

Renaissance of Samaritan Culture
Collaborative Project under the Sponsorship of Unesco

אמריטאן קולטור רנאסאנסה פראקט
אזאמיראן קולטור רנאסאנסה פראקט

نهضة الثقافة السامرية
مشروع مشترك تحت كفالة اليونسكو

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*Letters alaf and taaf representing «Alfa and Omega» of Samaritan language
Font created by Christophe Silvestre*

Introduction

Current situation of Samaritan

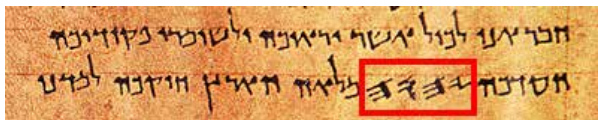
Samaritan language and heritage are endangered. The Samaritan community (800 in total) speaks Arabic in Nablus and Hebrew in Holon. Samaritan is only used for religious services and its used is disappearing due to a lack of modern communication tools (through computer) and teaching materials.

Members of the community want enhanced access to digital tools to enable new forms of composing and liturgical/artistic/cultural production.

A Holy Alphabet

The Samaritan alphabet is the oldest in the world to have always been in use and also the closest graphically to the first alphabet invented by man. It was used by the Jews to write the Bible before they adopted the Aramaic script (-700 BC), of which modern Hebrew is the last evolution.

For the Jews, this alphabet was sacred. Even many centuries after the adoption of the Aramaic alphabet, they continued to write the name of God, the sacred tetragram (Yahweh) in this Samaritan alphabet:



Fragment of parchment of Qumran

The Project: a Collaborative Website

This project is aimed at providing the resources and tools to permit the revival of Samaritan culture through the creation of the **first Website** in Samaritan script as a **repository of literature**, dictionary, bible and language learning materials.

The Bible: a Key to Success

Today, the cement between all Samaritans is not the language neither the culture, but the religion. Therefore the first Samaritan Bible online (as text and not pictures) will be a key element in this project.

Many researchers and religious people all around the world have a strong interest in the Samaritan bible as they did with the Qumran rolls. Such a bible with a dictionary and the possibility to search words will be of **worldwide interest**. This Bible should be enhanced and be a complement to the translations made by Mark Shoulson and Benyamim Tsedaka.

Current Limitations

A few persons will not be able to save Samaritan culture as nobody has all the knowledge required (teaching a language, writing teaching materials, ability to write Samaritan novels, poetry or songs, owning Samaritan manuscript or lead typography books to be digitalized, a linguistic approach to create Samaritan words for the non existing ones from original roots, etc.

Only Solution: Collaborative Work

The success of safeguarding and the revival of the Samaritan culture and language can be achieved only if we motivate the totality of the Samaritan community to share their existing knowledge and create new one.

The Model to Follow: Wikipedia

The Website to be created will use similar technology and give the same possibilities: everybody will be able to add or improve content. Also the content to be presented will be approved by the community and will not be the arbitrary decision of only one person.

Be Part of the Project

By sponsoring this project you will take part in safeguarding and promoting the oldest alphabet on earth still in use in its original shape. The Samaritan alphabet is also the closest to the first original alphabet found in the Sinai desert.

WebSite content

Summary

Menu Bar Items

- 1/ The Samaritan: History and present
- 2/ Learn Samaritan & Dictionary
- 3/ Samaritan Bible
- 4/ Samaritan writings
- 5/ Gallery
- 6/ Sponsors and thanks

There will be a button to chose between 4 languages (Arabic, Hebrew, English and French).

The details are presented in the following paragraphs

1/ The Samaritans: History and Present

History, economic situation, religious beliefs, difficulties, political issues, geography, etc. Everything the Samaritan would like to tell about themselves.

2/ Learn Samaritan & Dictionary

Content:

1/ alphabet with drawings showing how to write the letters,

2/ grammar and syntax,

3/ flashcards with words and sentences (including sounds and pictures). A written Samaritan word (or sentence with its sound) is presented, then a button permit to display the translation in Arabic, Hebrew and English (with a picture to help memorization). An algorithm to decide when to review the flashcard will be used to present the same word again and again later on. See appendix for details.

4/ dialogs in Samaritan with 3 translations (Ar, Hb, En)

5/ dictionary: Entries in Samaritan with translations in Hebrew, Arabic and English. Search will be possible in the 4 languages

6/ resources: keyboard, fonts, flashcards (to use off-line), writings as pdf and epub, sound recordings.

