University of Kent at Canterbury
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'The Samaritans: Strategies for Survival of an Ethnoreligious Minority in the Twenty First Century'
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CONTENTS

Abstract

The research focuses on the two Samaritan communities of Neve Marqeh in Holon (a satellite town south of Tel Aviv) and Kiryat Luza on the Samaritan holy mountain Gerizim (adjacent to the Palestinian West Bank city of Nablus). The Samaritan population currently stands at 654 persons almost exclusively resident in the two communities. Samaritans themselves believe that their Mosaic religious tradition has an uninterrupted history of 3,600 years. They are very proud and protective of their faith and are steeped in religious learning from an early age - as is evidenced in several of the illustrations children are involved in as much of the ritual as possible. The sacred mountain is the location for several sites of archaeological and historic interest and the Samaritans have had a presence in the vicinity throughout their history.

The paper considers how the Samaritans maintain their distinctive ethnoreligious identity as a minority population straddling a Jewish Israeli and a Palestinian Arab Muslim dichotomy. Samaritan use of regulated change to historic practice in order to surmount such problems as male female ratio imbalance and political problems is considered. There is examination of how the society functions and the roles that its members play in the strategies for survival in the twenty first century.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank the Council for British Research in the Levant (CBRL) for its kind assistance and also Mr Benyamim "Benny" Tsedaka, a Holon Samaritan, for facilitating my access to the communities. Prior to undertaking fieldwork research or even writing a methodological essay on the ethics of fieldwork I considered it wise to contact acknowledged contemporary experts on the subject of the Samaritans. Not only were ethical considerations addressed but also I was also able to negotiate access to the community through my "gatekeeper" Benny Tsedaka the Samaritans' de facto roving ambassador. For more general Israeli/Palestinian

concerns I contacted Professor Yoram Bilu of the Hebrew University, Jerusalem and Dr Nabil Alawi of the an-Najah University in Nablus. At the very outset of considering the Samaritans as a topic of study I visited the websites of Palestinian and Israeli Universities and speculatively emailed social scientists for relevant leads. Glenn Bowman my academic supervisor suggested that I contact Professor Bilu and the Palestinian sociologist Professor Salim Tamari. I also corresponded by email with Professor Reinhard Pummer of the University of Ottawa, a pre-eminent academic authority on the Samaritans. The Samaritan High Priest Saloum ben Amram (see illustration 4).

As well as providing me with an invaluable collection of data through numerous interviews the field trip enabled me to see first hand a small and thriving unique community. This experience has boosted my enthusiasm for the project in a way that library research alone could not. I am very grateful for the support of my department here at the University of Kent and the funding from the CBRL without which the field research would have been impossible. The Samaritans themselves made my brief visit invaluable with their hospitality and obvious interest in discussing their faith, history and contemporary situation.

Glossary

Aron (Aron Kodesh): Hebrew – an alcove or cupboard in a synagogue where the Torah scrolls are kept. The aron is used in both Samaritan and Jewish synagogues

Bet Israel: Hebrew – 'House/People of Israel.'

Cohen pl. Cohanim: Hebrew - hereditary position of priest, in both Samaritanism and Judaism this is based on descent from Aaron, brother of Moses.

HaCohen HaGadol: Hebrew High Priest.

Cuthim: Hebrew – A derogatory term used by Jews See also 2 Kings 17:24.

Eruv: Hebrew term applying to symbolic acts to justify breaking Sabbath taboos (the best known example in the UK is of the eruv tehumim amalgamating boundaries symbolised by a wire amalgamating boundaries so that the permitted 2000 cubit limit on travelling can be broken). Although Orthodox Jews make use of such devices Samaritans are more rigid in their practice.

Genizah: Hebrew a place for storing old books. It is forbidden in Jewish law to destroy anything that contains the name of God. Damaged or obsolete books where stored in small rooms in synagogues. The most famous genizah is the one discovered in an old synagogue in Fustat, (Old Cairo) in the late nineteenth century, containing thousands of documents relating to many aspects of mediaeval life. Although concerned mostly with Rabbinite Jews, there are references to Karaite and Samaritan life of the period.

Halakha: Hebrew 'way of going' Jewish or Samaritan religious law both of which claim that the whole religious legal system derives from Moses when he received the Torah from God on Mount Sinai. Like Orthodox Jews Samaritans believe it is binding.

Karaite: Jewish sect founded in early eighth century CE. They believe in a literal interpretation of the bible and reject Rabbinic oral law. Like the Samaritans they were once great in number in Egypt, Russia and parts of the Middle East. Now they are reduced to tens of thousand at most, predominantly in Israel.

Matzoh: Hebrew Unleavened bread eaten during Samaritan and Jewish Passovers. The ancient Israelites in flight from Egypt took it as they had no time for the bread to rise. In commemoration of this leavened bread must not be eaten in the Passover season.

Memar Marqah: Aramaic 'the Teaching of Marqah' a six book document, the most important after the Torah itself, written by the Samaritan fourth century CE scholar Marqah. It is mostly written in the same Palestinian Aramaic as the Targum with some Hebrew passages.

Mitzvah pl. Mitzvot: Hebrew 'commandment.'

Mohel: Hebrew religious official who carries out circumcisions on eight day old boys. The Samaritans now use Jewish mohels as the small size of the community does not justify it having its own.

Nagid: Hebrew 'prince' the head of the Jewish community in Islamic lands. The position disappeared in the nineteenth century CE. See Ra'is al Yahud

Pikkuah Nefesh: Hebrew 'regard for human life.' In Judaism the obligation to save life supersedes Sabbath laws.

Rabbinite Jews: Mainstream Jews accepting the whole canon of Jewish liturgical texts and post Torah interpretation of Jewish Law – as distinguished from Karaites.

Ra'is/Rayyis al Yahud: The Arab epithet of the Nagid or head of the Jewish community in Muslim lands. See Nagid.

Hasha'ar Moshe: Hebrew, Song of the Red Sea (Song of Moses and Miriam), Exodus 15:1 Ancient Samaritan Israelite chant. Song of Moses and Miriam the Prophetess, sister of Moses, sung by the Children of Israel when they crossed the Red Sea.

Shabbat: Hebrew the Samaritan and Jewish Sabbath when specific mitzvot are meant to be observed.

Shabbos Goy: Yiddish 'Sabbath gentile' non-Jewish person employed to perform tasks forbidden to Jews on the Sabbath.

Shisha: Arabic water pipe used for smoking tobacco, also known as *narghile* or *arghile*, very popular in Egypt and the Levant.

Shomer pl. Shomerim: Hebrew- 'Keepers (of the Faith) a self ascribed epithet of the Samaritans.

Shomron pl. Shomronim: Hebrew – 'Samarian' an inhabitant of Samaria and a misnomer applied by Jewish Israelis to Samaritans.

Taheb: Aramaic – 'the Redeemer' a messianic figure in Samaritan tradition who will herald the next period of divine favour.

Tannur pl. Tannurim: Hebrew – oven, in this study referring to the pit ovens used to cook the interred sacrificial paschal lambs.

