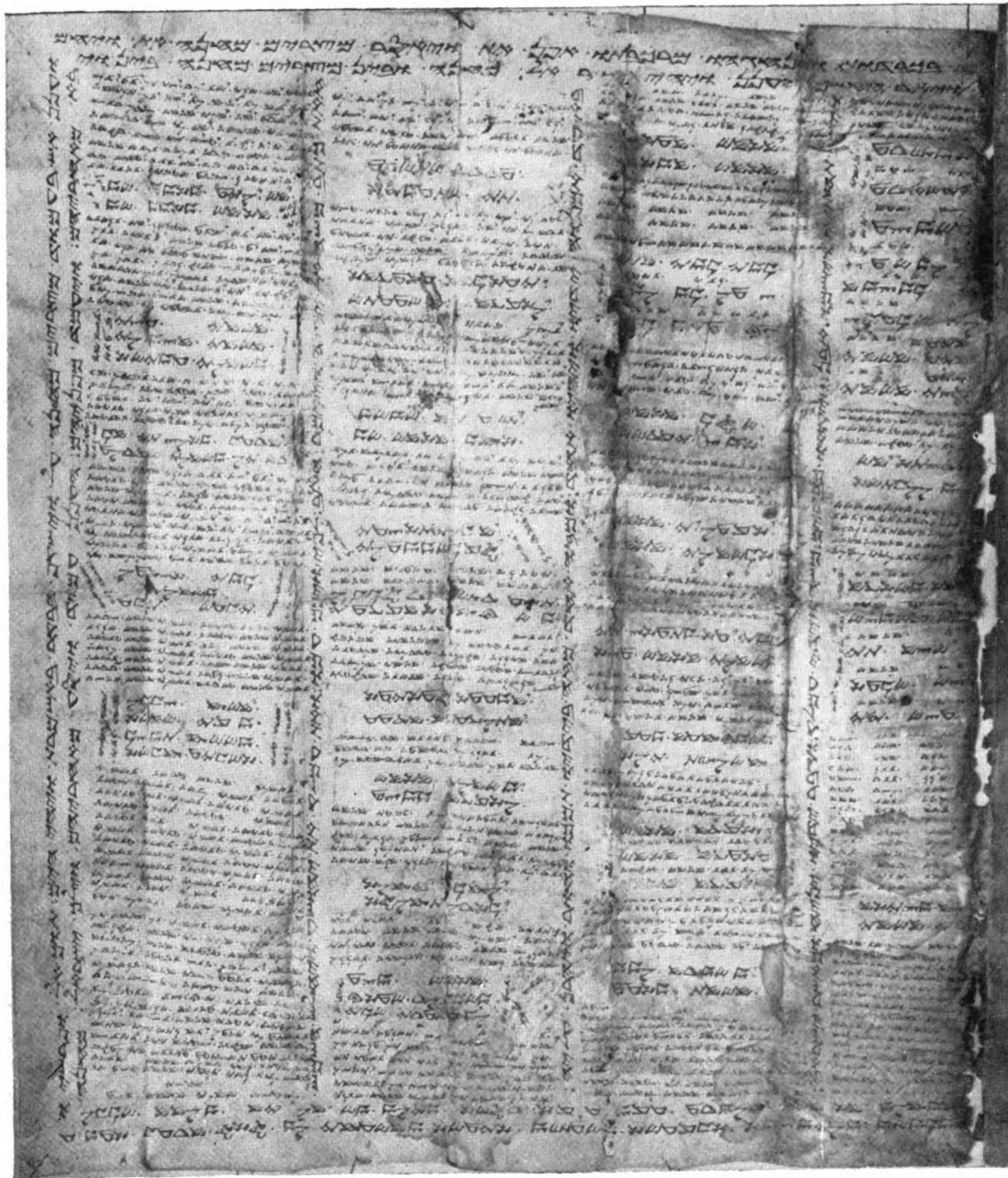


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HALF OF THE PARCHMENT SAID TO CONTAIN THE KEY TO THE INCOMMUNICABLE NAME OF JEHOVAH.

## **Samaritan Annals and the Mystic Name**

Daniel H. Ayers

A proposition formerly made and recently renewed to sell to the British Museum an ancient Samaritan document, known as "Annals," has occasioned a revived interest among many archaeologists and Bible students in that portion of Semitic literature.

The Samaritan people, once numerous and powerful, have dwindled to a small tribe of less than one hundred and fifty souls located about Nablus (formerly Shechem, which from the first has been intimately connected with the history of Israel). When Zerubbabel rebuilt the city and temple at Jerusalem, the Samaritans sought to participate in the work, but their overtures were rejected (Ezra iv, 3). This led to an enduring enmity with the Jews, and after that their name appears no more in the Old Testament.

