

Article

Tibåt Mårqe: A New Edition with English Translation

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Abstract: This contribution presents a short introduction to the new edition of Tibåt Mårqe. The oldest manuscript of Tibåt Mårqe dates from the 14th century but only fragments of it are preserved. Previous editors of Tibåt Mårqe included those fragments in their editions which, by necessity, were based on a later, less reliable version of this collection of Samaritan midrashim. The recent discovery of large portions of the 14th century manuscript of Tibåt Mårqe in the National Library of Russia in St. Petersburg made it possible for me to fill most of the gaps. The new edition presented here is therefore based on an improved instrument of research in the domain of Samaritan culture.

Keywords: Pentateuch interpretation; midrash; Samaritanism; Aramaic

This article is a shortened version of the Introduction to a new edition and translation of Tibåt Mårqe. Its aim is to bring the main points of the new edition to the attention of a wider readership. As the following list of previous editions and translations shows, the work was first edited in 1888 and last edited in 1988: H. Baneth, *Des Samaritaners Marqah an die 22 Buchstaben, den Grundstock der hebräischen Sprache anknüpfende Abhandlung* (Baneth 1888); L. Emmrich, *Das Siegeslied (Exodus 15)–Eine Schrifterklärung des Samaritaners Marqah* (Emmrich 1897); M. Heidenheim, *Des Samaritaners Marqah Buch der Wunder* (Heidenheim 1898); D. Rettig, *Memar Marqa, ein samaritanischer Midrasch zum Pentateuch untersucht* (Rettig 1934); J. Macdonald, *Memar Marqah, the Teaching of Marqah* (Macdonald 1963); Z. Ben-Hayyim, *מֵרָקָה מֵרָקָה (Tibåt Mårqe), a Collection of Samaritan Midrashim* (Ben-Hayyim 1988, Hebrew). I am happy to say that thirty-one years after Ben-Hayyim's outstanding edition, it was possible for me to complete the work he envisioned and present an edition of Tibåt Mårqe that is based on the oldest known manuscript.

Tibåt Mårqe¹ is a collection of midrashic compositions, considered the most important literary piece of the Samaritans. In the main, Tibåt Mårqe rewrites the Pentateuch, expanding the presentation of events and precepts, very similar to the Jewish midrash. Most of it aims to provide the reader with theological, didactic, and philosophical teachings associated with the portions of the Torah discussed.

¹ Also known as *Memar Marqah* since Rettig's publication (Rettig 1934). The name "Tibåt Mårqe" תִּבְאֵת מֵרָקָה was adopted by Ben-Hayyim, following the notes of the copyists of both MSS S and K (see below) דְּשִׁקְחַת קָמִי כְּתוּב בְּתִיבַת מֵרָקָה "this is the end of what I found before me written in the ark of Mårqe" (מֵרָקָה סְפִינָה in the Arabic column). תִּבְאֵת is polysemic. Apart from its meaning "ark" (Gen. 6:14, Exod. 2:3; Mishna *Nedarim* 5:5, etc.) it also means "(written) word" in Rabbinic Hebrew (Yerushalmi Talmud, *Pesahim* 31b). Ben-Hayyim assumed a semantic shift from "word" to "treatise" similar to מֵאמֶר originally "word" (Esther 1:15, Ben-Sira 3:8), which became "treatise" in medieval Hebrew (Ben Yehuda, 2762), in parallel with מֵאמֶר (Ben-Hayyim 1983, p. 121). Later, in the introduction to TM he opted for the position that the תִּבְאֵת in question refers to a case in which several compositions were deposited and later copied into one manuscript by an ancient scribe (TM, p. 15). Indeed, the 16th century Ismā'īl ar-Rumay'i used in his Arabic *Molad Moshe* the term סְפִינָה, originally "boat", when he referred to Mårqe's work (Miller 1949, pp. 110–11). Recently, Florentin called attention to the Arabic term סְפִינָה which designates books, anthologies, etc., as shown by E. Rödiger in ZDMG 16 (1862), 216–17, 229 (Florentin 1995, pp. 209–12). Cf. (Dozy 1927, p. 660). I translated the title of the present book as "The Ark of Mårqe", having in mind both meanings of סְפִינָה/תִּבְאֵת.