Taqiyya: Arabic – 'dissimulation' a practice adhered to among the Druze and historically Shia Muslims in

regions of Sunni Muslim hegemony.

Tarboush pl. Tarabish: Arabic – a red fez like hat traditionally worn by men in Egypt and the Levant. Worn by Samaritan men on Shabbat and feast days.

Targum Aramaic: 'translation' Aramaic translation of the bible. The Samaritan Targum was written in the Western Aramaic used by the Samaritans and was probably authored by Marqah.

Tolidah pl. Tolidot: Hebrew – 'Chronicle'

Torah: Hebrew lit. "instruction, law," from *horah* "he taught, showed." The Five Books of Moses (the first of the three sections of the Hebrew bible) believed by Jews and Samaritans to have been handed to Moses by God on Mount Sinai. The Samaritan bible consists only of their version of the Torah.

Yeshiva pl. Yeshivot: Hebrew – Jewish rabbinical academy devoted to the teaching of the Talmud

Introduction

In this paper I propose that the Samaritan ethnoreligious minority has recognised that it must accept socio-political change to survive, whilst at the same time regulating any development away from historic practice and maintaining tradition wherever possible. Without regulation change would hurry its demise absorbing the population into the wider Jewish Israeli society. A precedent for this has been set in previous centuries with Samaritans apostatising to Islam as discussed in chapters 1 and 2. Without change within a very few generations there would cease to be a Samaritan population.

The aim of my research is to understand what maintains Samaritan ethnocultural distinctiveness, considering their management of ethnic boundaries, tradition and acceptance of socio-political change. In other words to examine Samaritan strategies for survival with reference to internal and external historiography, anthropological discourse, empirical data and my own observations from which to draw inferences.

In order to realise this aim three research objectives are pursued. The first is to establish markers of Samaritan collective identity and differentials within the community and how they are maintained. This involves: kinship, language (the common liturgical use of the ancient Samaritan Hebrew and Aramaic, and the increasing use of Modern Hebrew by Palestinian Samaritans), acculturation (the increasing influence of modern Israeli Jewish lifestyle among Holon Samaritans and the differentials between the Kiryat Luza/Nablus and Holon communities), geographical location, gender (the peripheral role of women in religious ceremonies), participation (the central focus on educating children in Samaritanism through involvement in religious practice), conversion (the need for Jewish brides for Samaritan men and how patrilinealism facilitates their entry into the fold), and practice (religious and profane customs). A second objective is to analyse current external factors (the obstacles and assistance afforded by Israeli and Palestinian institutions) and the political efforts of Samaritans to surmount problems facing them (striving to maintain neutrality and preparing for the possibility of the community being split between two sovereign states). The third objective is to identify the threats to the survival of the Samaritans as a separate ethnoreligious community.

To avoid accusations of any real or metaphorical 'orientalism' on my part I have included reference to Samaritan models of thought and representation. It is not just the wistful dream of an anthropologist or historian that a biblical coelacanth continues to exist but the desire of Samaritans themselves to survive and develop as the True Nation of Israel. Meanwhile any serious ethnographic study must be wary of objectification and the

the True Nation of Israel. Meanwhile any serious ethnographic study must be wary of objectification and the assumption that a subject community is entirely unified or homogenous. Overlapping identities and differing opinions do occur and this is acknowledged in this study.

Within this introduction there is a literature review outlining anthropological discourse of boundaries that can be related to Samaritan group identity. Boundaries, and how they are maintained or eroded, are referred to in each of the chapters and the conclusion. The context of the Samaritans is set out in the first chapter with a brief history of the sect, an examination of the central tenets of their faith and demographic data. The second and third chapters are the arena for my argument that the Samaritans can thrive only by controlling their relations with the outside world. This involves recognising and accepting inevitable social and political change on their own terms. The major consideration in chapter 2 is the dramatic twentieth century decision of the community to accept outsiders into the faith – through exogamous marriages with Jewesses. Chapter 3 considers the abandonment in recent years of traditional Samaritan political passivity, current external factors and how Samaritans are preparing for the future. Threats to the Samaritans, historical, current and hypothetical are discussed in each of the chapters.

This is very much a field research based paper, and primary ethnographic research yielded more support to my argument than library research. The second chapter especially draws heavily from interviews and observations in the field, supported by literature.

Methods and materials

I undertook a short field research trip in April 2002 funded by the Council for British Research in the Levant (CBRL) which provided data for this MA dissertation. The trip consolidated my links made with the community, initiated through the de facto Samaritan roving ambassador Mr Benyamim 'Benny' Tsedaka.

I used a combination of interview and observational methods to acquire the necessary empirical data. Although I speak some Arabic and Hebrew most of the recorded interviews were carried out in English with two in Hebrew. A tape recorder was used when appropriate to assist in accurate recording of data and photographs were taken of a religious ceremony the Samaritan Passover Sacrifice ritual[1] on Mount Gerizim. A field diary was kept to record daily events and help co-ordinate the fieldwork with the overall aims of the research.

I recorded the interviews in English and Hebrew over a total of two or three days. All the recorded interviews were with male subjects one in Holon and the rest in Kiryat Luza with members from both locales.[2] I did have informal conversations in English, Hebrew and Arabic which provided me with insight both into the subject matter and more general local issues. A combination of semi-structured and informal interviews were undertaken with a list of set questions, although I adapted my interviews to the situation and respondent. Some interviews were prearranged through Benny, who was keen on me meeting as many Samaritan informants as possible, and others were spontaneous. Recording interviews was far more efficient than note taking and although transcribing the notes is time consuming, especially when translation is involved, it is easier to detect emphasis and to record verbatim. As with photography recordings provided prompts and reminders.

Ethical Considerations

During my studies I focused on the Samaritans and the ethics of undertaking field research among an ethnoreligious minority. As a marginal population in a highly politicised and tense region there are inevitably risks to the community being studied and to a field researcher. The conclusion that I arrived at, after consulting Benny Tsedaka and a renowned scholar of Samaritan studies Professor Reinhard Pummer, was that sensible field research and a sensitivity to the local and national environment justify the study. Both men informed me

that in their experience the Samaritans are more than happy to discuss themselves and their culture and would not consider an anthropological study intrusive.[3] I also contacted a Palestinian academic, Nabil Alawi, based at an-Najah University in Nablus and an Israeli anthropologist, Yoram Bilu, at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem. They advised me not to negotiate with the Palestinian and Israeli authorities beforehand but to read the situation at the time of the field work.

The informants were made aware of the reasons for my presence, the methods and intended and possible uses of the research. Confidentiality of information supplied by research subjects and anonymity of respondents will be maintained where necessary. The Palestinian Authority and the Israeli government are very sensitive to the physical welfare of the Samaritan communities and neither the official militaries nor guerilla organisations consider Samaritans to be legitimate targets. I collaborated closely with academic staff within my department and discussed the ethical implications of my research. I strove to maintain independence and impartiality towards the subject and am familiar with and abided by the Association of Social Anthroplogists (ASA) code of fieldwork ethics. Every reasonable effort will be made to ensure that the welfare of the community, informants and the academic integrity of the project are not compromised. Any data which may be considered a threat to the subject community will be withheld from publication.

