

Studies on the Texts of the Desert of Judah

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Conservatism and Innovation in the Hebrew Language of the Hellenistic Period

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SPOKEN HEBREW OF THE LATE SECOND TEMPLE
PERIOD ACCORDING TO ORAL AND WRITTEN
SAMARITAN TRADITION*

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Three different varieties of the Hebrew language are in use among present days Samaritans: Modern Israeli Hebrew, Samaritan Neo-Hebrew,¹ and Samaritan Hebrew. While Samaritan Neo-Hebrew is the language used mainly for liturgical compositions after the revival of Hebrew in the 12th century CE, Samaritan Hebrew (= SH) is the Hebrew language employed in the reading of the Torah as transmitted in the Samaritan community. The present contribution will focus on the latter only.

The linguistic evaluation of SH has undergone dramatic changes over the last 50 years, especially due to the work of Zeev Ben-Hayyim.² While Rudolf Macuch in his comprehensive “Grammatik des samaritanischen Hebräisch” (1969) tried to explain most of the peculiarities of SH as the result of influence from the Arabic vernacular adopted by the Samaritans around the 11th century CE,³ Ben-Hayyim successfully demonstrated

* Thanks are due to Mr. James Harland (Bethel/Oxford) for his thoughtful comments and for correcting my English.

¹ For a detailed account of the latter, see Moshe Florentin, *Late Samaritan Hebrew: a linguistic analysis of its different types*, Studies in Semitic languages and linguistics 43 (Leiden/Boston, 2005).

² See especially Zeev Ben-Hayyim, *The Literary and Oral Tradition of Hebrew and Aramaic Amongst the Samaritans* (5 volumes) (Jerusalem, 1957–1977 [= LOT I-V]). Volume 5 contains a grammar of Samaritan Hebrew which was subsequently translated into English: Zeev Ben-Hayyim, *A grammar of Samaritan Hebrew: based on the recitation of the law in comparison with the Tiberian and other Jewish traditions* (revised edition in English with assistance from Abraham Tal) (Jerusalem, Winona Lake, 2000).

³ However, the replacement of Samaritan Aramaic by Arabic as the vernacular was obviously a gradual process, see Haseeb Shehadeh, “The Arabic translation of the Pentateuch”, in Alan D. Crown (ed.), *The Samaritans* (Tübingen, 1989), 481–516 (especially 483–489).

that the language of the Samaritan reading of the Torah preserves the characteristics of Hebrew as spoken in the late Second Temple period:

“[...] [T]he characteristics of S[amaritan] H[ebrew] developed in the wake of the linguistic trends that became prominent in the period of the Second temple [...] S[amaritan] H[ebrew] preserves one of the language types spoken amongst the last generations of Hebrew speakers before Hebrew was displaced by Aramaic.”⁴

It seems to me, nevertheless, that the exact place of SH within this rather broad linguistic context has not yet been sufficiently described, neither in terms of language history nor in terms of Hebrew dialectology. Towards this aim, I shall deal with the following sub-problems:

1. Samaritan Hebrew and the history of the Hebrew language,
2. SH as a Hebrew dialect,
3. The linguistic relation between the oral and the written tradition of SH,
4. SH and the phonetics of late Second Temple Hebrew.

1. SAMARITAN HEBREW AND THE HISTORY OF THE HEBREW LANGUAGE

As has been convincingly demonstrated by Ben-Hayyim and others, SH shares many linguistic features with the Hebrew language attested in the scrolls from Qumran, and with Mishnaic Hebrew. As to the question of whether the particular features of SH should be described in terms of Hebrew language history or rather in terms of Hebrew dialectology, Ben-Hayyim's conclusion is as follows:

“Given that the spiritual center of the Samaritans was throughout the generations in the hill country of Ephraim, [...] we are tempted to attribute the particular features of the language of the S[amaritan] P[entateuch] to differences of dialect between the Hebrew in use in Ephraim and that current in Judah in general and [in] the Jerusalem area in particular. However, sustained and careful attention to the differences in orthography and word formation reveals that many of the features of SH are the same as those evident in non-Biblical Hebrew literature among the Jews, such as rabbinic literature. Furthermore, now that we have access to a number of [...] works [...] preserved among the Dead Sea Scrolls, and find their linguistic features similar to SH, it is entirely certain that we

⁴ Ben-Hayyim, *A grammar*, 340.

cannot ascribe the differences between the Biblical Hebrew of the Jewish Pentateuch and those of the SP to differences of place alone, but rather to differences of time.”⁵

