STUDIES IN SAMARITAN SCRIBAL PRACTICES AND MANUSCRIPT HISTORY: III. COLUMNAR WRITING AND THE SAMARITAN MASSORAH

by Alan D. CROWN, M.A., Ph.D.

DEPARTMENT OF SEMITIC STUDIES, UNIVERSITY OF SYDNEY

The discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls and the identification amongst them of different Pentateuch text types has led to a resurgence of interest in the Samaritan Pentateuch and its value as a witness to the state of the text in the early pre-Christian eras. The current tendency is to attribute the *stabilization* of the Samaritan text type to the period from the second century A.D. onwards[1] but the value of the text as a witness in the pre-Christian era is not yet subject to a consensus of opinion[2].

So far, the discussion has focused on the text of the Samaritan Pentateuch and its relationship to that found in the Hebrew Massoretic version and in the Septuagint versions. The structure of the Pentateuch, that is, in the broadest sense of the term, the Samaritan Massorah, the form and layout of the Pentateuch in which the words are presented to the reader, has not been found to be a suitable object of study nor, consequently, a source of evidence in the prime discussion. Moses Gaster[3] drew attention to the parallels between the section structures of the Samaritan Pentateuch and the *petuhot* and *setumot* in the Jewish Massoretic text and to the lection arrangement in *parashiyot*. However, his words were by way of preface to a study of the lections read by the Samaritans and they seem to have been ignored.

B.K. Waltke seems to summarise a widely-held view in his doctoral thesis in which he wrote: "It is obvious that no school of Massoretes arose among the Samaritans".[4] In clear contrast

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[1] Cf. B.K. Waltke, *Prolegomenon to the Samaritan Pentateuch* (hereafter PSP), Harvard Ph.D. thesis, 1965, especially pp. 86 and 132.

[2] Ibid., Introduction, pp. 1-41, for a discussion of contemporary and older views.

[3] Cf. M. Gaster, "The Biblical Lessons: A Chapter in Biblical Archaeology", *Studies and Texts*, i 503-600.

[4] *PSP*, p. 65. The context should be noted. "According to Gesenius every one of these manuscripts is transcribed less carefully than the Hebrew ones. This is the united testimony of almost all who work with Samaritan manuscripts. After

Z. Ben Hayyim observed:[5] "We can glimpse an independent scientific activity of early Samaritan Massoretes and grammarians which was by no means confined to the point discussed here", with which statement he noted his change of mind on this question.

Both these opposing views were propounded after detailed scrutinies of the evidence which, in Waltke's case, included recourse to a computer survey of the text of the Samaritan Pentateuch and a thorough appraisal of the work of his predecessors and, in Ben Hayyim's case, an opinion resulting from a life-long accumulation of evidence followed by intensive study of it. Waltke's conclusions seem to have been strengthened by the fact that in the earliest of the Samaritan Pentateuch manuscripts available to him he could see no signs of ongoing Massoretic activity, at least as far as textual correction is concerned. It is Ben Hayyim's view that the system of representing the vowels in Samaritan sacred texts developed after a period of Massoretic activity which followed its own line of development from a common ancestry with the Jewish traditions.[6] Ben Hayyim suggested that the creative period of the Massorah of the Samaritans was in the era when they used Aramaic as their spoken language, a conclusion for which support might be adduced from other sources. Written evidence for establishing a history of Samaritan literature is not abundant for the earlier periods, but it is clear enough that by the tenth century Aramaic had ceased to be the vernacular[7] and, while it remained the language of the liturgy, the concerns of the commentators and translators from the

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an examination of *all* [my italics] the variants in the book of Exodus it is obvious that no school of Massoretes arose among the Samaritans".

[5] Z. Ben Hayyim, "The Samaritan Vowel System and its Graphic Representation", *Archiv Orientalni*, xxii (1954), 515-530 (at p. 530).

[6] Ibid., see also p. 526. For further discussion see his *Ivrit Ve'Aramit Nusach Shomron*, 6 volumes, Jerusalem, 1957-1977 (hereafter *INS*).

[7] Cf. A.E. Cowley, *The Samaritan Liturgy* (hereafter *SL*) (Oxford, 1909), ii. p. xxxiv, and A. Loewenstamm, "The Samaritans", *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, p. 752. Cowley's view is largely reinforced and substantiated by the conclusions of A. Tal in his work on the new edition of the Samaritan Targum. A convenient summary of these views is to be found in his "Towards a Critical Edition of the Samaritan Targum of the Pentateuch", *Aleph Beth Samaritan News*, n°. 255, p. 20 (2.3.1980) or see his *Samaritan Targum of the Torah, A Critical Edition*, vol. 3 (Tel Aviv, 1983). Tal's work should be read in conjunction with Haseeb Shehadeh, *The Arabic Translation of the Samaritan Pentateuch, Prolegomena to a Critical Edition* (Jerusalem, Ph.D.) 1977 (Sold by Mayer, Jerusalem).

eleventh century onwards were now with the Arabic edition of the Samaritan Pentateuch, which was based on Abu'l Hasan Haṣuri's translation from the Hebrew.[8] The creative period of the Samaritan Massoretes would seem to have ended by the time any of our extant manuscripts was written. We have only two Massoretic tracts for the Samaritan Pentateuch, the works of Ibn Dartha and Ibrahim al Ayyah,[9] and they are repetitive and retrospective rather than creative and innovative.

One factor which has not yet been considered is whether there were substantial breaks in Samaritan Massoretic activity. We are not informed whether the Samaritans followed the Jewish tradition of writing mainly scrolls of the Pentateuch in the early centuries of the first millennium A.D.,[10] or whether they followed the Septuagint tradition of codex writing. The former course might have encouraged a break in Massoretic activity with plagiarism of the Jewish traditions in the earlier part of the first millennium A.D. and a resumption of some independent activity later. The evidence on this point is ambiguous.

A fundamental problem is that, for our studies of the structural features of the Samaritan Massorah—such as the arrangement of the poetic passages, the number and location of the open and closed sections, the marking of the centre point of the *Torah*, the location of minor and major *tashqilim*, the counting of verses and letters and the like,—we are dependent upon manuscripts which were copied when there was no visible *active* Massoretic tradition. It is possible that there was an oral Massoretic tradition passed down from scribe to scribe inside the scribal families, or even that

[8] *PSP*, p. 81 f., introduces a discussion of the literature to 1965. This discussion is superseded by Shehadeh's fine and exhaustive work. There is a convenient English summary at the end of volume 1 of the thesis. The thesis would indicate that existing notions of the origin of the Samaritan Arabic translation of the Pentateuch must be modified as Saʿadyah's version played little part in the creation of the Old Samaritan translation of the Pentateuch, though it may have been drawn on for a mixed type of text after the main revision by Abu Said. The summary and the body of the thesis differ slightly in discussing the mixed type of text.

[9] *INS*, pp. 305 ff. In his publication of the Treatise of Ibn Dartha on the rules of reading, reference is made (pp. 318-319) to the fixing of some of the rules in Ashkelon (coastal Diaspora) in 534 H = A.D. 1139-1140. The reference would seem to be to an evaluation rather than an establishment of the rules.

[10] Cf. J. Finegan, *Encountering New Testament Manuscripts* (hereafter *NTM*) (London, 1975), pp. 27-29.

different scribal centres had their own inner traditions. If these oral traditions existed we have, as yet, no proof of them, and our study of manuscripts from specified schools is not yet sufficiently advanced to enable us to describe any governing local Massoretic traditions, though, doubtless, that day will come. Appearances at present suggest that scribes copied the forms of the manuscripts which they inherited without necessarily understanding that they were transmitting a specialised Samaritan Massoretic tradition. As observed above, there is a school of thought which would deny even that cautious statement. However, we are fortunate that the material with which we work is visual and some, at least, goes back to the very beginning of the current millennium and must be based on older copies, which would carry us back further still.[11] In this we are far more fortunate than those who have been investigating the Samaritan traditions of cantillation. They, too, have come to the conclusion that there was once an active Samaritan Massoretic tradition which was later lost. They have argued in these terms: "The inescapable conclusion would be that a group of people, an archaic people, after having reached a sophisticated musical notation (neumes) reverted to an earlier stage of musical notation, directly deriving from chieronomy".[12] Because of the oral nature of that material the work on cantillation must finish with the hypothesis with which this study begins, namely that there was an active Massoretic tradition which has left traces which can be recovered and which will allow us to reconstruct some elements of the Samaritan Massorah. One most important element of that Massorah, in the view of the present writer, an element which may cast light on the active period of that Massorah, is the technique of 'columnar writing'. It may also have some light to shed on the age of the sentence division of the Pentateuch.

In his first catalogue of the manuscripts in the John Rylands

[11] This point will become more obvious from the discussion below, where it is shown that practices described are conservative rather than innovative.