Interviewees

Samaritans especially those who live in or spend much time in Kiryat Luza use both Arabic and Hebrew given names. Zebulan is known as Fayyad, Shalom is Saloum, Aharon is Harun. Listed below are the interviewees referred to throughout the dissertation:

Subject: Benny Tsedaka

Age: 57/58

Profession: Publisher of the Samaritan AB newspaper, director of the A.B. Institute of Samaritan Studies, and de facto roving ambassador for the Samaritan community.

Location of interviews: London 16/12/01 and 16/01/02, informal

conversation Kiryat Luza Saturday 26/04/02. Interviews were conducted in English.

Subject: Israel Tsedaka

Age: 70

Profession: retired senior civil servant having worked for the Israeli

Mint/currently researcher of Samaritan language and theology.

Resident of Holon.

Location of interview: his home in the Newe Marqeh neighbourhood

Thursday 19/04/02. Interview was conducted in English.

Subject: ‘Amar/Amram Cohen

Age: Thirties

Profession: Works in Israel

Location of interview: his parents’ home in the middle of Kiryat Luza.

The interview was conducted in Hebrew on Thursday 25/04/02.

Comments: ‘Amar’s brother Wa’el, a deaf mute, met me in the street and invited me to the family home to observe and discuss Samaritan life.

Subject: Yusuf Cohen

Age: 56

Profession: unknown

Location of interview: Yusuf’s comfortable home near the centre of Kiryat Luza. The interview was conducted in English the morning of Friday 26.04.02.

Subject: Harun/Aharon Cohen Ben Saloum/Shalom

Age: unknown

Profession: civil servant in the Palestinian ministry of Sport/son of the High Priest.

Location of interview: the High Priest’s house. The interview was conducted in English Saturday 27/04/02.

Subject: Fayyad/Zebulan Altif

Age: 72

Profession: Retired English teacher

Location of interview: Fayyad's comfortable home a few yards from the

High Priest's house towards the edge of the village on Mount

Gerizim. The interview was conducted in English on the evening of Saturday 27.04.02.

Subject: Ya'akov Cohen

Age: 28

Profession: Electrician. Resident of Holon.

Location of interview: the sacrificial site on Mount Gerizim. The

interview was conducted in English on the evening of Saturday

27.04.02.

Comments: Some of the Samaritans at the end of Shabbat are continuing

to destroy the remnants of the previous day's work burning them in

the pit ovens.

Subject: Salum Imran Ishaq Al-Samiri /Shalom HaCohen HaGadol Ben

Amram

Age: 80

Profession: High Priest/Samaritan representative on the Palestine

National Council formerly teacher.

Location of interview: his plush home on the western outskirts of Kiryat

Luza Sunday 28/04/02. Interview was conducted in English.

Literature Review

Fredrik Barth examined in his *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries* the previously accepted theories of the bounded

ethnic group and the tactical management of ethnic identity. I would posit that there are contradictions regarding the boundaries, identities and authenticities of the Samaritans (as of course there would be with any group). Despite these contradictions the Samaritans are more recognisably bounded than most ethnic or religious groups because of their small number and self professed 'difficult' religion.[4] For the same reasons, and because of an identified desire to survive, increase and thrive, their ethnic identity and its future development are tactically managed.

Anthony P. Cohen outlined five conditions for the authentication of identity 'predicated as it must be on the presence of a significant boundary:

The 'experiential'[5] nature of the boundary;

The implicit and tacit knowledge of it shared among those bounded by it;

Its capacity to contain and insulate their culture and worldview, even while they interact routinely with others and appear to have become absorbed in larger, hybrid forms;

Its consequent resilience and exploitation of its apparent peripherality to denigrate, and thereby to disempower the putative centre;

Its plasticity and assimilability to the widely diverse identity claims made on it' (Cohen 2000: 11,12).

All of Cohen's preconditions for authentication of identity, and the maintenance of that bounded identity, are present in the case of the Samaritans. Examples of the five pointers are seen in the three chapters of this paper.

'All culture is based on shared symbols, and all social and political symbols are structured and expressed through complex relations of symbols and rituals. In the study of nations and states, steeped in rationalist and materialist models these points are often missed' (Wilson and Donnan 2000: 15).

Although the Samaritans can express themselves as a nation (see chapter 3) it is easier to see the role of symbol and ritual in defining and maintaining group cohesion because of the small size of the community. The Passover Sacrifice and its significance to the Samaritans illuminates this cohesion – every Samaritan true to the faith, who is not bedridden, is present and participating to varying degrees.

A number of Israeli scholars have been researching and writing about the Samaritans. The veteran Samaritanist Professor Ze'ev Ben Hayyim now in his mid nineties and after over half a century of study on the community and its language and traditions has produced many books.[6] Professor Ben Hayyim's pupil Professor Avraham Tal has himself had a number of books published relating to the Samaritans. In turn Dr Moshe Florentine was his pupil and his works include a treatise on the history of the *Tolidah*.[7] Now Israel Tsedaka is working with Florentine's understudy Uri Mor on the prayer and poems of the Samaritans.[8]

Sources consulted

Although there is not a large body of recent academic ethnographic research material available there are many historical records pertaining to the Samaritans. Contemporary resources accessed include the works of Professor Reinhard Pummer and Nathan Schur. The Franciscan International Study Centre located on the University of Kent campus has the entire back catalogue of the Palestine Exploration Quarterly from the 1860s to the present day with many travelogue accounts of the Samaritans in Nablus. This proved very useful for nineteenth century information on the Samaritans and Nathan Schur's article on Christian travel literature of

nineteenth century information on the Samaritans and Nathan Schur's article on Christian travel literature of the fourteenth to nineteenth centuries pertaining to the Samaritans. Twentieth century studies of the Samaritan religion by John Bowman, John MacDonald, and R.J. Coggins, among others, are also referred to. For an updated Samaritan perspective on the two communities I consulted the Samaritan AB newspaper and the Samaritans Online website.[9]

I referred to S.D. Goitein's fascinating compendia of Jewish communities of the Arab World, A Mediterranean Society series. Unfortunately this large scale study of mediaeval documents found in the Cairo Genizah[10] unearthed in an old Fustat synagogue in the late nineteenth century yielded very little information on the Samaritans of the time. It did however provide some useful insight into Mamluk perceptions of the Samaritans (see chapter 1).

Special difficulties encountered

I could not afford a longer period of field research and had originally planned four weeks in Israel/Palestine. This meant that I missed the final Passover ceremony on the holy ancient site. Fortunately the Feast of Sacrifice, the initial Passover Shabbat prayers in the synagogue and the three days on Mount Gerizim afforded me great opportunity to interview and observe.

Time constraints and the sensitive nature of the subject meant that I was unable to talk and meet with Samaritans who had left the community. The matter was discussed in interview and is referred to in chapter 2. A disadvantage as far as researching this paper is concerned was the dearth of anthropological work specifically related to the Samaritans. This does however provide an element of originality to this project. The study is unique in that over 1% of the subject population was interviewed during its research.