Thus, Ben-Hayyim clearly expresses the view that the relation of Samaritan Hebrew towards other forms of Hebrew, especially Biblical Hebrew and Mishnaic Hebrew, should be described in terms of language history rather than in terms of Hebrew dialectology.⁶ This view has even been reinforced by Moshe Florentin:

“The cause of these dissimilarities [*i.e.* between Samaritan Hebrew and Mishnaic Hebrew] was time [...]: We believe that SH postdates not only [the] H[ebrew of the] D[ead]S[ea]S[crolls], but the Hebrew reflected in the good manuscripts of the Mishnah as well. By contrast to our lack of knowledge of any linguistic trends which are defined by geographical location, the history of the Hebrew language has pointed out a number of linguistic phenomena which have intensified over the course of time.”⁷

However, Florentin’s view seems problematic from at least two different perspectives:

—His postdating of SH compared to the Hebrew language of the Dead Sea scrolls is contradicted by a number of features in which SH preserves a more conservative stage of language history. One of them is the weakening of the laryngeals and pharyngeals. SH does not attest the complete weakening of these: While historical \aleph and η merged in SH into [ʔ] under all circumstances, historical η and ϵ show a different development: Although having merged into [ʔ] in most cases, they merged into [ʕ], which was retained under special phonetic conditions.⁸ Therefore, SH attests a more conservative stage not only in comparison to Samaritan Aramaic, which does not seem to have retained [ʕ] under any circumstances,⁹ but also in comparison to the Hebrew language of

⁵ Ben-Hayyim, *A grammar*, 4 and compare Florentin, *Late Samaritan Hebrew*, 15.

⁶ Similarly Florentin, *Late Samaritan Hebrew*, 15.

⁷ Florentin, *Late Samaritan Hebrew*, 15f.

⁸ See Zeev Ben-Hayyim, “Some problems of a Grammar of Samaritan Hebrew”, *Biblica* 52 (1971), 229–255 (especially 248–250). This phonetic development is not unique to SH, but it is known from Galilean Aramaic as well, see Eduard Yechezkel Kutscher, “Studies in Galilean Aramaic” (Hebr.), in *Hebrew and Aramaic Studies* (Jerusalem, 1977), 169–226 (especially 209–226).

⁹ In a Samaritan Aramaic acrostic poem, עבדתנון appears at the beginning of the η -line. According to the phonetic rules operative in SH, one would have expected that this word started with [ʔ]; its place in the acrosticon proofs, however, that the first consonant is [ʕ], see Ben-Hayyim, *A grammar*, 38. Similarly Rudolf Macuch, *Grammatik des samaritanischen Aramäisch*, *Studia Samaritana* 4 (Berlin/New York, 1982), 9.

some of the documents from the Judean desert.¹⁰ Thus, e.g. the language of the scribe of IQIs^a seems to have been characterized by a complete weakening of the laryngeals and pharyngeals.¹¹

—Although our knowledge of the dialect geography of Hebrew in ancient times is admittedly very limited, this does not, of course, exclude the existence of dialects or even the possibility to reconstruct some of their features. For example, if two varieties of Hebrew contain corresponding features which cannot be related one to the other through a language historical development, we should conclude that we are dealing with two different dialects of Hebrew, even if we do not know exactly in which areas these dialects were spoken.¹²

In the following, I will not attempt a presentation and analysis of those features in which SH seems to attest a more advanced stage in terms of language history than Biblical Hebrew as known from the Masoretic tradition, since they have been treated in different studies and are generally acknowledged by scholars.¹³ Rather, I would like to present in the following some instances where the Samaritan reading tradition of the Torah contains features which are more conservative in terms of Hebrew language history than their respective counterparts in the Masoretic tradition. The observation that these conservative features may be identified within SH side by side with the more advanced ones mentioned above seems to be a first and very strong argument in favor of the thesis that SH is a Hebrew dialect of its own.

1.1. *Internal passive*

It is usually assumed, both from a text-critical as well as from a linguistic point of view, that one of the characteristics which set the Samaritan Pentateuch apart from its Masoretic counterpart, is the prevalence of a strong tendency to replace internal passive forms.¹⁴

¹⁰ See Elisha Qimron, *The Hebrew of the Dead Sea Scrolls*, Harvard Semitic studies 29 (Atlanta, 1986), 25.

¹¹ See Eduard Yechezkel Kutscher, *The language and linguistic background of the Isaiah scroll (IQ Isa^a)*, STDJ 6 (Leiden, 1974), 505–511.

¹² Similarly Moshe Bar-Asher, *ספר היובל לרב מרדכי ברויאר*, (Jérusalem, 1991), § 10–11. Compare below, chapter 2.

