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**From Dan to Beersheba;**  
Or,  
The Land of Promise as it Now Appears.  
Including a Description of the Boundaries, Topography, Agriculture, Antiquities, Cities,  
and present Inhabitants of that Wonderful Land,  
with Illustrations of the  
Remarkable Accuracy of the Sacred Writers in their Allusions to their Native Country,  
Maps, and Engravings.  
By Rev. **J. P. Newman**, D. D.  
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Franklin Square.  
1864.

(p. 309)..... Intending to visit this interesting spot again, we ascended the Vale of Nablous and entered the ancient city of Shechem just as the old gate-keeper was turning the ponderous key. Gladly dismounting after the exploits of such a day, we led our jaded horses over the flag-paved streets of the city, exciting the curiosity of an idle crowd of Shechemites, and affording them fresh materials for village gossip. It was nine o'clock when we found our host, who was the Christian schoolteacher of the Protestant Mission. Receiving us with great politeness, he led us up a long flight of stone steps into a large clean room, where, after a simple repast, we spread our mats and blankets for the night.

Ranking with Damascus, Hebron, and Jerusalem in the antiquity of its origin and the importance of its history, Shechem, or the modern town of Nablous, is among the oldest cities in Palestine. Coming from Chaldea, Abraham pitched his tent on the fertile plains of Mukhnah, " in the place of Sichern, in the plain of Moreh."<sup>1</sup> Nearly two centuries later his grandson Jacob came from Mesopotamia to " Shalem, a city of Shechem, and pitched his tent before the city, and bought a parcel of a field, at the hand of the children of Hanor, for one hundred pieces of money, and erected there an altar, and called it El-Elohe-Israel."<sup>2</sup> Here Simeon and Levi plotted the murder of the whole male population of the town to avenge their dishonored sister, and, exposed by this act of indiscretion to the insults and attacks of the adjacent villagers, Jacob was compelled to remove to Hebron.<sup>3</sup> Retaining possession of these pasture-fields, hither he sent Joseph to search for his brethren, whom " a certain man found wandering in a field," and directed him to Dothan.<sup>4</sup> Four hundred years afterward, having achieved the conquest of Ai, Joshua led his triumphant hosts over the Jordan into this vale; upon Ebal he reared the first Jewish altar in Samaria; and from this and its companion mountain caused to be read the blessings

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<sup>1</sup> Gen., xii.  
<sup>2</sup> Ib., xxxiii  
<sup>3</sup> Ib., xxxiv  
<sup>4</sup> Ib., xxxvii

and cursings of the Law.<sup>5</sup> Two and a half centuries later, Abimelech seized this city and was proclaimed (p. 310) king, which gave rise to the beautiful parable of Jotham.<sup>6</sup> Hither came Rehoboam to be crowned king of Israel; and in the same year here occurred the coronation of Jeroboam, under whom the twelve tribes revolted, and Shechem became the royal city of the new monarchy.<sup>7</sup> During the long captivity of the Jews in Assyria, Nablous rose to be the chief city of the Samaritans, who were destined to act such a conspicuous part in sacred history. Being instructed in the Jewish religion, they reared upon the summit of Mount Gerizim a rival temple to that in Jerusalem, and became the religious and political enemies of the Jews. Four hundred and fifty years after the erection of this temple, the Vale of Shechem was hallowed by the presence and teachings of Jesus and his twelve apostles. In the year 89 A.D. it was the birthplace of Justin, the philosopher and martyr, one of the earliest and most learned of the Christian fathers. From the days of the Roman conquest to the present time it has shared the varied fortunes of the Crescent and the Cross, and to-day is subject to the sceptre of the False Prophet.