[12] Cf. Joanna Spector, "The Significance of the Samaritan Neumes", *Studia Musicologia Academaiae Scientiarum Hungaricae*, vii (1965), 141-152. Spector was told that the musical meaning of the *sidre miqrata* died with one of the High Priests in the nineteenth century. This would imply that the tradition had been maintained accurately after the true priestly line died out in the seventeenth century. We may suspect that this was the latest point at which the break in the musical tradition occurred. See especially p. 152.

University Library,[13] Robertson described the columnar arrange-
ment of words, letters or passages which are to be found in
Samaritan Pentateuch manuscripts. This columnar effect is im-
portant, not only for the reasons suggested above, but because it
appears to have been a factor in destroying credibility in a
Samaritan Massoretic tradition. Because it seems to be so varied
from manuscript to manuscript, anything but a prolonged and
detailed study over years across a wide range of manuscripts
would give the impression that there were no canons of copying in
Samaritan manuscripts and that every scribe did what he wanted
with the text. It is worth quoting Robertson's description directly,
not only for the sake of its ready intelligibility but also so that we
may appreciate the reasons which he adduced for the origins of
this phenomenon.

Robertson wrote: "The Samaritan calligraphers are sufficiently
ingenious to combine the use of blanks with a clever distribution
of letters in order to produce a highly ornamental effect. Thus, in
their more ornate manuscripts, they took pains to ensure that a
letter or group of letters should, where possible, be written directly
under the same letter or group of letters occurring in the line
above. Thus, e.g., an 'aleph or mishpaḥat when they chanced to be
found in suitable places in consecutive lines [my italics]. In portions
of texts accompanied by genealogical lists, etc., this led to quite
considerable numbers of the same letters and words being written
under each other in a number of consecutive lines, producing the
effect of columns of the same letter. This columnar arrangement
was often secured by separating at will the letters of words in the
middles of lines. Even the first letter of a line might be transposed
to second place, leaving the first space unoccupied".[14]

Robertson's view, then, was that columnar writing was a scribal
art-form which could be practised at will or by chance. This was a
view that was shared by others, who had anticipated him to some
extent,[15] but, by and large, the phenomenon has been ignored or

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[13] E. Robertson, *Catalogue of the Samaritan Manuscripts in the John Rylands
Library at Manchester*, vol. 1 (1938) (hereafter *CJRL* 1).

[14] Ibid., Introduction, p. xx.

[15] Cf. W. Scott Watson, "A Critical Copy of the Samaritan Pentateuch
Written in A.D. 1232", *Hebraica*, ix (1893), 216-225. Cf. also J.L. Bargès, *Notices
sur deux fragments d'un Pentateuque Hébreu-Samaritain* (Paris, 1865), pp. 5-6.
Bargès restricted his observations to description rather than to evaluation.

RYLANDS SAM. MS. 1, f. 471r.
(slightly reduced)

its occurrence has been noted *en passant* but with little attempt at discussion. Neither Von Gall[16] nor the Tsedaqas[17] present any

[16] A.F. von Gall, *Der hebräische Pentateuch der Samaritaner*, Giessen, 1918 (hereafter *HPS*).

[17] A. and R. Tsedaqa, *Jewish and Samaritan Versions of the Pentateuch*, 5 vols., Jerusalem and Tel Aviv, 1964. The addition of the Barberini Triglot with supplementary pages from the B.L. Triglot, Or. 7562 does not come into

trace of this feature in their editions of the Samaritan Pentateuch, although they have taken note of other Massoretic features such as the bi-columnar layout of Exodus 15 and Deuteronomy 32 (*Haazinu*) and of the Balaam oracles in Numbers. This omission, and general scholarly reticence on the subject, would incline us to the view that the majority of scholars accept the argument that the columnar effect in Samaritan Pentateuch writing is trivial—a matter of calligraphic artistry—and beyond the concern of the serious student of the Samaritan Pentateuch. Since Tsedaqa is a Samaritan, the omission of the technique from his edition would appear to verify the conclusion that any dependence of this technique on a Massoretic tradition is not recognised by contemporary Samaritans. Such an attitude is more easily understood when one recognises that the same type of columnar writing has been extrapolated from the writing of Pentateuchs to the writing of liturgical works where it could have no such Massoretic background.[18]

Despite Robertson's opinion, however, there are good reasons for believing that the technique of columnar writing had its origins in a Massoretic tradition—if not that of the Samaritans alone, at least in one that the Samaritans adopted (see below note 62). It only became a matter of calligraphic artistry from about the thirteenth century A.D. Though we have few manuscripts from before that era, and some show signs of the *ad hoc* artistic tradition of later centuries (see below), they also indicate their genuine grounding in a Massoretic tradition. As the purposes and reasons which underlay columnar writing were lost, its currency was not restricted to the specified places in the Pentateuch where tradition dictated its use, but the technique spread until it was used in every part of the Pentateuch manuscript and even in other Samaritan literature. This very diversity of usage has made scrutiny difficult and tedious.

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consideration here, since that edition was a facsimile edition and they had no control over its format other than the selection of pages from one manuscript or another. In the facsimile it is very clear that columnar writing appears. The Triglot manuscripts are an interesting indication of the way in which the Samaritan scribes of the early triglots (fourteenth century) viewed columnar writing. See I. Tsedaqa, *Sefer Hatorah* (*Barberini 1 and Or. 7562*), Holon, 1967.

[18] E.g., Keble Sam. MS. 72. I have seen the same arrangement in many Samaritan liturgical manuscripts.

If we may be permitted to anticipate a little, it might be reasonable to find an alternative description for the columnar appearance of the technique under discussion from the Greek uncial codices of the New Testament. Despite later Samaritan scribal developments in technique, it seems to have begun as a form of setting down a sense unit in one line beneath a sense unit of similar import and length. In other words, we are dealing with a form of colometry[19] in which each line is a form of colon or comma.[20] Whether there was any sense among Samaritan scribes, of true "stichometry" with a fixed number of letters per stichos, has yet to be determined.[21] Since we find the identical technique in at least one uncial manuscript in identical passages (see below), we should call the technique colometry.

To begin the investigation of colometry in Samaritan Pentateuch manuscripts we should recall conclusions reached previously in other studies of Samaritan manuscripts and note that there were centres of scribal activity each of which had its own calligraphic style and perhaps its own traditions of copying.[22] However, Samaritan manuscripts did not remain in the centre in which they were written. Manuscripts written in Damascus have scholia which show that they were transported to and sold in the Egyptian Diaspora[23] and manuscripts written in the coastal Diaspora found their way to Nablus. These movements and the recorded migration of scribes from centre to centre probably caused the blending of traditions. As far as is possible, not only should we consider manuscript families separately, but we should also consider the several manuscripts of each individual scribe separately to see if we can establish common patterns. If we find that there are common features between the scribal centres in all the early manuscripts, then we are entitled to consider these common features as representing a common Samaritan Massoretic source.

[19] *NTM*, p. 39 ff. Finegan provides a useful summary of the researches of Rendel-Harris.

[20] These terms are used not in the formal sense of a number of syllables but in the sense of arrangement in units of meaning.

[21] *NTM*, loc. cit. I have made no attempt to undertake a letter or syllable count in any of the colons. The manuscripts are so remote from their active Massoretic period that such a count would be difficult and not too meaningful.

[22] See my *Samaritan Majuscule Palaeography: Eleventh to Twentieth Century*, Manchester, 1978, reprinted from *Bulletin*, lx (1977-78) and *Bulletin*, lxi (1978-79), p. 15f. (hereafter SMP).

[23] The scholia are conveniently found in the introduction to *HPS*.

The first centre of scribal activity we must identify is Nablus, the principal city of the Samaritans, where the tradition of copying the *Torah* must have been continuous from no later than the second century B.C. Other studies[24] have shown us that the Nablus traditions among Samaritan scribes were the most resistant to changes, for in that town the Samaritans were often a majority, or at least a not insubstantial minority, and were rather conservative in their activities. It is from Nablus that we draw on the oldest Samaritan Pentateuch codex utilised in this study, namely Cambridge Add. Sam. MS. 1846, which was written not long before A.D. 1149.[25]

The second centre of manuscript production was the coastal Diaspora town of Serifin and its related centre of Jabneh,[26] where members of the Nuna family[27] wrote manuscripts which are important for this study, for they include several by the one scribe, Abi Berachatah b. Ab Sasson, which allows us to compare the writing of one scribe to see just how *ad hoc* this colometry was. Of Abi Berachatah's work we have compared Rylands Sam. MS. 1 of A.D. 1211, Chester Beatty MS. 751 of A.D. 1225, Nablus MS. 10 of A.D. 1197, and Cambridge Add. Sam. MS.714 of A.D. 1220. While more of his manuscripts are extant, this is a sufficient sample to show the scribe at work from his 10th to his 40th Pentateuch.[28] In addition, we are fortunate that we have access to other earlier coastal manuscripts. The first of these is Cambridge Add. Sam. MS. 713 which we now can prove to have been written within a decade of A.D. 1167. The second is a section of a *Torah* scroll, written by a member of the Nuna family, Salamah b. Abraham b. Joseph, namely Spiro MS. Katava Kadisha,[29] written in A.D. 1167. This allows us to compare a scroll with codexes to see if the scroll contains colometry. We can also compare the Spiro scroll with the published plates of the Abisha scroll to ascertain if the results correlate, as they both contain the same sections.

