The Samaritan Pentateuch in Current Research: Characterization, Tools, and Methods

The Samaritan Pentateuch is the authoritative text of the Samaritan sect. Apart from MT, this is the only comprehensive Hebrew version of the Pentateuch. Nevertheless, until the middle of the last century, it was mostly considered a sectarian text that constitutes a limited contribution to the textual criticism of the Pentateuch. In the last decades, however, mainly due to the impact of the DSS, there is a growing consensus about the contribution of the SP for our understanding of the textual history of the Pentateuch in the late Second Temple period. In fact, Samaritan studies are one of the current trends in biblical scholarship, with regard to the Pentateuch, as well as the Persian and Hellenistic periods.

In today’s session, the first of the series on SP and its importance for textual criticism of the Hebrew Bible, I will focus on the study of SP itself, while in the next sessions I will elaborate on the ancient manuscripts associated with the same textual tradition of the SP, that is the pre-Samaritan scrolls from Qumran, and the relation between these scrolls and the SP. (slide) I shall begin with the historical background of the Samaritan sect and its origin. I will then discuss the textual characterization of SP, the background of its formation, and its textual and oral transmission. I will elaborate on Samaritan manuscript culture, an issue that did not draw much scholarly attention yet. Finally, I will reflect on modern editions of SP. I shall review the major critical editions of SP and conclude by discussing the new comprehensive SP edition, which is an eminently useful foundation for researchers.

1. Who are the Samaritans?

The origins of the Samaritans are a subject of controversy between Jews and Samaritans. Jewish accounts, characterized by 2 Kings 17 and Josephus (*Jewish Antiquities* 9), claim that the Samaritans are descendants of colonists brought into the region of Samaria by the Assyrians from other lands they had conquered, including Cuthah. This is the origin of the Rabbinic designation of Samaritans as Cutheans (כותים). The Jews have argued that the veneer of Israelite religion displayed by the Samaritans is the result of instruction by an Israelite priest repatriated from Assyria after the colonists had been attacked by lions sent by God. The Samaritans, on the other hand, have insisted that they are “the genuine Israel,” namely, direct descendants of the northern Israelite tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh, who survived the destruction of the Northern kingdom of Israel by the Assyrians in 722 BCE.

Archeological evidence and epigraphic remains from the last decades have fundamentally enhanced the research on the Samaritans. From 1982, and during the next twenty years, Yitzhak Magen and his team took archeological excavations on Mount Gerizim. These excavations revealed a presence of a sanctuary on Mount Gerizim as early as the middle of the fifth century BCE. This sanctuary was Yahwistic, that is, dedicated to the same God as the Jerusalem temple, and with, presumably, many rituals in common. The inscriptional evidence, which included 395 inscriptions and fragments of inscriptions in Hebrew and Aramaic from the Persian and the early Hellenistic periods, as well as several inscriptions in Greek, suggests that the Samarians, the residents of the region of Samaria, wrote and spoke at the same language of the Judeans. They had a similar system of scripts and similar onomastica. The similar onomastica, particularly the use of Yahwistic names, is attested also in Samaria papyri and Samarian coins from the fifth and the fourth centuries BCE (Knoppers 2010, ”Aspects of Samaria’s Religious Culture”). Thus, archeological and epigraphic findings indicate that Judah and Samaria were two provinces that shared close cultural and religious ties in the Persian and Hellenistic periods. Moreover, the Yahwistic community in Samarian is traced back to the fifth century BCE, and shows some historical continuity. Therefore, it hardly seems that Yahwism in Samaria was a late arrival or that Yahwists Samarians were a late breakaway group from Judah.

The northern Yahwists presumably became later the Samaritans. The Pentateuch shared between Jews and Samaritans, therefore, is a part of a broader system of mutual influence between the two communities that were concentrated in the regions of Judah and Samaria in the Persian period. In fact, real estrangement between the two communities, in contrast to the biased accounts in Ezra and Nehemiah, did not begin until the rise of the Hasmoneans. It has been highly influenced by the destruction of the temple in Mount Gerizim by John Hyrcanus in 111/110 or 128 BCE, which was the leader of Judah and at the same time the High priest of the temple in Jerusalem. The destruction of the temple led to the emergence of a Jerusalem-focused Judaism versus a Mount Gerizim-focused Samaritanism as two distinct communities in opposition to each other.