Chapter 1

History

Other ancient heterodox Israelite sects such as the Sadducees, Essenes, Isunians and Sabbateans are now long extinct, but the Samaritans along with the Karaite Jews survive today (the latter in quite substantial numbers). They continue to practise what they consider to be the original biblical religion of Israel.[11] This chapter provides the historical and theological context of the Samaritans with reference to the schism with what developed into mainstream Judaism, and briefly to the Karaites.

Samaritans comprise the Cohanim from the priestly tribe of Levi who constitute the majority, with the rest claiming descent from the two tribes of Manasseh and Ephraim.[12] They consider themselves Israelites but not Jews, holding that their ancestors inhabited the region around Shechem (modern Nablus) continuously before and after the fall of the northern kingdom Israel in 722 BCE. The Judaean tribes of the southern kingdom Judaea were exiled to Babylonia in 586 BCE, returning to Palestine as Jews. Relations between the two groups were hostile; Babylonian returnees refused Samaritan help in reconstructing the Temple and the Jewish prophet Ezra condemned intermarriage. In turn the Samaritans constructed their own temple on Mount Gerizim[13] whilst distancing themselves from the Jews. In effect they realised Cohen's fourth condition of authenticity of identification, doctrinally 'disempowering the putative centre' Jerusalem.

Samaritan Israelites now number approximately 650 persons. About half live in Kiryat Luza, a new village sited on their holy place, Mount Gerizim,[14] Nablus in Palestine. The rest live in Holon, a satellite town south of Tel Aviv. They claim to be the remnants of the ancient kingdom of Israel, acknowledging the Jews to be a deviant branch of Israel.[15]

In the fourth and fifth centuries CE it is estimated that the total population of Samaritans was over one million. There was a considerable diaspora from the Hellenistic period that expired only in the eighteenth century CE. At its apogee in the Roman and Byzantine eras it extended from Armenia to Babylonia, Carthage, Sicily and Greece. The bulk of the Samaritans lived in Cairo, Aleppo, Damascus, Gaza, Jaffa, Haifa and of course Nablus and surrounding villages (Fayyad Altif[16] and also Schur 2002: 1). Over the centuries of Byzantine, Arab and Turkish rule they suffered many iniquities – forced conversion to Christianity[17] and Islam, harsh religious decrees, massacre and persecution. By 1918 and the arrival of the British Mandate they numbered only 146.

Fayyad Altif: 'when Islam came, because it believes only in one god, Samaritans found it very easy to move to it. Also because of the pressure they suffered during the early Islamic period, when many Samaritans moved to Islam until there were only five families left in all the Middle East.[18] I don't know how they gathered together but they understood that they must come to live together in Nablus, because it is very near to Mount Gerizim. From that time on the community lived only in Nablus'.[19]

The Nablus community escaped the fate of the Damascus Samaritans most of whom were killed or converted during the reign of the Ottoman Pasha Mardam Beq in the early 17th century CE.[20] The Nablus Samaritans endured because most of the surviving diaspora returned, as mentioned by Fayyad. The Marchiv family came from Sarafand on the south Lebanese coast, where there had been a Samaritan presence for many centuries. The Danefi clan migrated from Damascus and the Matari from Gaza.

Much of the local Palestinian population is believed to be descended from Samaritans who converted to Islam. Certain Nabulsi family names are associated with Samaritan ancestry – Muslimani, Yaish, and Shakshir among others. Fayyad: 'the Samaritans moved to Islam so that they could live freely and some people find it better to be one of millions rather than one of hundreds.' Despite such antecedents there appears to be little Palestinian interest in a sect routinely referred to as 'Samaritan Jews' by the PNA and the Palestinian media.[21] Chapter 3 discusses current Palestinian and Jewish Israeli relations with Samaritans at length.

From 1924 the community began to reverse the centuries old decline and the population increased.[22] The religious head of the community is the high priest or HaCohen HaGadol, the leader of the 'Ha' Abtai' priestly clan, descendants of Aaron, Moses' brother. As noted above, there are the Cohen priests from the tribe of Levi who constitute the majority, and the two tribes of Manasseh and Ephraim. The three Samaritan clans date back to the sons of Joseph: the Tsedaka Hatsafari from the tribe of Manasseh, the Danfi (the Altif and Hassetari/Sassoni families) and the Marchivi (the Marchiv and Yehoshua families) from the tribe of Ephraim. [23]

The Samaritans accept registry as a Jew ("Shomroni Yehudi") despite regarding themselves as descendants of the tribes of Israel, in distinction from the tribe of Judah. The term "Jew" does not relate exclusively to the descendants of Judah, but in general to the Children of the People of Israel. Also the Karaites today, call themselves, "Yehudim Karaim" (Karaite Jews), and some of them are formally registered in this way. The Ethopian Jews are regarded by the rabbinical authorities as the descendants of the tribe of Dan, and are called "Yehudei Etiopia" (Ethopian Jews), but since their integration with mainstream Judaism, are acknowledged and registered as Jews, with no indication of their origin. (Korinaldi 2001: 2)

Unlike the Samaritans, the Karaites (product of an eighth century schism with mainstream Judaism) accepted all twenty-four books of the Hebrew Bible, in the same version of the text as rabbinic Jews. However they argue that the Bible should be interpreted literally as the major source of Jewish Law and refute the Talmud and rabbinic oral tradition. Karaites usually established their communities alongside existing Jewish

settlements. This led to closer coexistence with the latter than the Samaritans experienced. It also meant that there was polemical tension, as of course exists between Rabbinic Judaism and Samaritanism.

The Karaites significantly differ from the Samaritans in that they have always considered themselves Jewish.[24] In Egypt and Turkey, the Karaites never questioned their status as Jews and neither did the rabbinic authorities.

Samaritan Tenets of Faith

There are four prerequisites for retaining membership of the Samaritan faith: living only within the historical Land of Israel; participating in the Passover Feast of Sacrifice on Mount Gerizim; strictly keeping the *Torah*[25] prescribed Sabbath; and observing all the *mitzvot* of purity and impurity as recorded in the Torah.[26] The main differentials between the Samaritans and Jews are that Mount Gerizim is the Holy place not Jerusalem; the Torah is the only canon of Samaritan *halakha*; and the lineage is patrilineal, not matrilineal as it is with Rabbinic Jews.

Perhaps the most central belief of the Samaritans is the sanctity of Mount Gerizim. The Samaritan in his twice-daily prayers swears and proclaims –'…and Mount Gerizim Beth-El all our days of our lives.' This faith in Mount Gerizim as the holy place of Israel is the essence of a Samaritan's life and his very reason for existence. Any Samaritan cut off from Mount Gerizim is lost and is no more' (Israel Tsedaka 2000). In this respect the attachment of Samaritans to Gerizim is far more intense even than the Judaic veneration of Jerusalem, which Samaritans see as an abomination of the Israelite faith.

Despite being derived from the same origin as Judaism, and having almost the same Torah, Samaritanism is unique in its near veneration of Moses. Its only prophet, he is so central to the faith that it cannot be understood without reference to him. Although not imbued with divine status, like Jesus Christ, Moses is related to every aspect of Samaritanism, in the way Christ is to Christians (MacDonald 1964: 147).