¹³ The most significant of these features have been collected in Ben-Hayyim, *A grammar*, passim.

¹⁴ See Ben-Hayyim, *A grammar*, 177–179.

Nevertheless, SH preserves not a few instances of internal passive forms, corresponding to *qal* passive and *hof'al*. As to *pu'al*-forms, a conclusive result regarding their existence in SH is impossible, since they would have become homophone with the respective forms of *pi'el*.¹⁵

Significantly, the internal passive forms of SH appear even in contexts where the consonantal framework would have allowed for a reading in the active as well. This demonstrates that these forms are not just survivals, preserved in the consonantal framework only due to an allegedly conservative attitude of scribes, but a living feature in the Hebrew language used at the time when the reading tradition of the Samaritan Pentateuch emerged and became fixed, i.e. the late Second Temple period or, more specifically, the late 2nd century BCE.¹⁶

Moreover, although a comparison with the Masoretic text of the Pentateuch reveals a number of instances where the latter preserved internal passive forms which were replaced in the Samaritan tradition, the opposite phenomenon—internal passive forms preserved in the Samaritan Pentateuch, but replaced in the Masoretic—is attested as well. One example is Gen 44:28, where the MT reads וַיֵּצֵא הָאֱחָד מֵאֲתוֹ וַיֹּאמֶר אֵד טָרַף טָרַף, while the Samaritan Pentateuch reads *wēmār* “and it was said” instead of וַיֹּאמֶר “and I said”.

As to the distribution of internal passive forms as contained in the Masoretic vocalization, on the one hand, and the Samaritan vocalization, on the other, a comparison related to the Book of Genesis shows a very interesting and somewhat unexpected figure:¹⁷

Both the MT and the SP preserve internal passive forms in 13 cases. Out of these thirteen, the MT and SP share 7 cases of internal passive forms,¹⁸ with the MT leaving 6 internal passive forms where the SP has active forms,¹⁹ as well as the SP containing 6 internal passive forms where the MT has active forms.²⁰

Evidently, this scheme makes it rather difficult to compare the Masoretic and the Samaritan tradition in terms of preservation versus aban-

¹⁵ See Ben-Hayyim, *A grammar*, 182.

¹⁶ See below, note 42.

¹⁷ The Samaritan vocalization of the Pentateuch is best available in the transcription of the Samaritan reading of the Torah as published by Zeev Ben-Hayyim in *LOT IV*.

¹⁸ Gen 4:24; 12:15; 38:24; 41:28; 44:3; 50:26. Additionally, the SP contains a *qal* passive participle in Gen 25:10 as against a *pu'al* in the MT.

¹⁹ Gen 2:1; 4:26; 7:19.20; 10:21; 40:15.

²⁰ Gen 12:16; 38:14; 41:28.31; 44:28; 48:2.

donment of internal passive forms. Although there is an obvious tendency in the Samaritan Pentateuch to change internal passive forms into active forms, the Masoretic vocalization attests a similar tendency, too, and even to a similar extent.

1.2. *Dual*

As has already been observed by Zeev Ben-Hayyim,²¹ the Samaritan reading tradition preserves the dual of nouns before the personal suffix, unattested in the Masoretic tradition:

Gen 11:31 (SP): ואת שרי ואת מלכה כלתו [...] ואת שרי ואת מלכה כלתו
(*kallūtu* “his two daughters”, instead of *kallūto* “his daughters”)

Gen 19:15 (SP): ואת שתי בנותיו
(*bānūtak* “his two sons”, instead of *bānūtek* “his sons”)

Regarding this feature, the Samaritan reading tradition clearly preserves a more conservative stage in the history of the Hebrew language than the Masoretic vocalization.

1.3. *The article*

Since the article does not appear in writing in certain positions (i.e. between preposition and noun), but only in the reading, we may separately analyze the application of the article in the consonantal framework and its application in the reading tradition.

If we compare the application of the article in the consonantal framework of the MT, the Masoretic vocalization and the Samaritan vocalization,²² we arrive at the following picture: The most conservative stage in terms of language history is preserved in the consonantal framework of the Masoretic text, which is hardly surprising. It may be more surprising to see, however, that the Masoretic vocalization attests the most advanced stage of these three corpora as regarding the application of the definite

²¹ Ben-Hayyim, *A grammar*, 229.