The Samaritans continue to exist down to our age. Like the Jews, they suffered a diaspora. Since antiquity and throughout the Middle Ages, the Samaritan diaspora included communities in Nablus, at the foot of Mount Gerizim, Cairo, Damascus, Aleppo, Gaza, and more. However, from the seventeenth century, only the community in Nablus survived. The Samaritan population has been reduced over the years until it numbered only 140 people in the early twentieth century. These days they were slightly rehabilitated, numbering several hundred in two communities – Nablus and Holon, a suburb of Tel-Aviv (slide).

1. Textual Characterization

The discovery of the pre-Samaritan scrolls revealed that SP represents a text of the Pentateuch which was circulated in Israel in the 2nd century BCE. SP can be characterized overall as an expansive text. Its main characteristic, which is also evident in the pre-Samaritan scrolls, is the major editorial changes that are not shared with MT and LXX. These editorial changes are concentrated in certain narrative blocks. They often occur in parallel, but yet different, versions of the same story that appear in different places in the Pentateuch. The two versions were combined into one story so that they no longer represent two distinctive accounts. Other expansions stem from the need to present divine commands or prohibitions to act before actions. The major expansions will be extensively discussed in the next session of this series. Today, I will detail minor variants in SP that can be divided into several categories: (1) small harmonizing changes; (2) clarifying small additions; (3) substitution of rare words or forms with more customary ones; (4) linguistic emendations.

2.1 Small Harmonizing Changes

This category includes minor alterations designed to solve contradictions or to create better harmony in the text. (slide) A well-known example of such a reading in SP is found in Gen 2:2 (slide): ויכל אלהים ביום השביעי מלאכתו אשר עשה וישבת ביום השביעי מכל מלאכתו אשר עשה. Since chapter 1 describes that the task of creation was finished on the sixth day, the text can hardly go on to say that God concluded it on the seventh day. In addition, if he indeed concluded the creation on the seventh day, how could he cease from all his works on the same day? Both SP and LXX read here ויכל אלהים ביום השישי, probably as a result of a deliberate emendation assuming the numeral is an error, thus resolving the contradiction arising from the verse as it appears in MT. However, some scholars, such as Ronald Hendel, believe that SP and LXX preserve the better reading and MT is a result of scribal error.

An additional example is found in the same chapter. (slide) In MT-Gen 2:4, the pair שמים and ארץ, “heaven and earth,” appears in both halves of the verse in a different order: in the first half, השמים והארץ and in the second ארץ ושמים. SP harmonizes the order of “heaven and earth” in both appearances.

(slide) Moreover, the variant readings in the two versions of the Sabbath commandment in MT – one the one hand זכור את יום השבת in Exod, and on the other, שמור את יום השבת, in Deut – are harmonized in SP to שמור את יום השבת in the two versions.

2.2 Clarifying Small Additions

Throughout all the SP are scattered minor glosses or expansions that were interpolated to the text in order to improve its coherence. In Exod 14:12 the Israelites complain to Moses: (slide) הלא זה הדבר אשר דברנו אליך במצרים לאמר חדל ממנו ונעבדה את מצרים כי טוב לנו עבד את מצרים ממתנו במדבר. However, the text registers no such complaint. Therefore, in order to avoid a citation that is not registered earlier, SP cites the people’s words, as they appear here, after Exod 6:9.

Moreover, (slide) according to MT and SP Gen 15:13, the Israelites will be enslaved in Egypt for four hundred years. Nonetheless, MT-Exod 12:40 states: “The length of time that the Israelites lived in Egypt was four hundred *and thirty years*.” In order to validate the promise in Genesis without refuting the total number in Exodus, SP expands the counting of the years in Exodus by minor additions in the verse (slide): The length of the time that the Israelites *and their fathers* lived in *the Land of Canaan and the Land of* Egypt was four hundred and thirty years.