The work is attributed to the foremost scholar, philosopher, and poet, Mârqe, who lived in the second half of the fourth century C.E., the epoch of great cultural blossoming within the Samaritan community under the rule of the great leader Baba Rabba. *Tulida*, the oldest Samaritan chronicle, characterizes Mârqe by the epithet *بدوؤ دخکمه*, “the founder of wisdom”, which reveals how respected he was among members of the community.

Tibât Mârqe (TM) consists of six independent books (see below). The first five contain homilies on certain portions of the Pentateuch, especially on Exod. 15, Deut. 27:9–26 and Deut. 32 as well as expanded narratives of the main events related in the story of the Exodus and the subsequent wanderings in the desert, until Moses’ death, just before the conquest of Canaan. The sixth book has a different content, taking as its theme a conversation between Moses and some of the letters of the Torah.

As far as authorship is concerned, there is little doubt about the assertion that only the first book was penned by Mârqe himself, since its language, style, and shape present obvious affinities with the liturgical pieces ascribed to him. Its language may be defined as fourth century Aramaic, the same as the language of most poems that bear Mârqe’s name in the common prayer books; it is also manifest in the old recensions of the Samaritan Aramaic Targum (ST III, 104, Tal 1980–1983; Stadel 2013, *passim*). Moreover, its language displays the characteristics of the adjacent dialects in the pre-Islamic land of Israel. However, this cannot be said about the five other books of TM, whose language and style exhibit a much later period (TM, pp. 16–24).

The first book, *سپر پلیته*, *The Book of Wonders*, is an expanded version of the story of the deliverance from Egyptian slavery. It starts with God’s revelation to Moses in the wilderness (Exod. 3), followed by the description of Moses’ arguments with Pharaoh and of the plagues administered to Egypt, and ends with the crossing of the Red Sea (Exod. 14). Its language is uniform and belongs, by and large, to the period when Aramaic was the Samaritan vernacular.²

The second book, *عل تهومي معین عدن*, *By the Depths of the Spring of Eden*, has as its main topic the “The Song of the Sea” (Exod. 15). The book starts with the creation of animals destined to serve humans. God created humans in His spiritual image and implanted in their body His wisdom in order to enable them to receive the Torah. For this purpose, Moses was sent to redeem the people of Israel from Egypt (§§ 1–3). Several portions of Book II are written in Aramaic, in similarity with Book I, others in the late Hebraized Aramaic (i.e., in the hybrid language which developed from the eleventh century onwards).³ Portions written in Neo Samaritan Hebrew (NSH) penetrate the text. The subjects treated are very varied. Although the main topic is “The Song of the Sea”, a multitude of inserted portions and their diversity have considerably altered the original form. Arguably, the ancient parts of this book originally formed a single unit with the first book. Later additions caused their separation into two distinct books (Kippenberg 1971, pp. 5, 216–17).

The third book, *ویدبر مته وهکنیم هلویم*, *Moses and the Levitical Priests Spoke*, is a midrash on the pericope of the “curses” (Deut 27: 9–27) (i.e., verses start with *زور*, ‘cursed be’). It contains teachings drawn from the imprecations said by the Levites against the transgressions enumerated in that pericope. Its language is mostly the late Hebraized Aramaic, into which segments composed in NSH quite often pervade. This is true for the rest of TM as well.

The fourth book, *میمه عل شیرته رته*, *The Treatise about The Great Song*, consists of a collection of homilies on Deut 32, which is considered by the Samaritans as a compendium of the whole Torah.⁴

² Nine paragraphs, namely 9–17, intercalated in Book II of many manuscripts of the type S, actually belong structurally to Book I. Since they are absent from MS K, they are reproduced in the present edition as its appendix.

³ Coined *سومرونیت* (“Samaritan”) in Ben-Hayyim (1939, p. 333), and further, in Ben-Hayyim (1969, p. 29), it is characterized as an amalgam of Hebrew and Aramaic derived from literary texts, deeply influenced by Arabic. “Samaritan” served exclusively as the community’s written means of expression, mainly in liturgy and other literary pieces (see below).

