Stefan Schorch, ed.

*The Samaritan Pentateuch: Leviticus*


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Stefan Schorch has now taken on the task of creating a new critical edition. It will record in one place all the manuscript evidence for the Samaritan Pentateuch, as well as its variants from other manuscript traditions. *Leviticus* is the first volume to be published in this new critical edition. As Schorch makes clear in the preface, these volumes are necessarily the product of a team effort. In the case of this volume, Evelyn Burkhardt and Ramona Fändrich played the major role in “the assessment of large parts of the Samaritan-Hebrew manuscript tradition” (xiii).
This volume contains an introduction in Hebrew, German, and English to the whole project. It describes the twenty-four extant manuscripts of the Samaritan Pentateuch dating between the twelfth and fourteenth centuries. That is followed by a description of each of the five apparatuses of this critical addition that explains their contents and the abbreviations they use. The introduction concludes with a list of abbreviations and a bibliography.

The main text of this critical edition reproduces the oldest complete manuscript of the Samaritan Pentateuch, MS Dublin, Chester Beatty Library 751, which was copied in 1225 CE. The text is printed here in unpointed Hebrew square letter. Below the text on every page is a list of all the Samaritan manuscripts extant for that passage.

Five apparatuses occupy the bottom of each page. The first documents variant readings between the Samaritan manuscripts. The second apparatus lists variants that indicate a different Hebrew Vorlage behind the Samaritan translations of the Pentateuch into Aramaic (Targumim) from the first ten centuries and into Arabic in the eleventh century. This evidence is important since the manuscripts of these translations antedate the extant Hebrew manuscripts of the Samaritan Pentateuch. The third lists variant vocalization marks in the manuscripts of the Samaritan Pentateuch. The fourth apparatus will be the first that many biblical scholars consult: it lists the differences between the Samaritan Pentateuch and the MT that have parallels in the Qumran scrolls, the Septuagint, or the Syriac Peshitta. The fifth and final apparatus lists variants in the Samaritan manuscripts’ punctuation marks. (This is the order in which the apparatuses appear in the critical edition. The introduction’s description of them reverses the order and numbering of Apparatuses 3 and 4.) Together the five apparatuses provide a comprehensive summary of all the textual data that can be gleaned from the manuscripts of the Samaritan Pentateuch themselves and from comparisons of them with other textual traditions.

But there is more. Notes appear beside the main text on the inside margins to indicate where the Samaritans’ oral recitation tradition offers a different vocalization than MT. The pronunciation is indicated by transliteration both into Roman letters and into Hebrew square-letter with Tiberian pointing. This information is based on Ze’ev Ben-Hayyim’s phonemic transcription published in 1977. The presentation of this information here reflects Schorch’s belief that the Samaritan oral tradition offers a significant alternative tradition of vocalization to that of the Tiberian Masoretes.¹

The result is an excellent resource for text-critical research on the Leviticus and, eventually, for the whole Pentateuch. Schorch’s team makes available to us the complete manuscript evidence from Samaritan Torahs and their relationship with the other major manuscript traditions of the Pentateuch.

Now, the effects of this critical edition may be felt less in the study of Leviticus than of other pentateuchal books because Leviticus’s text was more consistently reproduced than almost any other book in the Hebrew Bible. However, this critical edition has nevertheless helped me considerably in evaluating the variants that do appear in this book.

Let me give one example from Lev 15:3, where the Samaritan Pentateuch (SP) and the Septuagint Greek (LXX) contain an unusually long plus. BHS noted the addition but misstated its extent. The third apparatus in this book states it accurately and also provides the Greek text, which it rightly describes as equivalent but not quite the same as SP. It also provides a fragmentary reading from the Qumran scroll, 11QpaleoLevᵃ, that supports the SP and LXX and reading (but Schorch fails to include two letters that support the LXX rather than the SP version). The first apparatus shows no significant differences among the twenty Samaritan manuscripts extant for this verse, and the second shows support from the Samaritan Targumim and Arabic translations. This critical edition of the Samaritan Pentateuch made this evidence readily available to support my decision to read the longer text as original and regard MT here as defective due to homoioteleuton.

This new critical edition of the Samaritan Pentateuch is a wonderful addition to the text critic’s toolbox. I look forward to the publication of the other volumes.