2.3 Substitution of Rare Words or Forms with More Customary Ones

Rare words or forms are replaced by customary ones in SP. (slide) This principle occurs in the replacement of *hapax legomenon*, as in the interchange between the *hapax* סותה in MT-Gen 49:11 and כסותו in SP. (slide) Moreover, SP omits the paragogic *i* in the phrase שוכני סנה (Deut 33:16) and reads שכן סנה, “inhabitant of the bush.” It also omits the ancient case ending in the phrase וחיתו ארץ, and reads וחית הארץ, “animals of the earth” (Gen 1:24). (slide) Similarly, rare orthographic forms are replaced by common forms, as seen in the slide (Gen 9:20; 12:8; 13:3; 35:12; Gen 49:11; נער Gen 24:14, 16, 28).

2.4 Linguistic Emendations

SP tends to insert linguistic emendations when MT reflects inconsistency between subject and predicate in number and/or gender. There are many examples of this phenomenon, some of them are seen in the slide (Gen 13:6; 31:9; 49:15; Num 9:6).

As Emanuel Tov pointed out, many of the minor variants mentioned here, are shared with LXX, thus indicating that their presence in the *Vorlage* of LXX. Put differently, these variants were inserted into the text before its translation into Greek. We will reconsider the developmental history of the textual traditions of the Torah in light of the accumulating evidence from the ancient textual witnesses in the next sessions, after examining the textual evidence from Qumran scrolls.

In view of the editing that the textual tradition represented by SP had undergone, and in light of the abundance of emendations, omissions, glosses, which obviously are secondary readings, scholars fail to underestimate the contribution of SP for the textual criticism of the Pentateuch. This statement is certainly true for the early SP research in the seventeenth to the nineteenth centuries, but this view of SP existed among some scholars until recently. In early 1990, Bruce Walkte contended that “SP is of a little value for establishing original readings” of the Pentateuch. This conclusion is no longer sufficient today. It seems that several scholars were influenced by the overall characterization of SP as textually inferior to MT, so they were biased in the process of textual evaluation of specific versions. It turns out that in certain cases SP preserves better readings than MT, such as in Gen 4:8, whet MT seems to be corrupted and lacks the words נלכה השדה that appear in SP and are reflected also in LXX. In Gen 10:4, the SP’s רדנים (which appears also in the parallel genealogical list in MT-1Chr) is preferable than MT’s דדנים. In a recent paper, based on my doctoral dissertation that dealt with variants due to graphic similarity between MT and SP, I have shown that with respect to these variants, SP preserves preferable readings in an equal number to those in MT.

Yet, the value of the SP for Biblical studies is not limited to the preferable readings that it preserves. SP is an important resource for understanding the growth of the text of the Pentateuch in the late Second Temple period and for understanding the processes that a scriptural text has undergone during its transmission. These processes illustrate the ways in which scribes felt free to intervene in the text and the practices that they have used in order to improve it when passing it to the next generation.

1. The Socio-Historical Background of the Formation of SP

The scholarly discussion on the socio-historical background of the formation of the pre-Samaritan tradition has recently got a new direction as well. The SP was deemed a popular or a vulgar text practically from the moment that it aroused scholarly attention. This view dominated for many years. Moshe Greenberg, for instance, argued that the SP represented a popular textual tradition that was later rejected by the academic proto-Masoretic text. This idea, to some extent, informed the earlier works of Paul Kahle and Shemaryahu Talmon. Emanuel Tov also argues that the pre-Samaritan tradition reflects a popular textual tradition of the Pentateuch. However, in a paper of 2013, Jonathan Ben-Dov convincingly characterized the scribal activity of the pre-Samaritan tradition as an academic endeavor. Ben-Dov claimed that the duplications in the pre-Samaritan tradition were the fruit of trained scholars. These scholars were motivated to bring the text to perfection. Ben-Dov pointed to similar literary techniques evident in contemporary Hellenistic literature, chiefly those used by the Alexandrian scholars of Homer.