⁴ MS K is deficient in the fourth book; 45 of the 110 paragraphs existing in MS S are missing beyond recovery.

The fifth book, *מִימֵר עַל וַיָּמָת תִּמְתֵּה*, *Treatise about “Moses died there”* (Deut. 34:5), describes the events preceding the death of Moses. He departs for Mount Nebo accompanied by the lamenting Children of Israel. There he is welcomed by the hosts of heavenly angels. From the top of Mount Nebo Moses is shown the four quarters of the world and then he enters a cave, where a great sleep falls upon him. The book ends with praises of Moses and Aaron, and also of Joshua.

The sixth book, *מִימֵר מִדְּבַר בְּעִתְרִים וְתִנִּים*, *A Treatise Composed of the Twenty-Two Letters of the alphabet*, is arranged in two sections: (1) a long discourse on the Creation, and (2) a dialogue between Moses and the letters, which spells out the role of the letters in the history and life of Israel, and their spiritual meaning. As handed down to us, only twelve letters are present in the conversation, which begs the question—Was a part of this composition lost?

1. The New Edition

The new edition is a supplement to the monumental *תיבת מרקה והיא אסופת מדרשים שומרוניים יוצאת לאור מקור תרגום ופירוש על ידי זאב בן-חיים*, *Tibât Mârqe, a Collection of Samaritan Midrashim*, edited, translated, and annotated in Hebrew by the Nestor of Samaritan studies, Ze'ev Ben-Ḥayyim.⁵ His edition is based on a 16th century manuscript in possession of the priestly family in Shechem, a photocopy of which is housed in the National and University Library in Jerusalem (S in the following). Though he recognized the precedence of a much earlier manuscript, dated to the 14th century (K), Ben-Ḥayyim was compelled to give preference to the former, given the fragmentary state of K at that time. He therefore printed K, when available, in parallel with S. His rich annotations and discussions naturally pertained chiefly to S, while K was taken into consideration occasionally, mainly when its readings were able to clarify the readings of S or presented an independent tradition. This choice was dictated by the fact that the older version covered roughly 45 percent of the text of the composition as given in S.

Matters changed considerably at the turn of the century when the late Samaritan sage, Israel b. Gamaliel Tsedaqa returned from a trip to St. Petersburg and reported about some previously unknown fragments of *Tibât Mârqe*. He also showed to Ben-Ḥayyim photocopied samples of a manuscript, which the latter identified as belonging to the fragments located in the Torino Library (the bigger fragment of K known to date). Encouraged by Ben-Ḥayyim, in April 2003 I undertook a trip to the Russian National Library in St. Petersburg where I had the opportunity to study a large fragment, namely Sam III, 51. From the comparison of the St. Petersburg fragments with the photographs collected by Ben-Ḥayyim for K, it was clear to me that Sam III, 51 and the fragments he published in his edition belonged to each other. I also examined two other smaller fragments, written by other hands that bear distinct features of MS K: Sam III, 52 (4 folios) and Sam IX, 46 (42 folios).

2. The Language of *Tibât Mârqe*

As already mentioned, TM is linguistically anything but homogenous. Every period of the linguistic evolution of the Samaritan community left its traces on this *Sammlung*. Scholars have identified differences in the language of its six books, as Kippenberg put it: “Der Sammelcharakter of MM [Memar Marqa] wirft die Frage auf, ob nicht vielleicht Spätere diesem Werk weitere Überlieferungen einverleibt haben. Dieser Verdacht wird dadurch verstärkt, daß im MM ganze Passagen nicht aram., sondern hebr. abgefaßt sind” (Kippenberg 1971, p. 169). Kippenberg refers to Montgomery’s statement: “Aramaic composition lasted as late as the XIth Century, when Hebrew began to supersede it” (Montgomery 1907, p. 271). Montgomery’s assertion was closely followed by Cowley’s inquiries into the Samaritan liturgy. In a detailed description Cowley put forward his conclusion that Aramaic reigned supreme in the fourth century. Then (after a period of poor literary activity), in the 10th and

⁵ The first full publication of TM (with English) translation was John Macdonald’s, *Memar Marqah*, I–II, Berlin: Verlag Alfred Töpelmann, 1963. For his unhappy choice of base text see Ben-Ḥayyim’s critique in BO 23 (1966), pp. 185–91.

