

## The Third Publication of the Comparative Text of the SP and MT, Not Recommended for Use

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Prologue. The criticism in the pages of this new book is like a last desperate attempt to prove the superiority of the Masoretic Text of the Torah over the Samaritan version and other versions. The wording and the unusual way that they present their book surely will be sunk under the positive Tsunami of Biblical Criticism Science in which the irrefutable giants in this field today place the Samaritan version (at the very least) in the same state as the Masoretic Text. Yes, the two authors of this new book place all the weight of their scientific measure to prove their thesis (whose time has expired) and with no avail because the proofs of the Samaritan text are not limited to only Samaritan text types, but they can also be found in many other ancient versions - looking no further than the Dead Sea Scrolls, for example, in which three main urtexts, one similar to the Samaritan version in use today, one similar to the Jewish text in use today, and one an independent urtext which does not depend on either, according to its language - and perhaps even later to them.

Every criticism, even the most bitter ones, will be heard like a lullaby in contrast to the criticism that will be written soon about their book by colleagues in the academia in Israel and abroad regarding the incomplete product that came out of their hands. It appears as though these two authors, despite their seniority in the field of their study, even though it is second to archeology, history, and Biblical criticism - that it is hard for them to absorb that the research wind is blowing with all its might towards different research directions that are wider than the limited research that their book presents. It will never be said again about the Samaritan version as a harmonized and edited text. It is time to consider writing such as this unacceptable for research standards: "the Samaritan corrected," "the Samaritan harmonized," "the Samaritan simplified," which is part of their regular jargon.

### The Great Change in Biblical Research

The world of Biblical Criticism experienced a great change in its past perception of the different Torah versions, among them the Jewish Masoretic Text, the text in the hands of the Samaritans, the Septuagint - the first Greek Translation of the Bible, and the Aramaic translations of the Torah, both Samaritan and Jewish Aramaic versions. This change never happened at once, but moderately, and its beginning was with the discovery in the Judean Desert at the end of the 1940s. The advanced comparative research between the Jewish Masoretic text, the Samaritan Text, and the Septuagint, and the discovery of over 500 stone inscriptions on Mount Gerizim in the last 27 years contributed to this great change. Additional discoveries from the caves of Qumran only completed the picture of the change. Before these discoveries Biblical criticism gave first priority to the Jewish Masoretic Text and saw other versions, including the Samaritan Text as a development, or later editing of the Masoretic Text - described as the original text. The fact that the Septuagint of the Torah has far more common features to the Samaritan

text than the Masoretic text led to an assumption that maybe between or among the translators of the Septuagint some Samaritan writers had inserted themselves (because at the time of the authoring of the Septuagint there was a great Samaritan Community in Alexandria, the place of origin of the Septuagint in which there is no doubt that it is the oldest translation of the Torah into another language). However, because the Septuagint was made for all the books of the Bible, from which the Samaritans only consecrate only the five books of Moses, the likelihood of Samaritan editing of the Septuagint was denied. Yes, the Septuagint was made only by Jews, there is no doubt that before the Translators of the Septuagint in the 3rd century BCE, 200 years before the oldest Qumran scrolls, existed some of the oldest number of Hebrew manuscripts of the Torah, and from them they translated the scriptures into Greek. The fact should not be ignored that in regard to significant differences (around 3000 differences) between the MT and SP (about 1900 cases) there is agreement between the Septuagint and the Samaritan version. This is as though 1900 witnesses have a voice on the ancientness of the Samaritan Torah.