Nablous is situated in one of the most delightful vales in Palestine. A garden-like valley opens from the Plain of Mukhnah and runs nearly east and west, with Ebal on the north and Gerizim on the south. Standing less than two miles up the vale, the city covers the roots of Gerizim, extending toward the opposite mountain. Of its 8000 inhabitants, 50 are Jews, 150 Samaritans, 500 Christians, and over 7000 Moslems. Its narrow streets, thronged with a busy multitude—its stone dwellings, crowned with small domes—its mosques, with their graceful minarets—and its numerous bazars, filled with fruit and other commodities, remind the traveler of Jerusalem ; but the streets are less light and airy than those of the Holy City, as the buildings, projecting over them, supported by arches, impart to them a tunnel-like appearance. Except a spacious Saracenic doorway, now the portal of a mosque, a marble sarcophagus, now a water-trough, and a few prostrate columns of granite, limestone, and marble, there are no antiquities worthy of a moment's attention. The modern Shechemites are the chief cotton-growers, oil-makers, and soap manufacturers of Palestine. The valleys and hill-sides are covered with olive-trees, from the berries of which is extracted the precious oil. In the adjacent fields cotton is raised in large quantities for home consumption and exportation. Regarded as the best quality grown in the dominions of the Turkish empire, thousands of bales are yearly exported to Europe. The present citizens of the town afford another illustration that the character of a people, no less than their names and social customs, are handed down from generation to generation. They are infamous for their turbulent and fanatical reputation in the past, and more street-fights occur in Nablous than in any other Syrian city. The rebellious spirit that rose three thousand years ago against the government of Rehoboam is still dominant, and the Shechemites are among the most troublesome of the sultan's subjects, obeying or rebelling as interest dictates or passion inclines. It required the powerful and cruel arm of Ibrahim Pasha to crush them, though not without a long and bloody struggle. Jews, Samaritans, and Christians live among those turbulent children of the Prophet only by sufferance, and the crimes of theft and murder perpetrated on them are seldom punished by the weak and timorous Turkish officials.

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<sup>5</sup> Josh., viii

<sup>6</sup> Judges, ix

<sup>7</sup> 1 Kings, xii

The Jews have a small synagogue within the walls, the picture of poverty and wretchedness. Of the 500 Christians, most are of the Greek Church, and worship in an edifice at once old and filthy. The Protestant Christian Mission is under the protection of the English and Russian governments, and is accomplishing much good in the education of the young. The mission school, under the care of our host, was held in a room adjoining the one we occupied. Accepting his invitation, we spent an hour with his pupils: there were present from forty to fifty boys, from three to fifteen years of age. Attired in Syrian costume, they were clean and pretty in their appearance, and modest and obedient in their behavior. Sitting on their heels, they were engaged in writing with a reed not unlike in form and size, our common pencils. Calling up one by one, from the least to the greatest, the master exhibited specimens of penmanship which, as far as I was capable of judging of the graceful Arabic characters, were creditable to the young penmen. As they seemed anxious to know about the schools and children of America, I made them a brief speech, which was interpreted by our polite host.

From their wealth, social position, and historic importance, (p. 312) the Samaritans are by far the most interesting religious body in Nablous. The Bible account of their origin and history invests them with a peculiar charm, and imparts to the seat of their ancient empire an interest seldom equaled in the stories of romance. Hoping to effectually subdue Palestine to their powerful sway and restore it to the rites of idol worship, the Assyrian conqueror led the Jews of Samaria into captivity, and repopled their depopulated cities with colonists from the distant East. During the long period that intervened between the captivity and the colonization, the bears, panthers, wolves, and jackals from the Heights of Hermon and the jungles of the Jordan had so far penetrated into the heart of the country, and had multiplied to such a degree, as to endanger the lives of the colonists. Being polytheists themselves, they ascribed the evil to the local divinities, whose worship they knew not how to perform. Complaining to their king, he sent them a Jewish priest, who taught them the name and worship of Jehovah. With a curtness that savors of irony, the inspired historian adds, " They feared the Lord and served their own gods."<sup>8</sup> National pride, and contempt for their origin and mixed religion, led the Jews, in after years, to despise the colonists, and being thus scorned by those from whom they had reason to look for truth and righteousness, the Samaritans in turn became exclusive. Multiplying in numbers and increasing in wealth, in process of time they erected a temple on the summit of Gerizim. To them this mount became their Moriah, and in the lapse of ages an invented tradition designated it as the scene of the offering of Isaac. By a better title it shared the solemnity and significance of Mount Sinai, as from its slopes Joshua proclaimed the Law; and the vale beneath became a second Rahah, since the hosts of Israel gathered there to hear the blessings and cursings of the divine commandments. With honest pride they contemplated their surrounding plains as the camping-ground of the patriarchs prior to their pilgrimage to the south, and as the scene of the coronation of the son of Solomon. Turning their attention to commerce, they became merchants in Egypt, and, traveling westward, in the fifth century they had a synagogue in Rome. Continuing to live under the varied fortunes and vicissitudes of empire, the existence of this present remnant is one of the most remarkable (p. 313) instances of the tenacity of national life in the annals of the world. Numbering 130 souls—the sum of all that remain of a once proud and mighty kingdom—they cling to their ancient seat of empire with