An interesting aspect of Samaritanism is the belief in a redeemer or Taheb. Not one of the Samaritans that I spoke to in the two weeks I spent in Israel and Palestine volunteered any information about the *Taheb*.

Historical texts of the Samaritans

Marqah was a Samaritan scholar living in the fourth century CE. He is the probable author of the *Targum*[27] a mostly literal translation of the Torah from Hebrew to Palestinian Aramaic. Marqah is responsible for the second most important Samaritan writings after the Torah itself – *Memar Marqah*. MacDonald dates the work and its author to the late third or early fourth century CE (MacDonald 1964: 42).[28]

The proximity to the dominant Christianity of the late Roman and Byzantine era in Israel and the Samaritan diaspora allowed for New Testament influence on the status of Moses. The development of the doctrine of Moses by Marqah can be seen as a reaction to Christian comparisons of Jesus Christ and Moses (MacDonald 1964: 189).

This Samaritan system of belief in Moses clearly parallels New Testament teachings in the belief of Christ (MacDonald 1964: 150):

'He who believes in Moses believes in his Lord' (Memar IV: 7);

'You believe in God, believe also in me (Christ)' (John 14:1).

Who are the Samaritans?

Samaritans call themselves Shomerim or 'keepers' but in Israel they are usually referred to as Shomeronim. The latter term is a misnomer translating as Samarian and it refers to an area that does not exactly correspond with the historical Samaritan homeland.

Asking outright what a Samaritan identity is, in terms of an individual placing themselves on a continuum nearer to or further from a Palestinian or Jewish Israeli position, could be construed as a political question and dangerous for Samaritans.[29]

The Samaritans vehemently consider themselves and their putative history as authentic, that is, they are who they say they are. Recent studies seem to overturn the long academic and theological acceptance of the Samaritans as mongrel practitioners of a debased form of Judaism.[30] The Jews have historically had a generally disparaging attitude to the Samaritans, deriving from negative depictions in the Book of Ezra.[31] They labelled the Samaritans '*Cuthim*', a reference to a non-Israelite Assyrian people who according to the anti-Samaritan Jewish historian Flavius Josephus migrated to Israel and intermarried with locals.[32] This insult to Samaritanism has soured Judaeo-Samaritan polemics since the appearance of the Book of Ezra.

For much if not all of the 11th to 15th centuries CE the Samaritans, and the Karaites in Cairo, fell under the religious and civil jurisdiction of the Jewish *Nagid* or *Rayyis al Yahud*. This Rayyis or *Ra'is* was appointed from among the Rabbinite Jews by the Muslim caliphate. According to Goitein the role corresponded to that of the Christian patriarchs. No differentiation was made by the Muslim authorities between the Jewish sects and Samaritanism. Unlike the Karaites, who in Egypt were generally well integrated with the Rabbinites and often intermarried with them, the Samaritans did not recognise the Jewish religious authorities (Goitein 1967). Goitein also notes that on occasion poorer members of the Samaritan community would apostate to Rabbinite Judaism.

Uniquely in these days of globalisation the Samaritans prove the exception to Hobsbawm's observation: 'never was the word "community" used more indiscriminately and emptily than in the decades when communities in the sociological sense became hard to find in real life' (Hobsbawm 1994: 428).

Perhaps more than any other 'ethnie' the Samaritans are a bounded group. This boundedness is loosening (in some respects) as shall be seen in chapter 2. Endogamy is and still is blighting the community leading to a disproportionate number of deaf mutes and cripples. In response to this and the current imbalance between the number of marriageable males and females, exogamy has become commonplace. Most young Israeli Samaritan men marry Jewish women who are then brought into the faith.[33]

Despite this loosening, self-identity for Samaritans as individuals seems to be subsumed to their self-identity as a community. Although they interact with and are part of the modern, globalised world they are still inherently members of a bounded group. Samaritans have what Hobsbawm considers the modern man and woman are striving for – a group 'to which they can belong, certainly and forever in a world in which all else is moving and shifting, in which nothing else is certain' (Hobsbawm 1996: 40).

Now Samaritans live 'only in Holon and Mount Gerizim, but we can travel all over the world'.[34] Despite the general ignorance of the Jewish Israeli populace there has been reconciliation between the two faiths. This is partly as a result of the patronage of the Ben Tzvi and also of sympathetic Israeli scholastic interest.[35]

Fayyad:'due to economic problems most try to be government officials – teachers, work in offices. Those with

enough money have shops. My son-in-law has a very good fashion shop in Nablus selling throughout the country and even Israel. There are other shops but not enough to depend on them.'

To conclude, Samaritanism has survived through dogged adherence to its central doctrines – the sanctity of Mount Gerizim, the profane status of Jerusalem and the saviour status of Moses. Concurrently the faith has endured as a result of theological acculturation of ideas from Christianity and Islam.

I would argue that the tactical management of Samaritan boundaries and in turn their ethnoreligious distinctiveness is not a recent development but a continuing centuries-old process. Initially a boundary was established between the Samaritans and returnees from Babylon. The origin of the snub to the Samaritans may be mythical, but their subsequent refusal to accept Jewish additions to the biblical canon has helped preserve differentials.

Conversely, influence from the more distant Christianity and Islam has allowed the Samaritans to adapt to a changing environment. A clear example of this can be seen in the New Testament-influenced veneration of Moses. In Chapter 2 striking similarities between Muslim and Samaritan prayer postures and blessings are observed.

Clan identification and the claim to ancient lineage help maintain both internal and external boundaries. This familial identity is based on the belief in an unbroken ancestral chain of some 118 generations.[36] Whatever changes Samaritans consider that they must accept, the weight of history ensures that they are not undertaken lightly. As with the Karaites, endogamous marriage has traditionally kept the Samaritan identity bounded. The next chapter considers how the community accepts the arrival of exogamous marriage.

Chapter 2

This chapter looks at how Samaritan society has developed its own strategy for continuation. It considers how a need for change, the conversion of Jewish women to Samaritanism through marriage, is undertaken and justified. The ambiguities of acculturation and Samaritan tradition are analysed. This chapter also explores the gender specific division of labour in terms of practice and the socialisation of children into the '*Shomerim[37]*' of the future.

The Samaritans are a patrilineal society - this facilitates the conversion of Jewish women to the faith

In Samaritan *halakha[38]* there is a strict prohibition on intermarriage with non-believers (whether Samaritans who do not uphold the faith or anyone not born of the Samaritan religion). Historically this taboo was strictly followed as non-Samaritans could not be converted (unlike Rabbinite[39] Judaism which allowed converts to marry Jews - except to members of the Cohen lineage). Consequently the numbers in the community dwindled almost to extinction. Since 1924 this *halakha* has been waived as Samaritan practice changed vis a vis marriage to Jewesses. (Korinaldi 2001: 2)

There are two primary reasons, among others, for the need to accept the new practice. The most crucial perhaps is the value of new blood coming into what has been described as the most inbred population on earth.[40] A sustained level of consanguinity has led to a disproportionate number of deaf mutes[41] and cripples. Within two minutes walk from the High Priest's house on the western outskirts of the village, three of the first four Samaritans that I met were deaf mutes. One of them was so severely disabled that he could not walk unsupported.