However, this fact about the SP in relation to the LXX and other texts was not enough for the leading Biblical Critics of today to place the SP in the place that it deserves between the oldest manuscripts of the Bible. There was the need for more criteria in order to change their attitude and their views from one generation to the next generation from descriptions of the SP as an editing of the MT to the new view that gives the same weight to both versions, MT and SP. These criterion were found in the caves of the Judean Desert, in which different versions of the Torah were found in Cave number four, texts that were identical with the SP despite the fact they were scribed by Jews. Researchers that previously claimed enthusiastically against the SP, before the discovery of the DSS, changed their minds completely when the findings from Mount Gerizim, and additional findings from Qumran were added. Among those well known researchers who have changed their stance, we should mention Professor James David Purvis, may he have long life, from the University of Boston, that dismissed his original conclusion in his book "The Samaritan Version of the Torah" from what he wrote in an entry under the same title in the Jewish Biblical Encyclopedia. Following the discoveries of the inscriptions on Mount Gerizim, the late Professor Shmaryahu Talmon (the holder of The Prize of Israel for Biblical Studies in 1997, who died last month, November 2010, when he was 90 years old) expressed regret in his later articles from what he had written in his earlier articles; Professor Emanuel Tov, may he have long life, who did not need to change his mind extremely but still made some corrections to his introduction of the First English Edition of the Samaritan Pentateuch, after the discovery of a Qumran fragment that contained the commandment to build the first altar to the Almighty on Mount Gerizim, after the entrance to the Land of Israel, is also among the leading critics who give the SP its proper respect.

Those aforementioned researchers are some of the giants among the Biblical critics of our days. They are our teachers and mentors. The positive change in their views in regard to the SP gives a positive sign and push to those who work on Biblical criticism, to place the SP in a position recognized as preserving ancient readings of the Torah, and at the same time clarify that changes and harmonizations are not missing in the Masoretic Text. Another giant researcher of Biblical criticism and the research of the Dead Sea Scrolls, is Professor James Charlesworth, from Princeton University, who revealed to the world the fragment from Qumran of Deuteronomy 27:4b-6, that speaks about directing that an altar be built to the Almighty on Mount Gerizim. This fragment has been declared an authentic fragment. Professor Charlesworth affixed that the SP

preserved readings of the original version of the Torah, and demonstrates this in his articles, following that discovery.

### New Streams in Biblical Criticisms

The change, to the favor of the SP, predominates today due to the new research in Biblical Studies taking place in Europe, especially by Professor Eitan Nodet from Ecole Institute in Jerusalem, Joe Frey, Conrad Schmidt, Ursula Reiser Schattner from the University of Zurich, Professor Stefan Schorch from the University of Halle, Dr. Ingrid Hjelm, from the University of Kopenhagen and Professor Jozseph Zwengeller from the University of Papa Hungary. All of these scholars have a new tendency in Biblical criticism that gives preference to the variants in the SP as being prior to its parallels in the MT. For example, the text written “Mount Gerizim” in Deuteronomy 27 preferred over “Mount Ebal” and considering Mount Gerizim as the chosen place as demonstrated in the unbroken reading at the end of Chapter 11 in Deuteronomy and the beginning of Chapter 12, and preferring the variant “רחב” (has chosen) in the SP and some of the manuscripts of the Septuagint over the corrected variant in their opinion “רחבי” in the MT.

Professor Conrad Schmidt mentioned in conversation that this perspective is very typical to the way of the Biblical Scholarship all over Europe today. There are also those who raise the question in regard to the (missing) tenth commandment in the MT, which is a big question mark in this regard, as was presented recently by Professor D. N. Friedman.

### A New Book Going Against the Stream

Therefore, the new book, “The Five Fifths of Torah, Shomron Version and Masoretic Version” the third publication of the comparative text of the Jewish Torah against the Samaritan Torah, by the holder of the Prize of Israel for Philology, Professor Abraham Tal, and his colleague Professor Moshe Florentine, looks as though it is outmoded by today’s current research of Biblical studies. The two compilers (Tal and Florentine) guide their readers to the days when absolute priority was given to the MT and absolute inferiority was placed upon the SP.

This book was published by the University of Tel Aviv, dedicated to Chaim Rabin, presenting the two versions in parallel pages, on the right side one finds the MT and on the left side the SP, taken from manuscripts written in 1204, that are called “Nablu 6” from the name and number that was affixed by Hebrew University in Jerusalem when they photographed it in 1968 with the permission of the High Priest Amram b. Itzhaq, (1889-1980) May the Almighty give him mercy, and also contains the entire Samaritan manuscripts of the Torah that were left in Nablu.

