

On a Manuscript of ‘*Kitāb al-Hulf*’ by Ḥaḍr (Finḥās) b. Ishāq al-Ḥiftāwī

In this study an attempt is made to shed light on a new and unknown Samaritan Arabic manuscript whose subject concerns the differences between Jews and Samaritans. I will refer to this manuscript by the name of its owner, Larry Rynearson, (hereafter, LR) of Florida. Mr. Rynearson purchased the manuscript on 23 August 2006 from Ulrich Hobbeling, Antiquariat Th. Stenderhoff, Bergstrasse 70-48143 Muenster +49-251-414990 www.stenderhoff.com. Mr. Rynearson was kind enough to send an electronic version of the manuscript to me in August 2010, and I extend my sincere thanks to him. The number of Samaritan manuscripts housed in public libraries as well as in individual collections worldwide is more than 3,500. The lion’s share, some 1,350 in number, is found at the National Russian Library in St Petersburg.

LR consists of 175 pages marked with contemporary Arabic numerals. Every page contains 22 lines. Pentateuchal quotations are given, as usual, in Samaritan script. The author, Finḥās (Ḥaḍr) b. Ishāq b. Salāma b. Ghazāl (Ṭabia) al-Ḥiftāwī (1840-1898) was a unique Samaritan personality (ܐܦܘܨܬܐ ܕܩܘܨܬܐ) as I shall show in an article entitled “Two Samaritan Interpretations on Genesis 6:3. As its text indicates, the reason for writing this manuscript, was to answer questions raised by certain European scholars pertaining to a wide variety of subjects on the Israelite Samaritan faith and its traditions. Unfortunately, the identity of those scholars is not known. On the basis of another manuscript, Sam 30 in Berlin, it is obvious that the priest Ya‘qūb b. Hārūn (1840-1916) has urged the author Finḥās, the priest’s sister’s husband, to prepare this LR. The scribe of LR was Abū al-Ḥasan b. abī Ya‘qūb b. Salāma b. Ghazāl ha-Kohen, and the date of copying has been given as 17 February 1931. Other copies of *Kitāb al-Hulf*, which are found in Berlin, Jerusalem, Manchester and Nablus, are briefly discussed, and as far as can be judged at this point, they differ from each other.

LR is composed of the following ten chapters:

- 1) The origin of the Samaritans, pp. 3—24.
- 2) The *Qibla*, Mount Gerizim, pp. 24—45.
- 3) The Sabbath, pp. 45—55.
- 4) Circumcision, pp. 55—64.
- 5) The calendar, pp. 64—103.
- 6) Purity and impurity, pp. 103—111.

- 7) Rules of slaughter, legal and illegal, pp. 111—123.
- 8) Marriage and divorce, pp. 123—133.
- 9) The Samaritan Torah is the authentic version, pp. 133—143.
- 10) The rules with regard to the dead and the day of the hereafter (*yawm al-Ma'ād*), pp. 143—175.

One translation of *Kitāb al-Hulf* into modern Samaritan Hebrew was carried out by Nāḡī, the son of the author Ḥaḍr, (1880-1961) under the title *Sefer Hillūq* (Difference) rather than *Hillūk* (Walking) as appears in Edward Robertson's *Catalogue of the Samaritan Manuscripts in the John Rylands Library*. (Manchester. Volume II, the Gaster Manuscripts. Manchester 1962, pp. 143—146).

Generally speaking, the style of LR is good, but its language suffers from numerous linguistic errors, in morphology, syntax and lexicography. This statement holds true with regard to the so-called Middle Arabic written in particular by non-Muslim Arabs. A detailed linguistic investigation of RL is included in my study. This investigation includes an index of proper nouns, names of peoples and locations, and the four worlds. In addition the following topics are discussed: colloquial and loan words, phonology and spelling, morphology, syntax, lexicography, and religious terms and expressions. References to pages in RL are given. The reader does not have the impression at all that the author is a Samaritan who is aware also of what was written in the Old Testament. Numerous Pentateuchal quotations are presented and followed by a rendering in Arabic. A preliminary examination of this translation shows that it depends on a modern Arab Christian translation of the first books of Moses.

As sample of RL, two texts were chosen for inclusion and annotation. The former deals with circumcision and the latter discusses the characteristics required of a butcher and the legal features of the slaughtering knife. Six conditions of lawful slaughter are mentioned, one of which says that the length of the knife should be one and a half times the length of the slaughtered animal's neck. Samaritans are very precise in performing circumcision on the morning of the eighth day (Genesis 17: 14), whereas Jews may postpone the ceremony up to one month for different reasons, since in their version of the Torah there is no mention of 'the eighth day'. The passage in Exodus 4: 24-25 regarding the circumcision of Moses' son Eleazar by Zipporah is dealt with in detail because the difference between Samaritans and Jews on this point is

substantial. Samaritans believe that God's angel urged Moses to circumcise his son, whereas the Jews' interpretation is that the angel intended to kill Moses who was late in circumcising his son. The central two words here *המיתו*, *בנה* are interpreted differently. Samaritans derive this verb from *המה*, *המם* to 'urge, push', while the Jews understand it as taken from the root *מות* 'to die'. *בנה* is understood literally in Jewish sources as 'her son' but the Samaritans pronounce it differently—as *binna*—and have their own interpretation. The author says that Zipporah lost any hope of continuing as Moses' wife because her husband attained "the degree of spiritualism after the encounter with the angel". I know of no other source that preserves this Samaritan interpretation. Unfortunately, this remarkable difference between the Masoretic Torah and the Samaritan Pentateuch was not adequately described in a recent comparative edition of the two Torahs (the third on this subject): *The Pentateuch: The Samaritan Version and the Masoretic Version*, edited and annotated by Abraham Tal and Moshe Florentin (Tel Aviv University Press, 2010, pp. 664-665).