Secondly, in recent history, and at present, there has been a shortfall in the number of Samaritan females

available to marry Samaritan men. Integration into wider Israeli society, with Holon Samaritans especially studying, working and living among Jews, is also a factor. The practicalities are that intermarriage between a Samaritan and a Jew will be authorised by the High Priest, only when he is convinced that the incomer is able to withstand the rigours of Samaritan tradition. A Jewess must agree to observe Samaritan tradition living in the bridegroom's house for at least six months and learning the customs of the community:

'She needs to believe what the Samaritans believe and she has to forget Jerusalem. We believe in Mount Gerizim,' Yusuf Cohen.

The justification for the acceptance of Jewish women is that the progeny will be Samaritans in accordance with the patrilineal descent system. It is the custom with the Samaritans to give first-born males the name of their paternal grandfather.[42] Samaritan *halakha* bases the custom on Genesis 48:16: "the Angel which has redeemed me from all evil: bless the lads and let my name be named on them and the name of my fathers: Abraham and Isaac". Jews are considered part of the nation of Israel but have deviated from the true path followed by Samaritans. This status makes them redeemable on the day of vengeance and recompense, unlike Christians or Muslims.

The patrilineal descent system precludes a Samaritan woman from marrying a Jew or gentile, as any subsequent offspring would be non-Samaritan. A consequence of the patrilineal system is that it allows women to marry in – an acceptance of change – coinciding with the need for nubile females. As we have seen this practice can be biblically sanctioned and is also facilitated by the State of Israel allowing inter-denominational marriage between Jews and Samaritans.[43]

The opinions of Samaritans - the acceptance of Jewish brides into the community

The 1924 decision to accept Jewish wives into Samaritanism may well have been necessary[44], but it broke an ancient tradition of strict endogamy and could arguably threaten to dilute the Samaritan identity as much as its blood. 'Are the Samaritan community and families happy when their son marries a Jewish girl?' This question posed to the interviewees drew the following responses:

Israel: '...not happy, but it is necessary. When I married the number of girls was enough (Israel's late wife was a Samaritan cousin) for the men but now after 40 years the number of boys is more than the girls, so we must take girls from outside. But they must agree to all the *mitzvot[45]* of the Samaritans. My (four) sons all married Jews – but they left the religion of the Jews and became Samaritans.'

Interestingly Israel points out that it is not strictly forbidden for Christians or Muslims to marry Samaritans: 'it is more difficult. The Jews are part of Israel but the Torah does not say do not marry Muslims or Christians (although of course neither Islam nor Christianity existed when the Torah came into being). Everybody if he wants to become a man of God or Israel can if he… (observes) all the *mitzvot* of the Samaritans. She can enter but of course it is easier for Jews than Muslims or Christians because they are further from the religion. But if it happens for religion it is possible.'

In contrast Fayyad is less amenable to the phenomenon: 'for me it is not so good. Our life is not so easy, our religion is very strict. The children of those families will not be so sure whether they are Samaritans or Jews. To change your religion is not so easy, especially in the Middle East.'

This is countered by Yusuf's assertion that most families are happy to accept this relatively recent acceptance of intermarriage. They understand 'because when the girl comes to the Samaritan community she gives new blood to the Samaritans. Because we married inside the community we are too much (sic) defective, for

example, I have two brothers who are dumb. They do not see or hear because my father married his cousin.'

Even Fayyad acknowledges that the lack of Samaritan women and the willingness of some Jewish women to leave their Israelite faith for Samaritanism make intermarriage a solution, albeit an imperfect one. Israel supports the intermarriage on the basis that it can be religiously justified and the wives become Samaritans. Yusuf provides a more practical, experiential reason for condoning it.

One of my interviewees provides a useful case study of the modern Samaritan Holon based family.[46] Benny Tsedaka has a personal and increasingly typical experience of Samaritan and Jewish relations. In 1969 he married Miriam Davidovich, a Jewish girl of Romanian origin, whom he met at the Hebrew University. Miriam joined the Community and now considers herself a Samaritan. They have four adult children, two boys (the married son has a Jewish born wife) and two girls and grandchildren.

It does happen that sometimes a Samaritan marries a Jew and becomes a Jew. In practice when Samaritan women marry Jews they leave the Samaritan community. This has happened several times. Israel: 'I have a brother and his daughter left the Samaritans to become a Jewish girl. The rabbis at the rabbinate made them Jewish. I am very angry about the daughter of my brother but what can you do? Of course they remain *'Bet Israel'* (part of the nation of Israel), but in the Jewish not the Samaritan part. This is life.' The rarity of such cases fulfils another of Cohen's criteria for the authenticity of the Samaritan bounded identity – the resilience of the peripheral Samaritan community disempowering the putative Jewish centre. It is Jews who exchange their Judaism for Samaritanism not the other way round.

The entry of Jewish women to the community and their influence on identity and behaviour have been difficult to quantify. It could be argued that it is inevitable that the Samaritan upbringing of children could be diluted by Jewish mothers. Certainly for those families in Israel there has been greater acculturation through increased exposure to wider Israeli society. This is a phenomenon that is set to increase as more young men choose Jewish brides. The attitudes of the generation who are children now with Jewish mothers and paternal Jewish grandmothers is a future area of study.

Acculturation

Intermarriage with non-Samaritans is also a by-product of living among other groups. The Samaritans live in two small clusters surrounded by an almost exclusively Jewish Israeli population in Holon, and by an equally dominant Muslim Palestinian population in Nablus and the surrounding villages. Neither Samaritan community is wholly self sufficient in terms of education or employment and so interaction with their neighbours is almost inevitable.

A considerable acculturation has taken place but with markedly different trends. Holon Samaritans speak Modern Hebrew in everyday life and live study and work among Jews – even serving in the Israeli Defence Forces (IDF)**[47]**. Increasingly Nabulsi Samaritans, who speak Palestinian Arabic as a first language, are learning Modern Hebrew, and a number of the youths and young men were happy to converse with me in that language. Some of the Kiryat Luza community speak fluent modern Hebrew and commute to work in Israel. Yusuf although a native Arabic speaking Palestinian resident of Mount Gerizim, studied at Bar Ilan University in Tel Aviv and therefore speaks fluent Modern Hebrew.

Of course Palestinian Samaritans do not serve in the IDF but the Israeli Law of Return**[48]** has been extended to not only the Holon Samaritans but also those who are Palestinian National Authority (PNA) citizens. It appears that political and socio-economic pressures are pushing *both* Samaritan communities into the Jewish Israeli sphere and away from the centuries old cohabitation with Palestinian Muslims.**[49]** This is also a

Israeli sphere and away from the centuries old cohabitation with Palestinian Muslims.[49] This is also a geographical issue – the Holon Samaritans increasingly live cheek by jowl with Jewish neighbours. As explained in Chapter 3 the move from Nablus to the exclusively Samaritan village on Mount Gerizim has reduced Samaritan-Palestinian interaction.