²² The consonantal framework of SP exhibits the same rules for the application of the definite article as the Samaritan vocalization, see Stefan Schorch, *Determination and the Use of the Definite Article in the Samaritan and in the Masoretic Text of the Torah*, *JSS* 48 (2003), 287–320, and compare below, 2.1.

article. Although the Samaritan reading tradition attests a more advanced stage than the Masoretic consonantal framework, it is nevertheless more conservative with regard to the application of the article than the Masoretic vocalization.²³

The above examples demonstrate that the opposition of preservation versus abandonment of archaic or conservative features does not suffice to describe the relationship between the language of the Masoretic text of the Pentateuch and that transmitted in the Samaritan version. Although in many respects both the Masoretic consonantal framework as well as the Masoretic vocalization preserve a stage which is more conservative than SH in terms of Hebrew language history, nevertheless a number of features exist where the Samaritan Pentateuch preserves the more conservative stage vis-à-vis the Masoretic text. Therefore, the linguistic distinctiveness of each version as opposed to the other seems rather to be determined by a different distribution of features which are either conservative or advanced in terms of Hebrew language history. Thus, SH cannot just be regarded as reflecting a more advanced stage in the history of the Hebrew language than the Hebrew as preserved in the Masoretic text, but should be described as a Hebrew dialect of its own.

2. SAMARITAN HEBREW AS A HEBREW DIALECT

Apart from the different distribution of linguistically conservative and linguistically advanced features, the existence of a dialectal difference between the Samaritan and the Masoretic tradition is confirmed by further evidence: The existence of features in one version which cannot be explained as being related to corresponding features in the other version through a language historical development.²⁴

2.1. *The article*

One such feature is the use and meaning of the definite article: Although the two parts of the Masoretic tradition significantly differ from one

²³ For a detailed account of this view see Schorch, *Determination*.

²⁴ See above, 1.

another in this field, they both share at least one common and very significant feature: the generic use of the article. In SH, however this function is something of an exception, both in the written and in the oral tradition. Thus, the Samaritan tradition as a whole, is set apart from the Masoretic tradition as a whole, by many differences regarding the generic use of the article, e.g.

Exod 34:3 (MT): גם הצאן והבקר אל ירעו אל מול ההר ההוא

Exod 34:3 (SP): וגם צאן ובקר אל ירעו אל מול ההר ההוא

Lev 26:19 (MT): ונתתי את שמיכם כפרזל

Lev 26:19 (SP): ונתתי את שמיכם *קברזל²⁵

This difference cannot be explained as the result of historical linguistic development, due to the following observations regarding the use of the article: As shown above, the bi-partite Samaritan tradition reflects, generally speaking, an intermediate stage in terms of Hebrew language history regarding the use of the definite article, being more advanced than the consonantal framework of the Masoretic text, but more conservative than the Masoretic vocalization. The generic use of the definite article is here an exception, since its distribution does not vary in a significant way between the consonantal framework of the Masoretic text and its vocalization, but between the two traditions. Thus, the generic use of the definite article should be regarded as a dialectal feature of Masoretic Hebrew as opposed to the Samaritan tradition, where this feature is very infrequent.

2.2. The inflection of the noun לילה

A second exemplary feature is the construct state of the noun לילה: While the Masoretic tradition has לַיִל, the construct state of לילה in SH is *līla* (Exod 12:42 – MT לַיִל שְׁמֵרִים, SP *līla sēmīrīm*).²⁶ Again, the difference between the two forms, לַיִל in the Masoretic text and *līla* in SH, cannot be

²⁵ The transcription of the Samaritan vocalization into Masoretic vocalization signs is for the sake of the comparison. The Samaritan reading has *kābarzal*.

²⁶ In SH, the absolute and the construct state of לילה are identical in spelling (לילה) and pronunciation (*līla*).

described in terms of language history, but clearly points to a dialectal diversity between the two traditions.²⁷

3. THE RELATION BETWEEN THE WRITTEN AND THE ORAL TRADITION OF SAMARITAN HEBREW

One of the key problems of the linguistic evaluation of SH seems to be the question of the relationship between the written and the oral transmission. As in many other cases, Ben-Hayyim and Macuch went here in almost opposite directions: Macuch's book attests a clear tendency to base the grammatical description of SH on the language as transmitted in the manuscripts. Ben-Hayyim, on the other hand, obviously favors the reading tradition as the authentic testimony of SH²⁸ and regards the written text merely as an archaic survival of an older linguistic stratum, dating back to the First Temple period:

"From the Hebrew of the First Temple period, only one literary source has been preserved among the Samaritans: the Torah as preserved in Samaritan Torah scrolls."²⁹

According to Ben-Hayyim, this older textual stratum was interpreted by the reading tradition in the context of a new linguistic environment – לשון עתיקה במציאות חדשה.³⁰

It seems, however, that neither of the two scholars take sufficient account of the facts. Macuch did not pay enough attention to the observation that the spelling in Samaritan manuscripts is to a high degree dependent on the reading tradition, as has been pointed out by Ben-Hayyim:

"שכן אין דומה הנוסח השומרוני לנוסח היהודי בצורת מסירתו. [...] מאות כתבי היד של הנוסח השומרוני הידועים נבדלים זה מזה בדרכי הכתיב הבדלים רבים [...]. לפיכך אתה מוצא חילופים

²⁷ For a similar situation in Mishnaic Hebrew as compared to Biblical Hebrew, see Moshe Bar-Asher, לשון חכמים, § 10-11.