11th centuries an artificial Aramaic mixed with Hebraisms was used for literary purposes. It developed steadily under growing Hebrew influence and reached its apogee in the 13th to 14th century, the epoch of the Samaritan *Renaissance*, when Hebrew mixed with Aramaisms became the liturgical, as well as literary, language (Cowley 1909, p. xxxiv). This is the “Samaritan” as baptized by Ben-Ḥayyim.⁶ In an enlightening study, *Late Samaritan Hebrew* (Florentin 2005) Florentin described in detail this amalgamated argot, which he coined “Hybrid Samaritan Hebrew” (HSH):⁷ “a mixture of Hebrew and Aramaic (p. xxvii).” One of the characteristics of HSH is the mingling of Hebrew and Aramaic elements, both morphological and lexical, resulting from “a poetic decision taken by an elite group of intellectuals” (p. 69). Obviously, Arabic, the Samaritan vernacular, as well as the language of exegesis and halakha, had a serious impact on this linguistic blend, mainly on vocabulary and syntax (pp. 128–56). Moreover, the long process of transmission by Arabic speaking scribes “Arabized” much of the older parts of TM.

On the basis of a comprehensive analysis of its various grammatical and lexical manifestations Ben-Ḥayyim divided TM into two parts: Book I is mainly Aramaic. It bears the characteristics of the language of the poems and hymns penned by Mārqe and by his contemporaries, namely Amram Dare and Ninna (Ben-Ḥayyim 1957, pp. 12–16; TM, pp. 15–24). Therefore, there is good reason to attribute it to Mārqe himself, even though its long and concealed process of transmission deeply influenced its final shape.

As for Book II, Ben-Ḥayyim demonstrated that the paragraphs 1–8, 18–19, 36–38, and 50–54 do not belong to their environment, being imported from a much younger composition. Accordingly, he initially assumed that Books I and II were one unit, which started with Moses’ commission and ended with the departure from Egypt. It was augmented by later interpolations and finally divided into two.⁸ Ben-Ḥayyim dealt with TM as manifested in MS S. As a matter of fact, a part of these interpolations is absent from MS K, namely §§ 9–17, 20–35 and 52 to the end. This suggests that actually Book II was at a certain stage of development an independent unit, into which older (Aramaic) elements were inserted in the recension represented by MS S.

The deep linguistic discrepancy between Book I and the rest of TM is faithfully illustrated by the inroad of Hebrew elements in Books II–VI, which substituted Aramaic. They represent a remarkable later stage of development of Samaritan Aramaic, when in the process of succumbing to the surrounding Arabic it became increasingly mingled with Hebrew, the language of the holy writ.⁹

This Aramaic sprinkled with Hebrew was also the dominant language in the composition of the 10th to 11th century poets Ildustan, Ab Isda, Tabya ibn Darta, and others (Tal 2009, pp. 163–88).

There is a third stage in Samaritan literature, whose expression is mainly Hebrew. Though fused with Aramaic, Hebrew remains dominant. In this it corresponds to the poetry that crystalized around the 14th century.

Even in their quotations from the Torah, the preference manifested in various parts of TM for original Hebrew or Aramaic Targum constitutes a significant factor in the linguistic evaluation of TM. As given in MS K according to the present edition, Book I differs considerably from the rest of TM, being inclined mainly towards Aramaic quotations taken from ST. 127 direct quotations stem from the Aramaic Targum, while the Hebrew SP is quoted only six times in Book I. Three quotations are a mix between Hebrew and Aramaic.¹⁰ By contrast, Book II displays 105 quotations from the Hebrew SP and only four from the Aramaic ST. Book III has 81 Hebrew quotations, 57 Aramaic, and seven mixed quotations. Book IV quotes the Hebrew SP 225 times, and the Aramaic ST 96 times; it also has 21 mixed

⁶ See above, n. 3.