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<sup>8</sup> 2 Kings, xvii

undying fondness. Adhering to the Jewish law, which forbids marriage with foreigners, and numbering more males than females, not less than twenty men are doomed to involuntary celibacy. Industrious and thrifty, they dwell in their own houses, pursuing their vocations and maintaining their community with comparative ease. In their physique and apparel, in their intelligence and morals, in their social happiness and general behavior, they are the superior class among the citizens of Nablous. Possessing a solitary synagogue in the western part of the town, they observe their religious rites with much regularity. They have a school, under the direction of a shrewd, intelligent Samaritan. Their highpriest is a venerable man, who is assisted in the duties of his sacred office by two sons, the elder of whom will succeed his father to the office and rank he now holds. Besides a collection of hymns, they have in their possession the Book of Joshua in manuscript, with commentaries on the Law, and a copy of the Pentateuch in the original character. They claim for the latter that it is 3300 years old, and was written by "Abishua, the son of Phinehas, the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron." Regarded as a treasure of incalculable value, it is preserved in a metallic case, and deposited in their synagogue under the care of the high-priest. The tattered, patched, and soiled parchment forms an immense scroll, the ends of which are attached to two rollers. Such is their superstitious reverence for this antique manuscript, that they deem it a pardonable offense to exhibit a duplicate as the veritable one, and many a traveler has left with the impression of having seen the five books of Moses written by the son of Phinehas. Though destitute of a temple, they ascend their sacred mount three times a year, and celebrate with much display the Feast of the Passover, the Day of Pentecost, and the Feast of Tabernacles.

The clouds that had overcast the sky, and the fogs which had hung upon the mountains like floating curtains in the morning, had been lifted up by noon, and Nature smiled in all the beauty of spring. Passing out of the eastern gate of the city, I entered the Vale of Shechem. It extends from the Plain of Mukhnah on the east to the city on the west, and is two (p. 314) miles in length and something over 200 yards in width. It gently ascends from Jacob's Well, and for half a mile its entire breadth is one vast and glorious grove of olive, fig, and almond trees, presenting at times the density of a forest. Beyond the orchards are vineyards and fields of grain, through which flows a crystal brooklet. Rising like massive walls from this garden valley are Mount Gerizim on the south and Ebal on the north, attaining an altitude of nearly 1000 feet. Standing midway the vale, and looking upon these celebrated mountains, one is impressed with their singular companionship. Of equal height, with rugged sides and flattened summits, they remind one of twin brothers. Equally renowned in sacred history, the honor bestowed upon the one was only equal to the glory conferred upon the other. If Gerizim was the mount of blessing and Ebal the mount of cursing, it was upon the latter that Joshua reared the first altar to the living God in Central Palestine. But, less impartial than history, Nature symbolizes the benedictions and maledictions of the law by causing flowers to bloom on Gerizim and thorns to grow on Ebal. Midway the vale are corresponding nooks in the mountain sides, resembling well-formed recesses, and increasing its breadth to nearly 400 yards. Standing out from the base of the mountains are perpendicular ledges of rock, not unlike grand pulpits, from which the whole vale is distinctly seen. Somewhere in this expanse the hosts of Israel assembled to hear all the -words of the Law. Divided by the centre of the vale, the tribes of Simeon and Levi, of Judah and Issachar, of Joseph and Benjamin, were gathered around the base of Gerizim, and the tribes of Reuben and Gad,

of Asher and Zebulun, of Dan and Naphtali, were congregated over against Ebal. Standing above the people on these great pulpits, which the Creator had reared for an occasion so august, the priests read the Law, while to each blessing and to each cursing the vast multitude responded their assent.<sup>9</sup> So firmly does Nature retain her ancient features, and so exact is the correspondence between the inspired account and the scene as it now appears, that, standing within this venerable church of God's own construction, thirty centuries unfold their mighty scroll, and the past comes back with the actuality of the present. Before the eye of a sublime faith the tribes reassemble, the priests take their stand, and in son (p. 316 Sketch of Jacob's Well –not shown here) (p. 317) ous tones slowly and distinctly read, one by one, each command and each prohibition, while from either side, in alternate responses, beginning at the mountain base and rolling outward to the centre, rises the full, deep, responsive "Amen!" like the sound of many waters breaking in alternations of musical thunder against the opposite wall of the everlasting mountains. The area was sufficient for that grandest of human assemblies; and such is the profound silence of the vale, the human voice was heard then, as it is heard now, from mountain to mountain.