Professors Tal and Florentine do not leave even the slightest doubt about their opinion, stressing the high priority and the authenticity of the MT, in comparison to the SP. Following their system that evaluates the SP as a folk version, similar to a version that was discovered in Qumran, and that was adopted by the Samaritan “sect” that edited and installed changes in order to adjust the version to their belief in Mount Gerizim, as one of the compilers stressed, (Florentine, during an interview on television as a promotion for the book) their bias is clear in the manner they write about the SP in their introduction, page 39: “this version was never established until after a very long process in which at the end of it the version was created that is adhered to by the community.”

These assertions by the compilers towards the SP and the consideration of the SP as a subtext to the well-kept Jewish version, with some adjustments as they state, (in a special appendix they provide “additions” to the text that the Samaritans added, in their opinion) represent the same kind of claims that were stated in the distant past, that the Samaritans made additions in the manuscript that they have chosen for their religious system. Suddenly, all of these assertions fall apart before the textual and historical reality (that according to them the majority of the text and the differences that specialized the SP, according to the words of the compilers) found in some of the Qumran scrolls and in the Septuagint as well as other Jewish translations.

### Intentional Differences?

The compilers offer examples about the character of the SP, insinuating it is a folk composition in relation to the MT that is described by them as sacred, (A. Tal, in a quotation from his own article in the introduction, page 22) and as having a “higher language” (page 21). As the compilers state “ancient forms in the Torah were neglected by the SP, and were changed into ordinary forms: וְתִיחוּ in Genesis 1:24, was changed by the Samaritans to תִּיחוּ in Genesis 49:11 דִּרְתָּ in Genesis 27:40 to רְדָאָתָּ in Deuteronomy 32: 23, מְהִילֵעַ and more (pages 82-92). This general assertion that states that the Samaritans simplified the ancient forms for the benefit of public understanding is not correct. Such examples were written by those who are considered by many as having the authority as scholars, and unfortunately might be accepted as correct.

We are very motivated to comment about this according to their system, although in general we do not entirely accept their words, such as corrections were made, or adjustments, or simplifications by the Samaritan writer, especially because the same can be found in Qumran manuscripts written by Jews, and simply saying the singling out the SP is ignoring this fact.

It is clear that the SP was indeed before their researching eyes, although they used (as they admitted) an exceptional manuscript for their edition. The compilers also knew at the moment that they composed the introduction to the book that the version that is the hand of the Samaritans was never changed, was never simplified, and was never adjusted to the many forms for the need of the ignorant people as one of the claims that many others before them also made. Forms like the following ones were never simplified:

## → The Comparative Jewish & Samaritan Torah Versions New Publication by A. Tal and M. Florentine is Not Recommended

למו, יאחזמו, תבלעמו, תביאמו, אחיטנה, בחרט, לאטי, יגודנו, אבנט, אברך, אגר, אגן, אדן, אדרת, אחלמה, להתאפק, אצוים, אתורים, בבד, בד, בינה, תבונה, בשש, גבח, גבחתו, גבלות, גבן, מגדף, גדיש, יגור[מלשון גרה], גלולכם, יגער, גפר, יגרם, דאבון, דודאים, דלא, וידק, הבליהם, ותהינו, מהפכת, הפיכה, הרקי, זמה, יזח, יזמנו, יזנב, יזנק, מזרקות, זרת, תחבט, כחגבים, חה, תחלאיה, חלביניה, חללה, חמת, יחסלנו, מחספס, ויחפדו, חפיון, חופניו, חרטמי, חרס[שם מחלה], הנחשלים, התעשקו, חתת, טוה, מטחוי, טחו, טטפות, טלוא, יומם, יחס, ילפת, תקע, ישימון, מיתר, כבודות, כהתה, מכון, כחש, כלאים, כליון, כליל, כומז, נכמרו, גבעל, כסמת, תכפץ, כרכב, כשית, תלאה, לג, בלהטיהם, לוז, מליץ, ילחך, לטשים, לאמים, אשורים, לשד, מאס, מוס, משו, מחץ, מלילה,