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[24] See my *Samaritan Minuscule Palaeography*, Manchester, 1981 (reprinted from *Bulletin*, lxiii 1980-81), 349 (hereafter SMinP).

[25] *SMP*, p. 30.

[26] On this point see N° 2 in this series.

[27] Ibid.

[28] Ibid.

[29] This was previously known as Sassoon MS. 735. I am grateful to the Spiro family for access to a complete photo-copy of the text and for their generosity in allowing me to examine the scroll itself.

The third centre with its own distinctive calligraphic genre and manuscript tradition was Damascus, where there was a flourishing Samaritan community until the sixteenth century. There is one group of fourteenth-century Damascus manuscripts which is invaluable in helping us to clarify the question of colometry and its origins.

The fourth scribal centre was in Egypt. We have little, if anything, that is certainly of the early Egyptian genre, but from the fifteenth century we have eight manuscripts of a member of the Munis family, 'Afif b. Ṣadaqa b. Jacob b. Ṣadaqa b. Ab Ḥasda b. 'Abd Jahweh, two of whose manuscripts are found conveniently together in the Chamberlain Warren collection at Michigan State University. This group allows us to consider manuscripts from the spread of the Samaritan scribal traditions, though it is necessary to be especially cautious with manuscripts of the Egyptian Diaspora, for they are so late.

The writing of manuscripts in columns falls into true colometry, of which more will be said later, and a type which is not really colometry but an arrangement of the text so that like letter falls beneath like letter, especially in respect of the most common letters, *vav*, the copular, and *lamed*. This form of columnar writing has no relation to the length of the sentence and its structure and integrity, whereas colometry has. In those passages which reflect the technique of colometry, like word is written beneath like word and usually the line represents a full sentence. There is normally, in the colometry sequence, a full stop at the end of each line; i.e. each line is a full sentence. The colometry—the arrangement in colons— is directly related to the sense unity of the sentence and does no violence to that sense unity. On the contrary, the colometry may well make it easier for the reader to grasp and maintain the meaning of sentences written in this fashion.[30] On the other hand, where individual letter is written beneath individual letter, especially in the case of *lamed* and *vav*, words and sentences are broken for the sake of the calligraphic artistry and there is no clear relationship between sense units and layout. In fact, the division of words for the sake of calligraphic artistry may well be destructive of meaning and make it hard to understand what a text is attempting to say. Two examples present themselves to demonstrate these points.

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[30] See below for further discussion of this point.

Leiden Or. MS. 6, a Pentateuch written in Damascus in A.D. 1350[31], is probably the manuscript which carries the non-colometry type of symmetrical writing to the greatest extreme of any of the manuscripts known to the writer. The scribe has preferred to arrange his symmetrical arrangement on *vav* with only occasional reference to *lamed* as a source of symmetry. One

Gen. 48:14ff
229-230

Gen 48:17ff
230-231

Gen. 48:21ff
231-232

Gen. 49:1ff
232-233
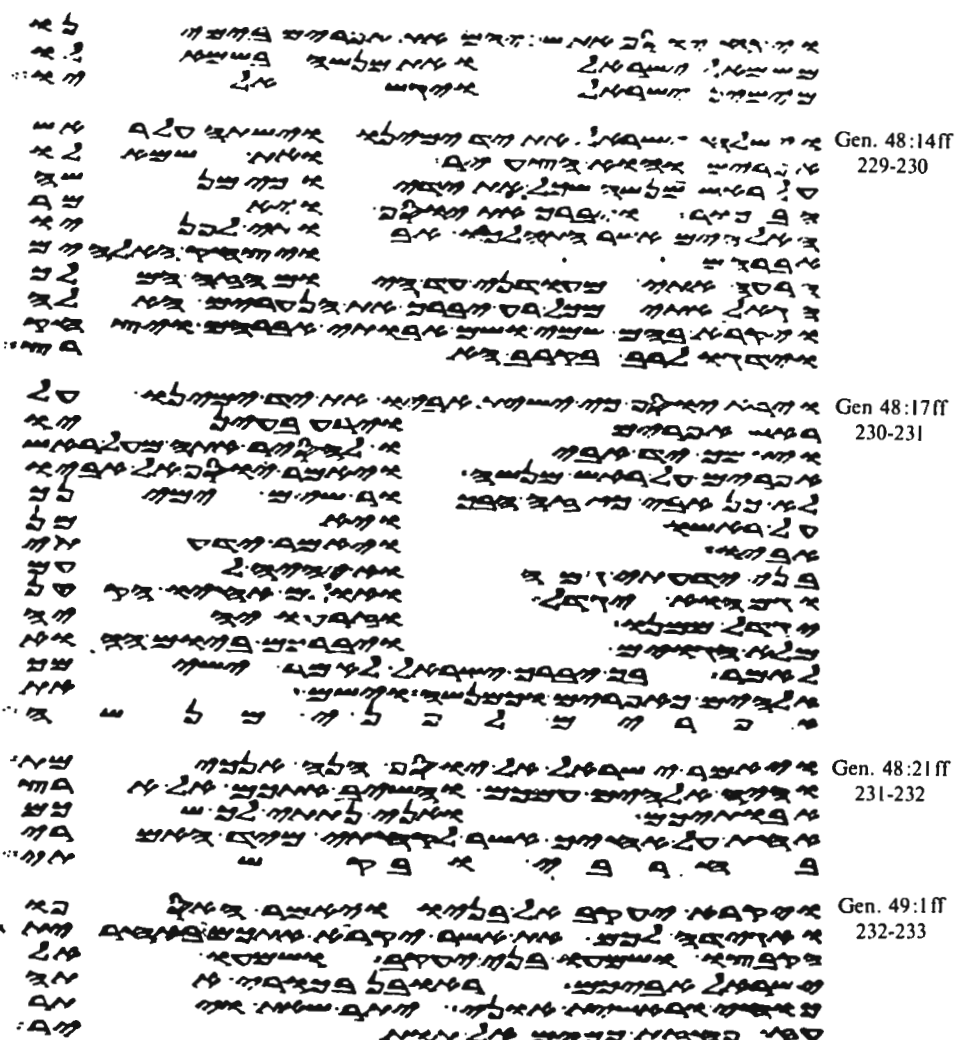
LEIDEN OR. MS. 6,f. 9v.
(slightly reduced)

assumes that this is because *vav* is the most common letter in Hebrew writing, serving as consonant, vowel and conjunction. In the sample shown, part of Genesis 48 and 49, we see that the arrangement in columns is primary and has no relation to the sense structures. In the paragraph numbered 231 (Genesis 48:17ff.) (the paragraph number refers to the *qiṣṣah* structure),[32] line three, the *vav* in the column is followed by a word separator dot, indicating that it is well detatched from its preceding word. The full word is *'aviv*, but since the final *vav* is so far remote from the preceding letters, the word *'aviv* ("his father"), could easily be misread "my father", *'avi*. In this case we are dealing with calligraphic art. Yet, the stretched line at the end of the paragraph and at the end of the next paragraph, where the scribe was obliged to fill a line with writing by separating his letters at even intervals, should also remind us that the scribe was following a tradition in which he knew that some paragraphs ended in a full line and others in a part line, i.e. the tradition of the *petuhah* and *setumah*. In the two instances before us the scribe's artistic verve created a problem for him. The scribe's *setumah* ending appears at the end of paragraph 230.[33] On other folios in the same manuscript where the vertical aligment of *vav lamed* or *'aleph* is near the beginning of the line, the scribe had problems in straightening the left-hand margin of his page and was obliged to depart from his custom of detaching two letters for this task.

By contrast, if we consider paragraph 49 (Genesis 10:13) of the same manuscript, we see that the names of the clans and peoples are as important as the list of like words, the repeated *ve'eth*; while the scribe has not been punctilious about the arrangement of the names, it is apparent that the manuscript from which he copied had such an arrangement. We see here an example of colometry, though an example which is somewhat distorted by the scribe's desire for symmetry.

Symmetrical writing, rather than colometry, is one of the characteristics of the Damascus genre, especially symmetrical writing based on the alignment of *vav*, *lamed* and *'aleph*. This does

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[32] The double number reflects the fact that in Leiden Or. MS. 6 the *qiṣṣah* sections are said to have the same number as other manuscripts, but in reality they differ. The author is undertaking a study of the *qiṣṣah* structures as part of the collation of manuscripts for his Index of Samaritan Scribes.