1. The Transmission of SP

The final form of SP has apparently emerged in the late second century BCE. This estimation is based on various considerations: (1) a paleographic analysis of the development of the Samaritan script by James Purvis. (2) The Qumran evidence: the scroll 4QExod-Levf, dated to the middle of the third century BCE, indicates that the pre-Samaritan tradition existed at this period. At the same time, pre-Samaritan scrolls from the first century BCE, namely 4QNumb and 4QRP, reflect more extensive editorial work than is reflected in SP. The expansions that are not documented in SP were presumably inserted into these scrolls after SP was branched from the pre-Samaritan tradition and became a sectarian text. (3) As shown by Stefan Schorch, the Samaritan reading tradition of SP reflects a linguistic dialect that can be traced to the second century BCE.

SP has been transmitted via two parallel paths: textual and oral tradition. Nevertheless, the Samaritan reading tradition surprisingly was not fully documented until the last century, when Zeev Ben-Hayyim published a full transcription of the Samaritan reading tradition, accompanied by a comprehensive grammar of Samaritan Hebrew. In addition, in 1998, Israel Sadaka, a member of the Samaritan community, produced a fully vocalized edition of SP in order to preserve the reading tradition, as well as for the research of Ben Hayyim. Ben-Hayyim’s monumental work demonstrates that the Samaritan reading tradition preserves ancient readings and reflects a Hebrew dialect used in the late Second Temple period. It refutes the claim of his contemporary German scholar, Rudolph Machuch, who argues that the reading tradition came late and was influenced by the Arabic adopted by the Samaritans in the eleventh century.

As opposed to the Samaritan textual tradition, the Samaritan reading tradition is highly stable. Ben-Hayyim, in his preface to Sadaka’s edition of the SP, comments (slide): “The hundreds of known manuscripts of SP’s text are different one from the other in their spelling in numerous instances… Therefore, one encounters differences in the various manuscripts of the Samaritan text regarding the spelling, while the reading is always the same.” The stability of the reading tradition, on the one hand, and the plurality and vitality of the textual tradition on the other hand, stresses the importance of the reading tradition, not only as a source of evidence for the spoken language among the Samaritans in the late Second Temple period but also for the text of SP.

A textual transmission of Hebrew texts is essentially ambiguous, often accumulating several readings. Nevertheless, the reading tradition involves certain vocalization and punctuation, thus determining a specific sense for the text. The importance of the additional information supplied by the reading tradition was widely illustrated by Stefan Schorch. I will mention here just two examples, among many, to make my point. The first concerns vocalization and the second punctuation.

1) (slide) The first example, demonstrating a divergent vocalization, is found in Gen 2:7, in the account of God’s creation of the man from the dust. After the introductory “The God formed man from the dust of the earth,” MT states ויפח באפיו נשמת חיים, “He breathed into his nostrils the breath of life.” According to this reading, the verb ויפח is in *Qal* stem. According to the Samaritan reading, the verb is pronounced *wyabba*, presenting the Samaritan Hebrew equivalent to וַיַּפַּח, (a result of *pe-bet* and *he-het* interchange due to phonological similarity). Thus, the Samaritan reading proceeds the verb from the *Hiph’il* stem, and the meaning is “He let breathe in his nostrils the breath of life.”

Thus, although both texts present God as the creator of man from dust, they imply different anthropological concepts. According to the MT, the ﬁrst man consisted of two clearly distinctive components: a body made from dust, and “the breath of life,” which originated directly with God. According to the SP, however, “the breath of life” is not a separate entity, but merely a function of the body, which was commenced by God. Thus, the different vocalization of one word of the consonantal framework led to two distinct texts, which both existed side by side.

2) (slide) The following example demonstrates the implications of *divergent punctuation* on the sense of the text. In Exod 19: 24 Moses is commanded to ascend Mount Sinai bringing Aaron with him, while the priests and the people are forbidden to come too close to the summit of Mt. Sinai. Many SP manuscripts, however, present an *afsaq* (full stop, equivalent to סוף פסוק in MT) above the word והכהנים, constructing the phrase אתה ואהרן עמך והכהנים as one syntactical unit. Thus, the two versions imply two different concepts of priesthood, especially with respect to the two questions, whether the priests had immediate access to the revelation at Mount Sinai, and whether they are to be regarded as part of the Israelite people or as a separate group.

These examples demonstrate that the consonantal framework is full of gaps that had to be filled in during the course of reading. They stress the importance of the Samaritan reading tradition and the role it plays in creating a text in the proper sense of the word.