Remark: the dictionary will be the key element of this section. The creation of new words, defining correct spelling of spoken words will be a huge and continuing work.

3/ Samaritan Bible

The whole bible in Samaritan script (as text and not pictures) where word search will be available. See appendix.

4/ Samaritan Writings and Art Gallery

Writings: People will be able to share their own novels, poems, songs even with audio mp3.

Gallery: Pictures of Samaritan craft, paintings, monuments, etc.

Who Am I?

Diplomas et competencies

Linguist speaking 10 languages, Microsoft Engineer, Certified par Adobe as an InDesign expert, Website designer... and passionate by alphabets!

I created more than 20 fonts from which 4 were provided with Adobe Indesign and Acrobat ME (Arabic and Hebrew versions from CS1 to CS5). Those were the first OpenTypes fonts containing Arabic, Hebrew and Latin characters with specific features.

Language methodology competencies

By learning 10 languages one after the other, I created a methodology I ameliorated through all these last 30 years.

This methodology will be applied to Samaritan and the feedback of the students will help to create a training course adapted to their specific needs.

This project proposal was realized by:

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Appendix

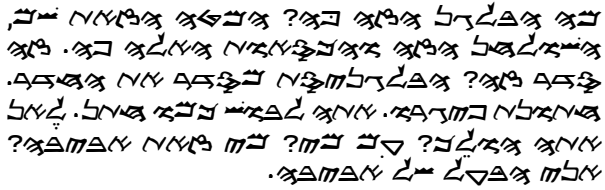
Current Samaritan Font Situation

Today, there are only handscript fonts available. They were scanned and digitalised from old manuscripts.

Would somebody write or read a book with such a font:

Would somebody write or read a book with such a font? It would be difficult. This is how Samaritan fonts look today. You will get used to it if you don't have proper typographic fonts. This is how it is in Samaritan.

Here is an example in Samaritan:



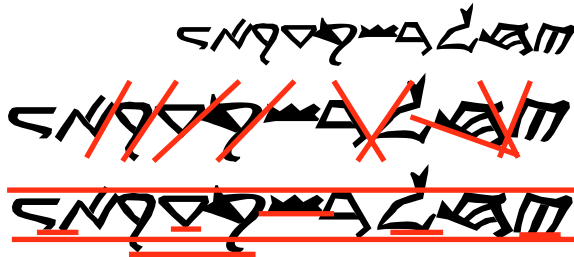
Would somebody use a Gothic font today, because this is the way we used to write the Bible in the past?

Would somebody use a Gothic font today, because this is the way we used to write in the past? It is the same with Hebrew. Nobody would use these fonts today.

This is exactly the same with Hebrew, nobody will use scripts as the ones found in the Qumran caves:

1 צראשיות צרא אלחיס את וטשלים ואת:
וצארץ 1:2 וצארץ ויווצ ותו וצו וצו וצו וצו
על פני וצו וצו וצו וצו וצו וצו וצו וצו
פני וצו

These scripts are **tiring to the eyes** as they go in different diagonals and don't respect the baseline as shown bellow:



The beauty of those old script

We can't deny that these scripts are beautiful and full of personality but we would have difficulties to read full pages!

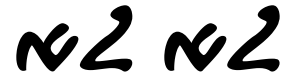
Need of a Real Typographic Font

Kerning

To ease reading, we minimise open spaces between letters. For example, between A and V, we bring nearer these two letters. This is called kerning:

AV instead of: AV

Similar need in Samaritan:



No existing Samaritan font has kerning.

Need of a proper diacritic positioning

Samaritan diacritics are collapsing in existing fonts and are wrongly placed on the left of the letters:



This is how it should be:



All these improvement can be done through OpenType features.

Need of a Font for Arabic Transliteration:

In the past Samaritans wrote Arabic with Samaritan characters. They couldn't do it until now due to computer limitation and a lack of knowledge in programing for complex scripts.

This kind of **literature is dead** and can flourish again thanks to a computer program to be developed. For example, this program will transform:

أهلاً وسهلاً

in Samaritan letters :

אָהֲלָא וסְהֻלָא

Be it 2 words or 100 pages, this program will transform everything. Also a special font to be created will permit to write again Arabic in Samaritan characters.

Safeguard Samaritan texts created with Daguesh

I produced a program that transforms all texts created with Daguesh to standards .rtf files.