[33] The assumption that this is a *setumah* depends on comparison with other manuscripts.

not imply that it does not occur elsewhere, but it is more common in manuscripts from Damascus in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries than from anywhere else. It seems fair to say that the younger the manuscript the more likely it is to display extensive symmetrical writing rather than simple colometry. This is not to say that symmetrical writing is itself necessarily of late origin.

There are situations in the text where it is difficult to judge whether we are dealing with colometry or symmetrical writing. For example, in the ethical Decalogues, Exodus 20 and Deuteronomy 6, the negatives *l'o* and the *tavs* of the imperfects are carefully placed to fall below each other in two columns. Yet the same pattern is familiar to us from Samaritan Decalogue inscriptions, some of which, we are assured, are of considerable antiquity, perhaps even going back to the second century A.D.[34] Some of the Decalogue inscriptions which exhibit this feature are certainly antique.[35] Yet we have shown elsewhere that the scribal characteristics of Samaritan inscriptions are not always those dictated by lapidary concerns but may well be in imitation of manuscript characteristics.[36] In other words, it is suggested that the layout of the Decalogue has a special format in manuscripts which is imitated in Decalogue inscriptions, and that these inscriptions testify to the antiquity of the manuscript layout. We shall return to this point later.

We must note, at this point, that the part colometry and part symmetry of such passages as paragraph 49 in Leiden Or. MS. 6 can only be managed by the scribe because he feels free to detach letters at the left margin of the manuscript to form an even left margin with substantial space between letters in the text. Space between letters is one hallmark of Samaritan scribal technique and it usually arises from the practice of colometry or symmetrical

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[34] A listing of Decalogue inscriptions and their alleged dates is to be found in St. Yonick, "Samaritan Inscription from Siyagha", *Liber Annuus*, xvii (1967), 162-221.

[35] I have not modified my view about the difficulty of dating Samaritan inscriptions, but I am not blind to the fact that the archaeological context of some Samaritan inscriptions could indicate their antiquity. See my "Problems of Epigraphy and Palaeography: The Nature of the Evidence in Samaritan Sources" (*Bulletin*, lxii (1979-80), 37-60 (hereafter *PEP*) for a discussion of the problems). See also J. Strugnell, "Quelques Inscriptions Samaritains", *RB*, lxxiv (1967), 555-580 for plates, especially p. 560 n° 2, and pp. 571-572, n° 4 and fig. 2.

[36] *PEP*, p. 51.

writing. This same technique is visible in inscriptions which are not Decalogue inscriptions but which are of some antiquity, and in some of which symmetry is traceable. In fig. 2 of St. Yonick's Siyagha inscription[37] we can clearly see the way in which a single letter has been detached to form the left margin of the text, and *kaph* has been laid beneath *kaph* and *mem* beneath *mem*. Yonick's fig. 14 emphasises this arrangement. Yet Yonick claims this inscription to be from the pre-Islamic era in the Holy Land and there seems to be no sound reason to dispute this. Here, then, is further proof that the technique of symmetrical writing is of some antiquity.

An outstanding example of symmetry is presented by Rosen[38] in an inscription which is alleged to date from the sixth century A.D.[39] On line 9 of the inscription, which is rather crowded and leaves little scope for scribal manipulation , a space has been left between the word *'adam* and the word *vay'omer* so as to allow six *vavs* to fall in line. The evidence is clear enough, from the earliest written indubitably Samaritan forms available to us, that the technique of symmetrical writing had long been a Samaritan lapidary practice, almost certainly in imitation of the scribal technique in manuscripts. This is apparent both from the letter orthographies and for reasons which become clear when we consider the reason for the layout of the Decalogue in the manuscripts.

When one compares manuscripts of all the genres, and specially a series of manuscripts from the same scribe, it becomes clear that, irrespective of the practice of symmetrical writing, there are certain passages which are standard in the codexes which are written in colometry or in an extended form of the colon and comma where the sense line overlaps more than one written line to have a specific shape. It is instructive to compare the manuscripts of Abi Berachatah (above) with other manuscripts from the coastal Diaspora and within themselves. It becomes apparent from a comparison of Rylands Sam. MS. 1 with Nablus MS. 10 and CB 751 that Abi Berachatah was a conservative scribe who

[37]   Op. cit., p. 207.
[38]   G. Rosen, "Über Samaritanische Inschriften", *Z.D.M.G.*, xiv (1860), 622-631.
[39]   Further details of the inscription are to be found in K. Foldes-Papp, *Vom Felsbild zum Alphabet*, pl. 147.

did not indulge in the habit of symmetrical writing with undue frequency but was able to use it *ad hoc* when he desired, and did not always keep to the identical format for his manuscripts. Yet there are certain passages which are commonly written in all his manuscripts per colon and commata, i.e. in colometry, and these same passages are also found in colometric form in all the older manuscripts. One can only conclude that we are dealing with an old Samaritan Massoretic tradition that has become fossilised in the period from the fourteenth century and onwards but which, in earlier years, may have had an active tradition. The passages are as follows (for convenience of reference the Massoretic numbering is used, but reference should also be made to Von Gall, *HPS*):—

Gen. 10: 13-19. Written in true colometry so that each line is a sense unit with a full stop at the end of the line, from verse 14. In the Egyptian MS. CW 2484 (Michigan State University) the arrangement of full stops is different, the stops being placed after *Sidon behoro*, v. 15, and *Hayevusi*, v. 16, the whole arrangement occupying eleven lines.

Gen. 10- 26-29. In the Egyptian manuscripts there is true colometry of five lines and one line employing symmetry.

Genesis 15: 19-21. In all genres

Genesis 22: 21-24. In symmetry but not colometry in the Egyptian manuscripts.

Genesis 36: 40-43. The latter passage is important as providing evidence on the question as to whether all the passages which are written in colometry are so written simply because they happen to be lists of names which, so far in our list, has proved to be the case. The passage in question lays out in colometry the names of the family of Esau. However, there are other lists of names in the same chapter which are worded in nearly identical fashion, e.g. Gen. 36: 29-30, which lend them equally well to colometry; but in none of the manuscripts of Abi Berachatah nor in any other manuscript which is indubitably of the coastal genre are they set out in colometry. (The early fist in Paris Sam. MS. 3, dated to A.D. 1182, appears to be of the coastal genre, but this is not certain. This manuscript has both sections in the colometric form). We should note that the later manuscripts of the Egyptian genre have all the lists of chieftains in this section in strict colometric form. It appears, then, that some scribes had a developed tradition in which names were to be treated in the colometric form and as prose. It is also clear from the variation in the versification in Paris

Sam. MS. 3 that the scribes were aware that the colometric form related to the versification but that the tradition was not stable; i.e. either the tradition was so old that it had already begun to move towards an art form by the twelfth century A.D., or that it had fossilised before it had developed fully.

Genesis 49: 25-26. In the Samaritan Pentateuch these lines are broken into four short colometric sentences each beginning with the word *birehkoth* and ending in a full stop. The tradition is not constant through all the manuscripts of the coastal genre but is found in some manuscripts from Nablus and Damascus, and the Egyptian manuscripts put this passage in symmetry rather than colometry, indicating that it was once part of the common Samaritan Massoretic tradition. It is worthy of note that in TB Yoma 52a there is a discussion on the arrangement of Gen. 49: 7 in terms which suggest that spacing was a fundamental part of the sentence structure and that spacing was either colometric or symmetrical in passages where there was a repetition of words or phrases.

Genesis 49: 31. Divided into three colons each ending in a stop and each beginning with the word *vesham* or *sham*. The word *shama*, which would have spoiled the symmetry, is not found, though it is present in the MT. However, this colon is missing from Abi Berachatah's bilingual manuscript (Cambridge Add. Sam. MS. 714), from one other manuscript of the coastal genre, and from the manuscripts of the Egyptian genre, which would seem to indicate that the division of this verse into three colons was not common to all the genres.

Exodus 20: 13-14. The Decalogue, which is written not only in colometry but with each colon marked as a section ending, that is with a *qiṣṣah* mark (viz. —:). (On this point see further Leviticus 18: 6-21, below).

Exodus 21: 23-25. Broken into six verses in all traditions except the Nablus traditions in the early period.

Exodus 23: 28. In one manuscript of the Egyptian genre in symmetry and not colometry but in the other genres and the other Egyptian manuscripts in colometry.

Exodus 25: 12. Where the words *shtai taba'ot 'al tsala 'o*, which are repeated in the Samaritan Pentateuch as well as in the MT, are written beneath each other in all the genres.