Viewed from this point, Gerizim is not unlike a cone with ridged sides and a broken base, while Ebal seems not so high nor steep, but rougher, with its top receding with gentle slope. In the centre of the vale opposite the nooks is the cool, clear, sweet fountain of 'Ain Depneh, whither, as of old, the maidens come for water, and around which shepherds linger with their flocks. In numberless rills the waters flow to the eastward, in pearly brightness and perennial music, the livelong day. From the fig and almond bowers birds of elegant plumage awaken the gentler echoes of the vale. Less than half a mile to the east of the fountain is the wretched hamlet of Belat, presenting a melancholy contrast between the beauty of nature and the deformity of man. Two hundred yards beyond, situated on the point of a spur from Gerizim, is Jacob's Well. On a mound of shapeless ruins, 20 feet above the Plain of Mukhnah, are fragments of granite columns, the remains of a Christian church. Measuring 75 feet in depth and nine in diameter, this patriarchal well is excavated in the solid rock with regular and smoothly-hewn sides. Originally, a vaulted chamber, 10 feet square and as many deep below the surface of the ground, formed the entrance to the well, the walls of which have fallen in, rendering access difficult. Leaping down into the ruined vault, I found two openings into the well through heaps of limestone blocks. Attaching a cord to a small tin bottle, I lowered it to the depth of 65 feet, but found no water; on lowering it, however, through the other aperture to the depth of 75 feet I reached the water, which was from three to five feet deep. Imagine my joy in drinking from the Well of Sychar, whose waters were sanctified by the lips of the gracious Redeemer f It is clear like unto crystal, having the softness of oil and the sweetness of honey. (p. 318)

Returning to the surface of the ground, and sitting beside the well whither the sons and daughters of the patriarchs had often come for water, and perchance where the Master had sat, I read its thrilling history as recorded by Moses and by John. With an accuracy that must claim the faith of every candid mind, all the facts of the sacred narrative are in harmony with the physical features of the scene. Stretching out to the north, east, and south is the parcel of a field Jacob bought of Hamor for a hundred pieces of money,<sup>10</sup> and

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<sup>9</sup> Deut., xxvii., 11-26 ; Ib., xxviii. ; Josh., viii., 30-35.

<sup>10</sup> One hundred lambs, or coina with the image of a lamb upon them. Gen., xxxiii., 19.

on its western border is the well. The three great religious sects agree as to its identity, and its site has been preserved in the memory and affections of man through an unbroken tradition to our own time. To one not conversant with Eastern customs it would appear improbable that a man as shrewd and prudent as Jacob would be at the expense and labor of excavating a well so near the living springs in the upper valley, which have always poured their irrigating waters down the Vale of Shechem. But the reflection on the prudence and economy of the patriarch is removed by the consideration of the well-known fact that in the East water is more valuable than land, and a higher value is set upon a well or spring than upon fields of pasture. "Pasture your flocks on my hills and plains, but let my wells alone," is the only request the Oriental makes of the stranger. In a land where water is scarce, every proprietor aims to have a well of his own, which he guards with peculiar vigilance. The custom of digging wells on a newly-purchased estate is as old as Abraham and Isaac; and as in their times, so now, there are more quarrels over wells of water than over fields of grain. Subject to the same social laws, Jacob but indicated his wisdom and conformed to an acknowledged usage in first purchasing a field and then digging a well. Accepting a tradition so venerable, I yielded to the full enjoyment which such a scene is calculated to afford, and the week I spent at Nablous I never wearied in my journeyings to drink of these delicious waters.