Samaria is one of the provinces of Palestine, but the name "Samaritans" applies to this remnant, who style themselves "Bene Yisrael" (sons of Israel). With great pertinacity they have clung to their ancient customs and traditions, and especially so with regard to their religious tenets, rites and observances.

The "Annals" purport to begin with Adam and to have been handed down to Phineas, grandson of Aaron, who formulated them into an orderly account; thence the records are claimed to have been continued through the priestly family, each high priest making additions concerning his own times. With much more probability, the early parts are ascribed to about the middle of the twelfth century. In 1346, Jacob b. Ishmael, priest at Damascus, brought the record down to his times, others continuing it, as before stated.

There were sixteen rolls of parchment in the collection offered to the British Museum by a cousin of the High (p. 124) Priest, and the price asked was £200 Sterling. To Christians a translation of that portion entitled "About the Birth of Jesus, the Son of Joseph the Carpenter," will no doubt be of interest, and reads as follows:

And in his days occurred the birth of Jesus, the son of Joseph the carpenter, of the sect of the Jews, hence the date from our ancestor Adam (to whom be peace) to the appearance of the son of Mary, 4290 years; and from the commencement of Fanoota (Samaritan word for darkness, i. e., since the disappearance of the Shechinah or God's light from the earth) to the birth of the said Jesus, the son of Mary, 1256; and his birth took place at Bethlehem; and his resort was to Nazareth; and many of the sect of the Jews were gathered to him, until his chief men were from among them; and the Jews hated him with a bitter hatred, and sought in every way to slay him because they claimed that all his works were contrary to the laws of their religion, and opposed to the traditions of the elders in every matter. And when he had gathered apostles he delegated them to various countries; among these, Peter was sent to Rome and Andrew to the Soudan, Matthew accompanying him; this Matthew wrote a gospel (this word is Greek and signified "good news"); this Matthew wrote his gospel in the year 41 after the death of Jesus, and it is said that he wrote it in Judea. Thomas was sent to Babylon, and Philip to "Kerwan" and Africa, and Paul to "Eliya" and its neighborhood; this Paul wrote a number of epistles which the Christians have, and he at first was called Saul, and it is said that he was born in Tarsus, capital of Silicia; it is said that he belonged to the tribe of Benjamin, but more truly he belongs to the tribe of Judah; he wrote fourteen epistles. Before he wrote these he sent an epistle to Salonica in the year 52, after the slaying of Jesus, the son of Mary; the last was the second epistle to the people of Timothy in the 56th year after the slaying of Jesus. And Simon was sent to the country of Barbary.

And the same Jesus had other disciples than these, among whom was Mark, who also wrote a gospel, and of whom it was said that he was a disciple of Peter; it is said that he wrote his gospel, at the dictation of Peter, to the people of Rome; it is said that he wrote his gospel forty-six years after the death of his master, Peter.

Among the others there was Luke, who was from the city of Antioch and Sabius, practicing medicine, and it is said that he was originally a heathen; after he became a Christian it is said he

was a disciple of Paul: it is said that he wrote his gospel in Beotia, which is a state in Greece, and its king was "Tabia Cade."

Among the others was John, who was from Bethsaida, a town of Galilee; he was the son of Zebedee and Salome; he was in his youth a fisherman, and Jesus ordained him as apostle. He also wrote a gospel in the year 101 after the death of Jesus; but more correctly after the slaying of Jesus in the year 97, because he reached the age of over 115; and it is said that he wrote part of his gospel in the Island of Patmos, and part after his return from there, in Ephesus, and he continued at the writing of his gospel from the year 97 after the slaying of Jesus.

To return to the subject of Jesus the son of Mary, whom the sect of the Jews, his relatives, accounted an illegitimate son of Joseph, the carpenter. Herod the king sought to slay him, and he fled from his hands, and was fugitive in hiding from him, and from his relatives the Jews. At this time the High Priest Ya Ayam died, in the mercy of God, and was succeeded by the High Priest Jonathan, who held the office for twenty-seven years. In his day Jesus, the son of Mary, was crucified by the Emperor Tiberius; with him were crucified two sinners, who, according to the laws of the Jews, were worthy of death. One of them was crucified on his right and the other on his left, and this was in the Jebusite city of "Aelia," through the instrumentality of "Jonata," the High Priest of the Jews. This Jesus never molested the Samaritans all the days of his life, neither were the Samaritans concerned with him, but he was a plague to his relatives and his coreligionists from whom he sprang; these were the sect of the Jews who hated him with bitter hatred.

The Jews were also the cause of the death of John, a disciple of the same Jesus; and they deceived Herod through the means of a young maiden whom they presented him for his pleasure; and when she found out that said Herod was deeply in love with her and her beauty, and was inclined to her, it was not difficult for her, and she beheaded said John. Said Herod was at Sebaste at the time.