מעוד, ממראת, ימרט, ממשלת, אביט, נבכים, נד, נין, מנוסת, יזל, נחבאת, נחשה, נטף, נכאת, נכליהם, נמגו, יפג, נמס, נסבו, נסחתם, מסה, נפך, נפצה, נקאתם, נצר, נצה, נקיא, נקיון, תקיפו, תנקש, תנקר, משאת, השיאני, נתך, נתר, יתשום, סאים, סבו, סגולה, מסוה, סופה, סף, יסיתך, סרה, הסכלת, מסכנת, הסכת, סלם, סלעם, סנורים, ספון, סורר, מורה, סתמום, סתרה, עבוט, עביט, עגב, כנר, עדנה, עדשים, עורון, עורת, יעטה, עכרתם, עלטה, מחללך, תתעלף, יעמסו, ענתה, ענו, יעפלו, עפלים, יעפף, עצה[אבר בגוף], מעקה, עקש, עקרב, תער, ערמון, התעשקו, עשתרות, עתידות, פגול, פדות, פדיון, פיח, יפזו, פחזת, פטדה, נפלגה, פליט, פללים, פנימה, תפעם, פקידים, פרט, פתאם, נפתלת, פתנים, פתרון, צדיה, אנה, מצוק, צלוע, צלצל, צמיתת, צנמות, צמח, צנים, שכים,

צנצנת, אצודה, צער, צפחית, צפרניה, צרבת, כמעט, מטחוי, קוממית, תקופה, קיצונה, קיטור, קלי, קלוט, קלקל, קנמון, קעקע, קפאו, מקצר, קשיטה, קשואים, שומים, רביבים, רביד, תרבות, מרבכת, רבעת, רגלאי, ירגנו, רוחה, מרכב, מרד[פחד], ירכסו, רקועי, רך, רשף, שגבה, שגם, שטן, שכת, שפם, שפוני, שרוע, שרית, שארה, שארות, שדים, שור, שרים, שחלת, שחר, שליט, שליתה, שנת, שפע, שפפון, משפתחם, שקעררות, שתם, תכו, תל, אתנו, מתעתע, תופיני, יתפרו, תרשיש.

And this is only a partial selection of the forms, in which most of them only occur once in the Torah of the Samaritan Pentateuch demonstrating that the language of the MT is not "higher" than the SP. There was no simplification of the forms as the compilers claim.

There are no intentional differences as they suggest, but this ancient Torah version that has been preserved in the hands of the Samaritans from ancient times till now. And this is "the Law of the Land" in the Kingdom of Israel, but we can claim the opposite claim that the "higher language" like the compilers claim characterize the MT was created to be an intentional difference.

However, there is no sense in suggesting this according to the style of their argument, in order to not be pulled into their system. In general these differentiations between an aristocratic version to a folk version is so old and was never accepted by the majority of scholars.

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#### An Exceptional Manuscript from Damascus In the Foundation of the Publication, Not a Manuscript from Shechem