Interesting as were the patriarchal associations of the place, it was with unmingled delight I read the beautiful story of our Lord's conversation with the woman of Samaria. Had St. John written the incidents of the Savior's journey from Jerusalem to Sychar with a previous knowledge that his narrative would be subjected to a searching criticism by the enemies of Divine truth, he could not have written with greater accuracy. As the facts of topography on which the traveler relies for the credibility of the story are recorded merely as incidents to the story itself, the correspondence between the statement and the fact is the more wonderful and convincing. Deeming it prudent to escape the snare of the Pharisees, "Jesus left Judea and departed again into Galilee." To reach his destination "he must needs go through Samaria." Reaching Jacob's Well at noon, he rested, it being on the direct road to Galilee by way of Tirzah, while his disciples, turning to the left, passed up the Vale of Shechem to the city to purchase refreshments. During their absence came the "woman of Samaria," with cord and pitcher, to draw water. He who had made the fountains of earth and sky requested, "Give me to drink." As at most Eastern wells there is neither wheel, chain, nor bucket, and surprised at his promise to give living waters, her reply was no less natural than truthful: "Sir, thou hast nothing to draw with, and the well is deep." Hoping to divert his attention from the irregularities of her life, she introduced the relative claims of the Jews and Samaritans to religious superiority. Rising up before them was Mount Gerizim, to which in turn each pointed in their allusions to the noble sanctuary crowning its summit. Looking with compassion upon the Samaritans, anticipating the great work to be wrought among them, and impressed with the necessity of immediately laboring in their behalf, he pointed to the ripe Plains of Mukhnah, warning his disciples not to say, "There are yet four months and then cometh harvest; behold, I say unto you, Lift up your eyes and look on the fields, for they are white already to harvest."<sup>11</sup>

While Jews and Samaritans, Christians and Moslems, agree that this is the Well of Sychar, the ever-restless skepticism of modern times has called in question its otherwise

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<sup>11</sup> John, iv., 1-42.

undisputed identity. Because it is two miles from the city of Shechem, it is judged too far away for the woman to have come for water. Nothing, however, is said in the text to cause us to suppose she came from the city; and if she had come from what is now known as Nablous, there are reasons for supposing that the ancient city extended farther east than the present one. (p. 320)

Like the village of Belat, her native town might have been adjacent to the spot; or at the noon hour she might have come from an adjoining field, where, with other peasant women, she had spent the morning in the toils of husbandry.

But, in the unmistakable fulfillment of our Lord's prophecy, time has furnished even a stronger proof of Bible inspiration than the exact correspondence between the narration of the event and the description of the scene. The woman of Samaria is dead; the disciples, one by one, have all passed to their reward; the Redeemer has ascended to glory; Gerizim is a desolation; Moriah is the shrine of Mohammed; and the prophetic words of Jesus, that first fell from his lips on the soft air of the Vale of Shechem, and were whispered back by the winds from Ebal and Gerizim, are now heard in all the valleys and on all the mountain summits in two hemispheres.

The tomb of Joseph is in sight of his father's well, around which he was wont to play when young. When dying in the palace of Pharaoh, he had taken an oath of the children of Israel that they should "carry up his bones from hence;"<sup>12</sup> and, true to their solemn vow, "the bones of Joseph, which the children of Israel brought up out of the land of Egypt, buried they in Shechem, in a parcel of ground which Jacob bought of the sons of Hamor, the father of Shechem."<sup>13</sup> Crossing a stream on which stands an old mill belonging to the village of Belat, we descended into the plain, and, passing through rich corn-fields half a mile to the north, we came to a small square area inclosed by a white plastered wall, marking the spot where sleeps in peace he who was the darling son, the wandering shepherd, the captive youth, Potiphar's slave, Asenath's betrothed, Pharaoh's prime minister, the preserver of his country, the joy of a dying father, the exemplary saint, and the model man. How strangely the lines of human actions cross each other in the orderings of Providence! What beautiful coincidences transpire beneath his benign sway! The parcel of land his father purchased of Hamor is now the place of Joseph's sepulchre, and in the very field where he was lost he now rests in death. And though the spot is unmarked by stately granite or marble shaft, Ebal, the mountain of his boyhood, is his imposing tomb-stone, and over the whitened wall a vine is now creeping, the symbol chosen by his dying father (p. 321) to preintimate the prosperity of a beloved son "Joseph is a fruitful bough, even a fruitful bough by a wall, whose branches run over the wall."<sup>14</sup>

It was five o'clock on a bright spring morning when, attended by a solitary guide, I descended the Vale of Nablous to where the valley widens, and began to ascend the Mount of Cursing. The sun was just peering over the hills of Ephraim, transforming the dew-drops into sparkling jewels, and awakening the matin notes of unnumbered songsters. In an hour we gained the summit; and though the horizon was misty, limiting the view, the familiar peaks of Moab rose above the fog clouds like islands in the ocean. The sides of Ebal are rough, and its summit broad and stony. A solitary goat-path leads over the mountain to the valleys beyond. Shepherds were roving with their flocks in quest

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<sup>12</sup> Gen., 1., 25.