⁷ I prefer the term Neo-Samaritan Hebrew (NSH).

⁸ First suggested in his review of Macdonald’s edition (Ben-Ḥayyim 1966, p. 190), and later discussed in TM, p. 108. See also Kippenberg (1971, pp. 216–22).

⁹ In TM, pp. 15–24 Ben-Ḥayyim gives a list of Hebrew and Hebraized Aramaic words and forms.

¹⁰ Not counting allusions, paraphrases, and repetitions.

quotations. In Book V there are 70 quotations, 55 from SP, 13 from ST, and two mixed. Finally, Book VI, has 23 Hebrew quotations from SP, 12 Aramaic quotations from ST, and three of mixed character. Obviously, this is a convincing argument in favor of approaching Book I as a separate literary unit, composed during the historical period when the Samaritan Targum was *en vogue* within the community and undoubtedly well understood. The rest of TM is clearly far removed from this period. As Aramaic lost ground to the growing Arabic influence, and Hebrew gained a stronger position in literature (see above), the Targum became less popular and was largely abandoned.

3. Manuscripts and Transmission

The extant manuscripts of Tibât Mârqe differ from each other not only in scribal variations but also in language, content, and structure. One may identify two principal recensions, well defined: one represented by MS K, the other by MS S.¹¹

3.1. The Text

As represented in the K tradition, several fragments scattered throughout several libraries constitute the text of Tibât Mârqe. A short survey which follows Ben-Ḥayyim's introduction is given in the following lines.

1. **Biblioteca Nazionale Universitaria di Torino, H1** (once in the possession of P. Kahle) consists of 145 folios, 143 of which contain Tibât Mârqe. Fol. 143a contains the colophon:

הכתב אהן כתבה על שם רבנה טבה ויקירה וידועה ומבונה ומביר כל מימר חסיד מלב
מלי פינחס בן רבה דקהלה הכהן הגדול בדמשק איתמר בן אהרן בן איתמר בן אהרן בן
אבי עזי בן פינחס בן אלעזר בן נתנאל בן אלעזר הכהנים הגדולים ישימו יהוה מברך
עליו ויחננו בנים טבים יתילפו כל דכתיב לגוה אמן אמן

This book was written on behalf of our good and honorable master, the insightful, who clarifies every clever treatise wholeheartedly, Phinehas, the son of the chief of the community, the Great Priest in Damascus, Ithamar the son of Aaron, the son of Ithamar, the son of Aaron, the son of Abi Ozzi, the son of Phinehas, the son of Eleazar, the son of Netanel, the son of Eleazar, the Great Priests, let the Lord make him blessed, and favor him with good sons who will learn all that is written in it. Amen, Amen.

Phinehas son of Ithamar, the Great Priest, became Great Priest himself after his father's death in the year H 793 (= 1391/2 CE) (Florentin 1999; TM, p. 34.). Since the book was copied while his father was still alive, we may safely assume that K is the product of the 14th century. It is therefore the oldest copy of TM known. A detailed physical description of MS H1 is given in TM (pp. 33–34).

2. **Saint Petersburg, National Library of Russia, Sam III, 51** contains 124 folios disorderly bound together. Moreover, they are incorrectly numbered: two folios repeat the numbers 22 and 23 (I marked them with an asterisk). Folios 144–145 do not bear on TM. MS Sam III, 51 and Torino H1 belong to one and the same manuscript. One may ascertain this fact just from their common *custodes*. Such is **وقفو** which occurs at the header of the former's fol. 16a and at the footer of the latter's fol. 58b (Book VI, § 29).

3. **Jerusalem Sam 8⁰, 47**. The fragment, located in the National Library in Jerusalem, contains eight folios with dimensions and script identical to MS Torino H1 and MS Sam III, 51. The footer of its last folio (8b) has the *custos* **السادس**, which reappears on the header of Sam III, 51, fol. 52a. The text pertains to Book II, §§ 44–50.