The compilers sometimes demonstrate unfamiliarity of the material that is before them. In the foundation of their edition they chose to lay a version of the Samaritan manuscript of the Torah that was taken from a triglot edition laid out in three columns: a Hebrew source, an ancient Samaritan Aramaic translation, and an ancient Samaritan Arabic translation (that was scribed in the year 1204 CE by the high priest, Phinchas ben Elazar ben Natanel ben Elazar). They write in each place its name, “Shechem 6” according to the name that is given to it by the Hebrew University in Jerusalem in the year 1968 when the university photographed the Torah manuscripts in the synagogue of Nablus. (Today all of them are in the Samaritan Synagogue on Mount Gerizim, except two manuscripts that were stolen in 1995 by Arabs and two codices that were given at the end of the 1990s to the main Samaritan synagogue in Holon. The “tashqil” located in the Book of Genesis of this manuscript states: “I am Phinchas, the son of Elazar, the son of Natanel, the son of Elazar, the High Priest, in the year 601 to Ishmael, have written this Holy Torah for the wise and clever sage Joseph son of Abi Saada, may our Almighty give him a long life.” The aforementioned compilers call it “Shechem 6” but maybe for their purpose that the name “Shechem” insinuates it has more authenticity, but at least one of them (Florentine who published a critical edition of the Chronicle of the High Priest, the Tulida) knows that these manuscripts were never written in Shechem, and not under the responsibility of the High Priest, who was the leader of all Samaritan communities. In addition that this manuscript never had his authorization, it is noted that this manuscript was scribed in Damascus (see Florentine, the Tulida, page 105). And the writer (scribe) was the High Priest in Damascus at the end of the 12th century and at the beginning of the 13th century. His nephew, Itamar, the son of Amram, was summoned to Nablus from Damascus at the beginning of the 12th century, to be the High Priest on Mount Gerizim, because the family of the High Priest Phinchas had become extinct. In addition, the Damascus priests were from the family of Phinchas. Even later, in the year 1290, there was once again the summoning of a priest from Damascus to Shechem, Joseph ben Azzi, because also the dynasty of the aforementioned Itamar did not continue there because of the hard political events that happened to the Samaritans.

It seems as though this manuscript was released from Damascus by the survivors of the Dinfi family that escaped to Nablus from the pogrom that was made against the Samaritan community in Damascus in the year 1625. The fact that the compilers did not mention the Damascus background of the manuscript in the foundation of this edition has the effect of misleading the readers.

In the shorter tashkil, in relation to other tashkils in other manuscripts, the writer shows his lack of control in spelling, with three mistakes, in writing his name, Phinchas, without the letter chet; Anna as "הנא" instead of "אנא" and "הננמי" instead of "הנממי" in the meaning of "long life." He doubled nun instead of mem. Therefore, it is no wonder that the compilers found that this manuscript is different in 500 forms, at least, from other Samaritan Manuscripts! Clearly it demonstrates it is quite exceptional, and which was caused most likely by the scribe's lack of control over the spelling. They list all of these examples in a special appendix at the end of their edition.

### What is Phinchasia?

These facts never prevented the compilers to continue and to double the importance of the exceptional manuscript that they chose. This is what they wrote on page 49: "An old and distinguished manuscript, very respected by the members of the community, who call it by an expression of likeness, "Phinchasia" following the name of its writer." They clarify in note number 81, by these words: "Later on this private name became a general name that marks every manuscript that is similar to it in its construction, three columns to three languages." This information that the compilers suggest as factual to the readers is entirely untrue. Yes, all the manuscripts that were written on parchment in the Shechem synagogue are old and unique, but this fact never prevented the manuscripts from being victimized by fast hands that cut folios from its beginning, from its middle, and from its end - in order to sell them to tourists for a living, demonstrating that they were not distinguished enough. Only a few of them, the most distinguished, were left uncut and without later inserts to complete them. These other unique manuscripts never enjoyed this state of honor during Samaritan times of poverty because also from it many folios were cut and found later in numerous libraries in the world. The manuscript called "Pinchasia" after the name of the writer, is a nickname that is given to all Samaritan manuscripts that were scribed by the High Priest from the family of Pinchas who headed the people of Israel and the Samaritans from the time of Pinchas ben Elazar the father of the family that was the grandson of the High Priest Aaron, the brother of Moses, until the last High Priest from that family, Shalmaya, who died without a successor in the year 1624. However, the affixing of the compilers that every manuscript with three languages is called "Pinchasia" is not correct.

Yes, the compilers were helped in editing their edition by the services of a member of the Samaritan community, the sage Israel Tsedaka, may the Almighty give him mercy, who left us last year. However, it is impossible to assume that he who was very fluent in the Samaritan tradition gave them wrong information in this regard. We hope that they will not defend themselves as though this is the way he described the information they present in their book.