²⁸ See especially his chapter "Material for the Grammar", in Ben-Hayyim, *A grammar*, 13-17.

²⁹ Ben-Hayyim, *A grammar*, 3.

³⁰ This is of course the title of a famous book written by Ben-Hayyim: לשון עתיקה במציאות חדשה: שיחות על בעיות בלשון העברית החיה (Jerusalem, 1953). A good example for this view is Ben-Hayyim's explanation of the emergence of the *nif'al*, see below.

בכתבי יד של הנוסח השומרונים בינם לבין עצמם בכתיב תבות [...] בעוד ההגייה היא לעולם אחת³¹[...]

Therefore, the text as transmitted in writing obviously has to be interpreted in light of the reading.

On the other hand, Ben-Hayyim and SH research in his footsteps treated the consonantal framework and the reading as two different linguistic corpora (one from the period of the First Temple, the other from the late Second Temple period), thus underestimating the high measure of homogeneity which exists between the reading tradition and the consonantal framework. Although thus neglected, however, this homogeneity between the two parts of the Samaritan tradition is a very prominent feature. Unlike the Masoretic tradition, in which differences between the oral and the written transmission are obvious,³² the Samaritan tradition appears to have harmonized the written and the oral transmission of the text of the Pentateuch to a high degree. This is apparent on different levels, as will be indicated by the following two examples:

—While the Masoretic text shows significant differences regarding the rules by which the application of the definite article is governed in the written consonantal framework as opposed to the vocalization, both parts of the Samaritan tradition are uniform in this respect.³³

—Both the consonantal framework of the Samaritan Pentateuch and its oral reading tradition are characterized by the same tendency to create a clear-cut linguistic distinction between the God of Israel, on the one side, and other gods or men, on the other. Thus, the word אלהים, when referring to the God of Israel, is always used in the Singular, but in the Plural, when referring to other gods.³⁴ The following examples may illustrate this tendency of the Samaritan Pentateuch against the

³¹ “The Samaritan text of the Torah is not similar to the Jewish text regarding the way of its tradition. [...] The hundreds of known manuscripts of the Samaritan 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 [...]” (Zeev Ben-Hayyim in his preface to the synoptic edition of the Samaritan and the Masoretic text of the Torah, prepared by Abraham and Ratzon Sadaka).

³² Clear examples are the differences between *Ketib* and *Qere*.

³³ See Schorch, *Determination*, 304–306.

³⁴ See Stefan Schorch, *Die (sogenannten) anti-polytheistischen Korrekturen im samaritanischen Pentateuch*, *Mitteilungen und Beiträge der Forschungsstelle Judentum, Theologische Fakultät Leipzig* 15/16 (1999), 4–21 (especially 15–17).

background of the respective original reading as preserved in the Masoretic text:

Gen 35:7 (MT): נגלו אליו האלהים

Gen 35:7 (SP): נגלה אליו האלהים

Exod 22:8 (MT): ירשיען אלהים

Exod 22:8 (SP): הירשיענן האלהים³⁵

Similarly, the Samaritan reading tradition makes a difference in the pronunciation of אדני “(my) Lord”: When referring to the God of Israel, it is *ādāni*, while *ādanni*, when referring to men.³⁶ Within the Masoretic tradition, distinctions like this are known from the vocalization (קִי יְהוָה *versus* קִי נִפְשָׁךְ), but not from the consonantal framework. Most obviously, therefore, this homogeneity of the oral and the written transmission is a feature which sets the Samaritan tradition apart from the Masoretic.

That the written and the oral tradition of the Samaritan Pentateuch should not be treated separately is supported by a further argument, extending to the date of origin of the consonantal framework of the Samaritan Torah, on the one hand, and of the reading tradition, on the other.