Screenshot of Bibles Online

Not only scholars, but so many people are interested in reading and comparing bibles online. A Website with the Samaritan bible will attract many people who will discover by the same time the Samaritan heritage and might be interested in going to Naplus. The city of Naplus might be interested in promoting such a Bible.

Example of a Website where you can compare Bibles in many different languages:

<https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=%EF%BA%97%EF%BB%9C%EF%BB%AE%EF%BB%B3%EF%BB%A6%201&version=NAV;ERV;WLC>

The screenshot shows a web interface for comparing Bible translations. At the top, there are three tabs: 'Ketab El Hayat (NAV)', 'Easy-to-Read Version', and 'The Westminster Leningrad Codex (WLC)'. Below the tabs, the text of Genesis 1 is displayed in three columns. The first column is in Arabic, the second in English, and the third in Hebrew. The English text is titled 'The Beginning of the World' and 'The First Day—Light'. The Hebrew text is titled 'בראשית בראשית בראשית את השמים ואת הארץ'.

1 Ketab El Hayat (NAV) تكوين
 بدء الخليقة
 1 في البدء خلق الله السموات والأرض، 2 وإذ كانت الأرض متوحشة ومظلمة وكثفت الظلمة وجه المياه، وإذ كان رُوحُ الله يُزغرفُ على سطح المياه.
 اليوم الأول: النور
 3 أمر الله: «ليكن نورٌ». فصارت نُورٌ، 4 ورأى الله النورَ فاستحسنه وافصل بينه وبين الظلمة، 5 وسمّى الله النورَ نهاراً، أما الظلمة فسمّاه ليلاً. وهكذا جاء مساءً وأغلقه صباح، فكان اليوم الأول.
 اليوم الثاني: الجلد
 6 ثم أمر الله: «ليكن جلدٌ يَحْضُرُ بين مياهٍ ومياهٍ». 7 فخلق الله الجلد، وفزق بين المياه التي تحمّلها السحب والمياه التي تغشّرُ الأرضين. وهكذا كان. 8 وسمّى الله الجلد سماءً. ثم جاء مساءً وأغلقه صباح فكان اليوم الثاني.
 اليوم الثالث: الأرض الجافة والخضروات
 9 ثم أمر الله: «بليثع المياه التي تحت السماء إلى موضعٍ واحدٍ، وليظهر اليابسة». وهكذا كان. 10 وسمّى الله اليابسة أرضاً والمياه السائلة بحاراً. ورأى الله ذلك فاستحسنه. 11 وأمر الله: «بليثب الأرض حُضرةً، وشجراً شُجراً فيه

Genesis 1 Easy-to-Read Version (ERV)
 The Beginning of the World
 1 God created the sky and the earth. At first, 2 the earth was completely empty. There was nothing on the earth. Darkness covered the ocean, and God’s Spirit moved over^(a) the water.
 The First Day—Light
 3 Then God said, “Let there be light!” And light began to shine.^(b) 4 He saw the light, and he knew that it was good. Then he separated the light from the darkness. 5 God named the light “day,” and he named the darkness “night.”
 There was evening, and then there was morning. This was the first day.
 The Second Day—Sky
 6 Then God said, “Let there be a space^(c) to separate the water into

