**Abstract**

This study focuses on variant readings due to graphical similarity between the Masoretic text and the Samaritan Pentateuch. Its first and foremost aim is to create a comprehensive corpus of all these variants, to study each one independently and to examine them from a broad perspective. Analysis of the findings in the present study was carried out using methods available to all scholars of the biblical text. Yet in addition, the study incorporates methods from the palaeographic realm and in this respect, it marks a new direction. The many researchers who have dealt with variants due to graphic similarity as part of the discussion of the textual history of the bible have made little use of knowledge that has accrued over the past decades on the development of the Hebrew script and the square script to explain specific phenomena or general processes. Therefore, my work will hopefully add to the research of textual criticism in all its dimensions and to biblical research itself.

Following an **introduction** to the study which includes its aims, a review of research on relevant topics and an outline, the **second chapter** presents the textual findings. This chapter surveys all the variants due to graphic similarity between the Masoretic text and the Samaritan Pentateuch and gathers variants from additional textual witnesses, primarily the Qumran scrolls and the Septuagint. Each difference is examined independently through a philological analysis of the variants, their process of development and an evaluation of which version is superior. Finally, the chapter presents a statistical analysis of the data, including, for example, a survey of the interchanging letters, the frequency of the interchanges, the number of superior readings in each textual witness and the frequency of agreement between the Septuagint and each textual witness.

The **third chapter** treats the palaeographic background of the variants and examines the shapes of the interchanging letters during each stage of development of the three relevant scripts – Hebrew script, square script and Samaritan script. Through this process it determines an estimated dating of the variants, that is, it identifies the stage of the script at which there exist graphic similarities between the letters and when it is reasonable to presume the changes occurred. The intermediate summary of this chapter relays the statistical data that emerges from the palaeographic analysis: the number of variants between the Masoretic text and the Samaritan Pentateuch in each script, the number of variants occurring in each stage of the script and an approximate dating of the overall variants. The data shed light on the transmission process of the Torah in the final centuries before the Common Era.

The **fourth chapter** is devoted to the conclusions of the study. This chapter discusses the contribution of the intermediate conclusions that arise from the textual findings and palaeographic analysis to scholarship on adjacent related subjects. Some of the conclusions concern the Samaritan Pentateuch specifically (its dating, the script in which it was transmitted, the nature of its transmission), while others relate more broadly to textual criticism of Hebrew Scripture, illustrating the relation between the textual witnesses discussed and the chronological framework of the Pentateuch’s transmission in Hebrew script.

As an **appendix**, the work offers a list of the variants due to graphic similarity between the Masoretic text and the Samaritan Pentateuch. The variants are presented in a chart form that concentrates all the data arising from the collected texts and from the analysis of each variant: The superior reading (if one exists); which variant is supported by the Septuagint (if at all); and whether this variant is documented in the *Ketiv* and *Qere* of the Masoretic text.