<sup>13</sup> Josh., xxiv., 32.

<sup>14</sup> Gen., xlix., 22.

of pasture, and peasants were hastening to their daily toil. The attritions of time and the sacrilegious hand of plunder have destroyed the altar Joshua reared to Jehovah. From its highest peak a noble view is obtained of the fertile hills and valleys to the east, and of the lofty Telluzeh, the renowned Tirzah, whose beauties Solomon has embalmed in immortal song,<sup>15</sup> and which was once the rival of Shechem as the seat of royalty.<sup>16</sup>

Returning to Nablous, we passed out of the western gate to ascend the Mount of Blessings. At the portal stood a group of lepers, perhaps the descendants of Gehazi, who was cursed with the leprosy of Naaman.<sup>17</sup> Poor creatures, how sad they looked! Their ulcered faces, dull, restless eyes, languid, husky voices, and tattered garments presented a mournful spectacle of fallen humanity. Excluded from society like those of Jerusalem, they live distinct, to grieve, rot, and die in their wretched hovels. Standing afar off and arranging themselves in a semicircle, twenty men and women, in tones of pity, asked our charities. No sight among living things that meets the traveler's eye recalls the days of the benevolent Savior so vividly as the appearance of lepers. Perhaps it was in this same city that "there met him ten men that were lepers, which stood afar off. And they lifted up their voices and said, Jesus, Master, have mercy on us."<sup>18</sup> Distributing bread among the poor creatures, we turned to the left and began the ascent. Our (p. 322) path led up a glen of rare beauty, and from a ridge to the south of the town we looked down upon the noble site of the city stretching nearly across the valley, and from amid palms and trees of exquisite foliage rose domes and minarets. Just above the ridge, in a sequestered spot, is the large fountain of 'Asal. Its clear waters, being first gathered into immense troughs, are then conducted by an aqueduct to a mill, from which they flow down the hill-side into a quiet dell rich with shrubs and flowers. Crossing the stream, we followed the path trodden by many ancient pilgrims, and passed through groves of figs and almonds, in the branches of which birds were singing merrily. Here the hill-sides were terraced, supporting groves of fruit-trees and also vineyards. Beyond the orchards the path was steep and stony, and turning abruptly to the left, after half an hour's hard climbing we reached the summit of Gerizim. The top is a broad, irregular plateau, covered with heaps of stones and the remains of vast structures. Crowning a rocky knoll is the white wely seen from the Heights of Ephraim. From the roof a view is obtained rivaling that from Neby Samwil in the extent and variety of the prospect. Far to the east, like a massive wall, stand the trans-Jordanic mountains; on the south a succession of green hills appear as far as the eye can reach; on the west are seen patches of the Plain of Sharon, and through openings in the hills are caught glimpses of the Mediterranean; while dimly in the hazy northern sky Hermon rises, covered with snow and tinged with a purple hue. In all its wealth and beauty, at the mountain base lies the Plain of Mukhnah, stretching eastward a broad green arm amid the dark hills of Ephraim. Indistinctly the modern town of Salim appears on its western border, supposed to mark the site of Shalem, where Jacob pitched his tent. Seen in the rays of the setting sun, the plain resembles a magnificent carpet of vast dimensions, of curious figures, and of variant hues, the chocolate-color of the soil, the light green of the corn, the sombre hue of the olive, the dull gray of the protruding rocks, and the purple and azure tints of the hills harmoniously blending.

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<sup>15</sup> Cant., vi., 4

<sup>16</sup> 1 Kings, xvi., 8.

<sup>17</sup> 2 Kings, v., 20-27.

<sup>18</sup> Luke, xvii., 11-13.