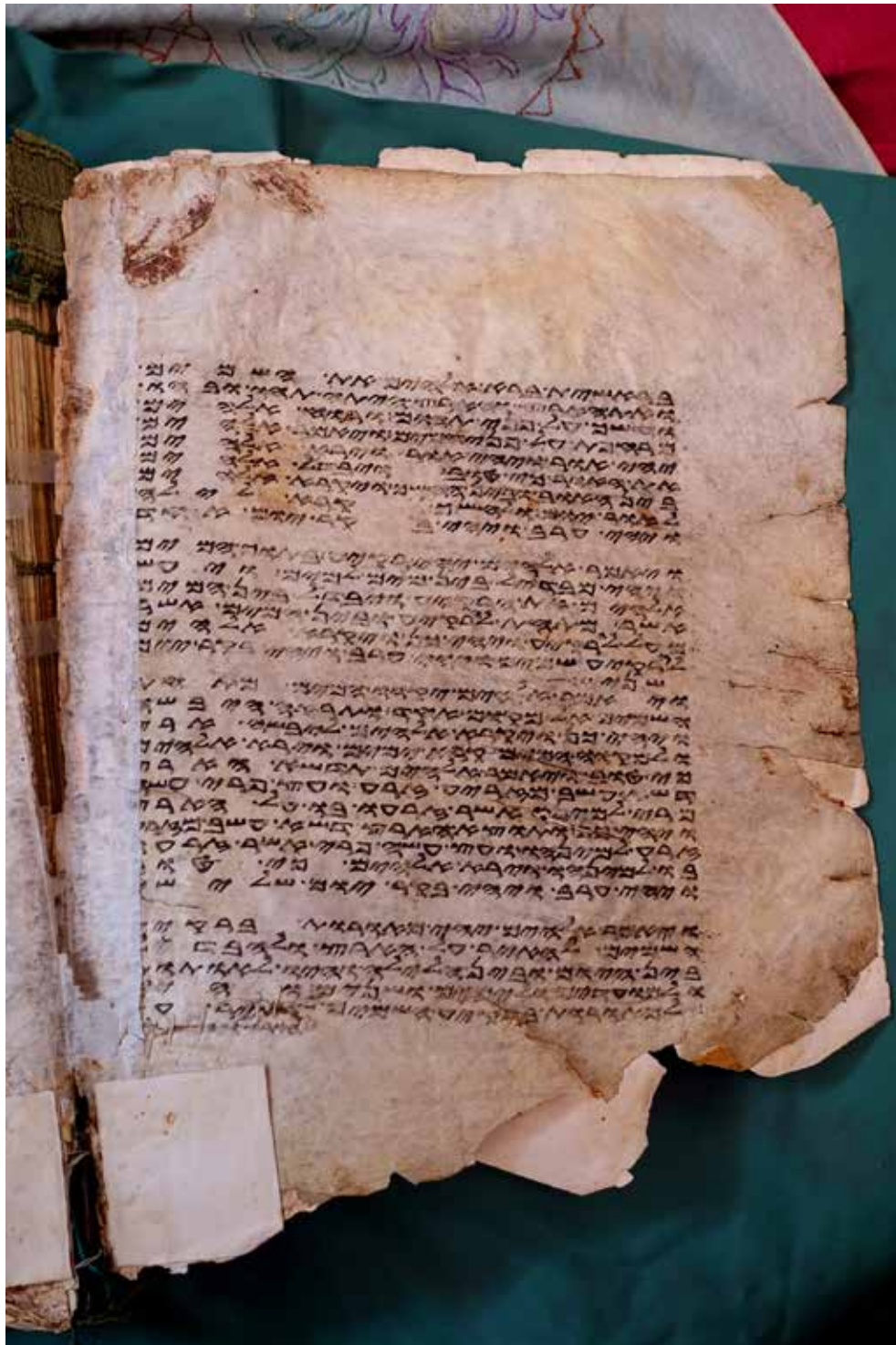
1 The Westminster Leningrad Codex (WLC)
 בראשית בראשית בראשית את השמים ואת הארץ:
 2 והארץ היתה תהו ובהו וחשך על־פני תהום ורוח אלהים מרחפת על־פני המים:
 3 ויאמר אלהים יהי אור ויהי־אור:
 4 ורא אלהים את־האור כי־טוב ויבדל אלהים בין האור ובין החשך:
 5 ויקרא אלהים לאור יום ולחשך קרא לילה ויהי־ערב ויהי־בקר יום אחד: פ
 6 ויאמר אלהים יהי רקיע בתוך המים ויהי מבדיל בין מים למים:
 7 ויעש אלהים את־הרקיע ויבדל בין המים אשר מתחת לרקיע ובין המים אשר מעל לרקיע ויהי־כן:
 8 ויקרא אלהים לרקיע שמים ויהי־ערב ויהי־בקר יום שני: פ
 9 ויאמר אלהים יקוו המים מתחת השמים אל־מקום אחד ותראה היבשה ויהי־כן:
 10 ויקרא אלהים ליבשה ארץ ולמקנה המים קרא

Urgent Need of an OCR!

How many books are in such state and will disintegrate before the end of this century?

What to do? Scan them? And then? Who will take the pain to read such pictures?

There is an urgent need to create a Samaritan OCR that will convert these books in standard .rtf texts and will preserve them forever. This OCR will enable different kinds of scholarship and activity with the texts.



Screenshot of Flashcards to Learn Samaritan

First flashcard display the Samaritan word (or sentence) and a click on the loud speaker will pronounce it. A click on the button “Show Answer” will show the second card.

If the student knows the answer, then he can suspend the card or choose to repeat it in a few minutes or days.

The algorithm calculates when the card should be displayed for the following repetitions. The picture and the sound will help to memorise.