### The Ancientness of the Samaritan Translations of the Torah

The compilers wrote in regard to the Samaritan Arabic translation (note 71, page 42) "this translation of Abhisda of Tyre from the 11th century was influenced as many claim by the tafsir of Saadya Gaon." However, in their triglot manuscript that the compilers chose, the Arabic translation is ancient, before the period of Saadya Gaon, as the Samaritanologist, Professor Haseeb Shehadeh, showed in his critical edition of the Samaritan Arabic Translation of the Torah. Also the roots of the Samaritan Aramaic

translation are earlier than what the compilers stated, because the Samaritans spoke and wrote Aramaic in the 5th and 4th centuries BCE, as it developed from the letters that were sent to them from Elephantine, and from Wadi Dalia Papyrus, and from Mount Gerizim inscriptions, wherein the Aramaic script is served by non-Biblical needs. Also very ancient is the Samaritan Greek translation of the Torah, as early as the first centuries BCE, when the great language was the main language in the Holy Land.

Therefore, the explanations of the compilers for the reason of their choice of this manuscript as the foundation of their edition (“more complete” - “historical philological consideration”) is not convincing at all. There are older manuscripts and more complete than this manuscript that are not exceptional in relation to other Samaritan manuscripts (for example Dublin Manuscripts of Abi Baraakaattaa). It seems to us that this manuscript was chosen because of its exceptionalness in many hundreds of forms from other manuscripts. Contrary to the compilers’ opinion we think that because of these facts that this manuscript does not adequately represent the SP.

### Why the Rush?

One question remains before we will discuss the historical reflection on what was between the Jews and Samaritans in regard to the Torah version: What was the rush? Why such a rush for the compilers to publish these editions when there are two previous editions, the first by Abraham and Ratson Tsedaka (1965) and the second of Mark Shoulson (2008 - Shoulson also used these manuscripts in the foundation of his edition, but thanks to our help he corrected what should have been corrected by using the printed Torah books of Ratson and Israel Tsedaka). And these two previous editions are more comfortable and better for use than the edition of the compilers because they emphasize ALL the differences between the two versions. However, the edition of the compilers reads like the “At Your Choice” radio program, that gives only a part of the differences prominently (only in the SP), according to the preferences of the compilers. If in the previous editions “the missing” places in both versions are marked by dots in order, then it is left to the clever reader to judge to decide which of the two versions appears more accurate. In this third edition there are no dots, but the MT is given without any emphasis regarding their system that prefers the MT over the SP (except marking in spaces anything that does not appear in the MT) that the compilers designate as “additions” of the Samaritans). With these choices and the choice to use an exceptional version, they demonstrate an intent to lessen the value and the state of the SP in relation to the MT.

We assume that the rush in publishing this edition was not only with the intention to give it an academic standing, but also to rush the publication before the expected publication of the critical edition of the SP based upon almost 150 manuscripts, by the scholars Schorch and Zswengeller, that contains the expectation within the introduction of an opposite view to their view of the SP.

Most of their views and the outlook of the compilers who expressed in the their long introduction and in the appendices to their edition, as well as a different presentation of the versions, are a repetition of views and outlooks that for many generations have no longer been applicable. Although the edition presents the two versions, both MT and SP, they limit their discussion only to the SP. This is probably because the compilers assume that the MT is above all criticism and “preserved.” They concentrated all their criticisms in the manner of throwing “facts” against the SP. In addition to this there is a



tendentious presentation of the two versions, one against the other, by visual preference of the MT, as we clarified above, and also using an exception to the typical SP manuscripts, without pointing out the details behind the original place and circumstances in which it was scribed. These facts are enough to cause us to not recommend the perusal of this edition.