When it was put to Fayyad that Samaritan people seem very close to Israel and the Jews: 'a problem, as the two know the same language and are very similar. The youth like the free life they can find among the Jews and sometimes they like to live among these people.'

He continued: 'in Nablus we are very different from the Muslims and do our best to teach our children the Samaritan religion before studying in Muslim schools. From three to five years old they learn their religion with their milk to manage being away from (with) different people. I finished reading all the five books (Torah) by five and a half years of age. We don't eat Muslim food only Samaritan food – a Samaritan child will not eat Muslim food especially on Yom Kippur. Any kind of food not just meat. Now Samaritans are modernised, before everything used to be homemade.[50] Recently Samaritans began to eat this (Kosher Jewish) food but it is not good among Samaritan beliefs.'

Fayyad raises important points about how the Samaritans socialise their children in a manner that defends their faith and identity from external influences.[51] All Samaritans are raised to ideally be polemicists for their faith (see illustration 1). This is very necessary living in a historically proselytising Islamic environment and among Jewish rabbis and settlers often trained in the arts of religious debate in *yeshivot.[52]*

There are differences between the Samaritans in Holon and those who live on Mount Gerizim. Certain aspects of life for the Samaritans in Kiryat Luza are still very indicative of Arab Palestinian influence. When quizzed about whether he smoked *shisha*[53] often Yusuf replied 'in Nablus all the people smoke *shisha* and we want to feel that we are the same' (see illustration 2).

My interview with Yusuf took place in his very smart Palestinian style house[54] where he and his companion are dressed in traditional clothes, with background chatter in Arabic. When guests arrive during the interview both Arabic and Modern Hebrew are used.

Ya'akov: 'the culture (is different). I have the culture of the Israeli people. They have the culture of the Palestinian people. In Israel there is a free community you can do what you want, go to pub, here the alcohol (sic) is forbidden. There in the city I can go to a pub, discotheque or go to a club. Everything like Israeli people, Israeli youth. Everything. Here they have a problem with the food here is …. You must to (sic) see what you are eating here. It is forbidden to eat meat outside your (the Nablus) community. We (Holon Samaritans) also do not eat meat outside our community, but we eat milky (dairy) things outside.[55] So you can go to a vegetarian restaurant or a milky (dairy) restaurant and eat there. With your girlfriend or your friends. Here (Nablus) there is a problem here you must to (sic) find a vegetarian restaurant if there is. That's it.'

Despite the cultural differences Ya'akov feels comfortable in Kiryat Luza where he has lots of friends and family of similar age. Some of the families within the two communities are more fraternal than others. Yusuf informed me that all his family live on Mount Gerizim and that he has no close relatives in Holon.

Ya'akov and Fayyad highlight the intergenerational, and locale specific, differences in attitude towards change. The younger Holon based man, Ya'akov, acknowledges that he has the dominant culture of Israel and, whilst protective of his Samaritan identity, embraces the freedom and accepts compromise. Although he observes the strict taboo on eating any meat that is not Samaritan kosher[56] he is prepared to eat other food from outside the community. Fayyad is older and appears wistful that Samaritans are succumbing to change and outside

the community. Fayyad is older and appears wistful that Samaritans are succumbing to change and outside influence.

The role of kinship and hierarchies in maintaining the community

There are not only external boundaries for a Samaritan to be distinguished from others but also internal demarcations. As mentioned in Chapter 1 there are five different family groups or clans. The Cohens of the priestly tribe of Levi are the largest family group, constituting almost a third of the total number of Samaritans, according to Seloum the High Priest and Ya'acov.**[57]** The second family is Altif, particularly numerous and powerful in Kiryat Luza. The third largest family is Tsedaka, with Sarawi/Sassoni and Yehoshua/Marchiv about the same size.

When questioned about hierarchies the respondents agreed that some in the community considered themselves more important, but that for them all Samaritans are the same.[58] This is one area where some dissent does exist insofar as representation is concerned. Each of the communities has a committee to represent its populace and there does seem to be an element of power brokering with some clans having more leverage than others.

In Kiryat Luza the High Priest determines the setting of an election. The two large clans on Mount Gerizim, the Cohens and the Altifs, agreed upon this with the latter consenting only on condition that the Secretary would come from their family. However whenever elections are held on Mount Gerizim this agreement is criticised as it is claimed that there are equally suitable or superior candidates, from other families in Kiryat Luza, such as the Cohens, Sirrawis, Marchivs and Tsedakas with experience as members of the Mount Gerizim Committee.[59]

Families tend to be large as evidenced by the respondents. Ya'akov's father had nine siblings, Fayyad has four children as does Benny, Israel and Yusuf both have four sons. Fayyad estimates that the number of Samaritan households is about 120 ranging from two people a house to ten. He keeps a special record for all the births, marriages and deaths.

These days marriages are not as strict and formally arranged as in the past. Within the community a man can select a girl. Whereas in the past he would have to convince her family now it is the woman he has to persuade first.[60] Nowadays Samaritans marrying each other tend to look beyond their immediate clan because of the fear of disease.[61] The age at which Samaritans marry is less important than it was. Ya'akov Cohen: 'it depends on whether you find the right girlfriend. It does not matter if she is Samaritan or Jewish.'

Samaritan ritual and belief, ceremonial and everyday maintain boundaries and cohesion - no such thing as a secular Samaritan

'We have one hundred percent synagogue attendance. If someone doesn't show up we all run to his house to find out what's wrong' Benny Tsedaka (Ross 1982: 115).

An account follows of the Samaritan Passover Sacrifice, a symbolic representation of the roles played between the men, women and children of the community.[62] The ceremony is charged with emotion, a sense of history and entirely unrehearsed.[63] The almost 40 sacrificial young male sheep are lined either side of a trench filled with kindling and buckets (see illustration 3). The men and boys are grouped in family order and sing the ancient Samaritan Hebrew prayers with gusto as the High Priest (see illustration 4) and his fellow *Cohanim[64]* in their green or bright blue vestments chant in remembrance of the Israelite flight from Pharaonic Egypt. All the lay Samaritan males are dressed in white to commemorate the clothing of the Israelites when they made the Exodus from Egypt (see illustration 5). The ceremony builds up to a crescendo

as the sheep are swiftly slaughtered with an expert throat slitting. Subsequent to this many of the men seem very emotional and embrace each other.[65] The Samaritans - men, women and children blood foreheads (see illustration 6)[66] This symbolic protection of the ancient Israelite firstborn assigned to all Samaritans to the exclusion of the disempowered centre – the rest of the world.

As in everyday Samaritan life the men, women and children play set roles and participate in different ways. Younger male children accompany the men and older boys in wearing symbolic clothing and taking a central physical location (see illustration 7). The older boys are responsible for marshalling the male lambs prior to sacrifice (see illustration 8).

