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**Bible Animals;
Being a Description of
Every Living Creature mentioned in the Scriptures
From the Ape to the Coral**

By **J. G. Wood**

With One Hundred New Designs by W.F. Keyl, T. W. Wood, and E.A. Smith

Engraved by G. Pearson

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(p. 177).....

WE now come to the important subject, the use of the Sheep in sacrifice.

No animal was used so frequently for this purpose as the (p. 178) Sheep, and in many passages of the Mosaic law are specified the precise age as well as the sex of the Sheep which was to be sacrificed in certain circumstances. Sometimes the Sheep was sacrificed as an offering of thanksgiving, sometimes as an expiation for sin, and sometimes as a redemption for some more valuable animal. The young male lamb was the usual sacrifice; and almost the only sacrifice for which a Sheep might not be offered was that of the two goats on the great Day of Atonement. To mention all the passages in which the Sheep is ordered for sacrifice would occupy too much of our space, and we will therefore restrict ourselves to the one central rite of the Jewish nation, the sacrifice of the Paschal lamb, the precursor of the Lamb of God, who taketh away the sins of the world.

Without examining in full the various ceremonies of the Paschal sacrifice, we will glance over the salient points which distinguish it from any other sacrifice.

The lamb must be a male, which is selected and examined with the minutest care, that it may be free from all blemish, and must be of the first year. It must be killed on the fourteenth of the month Abib as the sun is setting, and the blood must be sprinkled with hyssop. In the first or Egyptian Passover the blood was sprinkled on the lintels and doorposts of the houses, but afterwards on the altar. It must be roasted with fire, and not boiled, after the usual custom in the East; not a bone must be broken. It must be eaten by the household in haste, as if they were just starting on a journey, and if any of it should be left, it must be consumed in the fire, and not eaten on the following day.

Such are the chief points in connexion with the Paschal rite, at once a sacrifice and a feast. The original directions not being sufficiently minute to meet all the practical difficulties which might hinder the correct performance of the rite, a vast number of directions are given by the Rabbinical writers. In order, for example, to guard against the destruction of any part of the animal by careless cooking over a fire, or the possible fracture of a bone by a sudden jet of flame, the Paschal lamb was rather baked than roasted, being placed in an earthen oven from which the ashes had been removed. In order to prevent it from being burned or blackened against the sides of the oven, (p. 179) (in which case it would be cooked with earthenware and not with fire), it was transfixed with a wooden stake, made from the pomegranate-tree, and a transverse spit was thrust through the shoulders. These spits were made of wood, because a metal spit would become heated in the oven, and would cause all the flesh which it touched to be roasted with metal, and not with fire; and the wood of the pomegranate was chosen, because that wood was supposed not to emit any sap when heated. If a drop of water had fallen on the flesh, the law would have been broken, as that part of the flesh would be considered as boiled, and not roasted.

As to the eating of unleavened bread and bitter herbs with the lamb, the custom does not bear on the present subject. In shape the oven seems to have resembled a straw beehive, having an opening at the side by which the fuel could be removed and the lamb inserted.

It is most interesting to compare with the ancient Paschal sacrifice the mode of conducting the Passover as still practised on Mount Gerizim by the Samaritans, who still "worship in this mountain," as their fathers had done. The Samaritans, a turbulent nation, or rather an aggregation of tribes who had adopted their own modification of the Jewish religion, considered Mount Gerizim as the most sacred spot on the earth, and made it a principle of their faith to worship there. They hallowed the mountain with various traditions, some perhaps true, others clearly erroneous. They said that on the summit of Mount Gerizim, and not on the comparatively little hill of Moriah, Abraham's marvellous faith was so fearfully tested. They even now point out the very spot on which it took place—a small smoothed plot of ground on the summit of the mountain, remarkable for the contrast which its level plateau presents to the rough, rugged sides of the mountain, broken by clefts and strewn with great angular stones, as if a rocky mountain had been blown to pieces and the fragments showered on Gerizim.

On Gerizim are the "twelve stones" of Joshua, placed by him in commemoration of the passage of the Jordan. There are the great, massive stones placed closely together in a row, and apparently forming part of the rocky mountain itself.

On Gerizim are the seven steps made by Adam when he was driven out of Paradise, and in Gerizim is the cave in which the (p. 180) Tabernacle was built. On Gerizim the Passover was celebrated in the time of Christ, and on Gerizim it is celebrated still. The Samaritans have often been prevented from doing so by the Moslems, and even so late as 1842 the Mahometan Ulema threatened to murder the whole of the little community, under two hundred in number, on the ground that they had no religion.