It is generally acknowledged that the final form of the written Samaritan Pentateuch was shaped and edited towards the end of the 2nd century BCE.³⁷ The main argument for this conclusion is the comparison with Biblical manuscripts found in the Judean Desert: The Samaritan Pentateuch shares the same editorial tendencies like biblical manuscripts from Qumran from the end of the 2nd century BCE. Before and after that very period, different editorial tendencies were at work, and therefore the Samaritan Pentateuch must have undergone its final editing at that time. This editorial process mainly consisted of two features:

—The literary harmonization of parallel passages,³⁸ which means that differences between parallel passages in the Book of Deuteronomy and the former books of the Pentateuch, as e.g. in the Ten commandments, have been leveled out.

mentioned textual features of the Samaritan Pentateuch, this view is obviously problematic, since, according to all our knowledge about the textual character of the pre-Samaritan texts and the

³⁵ The Samaritan reading has *yaršīyinnu*, being the Samaritan equivalent to ירשיענן.

³⁶ See Schorch, *Die (sogenannten) anti-polytheistischen Korrekturen*, 18.

³⁷ See Esther Eshel, Hanan Eshel, *Dating the Samaritan Pentateuch's compilation in light of the Qumran biblical scrolls*, in Shalom M. Paul, Robert A. Kraft, Lawrence H. Schiffman and Weston W. Fields (ed.), *Emanuel: Studies in Hebrew Bible, Septuagint and Dead Sea Scrolls in Honor of Emanuel Tov* (Leiden, 2003), 215–240 (especially 239–240).

³⁸ See Eshel, *Dating the Samaritan Pentateuch's compilation*, 238–240.

—Linguistic harmonization, adaptations and updating.³⁹ With regard to the latter, the text of the Samaritan Pentateuch and its pre-Samaritan predecessors resemble phenomena well observable in 1QIsa^a,⁴⁰ although the scribe of 1QIsa^a seems to have been much more careless in matters of orthography than it is observable in the (pre-)Samaritan tradition.

The conclusion to be drawn from these observations is that the consonantal framework of the Samaritan Pentateuch is in essence a product of the late 2nd century BCE. It not only was edited at that time, but due to the editing principles prevalent in the Samaritan text, especially due to its strong tendency towards linguistic updating, it reflects the language of the time of its editing to a large extent. Thus, it cannot be regarded as a testimony of the First temple period, as Ben-Hayyim did,⁴¹ although most of its texts seem to have originated at that time.

As to the reading tradition of the Samaritan Pentateuch, its emergence and development into a fixed set of reading rules, including vocalization, stress, interpunction and phonetic realization, this should be dated towards the end of the 2nd century BCE. This has been demonstrated in a comprehensive text-historical analysis of the Samaritan reading tradition and its context.⁴²

Therefore, the emergence of the Samaritan reading tradition dates more or less to the same time as the editing of the written framework of the Samaritan Pentateuch. Moreover, due to the way the editing of the Samaritan Pentateuch has been carried out, both, the written framework as well as the reading tradition of the Samaritan Pentateuch, should be expected to reflect more or less the same language, i.e. the same stage in terms of history and dialectology of the Hebrew language.

On account of these evidence the two parts of the Samaritan tradition—the oral and the written part of tradition—should not be treated separately but should be regarded as one linguistic corpus only, dating to the late 2nd century BCE.

³⁹ See Emanuel Tov, *Textual Criticism of the Hebrew Bible* (Minneapolis, 1992), 89–97.

⁴⁰ See Tov, *Textual Criticism*, 91.

⁴¹ See above.

⁴² See Stefan Schorch, *Die Vokale des Gesetzes: Die samaritanische Lesetradition als Textzeugin der Tora. Band 1: Genesis*, BZAW 339 (Berlin, New York, 2004), 39–61.

4. SH AND THE PHONETICS OF LATE SECOND TEMPLE HEBREW

Due to the above described characteristics of the bi-partite Samaritan tradition, linguistic phenomena apparently deviating from this homogeneity would be an extraordinary feature and should be very carefully analyzed.

4.1. *The assimilation of ʔ in the hitpaʕel*

Maybe the most prominent example is the occurrence of what has been described by Ben-Hayyim in the footprints of the medieval Samaritan grammarians as a *nifʕal* with geminated second radical (= *nifʕal^b*), e.g.:

timmakkar (MT: תַּמְקַר; Lev 25:23)

The emergence of these SH forms has been explained by Ben-Hayyim as the interpretation of older forms transmitted in the consonantal framework within the linguistic context of the late Second Temple period:

According to Ben-Hayyim, in the Hebrew dialect used by the scribes of the pre-Samaritan and Samaritan tradition (and in late Second Temple Hebrew in general⁴³), numerous verbs originally used in the *qal* came to be used in the *piʕel*. On the other hand, the *hitpaʕel* replaced the *puʕal* as the regular passive of the *piʕel*. In many cases, therefore, the old opposition of active *qal* vs. passive *nifʕal* had been replaced by the opposition *piʕel* vs. *hitpaʕel*. Ben-Hayyim argues that the *nifʕal^b* appears in places where readers of the late Second Temple period were confronted with passive verbal forms, which were *nifʕal*, according to the consonantal framework, but should have been *hitpaʕel*, according to the language the readers were familiar with. In order to preserve the written text, on the one hand, and to be in line with their Hebrew dialect, on the other, the *nifʕal^b* arose as a kind of a blend.⁴⁴

In light of the aforementioned textual features of the Samaritan Pentateuch, this view is obviously problematic, since, according to all our knowledge about the textual character of the pre-Samaritan texts and the Samaritan Pentateuch, the copyists would have changed the written text

⁴³ See Qimron, *The Hebrew of the Dead Sea Scrolls*, 49.

⁴⁴ See Ben-Hayyim, *A grammar*, 222f.

in line with what they read, i.e. we could expect them writing an *hitpa^cel* instead of the *nif^cal*.

And indeed, the Samaritan scribes *did* change some of the verbal forms in question into the *hitpa^cel*. Thus, e.g., Masoretic text in Gen 45:24 reads אל תרגזו בדרך, while the Samaritan text has תתרגזו [*tūtraggāzu*].⁴⁵ In Exod 15:14, however, the same verb רגז appears in the Samaritan text in *nif^cal^b* as against the Masoretic *nif^cal*:

Gen 45:24 (MT): אל תרגזו בדרך

Gen 45:24 (SP): אל תתרגזו בדרך [*tūtraggāzu*]

Exod 15:14 (MT): שמעו עמים וירגזו

Exod 15:14 (SP): שמעו עמים וירגזו [*wyiraggāzu*]

Thus, the same verb is once applied in the *hitpa^cel*, and once in *nif^cal^b*, without any difference in meaning.⁴⁶

This phenomenon of *hitpa^cel* and *nif^cal^b*-forms freely interchanging is well observable with regard to other verbs as well: Out of a total of 31 verbs applied in the Samaritan reading tradition in the *nif^cal^b*, nine are attested in the *hitpa^cel* as well:⁴⁷

בר"ך – *yibbārrāk* (Gen 48:20) vs. *wēbbārrāk* (Deut 29:18)

כס"י – *tikkassi* (Deut 22:12) vs. *witkassi* (Gen 24:65)

מכ"ר – *yimmakkār* (Lev 25:15) vs. *wēmmakkartimma* (Deut 28:68)

נח"ל – *yin'nālu* (Num 18:23) vs. *yitnālu* (Num 26:55)

נח"ם – *wyin'nām* (Gen 6:6) vs. *wyit'nām* (Deut 32:36)

נצ"ל – *yinnāššāl* (Deut 23:16) vs. *wyitnāššālu* (Exod 33:6)

ענ"י – *tiyyanna* (Lev 23:29) vs. *wētānni* (Gen 16:9)

קד"ש – *wyiqqāddāšu* (Num 17:3) vs. *yitqāddāšu* (Exod 19:22)

רגז – *wyiraggāzu* (Exod 15:14) vs. *tūtraggāzu* (Gen 45:24)

Due to the harmonizing tendencies prevalent in the Samaritan Pentateuch, the existence of these parallel forms seems astonishing: How can it be that the same tradition which otherwise has a very strong tendency towards homogenization retains these parallel forms?

⁴⁵ A further reference for the interchange between a verbal form in the *qal* (MT) and a verbal form in the *hitpa^cel* (SP) is found in Num 26:55 (MT יתחלו vs. SP יתחלו [*yitnālu*]). Interchanges between *nif^cal* (MT) and *hitpa^cel* (SP) are attested in Num 21:27 (MT ותכנן vs. SP ותכנן [*witkinnam*]) and Num 24:7 (MT ותבש vs. [*witnāššā*]).

⁴⁶ There are no further instances of neither *hitpa^cel* nor *nif^cal* in the text of the Pentateuch.

⁴⁷ The references were collected from the concordance compiled by Ben-Hayyim, *LOT IV*, 3–310.

The most probable answer seems to be that at the time when the Samaritan reading tradition emerged, the two sets of forms were homophone. The forms of *nif^cal^b* and *hitpa^cel* quoted above must have been pronounced in the same way, i.e. the *ṣ* of the *hitpa^cel* was totally assimilated to the first consonant of the root, as it was in Palestinian Aramaic.⁴⁸ Thus, the forms in which the *ṣ* appears in writing represent nothing else than a historical spelling. As has already been mentioned, the Samaritan tradition has no consistent orthography,⁴⁹ and thus the two spellings simply existed forth in writing one along with the other.