The reason for naming this John "the Baptist" was that originally the Jews believed in his being righteous, and believed on him, and were also baptized of him; but stopped doing so when they saw he was a lover of Jesus, son of Mary, because they asked John not to baptize Jesus; but he took him to Jerico and baptized him there, for the Jews believed that any one who was baptized in those waters was cleansed from all their uncleanness and sins.

Since that time baptism has been changed and taken up by the Christians and refused by the Jews. The Jews instituted in its place to pass through the waters of Jordan, believing whosoever did so should be cleansed from their sins; but when the Christian kings came to power they forbade them from doing that.

With these parchments was another measuring seventeen by twenty-eight inches, which is greatly revered by the Samaritans. It is called "The Mystery of the Name Jehovah, Incommunicable to the Jews." A reproduction of a photograph, made in Jerusalem, of one half this parchment accompanies this article. This document professes to treat of the mysteries of the sacred, unutterable and ineffable name of God, which the Jews deem too holy to be pronounced by human lips. In their Biblical and liturgical works, the word "Adonai" (Lord) is substituted wherever the text reading "Yhwh" occurs. Occasionally pointings appear which indicate that "Elohim" is to be used instead of "Adonai."

Concerning the word "Jehovah" the Jewish Encyclopedia says that it is "a mispronunciation (introduced by Christian theologians, but almost entirely disregarded by the Jews) of the Hebrew 'Yhwh' the ineffable name of God (the Tetragrammaton or 'Shem-ha-Meforash'). This pronunciation is grammatically impossible." The Encyclopedia then explains how by a combination of the consonants "Yhwh" with the vowel sounds in "Adonai" the pronunciation "Jehovah" was evolved.

The Samaritan manuscript is mysterious to the point of incomprehensibility. According to the Samaritans the true pronunciation was communicated by God to Moses, and by him, once only, to his son Aaron and so on down through the priestly line, but has been lost. This document is said to contain the key, if it can be found among enigmatical and intricate combinations of letters and points. Whoever possesses the secret has power to work

miracles, but the mystery has not yet been solved. In connection with this it may be noted that Mohammedans claim that in the Sakhra, or sacred rock in the Mosque of Omar at Jerusalem, is the key to the mystery. They assert that it was discovered by Jesus, who thereby became clothed with miraculous power.

Anything pertaining to the Tetragrammaton, the Great Four-lettered Name, is of interest to the fraternity, and especially so to those of the Scottish Rite. The more we learn of Biblical history and of Oriental mysticism, the more do we realize how deeply the roots of Masonry penetrate into the remote past. Masonry lives and will live, not only because it is in vital touch with the hearts of men, but also because it is continually drawing sustenance and vigor from these sources. How often, when an ancient manu- (p. 125) script is discovered, or a mystic symbol brought to light, does the brother who is well grounded in speculative and symbolic Masonry recognize in it something with which he is already familiar! How his heart thrills with pleasure! He is impressed more and more with the fact that his Craft is not superficial and transient, but that it lays hold on the deeper things, and a widening knowledge of its truths is the acquisition of a liberal education.

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Arthur M. Smith, Editor and Manager

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Our Mail Pouch

Editor *Tyler-Keystone*.

Dear Brother:

In my article entitled "Samaritan Annals and the Mystic Name" which appeared in your issue of September 20- last, occurred one of those typographical errors which are as unexpected as they are vexatious. The types made me say: "According to the Samaritans the true pronunciation was communicated by God to Moses and by him, once only, *to his son Aaron*, etc." In the manuscript the word "and" appeared between the two last words quoted, so that the sentence should read "to his son *and* Aaron". The omission of the little word "and" was unfortunate; first, because the well-informed reader would be apt to consider me an ignoramus in speaking of Aaron as a son of Moses; and secondly, the statement that *three* took part in the first human communication (an item of interest Masonically) was not brought out.

In addition to calling my attention to this error, some brethren have asked why I did not give any translation from this document as well as from the "Annals". The reply is that it is not translatable, in the sense of being read intelligently. The claim of the Samaritans is that it is intentionally mystifying so that none might pronounce the sacred "Name." and yet possessing the secret might know and preserve it, something like the various cryptographic keys to the esoteric work of our Craft. For instance, some of the paragraphs or sections are written with, say, all the *alephs* (first letter of Hebrew alphabet) omitted and the required number of *alephs* is concealed in a succeeding section, and so on. There is a tradition that the true pronunciation, thus handed down through one family, was by one member carried to Spain, where once for a great inducement in money the secret was betrayed, but subsequently became lost.

Poverty and factiousness among the Samaritan remnant are the motives in offering the documents for sale.

Very fraternally yours, D. H. AYERS.

**Comments on this section from the Editor of theSamaritanUpdate.com**

This reference is not located in *A Bibliography of the Samaritans, Third Edition, Revised, Expanded, and Annotated*, by Alan David Crown and Reinhard Pummer, ATLA Bibliography, No. 51, **The Scarecrow Press, Inc.** Lanham, Maryland, Toronto, Oxford. 2005