### Who Departed From Whom? The Compilers Turn the Tables

In the historical background of the SP the compilers turned the tables with the claim that the Samaritans were those who departed from the Jews and not the other way around. They also claim that the Samaritans changed the text in order to be departed from the Jews, and they have chosen for the same reason to preserve the writing in the Ancient Hebrew script and preferred over the Aramaic Script that the Jews used in order to be departed from them. Not only these differences, but also from some of the differences between the two versions that the compilers claimed before the discoveries of the last sixty years that the Samaritans corrected their version in order to avoid personification of the Deity, Moses, Shabbat, and Mount Gerizim in their language in order to take it out of the mind of the reader so that he would not mistakenly think wrongly (see for example page 41 of the introduction) regarding “And God completed everything on the sixth day” against the MT “in the seventh day” without mentioning that “on the sixth day” also appears in the Septuagint. The compilers claim in this regard that the Samaritans corrected “in the sixth day” in order to adjust it, or to harmonize it to what was written in the ten commandments, without paying any attention that there isn’t any logic in the version “on the seventh day” which means that the Almighty did do work on Shabbat, and regarding this point already some of the Jewish sages pointed out there was an absence of logic. Of course the historical reality is totally the opposite. It was not the Samaritans who departed from the Jews, but the Jews were the ones who separated the Samaritans and rejected any cooperation with them, destroyed their altars and their city on Mount Gerizim, and declared that they were foreigners, worshippers of doves, and stars, and fortunes - all of these in order to segregate them. Yes, there were some Jewish sages who considered them nearer to Judaism and considered them as “Israelite for all intents and purposes” but those were lonesome voices within the sea of hatred and antagonism of the Jews towards the Samaritans, a hatred that came from their concern due to the high numerical existence of the Samaritans in the Land of Israel, and because the Mount Gerizim tradition was already clear from the Torah as earlier to the Jerusalem tradition, there were fears that this would influence the majority of the Jews. There isn’t any testimony that the Samaritans asked at any time to receive recognition as Jews. It is obvious that what has been found in ancient inscriptions from the 3rd and 2nd centuries BCE that the Samaritans identified themselves as “Israelites” for hundreds of years. The Jews (with their antagonism) chose to invent the nickname “Kuttim” in order to say that the Samaritans are from foreign origin. Is it correct integrity and style when the compilers write and say in interviews with the media that the Samaritans “have chosen” one of the versions (a Jewish version to make editions to) indicating that the compilers also believe the Samaritans are from foreign origin.

### The “Choice” of the Script

Also the compilers claim that the Samaritan “choice” of the ancient Hebrew script proves opposite to the historical criteria. The Jewish sages were those who chose the Aramaic script as their script in order to depart from the Samaritans that never abandoned the ancient Hebrew script. It is obvious that the compilers themselves are adopting religious

rabbinic dogma by using the words of Rabbi Hisda and Ukva (Babylonian Talmud Sanhedrin 21, page 2) describing that when the Jews came from Babylon they replaced the ancient Hebrew script with the Aramaic script and “they gave the ignorant people the Hebrew script and Aramaic language.” Who are the ignorants, Rabbi Hisda said “Kutti” (ignorants are those who do not know the Torah). Kuttim is a negative nickname for the Samaritans. B.Tsedaka.” We must reply to the compilers that writing in Ancient Hebrew with dots that separate one word from the other, as in ancient stones and inscriptions, testify especially about the ancientness and not a Samaritan attempt to make the text earlier. See how the Samaritans are so careful even spending many days in order to insist upon not adding even one character to the text, as they do with the creation of each tashqil, by integrating the testimony of the writer in the text without adding or deleting any character from the text. The Samaritans never preferred one manuscript over others, as the Jews eventually did with the MT that was based upon one manuscript. However, the differences between Samaritan manuscripts are so few (and most of the rest of the differences are a matter of orthography) and derive from a period in which the characters: aleph, hey, vav, and yod were used as vocals, before the time of integrating the punctuation.

### Remove From the Minds of Whom?

The repeated expression of the compilers that the Samaritans corrected the version to remove from the minds of the readers leads us to ask the question - remove from the minds of whom? Remove from the minds of the Samaritans? It is out of the question, because regardless the Samaritans consecrate the version in their hands and consider it a complete Torah from Sinai. To remove from the minds of the Jews? This is also out of the question, because the Samaritans were indifferent to the internal argument in Judaism of the second temple period in regard to them. It is for sure that the Samaritans were never interested in the Jewish versions of the Torah, even those that were found in Qumran. Those manuscripts were Jewish manuscripts outside the border from the Samaritan influence.

