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(p. 29) A SAMARITAN PASSOVER.

The ascent of Geriziin and Ebal impressed us with the singular companionship of these two celebrated mountains. They remind one of twin brothers. Of equal height, with flattened summits and rugged sides, they are both equally renowned in sacred history. The honor bestowed on one was equalized by the glory conferred upon the other. If Gerizim was the Mount of Blessings, and Ebal the Mount of Cursings, yet it was upon the summit of the latter that Joshua reared the first altar to the Living God. But nature is less impartial, as flowers grow upon Gerizim, and thorns on Ebal. The former is chiefly celebrated as the Mount Moriah of the Samaritans. Upon its summit they erected a temple that rivalled that of Solomon, but like that of the latter it is a heap of ruins, and desolation holds unbroken sway where once it stood. Having witnessed the Jewish Passover in Jerusalem, and being at Nablous at the time of the Samaritan Passover, we were anxious to witness the ceremony. The Samaritans had assembled upon the Mount to the number of one hundred and thirty, who the priest informed me are all that are known to exist in the world. It was evidently a gala day, as the women and children were attired in their gayest costumes, and all were full of glee. The ceremonies commenced at five P. M., conducted by the venerable high-priest and his two assistants. The male part of the audience stood on a small mound chanting psalms and reciting portions of the Pentateuch. Everything had been prepared to slay and roast the paschal lamb. In one corner were six sheep without spot or blemish; immense cauldrons of boiling water were near the altar to scald the sheep like swine, instead of flaying them in the ordinary way; and to the left was a circular furnace four feet in diameter and eight feet deep, in which the sacrifice was roasted. The going down of the sun was the appointed moment to slay the paschal offering; all eagerly watched the last rays of sun-light reflected from the highest peaks of Moab. At length the solemn moment came, and the lambs were slain; the worshippers bowed their faces to the ground, touching their foreheads to the earth, and after an interval of silent prayer, they rose, greeting each other with a holy kiss, and then sprinkled the blood of the victims upon the forehead of the first-born child. The scalding of the sheep now begins, and after the fleece is removed, they are suspended upon a thick oaken stick, and with much ceremony placed in the furnace. When thoroughly roasted (p.

30) they are withdrawn; the right shoulder is removed as the priest's portion, and the rest eaten by the people with bitter herbs and unleavened bread; and after the meal, which was partaken of with anything but religious solemnity, the ceremonies closed with a prayer and a chant.

It was an interesting spectacle for a Christian to witness, as illustrating the sacrificial law, but it is equally painful to reflect upon the blindness and unbelief of a people, whose prophetic writings, if only candidly examined, would lead them to the "Lamb of God who taketh away the sin of the world," and to the feet of " Shiloh, unto whom shall be the gathering of the people." —*J. P. Newman.*

#### **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