**Abstract**

This study focuses on textual variations between the Masoretic text and the Samaritan Torah that are caused by graphic similarities. Its aim is to begin by creating a comprehensive corpus of all these variants, to examine each one independently and then to consider the variations from an overview. The data will be analyzed using tools available to all textual critics. Yet in addition, the study incorporates tools from the palaeographic realm and in this respect, it marks a new direction. The many researchers who have treated variations caused by graphic similarities as part of the discussion of the history of textual versions 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 add to the study of the textual criticism in all its dimensions and to the method of 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 differences between the Masoretic text and the Samaritan Torah caused through graph similarities and explores versions of additional textual witnesses, primarily the Qumran scrolls and the Septuagint. Each variance is examined independently through a philological analysis of the different versions, their method of development and their appraisal. At the end, the chapter presents a statistical analysis of the data, surveys the interchanging letters, the frequency of the changes, the number of preferred versions 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 variations and examines the shapes of the interchanging letters during each stage of development of the three relevant writing systems – Hebrew script, square script and Samaritan script. Through this process it determines an estimated chronological context for the variations, that is, it identifies the stage of graphic development in which similarity between the letters exists 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 variations between the Masoretic text and the Samaritan Torah in each system of writing, the number of variations occurring in each phase of the script’s development and an approximate chronological context for the overall variations. The data sheds light on the process of transmitting 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 intermediate conclusions that arise from the textual findings and palaeographic analysis to research in overlapping issues. Part of the conclusions concern the Samaritan Torah specifically (its dating, the letters in which it was transmitted, the nature of its transmission), and a different part relates more broadly to textual criticism of Hebrew Scripture, and illustrates the relation between the textual witnesses discussed and the chronological framework of the Torah’s transmission in Hebrew script.

As an **appendix**, the work offers a list of the differences between the Masoretic text and the Samaritan Torah that are caused by graphic similarities. The variations are presented in a chart form that concentrates all the data arising from the collected texts and from the analysis of each variation: The preferred version (if one exists), which version is supported by the Septuagint (if at all) and whether a record of the variation exists in the *Qere* and *Ketiv* of the Masoretic text.