The Samaritans believe themselves to be children of Ephraim and Manasseh, and that their present priest is lineally descended from a branch of the tribe of Levi, and have accordingly a great pride in their descent. They observe the ceremonial law with exceeding care, and, even through the many years of persecution to which they have been subjected, they have never failed to go thrice in the year to the top of their holy mountain, repeating parts of the Law as they ascend. A great loss has lately fallen upon them. They had at one time a priesthood of the house of Aaron, but the family gradually dwindled away, and at last utterly perished.

The ceremony of the Passover has been described by several persons, such as the late Consul Rogers and the Dean of Westminster, the latter of whom has given a most striking and vivid account of the rite in his "Lectures on the Jewish Church."

The place which is now employed in the celebration of this rite is a level spot about two hundred yards from the summit of the mountain, a place which is apparently selected on account of its comparative quiet and seclusion. Dean Stanley thinks that in former times, when the Samaritans were the masters of the country, they celebrated the sacrifice on the sacred plateau on the very summit of the mountain, so that the rite could be seen for a vast distance on every side. Now, however, the less conspicuous place is preferred. By the kindness of the Palestine Exploration Society, I am enabled to present the reader with a view of this sacred spot, taken from a photograph made an hour or two before the time of sacrifice. The



THE PLACE OF SACRIFICE.

rough, rugged character of the mountain is shown by this illustration, though not so well as in several other photographs of Gerizim, in which the entire surface seems to be loosely covered with stones like those of which the low wall is built. Near the centre of the illustration may be seen a pile of sticks, and the tops of two caldrons, on each of which a stone is laid to keep the cover from (p. 181) being blown off by the wind. These sticks nearly fill a trench in which the caldrons are sunk, and their use will be presently seen on reading Dean Stanley's narrative. In the far distance are the plains of Samaria, and the long-drawn shadows of the priest and his nephew, and probable successor, show that the time of sacrifice is rapidly approaching.

[Image (The Place of Sacrifice) shown on page 181]

On the previous day the whole of the community had pitched their tents on the mountain, and as the time of sunset approached the women retired to the tents, and all the males, except those who were unclean according to the provisions of the Mosaic law, assembled near a long deep trench that had been dug in the ground. The men are clothed in long white garments, and the six young men who are selected as the actual sacrificers are (p. 182) dressed in white drawers and shirts. These youths are trained to the duty, but whether they hold any sacred office could not be ascertained.

Then, according to the narrative of Dean Stanley, "the priest, ascending a large rough stone in front of the congregation, recited in a loud chant or scream, in which the others joined, prayers-or praises chiefly turning on the glories of Abraham and Isaac. Their attitude was that of all Orientals in prayer; standing, occasionally diversified by the stretching out of the hands, and more rarely by kneeling or crouching, with their knees wrapped in their clothes and bent to the ground, towards the Holy Place on the summit of Gerizim. The priest recited his prayers by heart; the others had mostly books in Hebrew and Arabic.

"Presently, suddenly there appeared amongst the worshippers six sheep, driven up by the side of the youths before mentioned. The unconscious innocence with which they wandered to and fro amongst the bystanders, and the simplicity in aspect and manner of the young men who tended them, more recalled a pastoral scene in Arcadia, or one of those inimitable patriarchal *tableaux* represented in the Ammergau Mystery, than a religious ceremonial.

"The sun, meanwhile, which had hitherto burnished up the Mediterranean in the distance, now sank very nearly to the farthest western ridge overhanging the Plain of Sharon. The recitation became more vehement. The priest turned about, facing his brethren, and the whole history of the Exodus from the beginning of the plagues of Egypt was rapidly, almost furiously, chanted. The sheep, still innocently playful, were driven more closely together.

"The setting sun now touched the ridge. The youths burst into a wild murmur of their own, drew forth their long bright knives, and brandished them aloft. In a moment the sheep were thrown on their backs, and the flashing knives rapidly drawn across their throats. Then a few convulsive but silent struggles—as a sheep . . . dumb... that openeth not his mouth,'—and the six forms lay lifeless on the ground, the blood streaming from them; the one only Jewish sacrifice lingering in the world. In the blood the young men dipped their fingers, and a small spot was marked on the foreheads and noses of the children. A (p. 183) few years ago the red stain was placed on all. But this had now dwindled away into the present practice, preserved, we were told, as a relic or emblem of the whole. Then, as if in congratulation at the completion of the ceremony, they all kissed each other, in the Oriental fashion, on each side of the head.