Obviously, the assumption that the *ṣ* of the *hitpa^cel* is totally assimilated to the first root consonant is not confirmed by the contemporary pronunciation of SH. Therefore, we should ask when and why the original pronunciation was abandoned and the *ṣ* was re-introduced in pronunciation as [ʔ].

As is well known, the consonantal inventory of SH underwent a change somewhere after the 15th century BCE. Prior to that date, the consonants *ḥpdt* were pronounced in a twofold way—plosive or fricative—similarly to the *begadkephat*-consonants in Masoretic Hebrew. This twofold realization, however, was abandoned, and the fricative pronunciation disappeared.⁵⁰ Most probably, in the course of this process the historical [ʔ] of the *hitpa^cel* was reintroduced in pronunciation as well, wherever it was retained in the consonantal framework of the Samaritan Pentateuch.

Thus, it seems to me that the parallel existence of *nif^cal^b* forms and of *hitpa^cel* forms in the consonantal framework of the Samaritan Pentateuch is a clear indicator that the [ʔ] of the *hitpa^cel* was assimilated to the first root consonant in spoken SH.⁵¹

4.2. *The pronunciation of Nun paragogicum*

A further important point where there appears to be an inhomogeneity in the Samaritan tradition is the parallel existence of imperfect forms with and without the so-called *Nun paragogicum* (i.e. *yiqtelun*). Scholars usually

⁴⁸ See Ben-Hayyim, *A grammar*, 118.

⁴⁹ See above.

⁵⁰ See Ben-Hayyim, *A grammar*, 30-34.

⁵¹ This view was already expressed by Ben-Hayyim, although he does not seem to have thought of the evidence quoted above, see his *A grammar*, 87.

claim that the Samaritan Pentateuch less often attests the long forms than the Masoretic text does.⁵² However, this is not the case since, in the light of a detailed comparison, a different scheme appears, revealing an almost equally widespread use in both versions, pointing even to a slight plus on the side of the Samaritan Pentateuch (MT: 99; SP: 106). It seems, that this scheme sets SH apart from both the Hebrew in the non-biblical scrolls from Qumran as well as from Mishnaic Hebrew.

What is our focus here, however, is the observation, that the two forms, with and without *Nun paragogicum*, exist side by side in the Samaritan Pentateuch, without any difference in meaning.⁵³ Again, according to the textual principles governing the editing of the Samaritan Pentateuch we would have expected that the pre-Samaritan or Samaritan scribes unified the use of the written forms. Since they did not, we should conclude that there was no difference in reading between the two.

This conclusion is well in line with Hebrew and Aramaic documents from Qumran along with further Palestinian sources which demonstrate that the forms with and without final *Nun* after vowel were often interchangeable. In accordance with a suggestion by Ben-Hayyim we may suppose that this interchangeability goes back to the nasalization of long vowels in final syllables.⁵⁴ It seems thus that the original SH pronunciation was characterized by the nasalization of long vowels in final syllables.

5. CONCLUSION

SH, as it is heard in the reading of the Torah among the Samaritan community until our days, originates in the late Second Temple period and was the language spoken among the (proto-)Samaritans in the late

⁵² See Qimron, *The Hebrew of the Dead Sea Scrolls*, 45.

⁵³ W. Randall Garr expressed the view that the use of paragogic *nun* in Biblical Hebrew was a rhetorical device, see his "The paragogic *nun* in rhetorical perspective", in Steven Fassberg, Avi Hurvitz (ed.), *Biblical Hebrew in its Northwest Semitic setting: Typological and historical perspectives* (Jerusalem, Winona Lake, 2006), 65–74. For the comparison of the use of paragogic forms in the MT respectively the SP, this question seems less important.

⁵⁴ Kutscher's suggestion that a nasal was regularly added to a vowel in an originally open final syllable is not supported by Samaritan Hebrew, since there are no other examples for the addition of a nasal. For references, see Qimron, *The Hebrew of the Dead Sea Scrolls*, 27.

second century BCE. SH is a Hebrew dialect of its own, distinct from both the Hebrew dialect as preserved in Tiberian Hebrew pronunciation of the Bible and from Mishnaic Hebrew. Although, in general, SH is very well preserved in the Samaritan reading tradition, some of the characteristics of the ancient pronunciation did not survive and have to be reconstructed, among them most prominently the total assimilation of [t̪] in the t-stem (*hitpa^ʿel*) and the nasalization of long vowels in final syllables.