Exodus 25: 24-26. Where the words *saviv* and *ve'asitah*, which are repeated three and four times respectively, are laid down

beneath each other in all genres except the Nablus genre, but not always as colons.

Exodus 25: 35. Where the identical phrase *vekaphtor taḥat shnai haqanim mimmenah*, is repeated three times, the single verse of the MT becoming three in the Samaritan in all genres.

Exodus 28: 17-20. The description of the rows of jewels on the breastplate of the priest is presented in four colons in the Nablus and Damascus genres but not in the coastal or Egyptian genres. However, in all the genres the verses are of the same length; that is, the description of the fourth row of jewels is in two verses in place of the single verse of the MT.

Exodus 31: 7-11, which is presented in colometry in all the genres though the structure of the colons differs in each genre. It is clear from this passage that the lack of uniformity in the point at which the sentence ends (i.e. in the placing of the full stops in the Samaritan Pentateuch manuscripts) depends upon the differences between the manuscripts in their structuring of the colons. One must assume that there was once, at least, a fairly uniform tradition that became diversified as the scribes became more remote from their living Massorah. It is interesting to consider here the manuscript of the Egyptian genre CW 2478a, which is a bilingual Hebrew-Arabic manuscript in parallel columns. It is clear that the space for arranging these verses in colometric structure was inadequate because of the nature of the manuscript with its two columns, yet the scribe felt it incumbent to observe the colometric structure at this point, an indication of his under-standing of the treatment of this passage.

Exodus 32: 17-19, which is written symmetrically but not colometrically on the word *kol* in the coastal genre, the Damascus genre and some manuscripts of the Egyptian genre. In contrast to the former example, the scribe of the bilingual CW 2478a did not feel obliged to trouble himself in structuring these verses. Clearly, his understanding was that this passage was structured only as a matter of artistry and not of Massorah.

Exodus 35: 11-20, written in 22 lines partly in colometry and partly in symmetry.

Exodus 37: 11-12, which are written in symmetry but with stops in the middle of the versicles. It would have been possible to describe these lines as being in a colometric structure if the line-ends had corresponded with the sentence endings. The two verses of the MT become three in the Samaritan in all the genres.

Exodus 37: 21, in colometry except in the Egyptian mono-lingual manuscripts, where one finds symmetry. There are three verses instead of the single verse of the MT.

Exodus 39: 33-41. In the Nablus genre in strict colometry. In the other genres two lines may represent one verse. This is one of the more significant passages for comparison with the versifica-tion of the MT (see below).

Leviticus 11: 13-20. In the manuscripts of Abi Berachatah and the early manuscripts of the Nablus genre, the passage is in strict colometry of twelve lines. In other manuscripts of the coastal genre and in the Egyptian genre the passage is written in symmetry in a greater number of lines. The layout is seen at its best in Leiden Or. MS. 6, indicating that the Damascus genre also observed a colometric form of twelve lines.

Leviticus 18: 6-21. This major section is laid out in colometry in the writings of Abi Berachatah and in the manuscripts of the Damascus genre, but not in other manuscripts of the coastal diaspora, Nablus or the Egyptian genre. The variation between the manuscripts here is rather strange, for in the MT verses 7-16 are marked by a *Setumah*, and a comparison of this passage in the manuscripts of the MT[40] such as Codex Hileli or Leningrad MS. B 19A and Codex Reuchlinus (as published by Sperber) shows that the structure of the text in the MT is not at all unlike that of the Samaritan manuscripts. This is because of the positioning of the *Setumot*, which virtually impose a symmetric structure on the passage. However, the structure in the manuscripts of Abi Berachatah is not merely symmetric but colometric, with verse-endings and line-endings coinciding. The Massoretic manuscripts give rise to the possibility that the use of spacing to mark the ends of the *Setumot* led to the use of spacing to arrange the text in versicles or colons, and that a first stage in the development of the verse-ending system was the spacing of the colons. As will be seen later, a likely second step was the use of spacing, rather than any internal marking, to mark the ends of all verses.

Support for this view is found in a number of the manuscripts of the MT, especially Codex Hileli, where the arrangement of

[40] Plates of these manuscripts are conveniently available in the Makor series of facsimile reproductions, part of Deuteronomy is available in M. Goshen Gottstein, *The Aleppo Codex* (Jerusalem, 1976), and other facsimiles are to be found in A. Sperber, *The Pre-Massoretic Bible Discovered in Four Manuscripts* (Copenhagen, 1956).

the ethical Decalogue in Deuteronomy closely follows the section marks, the *Setumot*. This arrangement produces a result almost identical with that found in Samaritan manuscripts and in some Samaritan Decalogue inscriptions, as noted previously. Yet the need to represent the *Setumot* can only have been one stage in the impulse to develop the colometric system, since Samaritan scribes found it convenient to treat the *Setumot* differently from Jewish scribes and leave a break between sections and there is no trace of that in any of the manuscripts before us. We must look for additional influences in developing this system.

Leviticus 19: 9-15. In colometry in the Damascus genre and in the manuscripts of Abi Berachatah and the coastal genre. In symmetry in some manuscripts of the Egyptian genre but not in the bilingual CW 2484a. It is interesting that 19: 7 was known to the Tannaim as a short verse (Zevachim 28b), suggesting that the colometry might have been more extensive at some time.

Leviticus 26: 42. This passage is in colometry and symmetry in the manuscripts of Abi Berachatah, who has a different verse division from the other traditions. One of the Egyptian genre manuscripts (CW 2484) has the same verse division, indicating that Abi Berachatah was drawing on a tradition rather than creating a form of his own.

Throughout the book of Numbers we find descriptions of the camps, the tribes and the orders of march. These are found in the various genres as standard passages written in colons. While, for the most part, the versification agrees with that in the MT, there are places where it is quite distinctive. Thus, in Numbers 1: 6, the colometry begins with the first name in the tribal list (Reuben), though in the MT this name falls within verse 6.

Numbers 1: 6-15 is in colometry in all the genres.

Numbers 3: 27 is in colometry, dividing the single verse into three verses in the manuscripts of Abi Berachatah and the Damascus genre but not in the Nablus genre or the Egyptian genre or other manuscripts of the coastal genre.

Numbers 13: 4-15. Note that the versification differs from the MT in respect of verse 4, where the colometry begins with the words *lemateh re'uven*, and in Abi Berachatah's manuscripts is strict, with a stop at the end of each line; in other coastal manuscripts and in some of the Damascus manuscripts, the Egyptian genre, and in the Nablus manuscripts, the words *lemateh Joseph* are extended to fill a line on their own and the colon

continues to the next line. Since the Samaritans claim descent from the tribe of Joseph, the format would appear to be such that it clearly emphasises an element of Samaritan tradition. The fact that neither Abi Berachatah does this nor do some of the Damascus manuscripts, indicates that the original form of the passage was strict colometry with verse-endings and line-endings coinciding.

Numbers 26: 12-51 is in strict colometry in all the genres in all the early manuscripts using an identical layout. It is interesting to note that even some of the later manuscripts, such as Paris Sam. MS. 2, have maintained the colometry intact. The scribes of the MT codexes Hileli and Leningrad B 19A followed a tradition parallel to that in the Samaritan copying of the same passages with a symmetrical arrangement on the word *mishpaḥat*; strangely enough, the line structure in both Massoretic manuscripts is identical at this point and one cannot help but conclude that the MT scribes and the Samaritan scribes were following a parallel tradition based on the spacing imposed by the sections, open and closed.

Numbers 33: 11-37. The passage is in strict colometry in all the genres. The versification is the same as that of the MT.

Numbers 34: 17-28 is in strict colometry in all the genres. A comparison between the verse structure in the Samaritan text and that in the MT suggests that the Samaritan verse division is more rational than that in the MT. Perhaps there was some independence in the development of the Samaritan system.

There are traces of an interesting variation in the tradition in the manuscripts of Abi Berachatah in regard to the description of the Levitical cities in Numbers 35: 5, which, in all the genres, is found in strict colometry as four verses against the MT's one. While Abi Berachatah follows this tradition in Chester Beatty MS. 751, he takes quite a different direction in Ryl. Sam. MS. 1, arranging the text in a "geographical" manner, i.e. as a primitive or stylised map, though the versification remains the same as in the other genres. The arrangement is not unknown in other manuscripts and we must assume that this is not the scribe's own invention but one choice of the conventions available for the copying of this passage.

It is difficult to establish, from the extant manuscripts of Abi Berachatah, which passages at the beginning of Deuteronomy were normally written in colometry or symmetry, for it is in

these chapters that he writes his *tashqils*. However, from other manuscripts of the coastal genre, from the Nablus manuscripts, and from the Damascus manuscripts (at least those without *tashqils* in this place), and, especially from later manuscripts which have already shown signs of extending colometry into symmetry in other places, it is clear that there are no passages at the beginning of Deuteronomy which would normally have been written in this fashion. It may be suggested, therefore, that the common choice of the early chapters of Deuteronomy as the most suitable place for writing *tashqils* is not because this is any reflection of scribal rank, as was averred by Ben Zvi,[41] but because this position is the one that would do least damage to the Massoretic traditions which governed the copying of the texts.