1. Samaritan Manuscript Culture

As MT, the earliest preserved manuscripts of SP are from the medieval period (slide). Six manuscripts preserve all the text of SP, two of them are currently in the British Library in London, and others in Nablus, Dublin, Paris, and Washington. There are additional fifteen very well-preserved manuscripts, lacking only numerous folia. All of these are dated to the twelfth to the fourteenth centuries CE. The medieval manuscripts are written in the Samaritan script, which has been developed from the Hebrew script approximately in the second century BCE (slide).

As mentioned, the Samaritan manuscript culture has been generally granted little attention by scholars, who concentrated on more stimulating aspects of Samaritan studies, such as theology, history, literature, and language. Few exceptions are the works of Alan Crown and Reinhard Pummer. The material philology of the manuscripts, however, is a primary source of evidence of the Samaritan scribal practices and the transmission of SP. A study of these manuscripts within a broader context of medieval Masoretic manuscripts teases out both commonalities as well as regional features of each manuscript group and scribal circle. In the following, I will elaborate on several Samaritan scribal practices, as they are reflected in the Pentateuchal manuscripts.

The main medium for the medieval manuscripts is codices, but there are also scrolls, such as the famous Abisha scroll of Deuteronomy from Nablus. This manuscript is attributed by the Samaritans to Abisha, the great-grandson of Aaron, brother of Moses, who lived in the time of Joshua, but scholars agree that it is from the fourteenth century CE.

(slide) The manuscripts are ruled with vertical lines, to mark the beginning and the end of lines, as well as horizontal lines that serve as ceiling lines on which the letters are hanged. The columns exhibit top, bottom, and intercolumnar margins. The top and bottom margins are generally similar throughout the manuscript.

In general, one can say that the traditions of laying out the text on the column of the scroll, which was adopted for the layout of the codex, were similar to those of Jewish scribes. Fraser observes that “the proportions of the single wide column resembles those of the scrolls from Qumran more closely than the narrow columns of the Greek uncial manuscripts of the bible or the HB codices of the Tiberian Masoretes.” As most of the Paleo-Hebrew scrolls from Qumran, the SP manuscripts use dots as words dividers.

SP manuscripts contain signs for vocalization, punctuation, and text-critical remarks, the first two probably reflect a public reading of the Torah. Not much can be said about these signs, as no systematic research has been devoted to them. Yet, it could be confidently said that Samaritan scribes used punctuation quite abundantly, in comparison to the vowel and text-critical signs. (slide) The slide before us demonstrates the use of punctuation, as well as vowel and text critical signs in an exemplar folio of the Dublin manuscript. We can see that the use of punctuation signs is much more frequent on this page. Stefan Schorch pointed out that the deployment of vowel and punctuation signs is very sparse and does not follow any systematic rules. Samaritan scribal practice may vary within the same manuscript or between different manuscripts written by the same scribe.

Additional prominent scribal practice evident in the Samaritan manuscripts is the columnar arrangement of the text, in which similar letters or words appear in a vertical line, one under the other (slide). In texts that use similar wording as genealogical lists, for instance, this leads to considerable numbers of the same letters and words being written under each other in a number of consecutive lines. In these cases, words and sentences are often broken for the sake of the unique arrangement. Therefore, times that there is no clear relationship between the sense of the units and the layout of the text.

A clear example for this phenomenon is the folio of Dublin manuscript that contains the text of Num 26:41–50, the lists of the tribes of Benjamin, which is called בנימים in SP, Dan, Asher, and Naphtali from the second census (slide). Firstly, we can observe the clear paragraph division. Each tribe is treated in a separate paragraph, all presented in a similar layout. The scribe took pains to ensure that the letters *lamed* at the beginnings of the lines (slide) and *tav*, *vav*, and *yod* (slide) would be written directly under the same letter occurring in the line above. This is also true for the recurring words למשפחת or למשפחות (slide). The columnar arrangement was secured by separating letters in these words, as well as the transposition of the first letter in the line to the second place, leaving the first space unoccupied.