Of the nature and origin of the immense ruins covering the summit of Gerizim but little is known. There is one vast structure, now in ruins, consisting of two adjacent parts, measuring 400 feet in length and 250 in breadth, with the remains (p. 323) of square towers at each corner. Consisting of blocks of limestone with beveled edges and rough centres, they are regarded by some as the remains of the once grand temple of the Samaritans, and by others as portions of the great fortress here erected by the Emperor Justinian. Though the Samaritans reject these ruins as part of their temple, yet they point to many of their sacred places. Beneath the western wall of what is now called the castle are twelve flat stones, and under them are said to be the veritable twelve stones that Joshua brought up out of the Jordan as memorials of the miraculous dividing of the water. A few yards to the south is their "Holy of Holies." Irregular in form, it is a smooth-faced natural rock, measuring 45 feet in diameter, and gently declining toward a deep-hewn pit called their *sanctum sanctorum*. Regarding it as holy ground, they always remove their shoes before stepping upon it; and as truly as the Moslem turns toward Mecca in the moment of prayer, and the Jew toward Jerusalem, so truly do the Samaritans turn toward this rockhewn cavern in the time of devotion. Contrary to all history and to all tradition, they claim it as the scene of the offering of Isaac, of Jacob's vision, as the place where the Tabernacle was first set up, and where the Ark rested. Sacred and profane history is too explicit to countenance either of these assumptions; and, besides the unanimous voice of history, the distance from Beersheba to Gerizim is too great to have been accomplished in three days by Abraham and his son. Even had the Father of the Faithful followed the Plain of Philistia, and on the morning of the third day from the Plain of Sharon seen Gerizim, the difficulty of distance would not have been obviated by such a route, as it would have required him to travel thirty miles a day for the first two days and twenty miles of heavy mountain-climbing for the third; and as he and Isaac returned to the young men the same day, the distance would have been much greater. Not far from these ruins is a rectangular area, surrounded with a low stone fence, called the Temple of the Samaritans. Here they annually assemble, pitch their tents, and eat the Passover. Near the inclosure is a circular pit, three feet in diameter and ten deep, in which the paschal lambs are roasted. I was fortunate enough to be present on the 23d of April to witness the celebration of the feast of the Samaritan Passover. According to their custom, their (p. 324) whole community, to the number of 130 souls, consisting of men, women, and children, had ascended the mount and pitched their tents, some of which were white and others of variegated colors, upon its broad summit. The day being regarded by them as a gala-day, all were attired in their gayest costumes, and all rejoiced in the historic significance of the occasion. Occupying an elevated position, the ceremonies were conducted by the venerable high-priest, assisted by his two sons. The male portion of the congregation stood in a group on a small mound, chanting psalms and reciting portions of the Pentateuch, while the females remained in and around the tents. In a group stood seven Levites clad in white garments, each holding by the head a lamb without spot or blemish; near them were large caldrons of boiling water, to scald the sheep like swine, instead of flaying them, as in the ordinary way; and beyond was the circular furnace, already heated, to roast the offering. The going down of the sun was the appointed time to slay the paschal lambs. As the day declined, each face was turned toward the west, eagerly watching the last ray of the setting sun. At length the solemn moment came; the high - priest waved his hand as the signal for the slaughter; in an instant each lamb was

slain and lay bleeding at the Levite's feet. Not a sound was heard. Each worshiper bowed his face to the earth, his forehead touching the ground. After an interval of silent prayer, all arose, greeted each other with a holy kiss, and parents sprinkled the blood of the victims upon the forehead of their first-born. The scalding of the sheep followed, and after the fleece had been removed, the seven lambs were suspended on heavy oaken spits, and with much ceremony placed in the heated furnace. It was night before the feast was ready. The paschal moon had risen in unclouded beauty upon the rugged summit of Gerizim, and many a one had fallen asleep, like the three disciples in Tabor. At length a shout is heard—the feast is ready! The lambs being removed from the furnace, the priest's portion was first presented to him, and then the whole company, except those women ceremonially unclean, ate the flesh with bitter herbs and with unleavened bread, in haste, with their loins girded, their shoes on their feet, and their staffs in their hand.<sup>19</sup>

### **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

**John Philip Newman** (1 September 1826 – 5 July 1899) was an American Bishop of the Methodist Episcopal Church, elected in 1888.

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John\\_Philip\\_Newman](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_Philip_Newman)

His visit was on the 23d of April, but the year is unknown but before 1861.

The section on the Passover of this work was printed in *Friends' Review*, Vol. 15, Philadelphia, September 14, 1861, No. 2. pg. 29-30

It is obvious that this book came out after the *Friend's Review* article since there are numbers references of the year 1862 in the book.

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<sup>19</sup> Ex.,xii., 11.