The first passage in Deuteronomy in the older manuscripts to appear in structured form is Deuteronomy 4: 16-18, though in some late manuscripts, such as Paris Sam. MS. 2, the first passage structured is Deuteronomy 10: 6-7. In the Nablus and Damascus genres Deut. 4: 16-18 appears in strict colometry in five verses, whereas in the coastal genre and the Egyptian genre (which in many respects seems to follow the coastal genre) the passage is written symmetrically around the word *tabhnith*, so that the verse-ending appears after the first word in the line.

Deuteronomy 6: 10-12 is written in symmetrical rather than colometric form in manuscripts of the coastal genre and those of Abi Berachatah, except for his bilingual Pentateuch, Cambridge Add. Sam. MS. 714, and in the Damascus genre. The Nablus genre ignores this passage. The fact that Abi Berachatah did not feel constrained to include it in his bilingual *Torah* inclines one to the belief that this passage was of late Massoretic development. Could it be that, as Ben Hayyim argued (see n. 5), the scribes of the coastal Diaspora developed an active interest in the Massorah in the eleventh and twelfth centuries? It is certainly of interest to note at this point that, in general, in the bilingual and tri-lingual manuscripts, the scribes tended to reproduce colometric structures in all the different languages, whereas symmetrical structures often appeared in the Hebrew and Aramaic texts but not in the Arabic column (usually the third column), as if the symmetric structure could be treated at will whereas the colometric structure was to be regarded as part of the text that had to be transmitted. (It is, of course, possible that the Hebrew and Aramaic columns

[41] I. Ben Zvi, *Sepher Hashomronim* (revised edn., Jerusalem, 1970), p. 253.

were regarded as texts in a sacred language whereas Arabic had not the same sanctity). This phenomenon is apparent even in the facsimile mixed text of Barberini Or. MS. 1 and B.L. Or. MS. 7562 (see above n. 17).

Deuteronomy 10: 6-7. This is in strict colometry in all the genres. Even in MS. CW 2484a, where the passage falls inside the *tashqil*, the scribe felt obliged at least to put the material in a symmetrical arrangement; it may have been too difficult to write both a *tashqil* and the colometry. It should be noted that the differences from the text of the MT in this passage are evident at a glance as a result of the colometry.

Deuteronomy 14: 12-18. This passage is in strict colometry in the manuscripts of Abi Berachatah, in eleven lines. One manuscript of the coastal genre does not mark the verse endings and appears to treat the passage as symmetry. The Nablus genre is in strict colometry, but the Damascus genre treats the passage as symmetry. The fact that the conservative Vatican Sam. MS. 1 treats this passage at all, even as symmetry, would lead us to believe that we are dealing with a Massoretic tradition that has been distorted by later scribes from colometry to symmetry. This conclusion would appear to be supported by Paris Sam. MS. 2, which presents this passage in eleven lines in a mixture of colometry and symmetry.

Deuteronomy 23: 2-5 is a mixture of colometry and symmetry in all early manuscripts of the genres. However, the evidence of the later Paris Sam. MS. 2 would again suggest that this is a development from an original colometric form, for these verses appear as colometry in five lines in that manuscript. In all genres the versification is different from that of the MT.

Deuteronomy 27: 16-26. All the Abi Berachatah manuscripts lay out this passage in colometry, or, rather, in a bi-colon structure with the verse-stop every second line. In the Egyptian manuscripts the passage is treated as a bi-colon structure with two stops in each line, i.e. seven lines with two stops per line. The arrangement of Abi Berachatah's texts is rather like the traditional structure in the MT of Exodus 15, which is described in TB Sopherim as the "form of a half brick over a whole brick". The fact that the same structure was used of the Song of Deborah, Judges 5, might imply that material recited antiphonally was structured in this fashion. Since the passage in question is the recitation of curses and the responses of the people, the structure

might be intended to reflect this dialogue. That there was a tradition of some form of special recitation of the passage outside the Samaritan community is apparent from the statement in Megillah 31b that the threats and the curses were not to be read together without a break, together with the verse preceding and the verse following the passage. The same structure is to be found in one Damascus manuscript (J.N.U.L. 2°2) but not in the majority of the Damascene manuscripts or in the Nablus or the coastal genre manuscripts, where the material is treated as symmetrical rather than as colometric.

Examination of this passage in the text of the two old *Torah* scrolls available to us is inconclusive in offering evidence as to whether the colometric structures of the Samaritan Pentateuch were forms which developed in codexes rather than in scrolls. In the published plates of the Abisha scroll[42] we can see clearly on plate 19 a symmetric but not a colometric structure, rather on the lines of the Nablus genre. (If, as seems likely on the evidence available, the symmetric arrangement of this passage indicates a secondary and late development of a colometric tradition, there is clear evidence here that the Abisha scroll is a somewhat later document than suggested by Castro in his publication). However, the Spiro collection Katava Kadisha shows neither colometry nor symmetry at this or at any other point. We can not, however, draw any conclusions from this, as not even the text of Deuteronomy 32 is broken into stichoi, as in virtually all Samaritan Pentateuch manuscripts, codex and scroll alike, and in the Jewish *Torah* scrolls. Further examination of the plates of the Abisha scroll leaves us in no doubt that colometry and symmetry were employed elsewhere in the scroll (see pl. 9).

All in all, the evidence would seem to indicate that there are places in Samaritan codexes and scrolls where there were standard forms for writing given passages. Usually this standard form appears to be that of colometry and we have been able to indicate places where symmetrical structures seem to have been a secondary development from the colometric structures. However, we are not yet able to exclude symmetric writing as an old Samaritan Massoretic device. Is this Massorah of Samaritan origin or is it of Jewish scribal origin, and have the Samaritans developed the layout of their Pentateuch from an inherited section structure

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[42] F. Perez Castro, *Séfer Abiša*, Madrid, 1959.

which allowed them to develop their own Massorah which later became fossilised?

To answer, or at least to attempt to answer, this question we must review the nature of the symmetry and the colometry in the passages discussed above.

One type of colometry is that in which lists of names (e.g. Gen. 10: 26f.) or objects appear. Where, in these lists, the Samaritan versification matches the MT versification, we find that the verse structure in the MT frequently breaks the sense of the description and has no evident logic of its own, unless a colometric arrangement of the type found in the Samaritan underlay the MT verse structure[43] and dictated the placing of the stops. It is difficult to see how the colometric structure could have been a secondary development from an existing versification, for the one has a logic of its own and the other does not.

A second type of colometry appears in all the genres where the same phrase is repeated several times, sometimes without variation and sometimes with a slight variation between the repetitions. Sometimes there is a marked difference from the MT, as was noted in the exposition above.

A third type of colometry involves both colometry and symmetry so that the text has a structured appearance.

A type of symmetry which has not been considered, since it is *ad hoc* and has no standards, is found, nevertheless, in the work of some of the better scribes. It consists of a column of *vavs* where each *vav* is the *vav* consecutive and hence the first letter of a verb, so that by looking down the column of text the sequence of events as expressed in the verbs alone becomes rapidly clear. Numerous examples of this technique were identified in the manuscripts of Abi Berachatah but not noted, as they were clearly part of a developing but not of a received tradition, as is proved from the fact that they are not in parallel places in his own or in other manuscripts. It would not be a matter of surprise to find that this development took place in tandem with the development of catenas in the liturgy, sometimes called the *qatafim*, which at first were whole sections of the *Torah* but later came to be phrases beaded together to represent those sections. Without further detailed examination of this point we can say no more.

Of these four types of colometry and symmetry, several are

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[43]   See below for a further discussion of this point.

known to us from the Massoretic text of the Old Testament. As noted above, the structured form of the Decalogue is found in Massoretic codexes of the Pentateuch because of the arrangement dictated by the closed section. The structure of the cursing and the threats apparently arranged for antiphonal response have parallels in Exodus 15 and Judges 5 (see above) and there is a parallel with the same passage in Leningrad MS. B 19A, although in the latter the structure depends on the section arrangement. However, there is a tradition, as noted, that the reading of the threats and curses should be performed publicly in such a way that it is broken up. Likewise, there is a listing of names in columns, such as in Joshua 12 and the Book of Esther. If one considers the arrangement of the names of the kings in Joshua 12 in the Aleppo Codex,[44] one sees that the arrangement is symmetrical rather in the style favoured by the Samaritans, with neat columns arranged on the words 'ehad and melekh.