Edward Robertson believed that columnar writing was a scribal art form that aims to create an ornamental sentence division effect. However, it might not be only a calligraphic art form. Alan Crown claims that columnar writing is a unique and successful way of protecting the text from scribal corruption, such as omissions of phrases in places when identical phrases or words are repeated, as well as contamination from the Jewish version. Crown demonstrates that this writing had its roots origins in an ancient Samaritan Masoretic tradition. Despite the certain variation in the use of columnar writing by the Samaritan scribes, the evidence seems to indicate that there are some pericopes in SP that indeed had standard layouts and forms of copying.

The last term that I would like to mention in the context of Samaritan manuscript culture is the *tashqil*. *Tashqil* is a sophisticated practice that isolates letters from the text along an empty path in the middle of the folio. The letters, read from top to bottom, form the scribe’s name accompanied by other details, such as the place and time of the manuscript’s writing. Thus, for instance, the Dublin manuscript presents a great *tashqil* that extends over the first sixteen pages of the book of Deuteronomy (slide, fols. 258a-265a, Deut 1:1–4:8), the first of which is seen in the slide. The *tashqil* reveals that the manuscript was written by the scribe Abi Barakatah in his fifties in 1225 CE.

Sometimes the *tashqil* not only supply the reader with personal data, but also “Masoretic” notes:חצי תורה , “halfway through the Torah” (in Lev 7:15), or religious slogans, such as ה' גיבור במלחמה. It should be noted that *tashqil* is not unique for Pentateuchal manuscripts, but is documented in other Samaritan texts as well, in different forms and wordings.

The *tashqil* could also be used to create a sort of illustration. We can see in the slide before us, a folio in the Dublin manuscript that describes the borders of the Promised Land (Num 34). It is shaped according to the Samaritan concept of the Holy Land: Mount Gerizim at the center, surrounded by four parts according to the four points of compass.

1. Editions

From the beginning of the twentieth century, a number of critical editions of the SP have appeared. Most are diplomatic in nature, based on a single manuscript, but not all of them. In what follows, I shall review the major editions and conclude by discussing a comprehensive new SP edition.

6.1 *August von Gall’s edition (1914–1918)*, *Der Hebräische der Samaritane*

The purpose of this edition was to create an eclectic reconstruction of the SP. Von Gall collected a large number of manuscripts, evaluated their relative values, and labored to recover the earliest and best reading. (slide) The edition contains the main text and three critical apparatuses: one addresses the consonantal framework, a second the vowel signs, and a third (the largest) the punctuation signs.

The main strength of this edition, which was the prominent critical edition of SP until the late twentieth century, is the cumulative apparatuses 2 and 3. They tally the evidence of vowel signs and punctuation in all of the manuscripts employed in this edition. However, this edition has several weaknesses, the first of them is that it does not include all the medieval manuscripts of SP. Perhaps more importantly, is the false criteria for evaluation of the textual evidence. Von Gall displayed a predilection for choosing readings that agree with MT, rather than choosing the readings that best represent the SP tradition. In addition, he is insufficiently appreciative of how the grammar of Samaritan Hebrew differs from that of Masoretic Hebrew. These failures adversely affected the quality of the main text in the eclectic edition.

6.2 Tal and Florentin, *The Pentateuch: The Samaritan Version and the Masoretic Version*

A diplomatic edition that was published by Abraham Tal in 1994 is based on one of the most important and most complete SP manuscript, manuscript number six emanating from the Samaritan synagogue of Nablus. This manuscript is occasionally not well preserved and parts from the beginning and the end of the Pentateuch were teared away. Therefore, its testimony is supplemented by textual evidence from other SP manuscripts. By the way, the most extensive part that was ripped off from this manuscript is currently found here in Oxford, in the Bodleian Libraries’ collection.

In 2010, Abraham Tal and Moshe Florentin published an improved edition of Nablus manuscript, along with the MT on facing pages, to facilitate convenient comparison between the two texts (slide). The edition marks expansions in SP and presents these in a separate index. In addition, the corresponding MT has blank spaces in those instances in which the SP has extended pluses.

The editors have produced a convenient, accessible, and useful synoptic edition of SP and MT. What this edition does not offer, however, is any information about the multitude of other textual witnesses to the SP, nor the parallels with other biblical witnesses. Tal-Florentin edition is used in the Accordance module of the SP.