Yes, there is a discussion in Talmudic versions that set up conditions to accept the Samaritans as Israelites (in Judaism), but there is no testimony that the Samaritans requested to be recognized as Jews. The opposite process happened, the testimony of Rabbi Abahu from the 4th century CE in which there were about “13 villages that integrated into the Kuttim.” We assume that the Samaritans in those villages willingly welcomed the transformation of the Jews of those areas, in the border of the lands of Samaria, to Samaritan life. It is far from anyone’s mind to describe the Samaritans of the second temple period as one of the sects that chose one of the folk versions of the Torah and adjusted it to their belief, as the compiler Florentine claimed in interviews to channels 1 and 10 recently in order to promote this book. There isn’t any Jewish sect or other sect during the second temple period that had the qualities that characterized the Samaritans. Those who held the SP were not a sect but a big nation that lived in many hundreds of thousands all over the land of Israel and abroad. They had central territory in Samaria with a holy center on Mount Gerizim with their belief based upon a tradition out of Samaria that was based upon the Torah. They had armies and they committed wars against their enemies and originally they were descendants of the ancient Kingdom of Israel of which the majority remained on their lands also after the Assyrian occupation. And there they taught the foreigners that were brought from foreign countries the “law of the land” in the North that was different of course from the law of the land in the Kingdom of Judah that still existed during the Assyrian occupation, but

their priests never demanded from the King of Assyria to come to Assyria and circulate their laws in Samaria, although they were under his jurisdiction. The King of Assyria preferred to bring priests from those few Israelites that were sent off by the Assyrians. This fact is enough to show that the law of the land in the North was different from the law of the land in the south already during the period of the two kingdoms.

It is correct that the Samaritans today are fighting for their existence in different ways, and they number today, January 2011, almost 750 individuals. However, there isn't any link between the fact that in the past they were many hundreds of thousands of individuals and today they are less than one thousand, to the credibility of the Torah version in their hand. This is the version that was preserved by them, and according to most scholars today, since the ancient times of the people of Israel. The view of the compilers about the SP represents a negligible minority view in which its time has passed because it is based on an unstable base that is so easy to prove that it is not correct, as we have tried to do in this criticism on their new book. Let's wait patiently for the publication of the critical edition of the SP.

#### A Dedication that Israel Tsedaka Would Have Regretted

And we conclude with the fact that the compilers dedicated their book to the sage, Israel Tsedaka, who gave them his complete dedication for many years, but won his reward only after his death. We assume that if he had read the introduction that the compilers prepared for their book he would have said to them "no thanks." We allow ourselves to be insulted on his behalf, when they call him "a distinguished Samaritan in Holon." What is the meaning of such a title, "a distinguished Samaritan in Holon" ? (page 10, in preface) What is that? Are the compilers themselves considered as a distinguished Jew in Nathania, or a distinguished Jew in Tel Aviv? Why such an inadequate expression, that lessened the value of Israel Tsedaka, who was one of the brilliant sages of the entire Samaritan community and recognized by many? He willingly fulfilled every mission that the compilers requested of him and travelled to the edge of the world to bring them copies of Samaritan manuscripts and also fed them with his vast knowledge on Samaritan tradition. However, when the time came for the question of the acceptance of membership for Israel Tsedaka to the Society of Samaritan Studies (SES) in the final session of the Helsinki congress (Israel Tsedaka arrived there from St. Petersburg after fulfilling one of the missions for the compilers, and his membership was conditioned by a vote from at least two members of the organization) the compilers completely refused to comply to the vocal urgings of the head of the session, Professor Haseeb Shehadeh, to both of them to vote for Israel Tsedaka. Israel Tsedaka was not distinguished enough for the compilers' tastes, and not academic enough for them. Eventually he joined the SES by the votes of other members in the organization, and among whom the writer of this criticism had the honor to be one of its founders, in Paris of 1985. On these conditions and upon this consideration a dedication of this book to the sage, Israel Tsedaka, is a matter under the circumstances that he surely would have regretted upon it.