There is, however, a more surprising series of parallels which leaves open the possibility that the Samaritan tradition as we find it today was substantially developed in its present form by no later than the fourth century A.D. A detailed examination of the published plates of the Septuagint Codex Alexandrinus[45] shows us places in the codex laid out as per the Samaritan colometric and symmetric system. These are Genesis 10: 17-18; 36: 40-43; 36: 26-28; Exodus 34: 11; Numbers 33: 11-37; 34: 17-28 (as in the Samaritan); Deuteronomy 20: 17. The ethical Decalogue in Alexandrinus is carefully laid out on the same lines as in the Samaritan text.

Codex Alexandrinus thus reproduces three of the four forms of colometry distinguished in Samaritan, namely colometry of names, colometry of the wilderness journeys of Numbers 33-34, and colometry/symmetry of the conjunction kai. One must note one other example of symmetry, namely, the arrangement on Φ on page 87 of the published edition. The nature of the contact between Alexandrinus and the Samaritan version is not clear. Is the Samaritan form based on a Greek tradition? An argument in favour of that conclusion is that the ornamentation at the end of each of the books of the Pentateuch in the Alexandrinus consists of forms which have become standard at the end of the separate

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[44] In the facsimile edition, see n. 40 above.
[45] Cf. The Codex Alexandrinus, London, 1915.

books of the Pentateuch in Samaritan manuscripts. When one looks closely and carefully at this ornamentation in the Samaritan context, one can see that it has been adapted to Samaritan alphabet forms so that the ornamentation spells out final words such as *tam* ("complete") or *Torah* or the initial and last letters of the Aramaic form *'oraitah*, which would suggest that the process of grafting ornament and alphabet began in the Aramaic-speaking period of the Samaritans, i.e. from early in the first millennium A.D. to about the tenth century A.D. This would support the view that the grafting of the letter to ornament was not an organic process but was an adaptation, and that the ornament was primary. It is difficult to say, however, whether the ornamentation of Alexandrinus is of Greek origin or of Samaritan origin, though the balance of probability is that it is of Greek origin and that the Samaritans borrowed it just as they borrowed elements of Greek punctuation for their *ta'ame miqrata*.

There are reasons for assuming that the colometry was original in Hebrew and that the technique was copied by the scribe of the Alexandrinus who, therefore, had a Samaritan manuscript in front of him. (The implications of that suggestion for the textual criticism of Alexandrinus cannot be explored here, though it is abundantly clear that there are substantial implications). Firstly, as has been argued above, the Decalogue structure, which the Samaritans adopted and which is imitated in Alexandrinus, developed from the section structures. Since the section structures are known from early Tannaitic times and before, and probably relate to the use of the Pentateuch for liturgical purposes,[46] they are original to Hebrew rather than to Greek texts and long antedate the Greek translations. Secondly, since there are examples of text structures in the MT and at least one of these (Exodus 15) is found in the *Torah* scrolls, structuring must have been practised before early Tannaitic days. The Tannaim knew of

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[46] It is interesting to note the thinking of J. Bowman who came to the conclusion, without developing it further, that the earliest Samaritan Massorah is liturgical in origin. Bowman appeared to be speaking specifically of the use of the section divisions in selecting readings for the festivals and Sabbaths, but he is doubtless correct in his suggestion that the oral reading of the text was the initial factor in moving the Samaritans to develope a Massoretic tradition. See his "Modern Samaritan Morning and Afternoon Services: Ancient Survivals: Their Importance for the History of the Liturgy", *Proceedings of the 23rd International Congress of Orientalists 1954* (Cambridge), pp. 86-87.

the verse divisions[47] but these did not find their way into sacred *scrolls*, as one assumes that they had not yet developed sufficient antiquity; yet Exodus 15 is structured and in the Pentateuch scrolls. Structuring, then, developed at least to some extent in Jewish circles before the Greek translations. Thirdly, there seems to be no other manuscript than the Alexandrinus which uses *kai* for symmetry in the way that the Samaritans use the *vav* equivalent: symmetrical writing was, therefore, borrowed by the scribe of the Alexandrinus from one of his manuscript sources, which can scarcely have been other than a Samaritan manuscript.

As against this claim for a direct contact between the scribe of the Alexandrinus and a Samaritan Pentateuch, we should note that Ben Hayyim[48] and Revell[49], in considering other aspects of the parallels between the Samaritan Massoretic tradition, the Hebrew-Jewish Massoretic tradition, and the Septuagint scribal traditions, have been at pains to stress that parallelism has arisen through a common ancestry in the Syro-Palestinian tradition. Revell especially has argued against direct contact in the traditions of cantillation, despite the fact that the names of the Samaritan neumes overlap with the names of the Hebrew neumes in four places. Revell came to his consideration of the Samaritan cantillation system via analysis of the usual spacing of some lines in fragments of Greek Biblical manuscripts which, he claimed, were replicating in Greek texts of the second century B.C. pause patterns in Hebrew texts.[50] However, none of these patterns was structured in any way like the columns in the Alexandrinus which we have been considering, and, in any case, there are reasons for suspecting that such spacing might have been directly copied from Hebrew manuscripts (see below).

We should not disregard the connection between the spacing discussed by Revell, which turns out to be a type of punctuation

[47] L. Blau, "Massoretic Studies III: The Division into Verses", *J.Q.R.*, ix (1897), 122-144, 471-490 (hereafter *DIV*), marshals the evidence regarding the Tannaitic discussion of the verse structure in a classic essay that has stood the test of time. It is Blau who saw that the division into verses was a third stage from the division into *parashiyyot* and sections.

[48] Op. cit. ("The Samaritan Vowel system", etc.,), p. 530.

[49] E.J. Revell, "Biblical Punctuation and Chant in the Second Temple Period", *J.S.J.*, 7: 2 (1976), pp. 181-198 (hereafter, BPC).

[50] Ibid., and see his, "The Oldest Evidence for the Hebrew Accent System", *Bulletin*, liv (1971-72), 214-221.

with some verse division, and the colometry of the Samaritan texts. One of the marks of colometry, as noted, is the appearance of the puctuation mark *afsaq* (*sof pasuk*)—full stop—at the end of the colon. In fact, the anomalies in Revell's findings[51] might well be explained if we were to suggest that what is being represented is not a fixed system of *ta'ame miqra*, reading guides, where each word had a neume, but a system like the Samaritan *sidre miqrata*, where each sentence, that is each colon, had a neume.[52] In this case there would be no need to use a verse marker where the material was structured in colons; and where the material was not in colons but the verses ended in the middle of a line, it would have been adequate to leave a space between the last word of one verse and the first verse of the next word. This system of versification would be a logical extension of the use of space to mark the sections and would explain how the Tannaim could define individual verses, although there are no verse markers used in the early manuscripts.[53] This is precisely the system used in the Dead Sea scrolls, well developed in the Isaiah text,[54] and present, but not so well developed, in the palaeo-Hebrew texts,[55] especially those which are held to be related to the Samaritan texts.[56] So far as can be judged from the one published plate[57] of 4 Q Palæo-Exodus M, it does not appear in that text which is a thoroughly eclectic text, representing neither Massoretic nor the Samaritan version.

[51] *BPC*, p. 192.

[52] Spector, op. cit., p. 144.

[53] See *DIV*, p. 122.

[54] For very clear illustrations of the use of space for marking sentence structures see Millar Burrows, *The Dead Sea Scrolls of St. Mark's Monastery*, vol., 1 (ASOR monograph, 1950), pl. 38, the start of verse 17, pl. 37, verses 23 ff. It does not seem to be possible to find a reference to this use of space for versification in M. Martin's detailed study of the codicological techniques of the scrolls in his *The Scribal Character of the Dead Sea Scrolls*, 2 vols. (Louvain, 1958).

[55] Cf. M. Baillet, J.T. Milik and R. de Vaux, (*DISCOVERIES IN THE JUDEAN DESERT OF JORDAN, III*) *Les Petites Grottes de Qumran* (Oxford, 1962), pl. 12.5, Leviticus, Palaeo-Hebrew, l. 2, for example.

[56] Cf. D. Barthélemy and J.T. Milik, *Qumran, Cave 1* (Oxford, 1955), pl. 8, 3: 2, where the spacing of the sentences is not consistent but shows movement towards a fixed system.

[57] Cf. D.N. Freedman, "Variant Readings in the Leviticus Scroll From Qumran Cave 11", *CBQ*, xxxvi, 4 (1974), 525-534. I am grateful to Prof. Freedman for allowing me to examine the full plates of the scroll in Ann Arbor.