"The next process was that of the fleecing and roasting of the slaughtered animals, for which the ancient temple furnished such ample provisions. Two holes on the mountain side had been dug; one at some distance, of considerable depth, the other, close to the scene of the sacrifice, comparatively shallow. In this latter cavity, after a short prayer, a fire was kindled, out of the mass of dry heath, juniper, and briers, such as furnished the materials for the conflagration in Jotham's parable, delivered not far from this spot.

"Over the fire were placed two caldrons full of water. Whilst the water boiled, the congregation again stood around, and (as if for economy of time) continued the recitation of the Book of Exodus, and bitter herbs were handed round wrapped in a strip of unleavened bread—' with unleavened bread and bitter herbs shall they eat it.' Then was chanted another short prayer; after which the six youths again appeared, poured the boiling water over the sheep, and plucked off their fleeces. The right forelegs of the sheep, with the entrails, were thrown aside and burnt. The liver was carefully put back. Long poles were brought, on which the animals were spitted; near the bottom of each pole was a transverse peg or stick, to prevent the body from slipping off."

This cross-piece does not, however, penetrate the body, which in most cases scarcely touches it, so that there is little or no resemblance to a crucifixion. The writer lays especial stress on this point, because the early Christians saw in the transverse spit an emblem of the cross. In the Jewish Passover this emblem would have been more appropriate, as in that ceremony the cross-piece was passed through the shoulders, and the forefeet tied to it.

The Sheep being now prepared, they were carried to the oven, which on this occasion was a deep, circular pit, in which a fire had been previously kindled. Into this the victims were carefully lowered, the

stakes on which they were impaled guarding their bodies from touching the sides of the oven, and the cross- (p. 184) piece at the end preventing them from slipping off the stake to the bottom of the pit among the ashes. A hurdle was then laid on the mouth of the pit, and wet earth was heaped upon it so as to close it completely. The greater part of the community then retired to rest. In about five hours, the Paschal moon being high in the heavens, announcement was made that the feast was about to begin. Then, to resume Dean Stanley's narrative,

"Suddenly the covering of the hole was torn off, and up rose into the still moonlit sky a vast column of smoke and steam; recalling, with a shock of surprise, that, even by an accidental coincidence, Reginald Heber should have so well caught this striking feature of so remote and unknown a ritual:

Smokes on Gerizim's mount Samaria's sacrifice.

"Out of the pit were dragged successively the six sheep, on their long spits, black from the oven. The outlines of their heads, their ears, their legs, were still visible—'his head, with his legs, and with the inward parts thereof.' They were hoisted aloft, and then thrown on large square brown mats, previously prepared for their reception, on which we were carefully prevented from heading, as also from touching even the extremities of the spit.

"The bodies thus wrapped in the mats were hurried down to the trench where the sacrifice had taken place, and laid out upon them in a line between two files of the Samaritans. Those who had before been dressed in white robes still retained them, with the addition now of shoes on their feet and staves in their hands, and ropes round their waists—'thus shall ye eat it; with your loins girded, your shoes on your feet, your staff in your hand.' The recitation of prayers or of the Pentateuch recommenced, and continued till it suddenly terminated in their all sitting down on their haunches, after the Arab fashion at meals, and beginning to eat. This, too, is a deviation from the practice of only a few years since, when they retained the Mosaic ritual of standing whilst they ate. The actual feast was conducted in rapid silence, as of men in hunger, as no doubt most of them were, and so as soon to consume every portion of the blackened masses, which they tore away piecemeal with their fingers—' ye shall eat in haste.' There was a general merriment, as of a hearty and welcome meal.

(p. 185) "In ten minutes all was gone but a few remnants. To the priest and to the women, who, all but two (probably his two wives), remained in the tents, separate morsels were carried round. The remnants were gathered into the mats, and put on a wooden grate, or hurdle, over the hole where the water had been originally boiled; the fire was again lit, and a huge bonfire was kindled. By its blaze, and by candles lighted for the purpose, the ground was searched in every direction, as for the consecrated particles of sacramental elements; and these fragments of flesh and bone were thrown upon the burning mass—' ye shall let nothing remain until the morning; and that which remaineth until the morning ye shall burn with fire;' 'there shall not anything of the flesh which thou sacrifice the first day at even remain all night until the morning ;' 'thou shalt not carry forth aught of the flesh abroad out of the house.' The flames blazed up once more, and then gradually sank away.

"Perhaps in another century the fire on Mount Gerizim will be the only relic left of this most interesting and ancient rite."

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J. G. Wood is John George Wood, or Rev J. G. Wood, (1827-1889) was a popular English writer on natural history. Wood was born in London, son of surgeon John Freeman Wood and Juliana Lisetta, and educated at home, at Ashbourne. Most likely he never visited Palestine or the Samaritans.

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_George_Wood