¹¹ This was already established by Rettig (pp. 11–19), who examined in detail the material at his disposal when preparing his 1934 dissertation. I use the symbol S, initial of Shechem, where the manuscript is located (TM, pp. 35–36). As for K, I follow Macdonald, who named the fragments he used after Paul Kahle, the owner of the fragment presently found in the library of Torino University (Macdonald, pp. XXVI–XXIX; TM, pp. 33–35). In the introduction to his TM, Ben-Ḥayyim amply discussed the distribution of the manuscripts (pp. 30–36), which I follow in the present edition.

4. **British Library, London, Or. 12296** (Gaster Collection no. 883)¹² is a collection of 14 folios bearing the physical characteristics of the above-mentioned fragments that belong to TM. The first group of folios, 1a–4b, continues the text of Torino H1 in Book III, § 16, having as header the *custos* انظر, which is also at the footer of Torino H1, f. 55b. The second group, folios 5a–13b, with the *custos* تبتت as header of fol. 5a, follows Torino H1, fol. 114b, which has the same *custos* as footer (Book VI, § 18). The last folio, 14ab, follows Torino H1, fol. 115b, which is damaged at its lower end, and therefore no *custos* survived (Book VI, § 39).

The following fragments are copies made at undetermined times by various scribes, all different in script from the former fragments, but still bearing the distinct linguistic characteristics of K.

5. **Saint Petersburg, National Library of Russia, Sam III, 51** (*) contains four folios, numbered 24–27, being copies of K or its prototype, bound together with Sam III, 51. (I marked them with an asterisk). The text is different from S, corresponding in language and structure to BL Or. 7923, whose folios 1–37 represent the K tradition (see below). They cover Book I, §§ 3–10 in the following order: *26, *24, *25, *27.

6. The fragment **Sam III, 52** from **Saint Petersburg, National Library of Russia** contains four folios copied from K or from its prototype. In this edition it was used as an auxiliary source to restore the text of mutilated folios of Sam III, 51 in Book IV, §§ 69–71.

7. The fragment **Sam IX, 46** from **Saint Petersburg, National Library of Russia** consists of 42 folios, the first 16 of which were copied from K or its prototype. The rest are copies of various prayers. Many of its folios are badly damaged. I used it for the restoration of K where no other text was available in the Books I, §§ 10–11; 39–40; 52; II, § 3–4 and IV, §§ 55–59; 93.

8. The fragment, now lost, published by S. Kohn under the title “Aus einer Pessach-Haggadah der Samaritaner” in his *Zur Sprache, Literatur und Dogmatik der Samaritaner*, (Kohn 1876, pp. 1–95), Kohn was unaware of it being part and parcel of TM, a fact later recognized by Baneth and others (Baneth 1888, p. 16; Emmrich 1897, p. 16; TM, pp. 11, 312–32). Its close affinity with MS Torino H1 was proven by Ben-Hayyim’s analysis (Ben-Hayyim 1983, p. 124). Notably, the first word of the fragment, كسپه, corresponds to the *custos* الفضة (i.e., الْفِضَّةُ) at the footer of Torino H1, fol. 16b (Book I, § 66).

9. **British Library, London, Or. 7923 (L)** is a late copy of K (1738–1741 C.E.) as far as its first 37 folios are concerned. The rest are copied from MS S. It was used for restoration of damaged text in the first 12 paragraphs of Book I as well as in paragraph 77.¹³

3.2. The Translation

Rendering an Aramaic document into English is certainly not a simple task. The significant diversity in structure, semantics, etc., between these two languages is a great obstacle to surmount, especially because Tibât Mârqe with its mixture of Aramaic, Hebraized Aramaic, and even late Neo-Samaritan Hebrew, was transmitted by scribes who no longer spoke the language of the composition they copied. Moreover, it is very doubtful whether it was understood in every detail at the time the extant copies were made. All this creates an entangled fabric which contributes considerably to the difficulties of translation.

In my attempt to produce a translation that represents the composition and its ways of expression as faithfully as possible, I adopted a more or less literal rendition, without infringing too much on the laws of the English language. When the tension between the source language and the target language became too great, I opted for Tibât Mârqe rather than departing from it for the sake of “good” English.

¹² I gratefully used the microfilm located at the Israel National Library in Jerusalem and the digital images accessible at the website of the British Library.