6.3 *The Samaritan Pentateuch: A Critical Editio Maior*

A concerted effort is currently underway to produce a comprehensive critical editionof SP. Editions of the books of Genesis and Leviticus have been already prepared and published by Stefan Schorch and his team at the University of Halle-Wittenberg and further volumes of the books of Exodus, Numbers and Deuteronomy are under preparation.

Similar to Tal-Florentin’s edition, the new critical edition is a diplomatic one. The main text is employed Dublin manuscript, which is one of the best preserved and most carefully produced SP manuscripts. The edition consists of the main text, a list of the extant manuscripts dating from the eleventh to fourteenth centuries for the respective passages, and of five apparatuses. Not all of the apparatuses appear on every page, depending on the manuscript evidence. (slide) The main text records the consonantal framework, paragraphing, punctuation, vowels, and text-critical signs. The few corrections found in that manuscript, all of which were evidently implemented by the scribe himself, are not indicated in the main text. Instead, it follows the corrected reading in these cases, but the variants appear in apparatus 1. (slide) Thus, for instance in Lev 18:12–13. The scribe first wrote the words אביך; ערות and corrected himself afterwards by adding the word היא above the line, between the two words. The base text of the edition contains the corrected reading אביך; היא; ערות and apparatus 1 indicates that the word היא is a result of emendation.

In the inner margins of the main text, the editors provide information from the Samaritan reading tradition in cases where the consonantal framework of the main text is ambiguous. Hence, when the text can be read in different ways and the traditional Samaritan vocalization differs from that of the MT, this feature of the new edition provides critical information.

(slide) Apparatus 1 lists the variants within the consonantal framework, including corrections or additions by later hands, erasures, and so forth. The importance of this apparatus lies in the fact that no canonized written form of the SP exists in the sense that it does in the Masoretic tradition. In Samaritan tradition, scribes have been allowed significant freedom, as long as they remain firmly within the bounds of the orally transmitted reading tradition. For this reason, the scribal transmission of the SP is generally much more diverse than that of the relatively conservative MT.

(slide) Apparatus 2 lists and explains those cases in which the ancient translations of the SP, that is, the Samaritan Targum and the Samaritan Arabic translation of the Pentateuch, attest to a Hebrew *Vorlage* that differs from Dublin manuscript. In each instance, the editors refer to the original, whether Aramaic or Arabic, and reconstruct the Hebrew *Vorlage*.

(slide) Apparatus 3 lists all instances of vowel and text-critical signs found in the manuscripts of the SP covered by the edition. This apparatus is, therefore, not comparative but rather cumulative in that it records the entire evidence of vowel and text-critical signs found in the manuscripts covered by the apparatus, irrespective of the reading evidence found in the main text.

(slide) Apparatus 4 is particularly valuable for comparison of SP with other ancient witnesses. It provides parallels between the Hebrew Samaritan text and textual witnesses outside of the Masoretic tradition, especially from the LXX and the DSS.

(slide) Apparatus 5 is devoted to punctuation and lists all variants gained from the manuscripts covered by the edition. Recording this evidence is important for understanding paragraphing and syntax.

The new edition is a major contribution to the study of the SP in particular, and to the study of the Pentateuch in general. For the first time, readers have access to full documentation of SP’s text, the distribution of readings, and the particulars of the Samaritan manuscript tradition. Therefore, it is a superb instrument for Biblical scholars.

To conclude, today’s session focused on the Samaritan Pentateuch, a sectarian text that preserves textual tradition and spoken language that is traced back to the second century BCE. Our discussion detailed the textual characterization of SP, its written and oral transmission, the manuscript culture, and a review of the modern editions. The later are the basic tools for Samaritan studies and Biblical researchers to become acquainted with SP.

The discussion on SP is incomplete without a depth study of the pre-Samaritans manuscripts, which attest to the ancient tradition on which SP is based. Indeed, from a diachronic point of view, we started our study of the pre-Samaritan tradition with its later exemplar, the SP. In the next sessions, we will elaborate on the pre-Samaritan manuscripts, their proximity to SP, and their contribution to our knowledge of the SP-group tradition and its origins. This study will hopefully shed new light on the textual history of the Pentateuch.