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(p. 2) The Samaritan Easter.

As TO THE origin of the Samaritan people, you all know that it is descended from the Jews of the Ten Tribes that escaped deportation to Assyria and who intermarried with Eastern settlers sent from the East by Assyrian kings. When the Two Tribes returned from Babylonia it seems that the Samaritans were exceedingly anxious to unite these on the rebuilding of Jerusalem and its temple. Ezra, however, would not own them as pure Jews and, hence, they were driven away and thereafter constituted themselves into a sect that has kept up its ancient ways and sacrifices, to a very great extent even up till the present time. In fact, the last of the Jewish sacrifices to-day are annually offered up on Mount Gerizim, in Palestine, by these Samaritans, who, it is said, number only 201 souls, men, women and children included. Their only synagogue, in which they meet for worship on the sabbath, is only eighteen feet wide and thirty-two feet long with an arched ceiling and matting on the floor. Only the men attend the Sabbath services, the women not being considered to have any interest in religion, since their souls are thought to be of an inferior quality to that of the men.

A correspondent of *The Christian Herald* writes of the way in which the Samaritans celebrate Easter, and thinking, since Easter is upon us, that his description might interest the readers of THE JOURNAL, we clip from the article referred to the following:

"Seven days before the feast of the Passover the Samaritans leave their homes, climb the mountain and encamp in a hollow near the top of Gerizim. Three times a year they make their pilgrimage to the holy mountain, but only at the Passover is there a sacrifice offered .

It is in the month of flowers, it is in the month Nisan, and at the full moon this feast is held. About an hour before sunset on the last day of the encampment, one hundred and eleven, which is the full number of the male Samaritans, gather at the place of the slaying of seven white lambs. (Most of the women remain in the tents.) Then Jacob Aaron, the High Priest, dressed in long flowing white priestly robes, steps upon a large stone and stands there barefooted, leading the congregation in chanting prayers or praises. During prayer the men stretch out their hands, bow, kneel and touch the ground with their forehead, much after the fashion of the Moslems. Seven white lambs having been driven into the circle by seven barefooted young men dressed in white, the history of the Exodus is recited in concert, faster and faster as the moment of sunset approaches. When the "orb of the day" has touched the western sky-line, the seven young men suddenly unsheath their bright knives, lift them on high, they flash in the light of the setting sun for a moment and then across the throats of the innocent lambs. The slayers then dip their fingers in the blood and touch each Samaritan on the forehead and the nose. Sometimes only the youngest are thus blood stained. I noticed two holes dug at the place of sacrifice,

one some distance from the other and twice as deep. I was told on the spot how a fire is kindled in the deep hole, a kettle swung in and water boiled. The hot water is carried and thrown on the slain animals and the fleece removed. Afterwards a spit fashioned out of what is supposed to be pomegranate, is thrust through lengthwise of each lamb. A shorter spit is either driven through the breast or else is fastened to the long piece where the throat is cut. The forefeet are stretched out and fastened to it, thus making a veritable cross and crucifixion. They are then taken to the more shallow hole, and fire having been made in it are put in and the hole covered over: here they remain until the flesh is well roasted. I must not omit mentioning that the right foreshoulders and entrails are flung aside and burned. The congregation employ themselves most of the time by chanting. By and by the lambs are taken out and held aloft, then one can behold the seven crosses. They are carried to the place of sacrifice where the people, having been supplied with bitter herbs and unleavened bread, tear the flesh (p. 3) off and eat it. It is intended that all should wear white robes tied around their waists, shoes on their feet and stones in their hands, thus fulfilling the Scripture requirements to the letter. (Meat is carried to the women in the tents.) After having eaten, the men search diligently for any morsels that may have fallen aside, and burn all that remains and then, according to Deut. 16:7, which says: "Thou shalt turn in the morning, and go unto thy tents," they depart to their homes.

A guard of fifty Turkish soldiers is frequently necessary to protect the Samaritans at the time of the sacrifice, from the excitable and fanatical Mohammedan residents of Shechem."

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

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