¹³ See Ben-Hayyim’s discussion about the eclectic character of this copy in TM, p. 32. Unfortunately, Macdonald did not realize this fact. He took the whole manuscript as uniform and made it the basic text of his edition (Macdonald 1963, p. XXXIII). See Ben-Hayyim (1966).

On the other hand, I adopted the proper names, places, and persons as given in the modern English translations of the Pentateuch, avoiding the actual Samaritan pronunciation. I did so in order to prevent the reader from stumbling over unrecognizable names, such as *Na* for Noah, *Yashishakar* for Issachar, *Ye'usha* for Joshua, etc. For similar considerations I transcribed the entire text into the Jewish “square script” which is far more popular than the one practiced by the Samaritan scribes. After all, this is what many of the previous editors of Samaritan texts did from the 19th century onward.¹⁴ Thus, every Samaritan letter has been faithfully rendered by a sister-system of graphemes.

3.3. The Notes

Translation is not enough to make such a complicated composition understood. Its sometimes intentionally cryptic formulations require explanatory notes. Examples are the predilection of the authors for sobriquets instead of real names of the figures involved in their accounts,¹⁵ and their constant recourse to subtle allusions to events, ideas, precepts, etc. that are difficult to identify and leave the reader in the dark as to their meaning. In many cases it is necessary to inquire into the way homilies are derived from biblical passages, especially when the matter is not self-evident, although in most cases the notes attempt to clarify intricate, sometimes lengthy, sentences penned with very little concern for coherence. Thus, the purpose of the notes is mainly to decipher the messages conveyed. I am not convinced that I fulfilled this task successfully in every case, chiefly because of my limited faculties, but also because very little has been treated by scholars in the past.¹⁶

4. Concluding Remarks

To summarize, the above introduction outlines the main features of the new edition and translation of this most important Samaritan literary work. Due to the brevity of this article, no illustrative examples of the new manuscript could be included, but it is hoped that this preview motivates readers to consult the complete work which has just come off the press under the title *Tibât Mârqe: The Ark of Marqe. Edition, Translation, Commentary* (Tal 2019).

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Abbreviations

LOT	Ben-Ḥayyim, Ze'ev: <i>The Literary and Oral Tradition of Hebrew and Aramaic amongst the Samaritans</i> , Vols. I–V, Jerusalem: Academy of Hebrew Language, 1957–1977 (in Hebrew).
SP	Samaritan Pentateuch
ST	Samaritan Targum
ST	<i>The Samaritan Targum of the Pentateuch</i> , I–III, edited by Abraham Tal, Tel-Aviv: Tel-Aviv University Press, 1980–1983.
TM	Tibât Mârqe.
TM	Ben-Ḥayyim, Ze'ev: <i>Tibât Mârqe, a Collection of Samaritan Midrashim, Edited, Translated and Annotated</i> . Jerusalem: The Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities 1988 (in Hebrew).

¹⁴ In fact, the “Samaritan” characters used from the 17th century on for the printed editions of SP and ST in the Polyglots of Paris and London, as well as for many treatises, have very little to do with the Samaritan characters as they appear in the manuscripts. A great improvement is visible in the “Table of Alphabets” produced by M. Lidzbarski (columns 7–9) and appended to the 28th edition of E. Kautzsch’s edition of Gesenius’ Hebrew Grammar (A.E. Cowley transl.), Oxford 1910. See also Pummer (1987), Plate I.

¹⁵ E.g., Moses is nicknamed *بر دعدن*, “the son of the son of Eden”, which embraces into one sequence two different circumstances: (a) Moses being protected by the Nile (Exod. 2:3), and (b) the source of the Nile in the Garden of Eden, as the TM identifies the Nile with *پیشون* and *گیخون* (Book I, §§ 9, 28 respectively) both originating in Eden (Gen. 2:13).

¹⁶ According to his own testimony, the illuminating notes that accompany Ben-Ḥayyim’s edition were directed mostly to linguistic and versional matters (TM, p. 30). Nevertheless, I found in them many instructive remarks concerning beliefs and ideas, a good part of which I quoted in my edition.

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