This is not to claim that the Samaritans developed the verse division. It is true that the Samaritan system of reading the *Torah* is of hoary antiquity and sprang from the same stock as that of the Jews, but, whereas the Jewish system developed a full accentual system, the Samaritan system either fossilised or led to a form of colometry which met their needs in reading the Pentateuch. The colon marks its own verse end, just as does the alphabetical Psalm, and needs no exterior marker. The Jewish system needed a method of marking the verse-endings and, on the evidence of the Dead Sea Scrolls, that method was developed by, at latest, the first century B.C. in the form of spacing, and possibly even by the early second century or even the third century B.C. on Revell's evidence, but still too late to be taken into the Pentateuch scroll form which may have had a fixed tradition for liturgical purposes by this time. The Samaritan system of versification beyond the colometric system must have been a later development, for it is still not stable in the earliest manuscripts extant, and there seems to have been some doubt as to which was the mid-point of the Pentateuch, for in general it is identified as a paragraph in Leviticus 7 by a minor *tashqil*, though Paris Sam. MS. 2 marks the division between verses 16 and 17 as the mid-point (though not in the fist of the scribe; it is an addition by a later hand in Aramaic in a series of dotted letter outlines—one may suspect even a European hand). (Of course, the contrary might apply and an old tradition might have destabilised as Massoretic activity came to an end).

Nevertheless, the Samaritan colometric system is old, for it may well have contaminated some of the Jewish versification amongst the Tannaim, recorded by Blau.[58] A place in which contamination of the Jewish system may be suggested is in Genesis 15: 19, 20, 21, where the Massoretic versification is awkward. There is no need to see in this awkwardness some esoteric numerical system, as does Meysing[59], but we may suggest, rather, that the system developed logically from colometry, in a Palaeo-Hebrew Samaritan type manuscript.

Why did Samaritan scribes develop a colometric system rather than follow the Jewish scribes and develop a verse system marked by spacing?

[58] *DIV*, pp. 138-139.
[59] J. Meysing, "The Numbers of the Verses of the Biblical Books", *Christian News From Israel*, xx.: 1 (1964), pt. 1, pp. 35-39.

Samaritan scribes must have needed some system which could allow them to protect their version from contamination by the Jewish version. If the scribes were working in the Diaspora, or if they were in regular contact with non-Samaritan Palaeo-Hebrew versions, they would have needed some device which would easily point up the differences between their version and the Jewish version. The Jewish scribes seem to have faced the same problem, which they met by changing the script from Palaeo-Hebrew to the Aramaic square script, a change so drastic as to underline the urgent necessity of isolating the two versions, as early as the time of Ezra. Yet Jewish Palaeo-Hebrew versions or, at least, non-Samaritan Palaeo-Hebrew versions, were still current at the time of the Dead Sea Scrolls[60] and the Samaritans must have required at least the same protection for their sacred books as the Jews required for theirs. A system of symmetry and colometry may well have been the answer to the problem.

In the first place, the system of symmetry and colometry provides a safeguard at a glance against omission of phrases in those places where the identical phrase is repeated. It also served as a safeguard against dittography, haplography, and homoioteleuton.

In the second place, where a list of persons or sacred objects was presented as, for example, in the list of clean and unclean animals that were fit or unfit for eating, the structured form of the list made it easier to check whether any item was omitted. The corrector of a manuscript (and the presence of correctors is proved by the frequent appearance of second hands making corrections) had an easier time with the Samaritan Pentateuch than the Jewish Pentateuch. The structured colometry in those passages where sense was no guide to the accuracy made it an easier task to check the accuracy of the text. A corollary of this is that the spacing in colons must have made it easier for the reader, especially in public reading, to recover the sense of the material. Whereas the Jewish scribes had to proliferate disjunctive accents in places where there was repetition of word sequences,[61] the Samaritans had no need for such a detailed system, since their colometric structure would have served the same purpose. The direction taken by the Samaritans in developing their system of neumes would suggest,

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[60] These are discussed in *PSP*, chapter 2.

[61] *BPC*, p. 192.

at very least, the coexistence of the colometric system; that is, that
the text was carefully structured for oral recitation. It might even
be argued that the colometric structures were present before
methods of recitation developed: the written text precedes the
readers.

A third reason for the colometric structure, and perhaps the
primary reason, would be to highlight those places where the
Samaritan text differs from the Jewish text.

One disadvantage of the system of symmetry, when it is carried
far beyond the demands of colometry, is that substantial spaces
may be left in the text to create a balanced left margin. Thus,
instead of the gains in intelligibility which derive from colometry,
the reverse applies as uncertainties in word-division result. Once
the Samaritans had abandoned the system of breaking words
between lines, as found, for example, in 4 Q Palaeo-Exodus, they
might have been able to follow the Jewish development in their
late archaising Palaeo-Hebrew inscriptions and abandon the
word-separator dot. The fact that this was not done might have
been scribal conservatism. It might also imply necessity through
the writing of some passages symmetrically. If the latter were the
case, it would testify to the antiquity of symmetrical writing.

In conclusion, it would seem that in the Samaritan colometric
system, and perhaps in their symmetric system of writing the
Torah text, we are not so much looking at a calligraphic art form,
though it may have become such in the course of time, but at the
living relic of a Massoretic tradition which created a unique and
tolerably successful way of protecting the text from scribal
corruption and contamination from the Jewish version. It was
also a step in defining the division of verses and it may have
influenced the Jewish verse division. The system is of considerable
antiquity;[62] one can argue for its presence in one of the sources
of the Codex Alexandrinus, and it may well have been in existence
by the second century B.C., when we have evidence of a Samaritan

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[62] *DIV*, p. 474, draws attention to the fact that the stichoi in Exodus 15,
Deuteronomy 32 and Judges 5 were complete in themselves in the Jewish system
and were understood to be so complete. There can be no doubt of the antiquity
of this system. What we do not known is exactly when the Samaritans developed
it further as a feature of their Pentateuch, but the second century B.C. as a
median point between the emergence of a Samaritan text and the Dead Sea
Scrolls would not be an unreasonable assumption.

system of *Torah* reading. Were it not for this system, the text of the Samaritan Pentateuch might have become far more corrupt than it is today.

POSTSCRIPT

Since this study was written, the writer has become aware of two other sets of evidence which support his conclusions about the antiquity of the colometric writing system. The first is Sam. MS. 1 of Columbia University, New York, comprising a single folio of Genesis. This leaf, by common consensus of the scholars who have examined it is said to be of ninth-century provenance. The writer sees nothing wrong with this date as a *terminus ad quem*. However, in the absence of any comparable *dated* material (there is a fragment of the same manuscript in the Bodleian, also undated) and because of orthographic elements which suggest some *considerable* distance in time from our earliest dated manuscripts, the fragment may well be centuries older than the date agreed by others. On the recto, Genesis 10:13-19 is to be found in a mixed colometric-symmetric system. This would indicate that the breakdown of the colometric tradition into a symmetric or a mixed system was well developed by the end of, if not the middle of, the first millennium A.D.

The second piece of evidence derives from a series of Palestine-Byzantine inscriptions dating from the late fourth century A.D. to the seventh century A.D. These are published by Albrecht Alt, *Die Griechischen Inschriften der Palästina Tertia Westlich der 'Araba* (Berlin, 1921). An additional inscription is to be found in the Hebrew edition of A. Reifenberg's *Struggle Between the Desert and the Sown* (= *Milḥemet Hamizr'a vehayeshimon*) (Jerusalem, 1950). The inscriptions are partly in plain text and partly in colometry. The colometry appears when lists of names, taxes and dues are presented.

It is clear from these inscriptions that the conclusion reached about the age of colometric writing as being not later than the fourth century A.D. and, possibly, some centuries earlier, may be regarded as verified.

However, the inscriptions leave open the possibility that the colometric writing system developed in tandem with the symmetric system, the latter being a necessary, secondary concomitant of the former. The mixed system is self-evidently, in this case, a late bowdlerisation.

The inscriptions still leave open the question of the relationship of the format of the Samaritan Pentateuch to the open and closed sectioning of the Hebrew (M.T.) Pentateuch, and of the format of these inscriptions to the format of the Samaritan Decalogue inscriptions which is influenced by the open and closed sectioning as demonstrated above. While one is tempted to veer towards Revell's view that the common forms represent

growth from a common milieu in which colometric writing was wide-spread, the objections to that view in respect of the Samaritan Penta-teuch, as posed above, are still valid. A corollary of the evidence now available from these inscriptions is that, if one rejects Revell's arguments, one must take seriously the claim in Samaritan chronicles and in the writings of Procopius that there were times when Samaritans were drawn closely into influential circles of the Byzantine leadership. It would need some such process to allow for an intimate knowledge by Byzantine scribes and administrators of Samaritan Massoretic and scribal tech-niques, which knowledge is implicit in any argument for the priority of Samaritan colometric techniques. One must recognise that there was a keen interest in the Old Testament among the Byzantines.

One further matter arises from the evidence of early colometry. This is that the technique results in the justification of the left margin of a text (the right margin of the Greek inscriptions), and we should seek the ancestry of the justification of margins among texts which exhibit this feature.