The adult men then set to without pause to skin, inspect, wash and salt the carcasses with the hides and entrails being burnt over the *tannurim[67]*. The meat is skewered onto long spits cleaned and rested against walls before being carried to the pit ovens where men in family groups thrust the stakes into the ground and lower heavy metal grilled lids over the holes (see illustration 9). Hessian sacks are placed over the lids, which the men seal with red mud from buckets. Liturgical chanting accompanies the interment. All the able bodied adult men participate directly. It is a prerequisite that any Samaritan who is not bedridden attend the ceremony.

In the evening with the onset of the *Shabbat* [68] groups of men return to disinter the now cooked meat, which is quickly relayed back to the houses. The women had been busy preparing the meal and indeed had undertaken a great deal of cooking and preparing of flour for *matzoh* [69]bread in the day(s) preceding the *Shabbat*. It was taboo for me to enter the houses as the Samaritans ate the meat and importantly the sacrificial meat is forbidden to non-Samaritans. Despite the division of men and women into central and peripheral, public and private the essence of the event is inclusive of all Samaritans. The non-Samaritan is excluded entirely (albeit in a friendly manner), relegated to observer, a non-participant in the labour and consumption.

The following morning in the early hours I observed the Samaritans worshipping in the modern synagogue. As with the sacrifice this was a predominantly male activity with women having a peripheral presence being allowed into the back of the synagogue near the entrance to where the High Priest brought the glass encased Torah scroll for them to touch or kiss as the men had done. No photographs could be taken as the Samaritan Shabbat forbids the use of electrical equipment. The atmosphere was generally relaxed with people chatting, praying and contemplating. Several who had made my acquaintance smiled and waved as they arrive. The prostrations and face covering blessings seemed Islamic as did the leaving of shoes outside the synagogue entrance. The *tarboush*[70]or fez was omnipresent especially among the Palestinian Samaritans and the men again wore white clothing and an assortment of *tarabish*, berets, and other headgear as they had the previous day. The ceremonial clothes mark out the symbolic importance of the day and bound the Samaritans together. Although the clothes and the setting formalise the event the atmosphere is relaxed and everyday linking the sacred to the profane lives of the Samaritans.

Some of the men appear to be napping, as the synagogue gradually fills up, but then they may well have been praying for several hours already. The interior of the synagogue is very reminiscent of a mosque light, airy, carpeted and unfurnished save for chandeliers and air conditioning fans. The congregation is facing the front and a gold coloured curtain behind which is an *aron[71]* or scroll cupboard. Some of the worshippers are reading from prayer books while others recite from memory. The prayer books are written in the ancient Hebrew alphabet used exclusively by the Samaritans. Unlike the Roman Catholic Latin mass, that excluded its congregants from understanding, only its congregants understand the Samaritan Hebrew and Aramaic liturgy. People begin to sit and kneel with their heads down, then standing and making brief prostrations in the Muslim manner.[72] The similarity of the mode of worship to Islamic practice is possibly very superficial. I encountered no sources that gave an authoritative explanation and surmise that it is purely a cultural syncretism rather than a theological one.

Although women play no central role in the synagogue or any of the ceremony that I observed one man had his young daughter with him among the male congregants. Slowly and tentatively women began to appear at the back of the synagogue.[73]

The Torah scroll was brought out of the *aron* at the front of the synagogue whilst the chanting, which had been taking place for several hours, became more animated and co-ordinated. The High Priest was holding the scroll, which was then taken from him and put into a glass case. All the men approach the case and kiss it, running their hands over it and then their faces.[74] The men all sit down and the women are crowded at the back near the entrance of the synagogue. The case is brought towards them and like the men they kiss it and bless themselves. The High Priest is stood at the front reciting prayers from a book. Soon the women leave as the men begin to prostrate themselves, praying in the Muslim fashion.

During the morning in the synagogue I was privy to an interesting interlude. Altif, one of the celebrants had an elderly mother who, bedridden after a serious operation, had started bleeding and needed hospital treatment. As it was *Shabbat* he could not make a telephone call. I accompanied Altif to his house where he indicated a mobile telephone. He told me the number in Arabic and Hebrew and I dialled the hospital at the large Jewish settlement Ariel and explained the situation in English. The Jewish, possibly Orthodox, doctor could not understand why a return call could not be taken by the Samaritan in a life or death matter.[75] The Samaritan *mitzvah* proscribing any use of fire (electricity) or work was strictly observed.[76]

Other *mitzvot* were strictly observed. On any *Shabbat* Samaritans have to refrain from anything that can be considered work or lighting fire – bathing, having sex, driving and turning electrical appliances on and off. As with dietary laws the *Shabbat mitzvot* act as demarcations separating the Samaritans from everyone else. They do not circumvent such privations as Orthodox Jews do with the *eruv[77]* but the concept of the *shabbos goy[78]* has seemingly been imported into Samaritan life.[79]

One of the most distinctive aspects of Samaritan culture is the music. Fayyad: 'Samaritan music is very strange. First of all you can't modernise it. This music, for example today (in the synagogue) we heard the Song of the Israelites passing through the sea, *HaSha'ar Moshe* (Song of Moses). **[80]** We have special music that we believe is descended from Miriam the sister of Moshe more than 3,600 years ago. It came to us by a very special system. I teach it to my son and he teaches it to his son, and so on, and so on. All the Samaritans know it – without special (training). *HaSha'ar Moshe* – this doesn't have a special system – we have to learn it as it is, from (antiquity) until today it is the same. The important point here with Samaritan music is that you cannot modernise it – as you can with any other type of music. Another important thing is that we don't use musical instruments.[81]

The praying or chanting that took place in the synagogue is very distinctive and whilst bearing some similarity to Jewish prayer has its own very unique cadences. The words are very drawn out, with long protracted vowel sounds rising and falling.

Fayyad: "you may think our prayers terrible, high voices etc. This is on purpose so children can learn by heart even though they don't understand. Our religion is stressed on young people. Feasts – for example a child cannot forget what happened yesterday in the sacrifice for example Succoth (the Feast of Tabernacles) the stress is for our children so they cannot forget it"(see illustration).

He continues: 'Jewish rabbis learn religion in colleges and universities and are very literate. The Samaritans learn themselves – but they can stand in front of any rabbi and always win in these discussions. The Samaritans are only interested in the five books of Moses' (see illustration).

Throughout their history and even more so now, boys and girls after returning from their general school in either Nablus or Holon, go to the public centre in their respective neighbourhoods. There they learn to read and write ancient Samaritan Hebrew and their special dialect of Aramaic taught by Samaritan teachers in order to maintain the tradition from generation to generation.[82]

To conclude the Samaritans have had to accept the need for conversion through marriage of Jewish women. The priesthood justified this development through biblical sanction and the change was facilitated by the patrilineal system and male public face of Samaritanism. As Samaritans have seen their numbers thrive they see the benefits of 'new blood'. To ensure that no more than blood is diluted the process is regulated. The women leave their Judaism crossing a boundary for which entry is conditional on rigorous preparation and proven commitment to the faith.

Their children are socialised, as Samaritan children have been throughout Samaritan history, into being practitioners of and protectors (*shomerim*) of the faith.

It can be surmised that the participation of women in Samaritan ritual and practice is somewhat peripheral[83] whilst that of men and children is central. A clear division of labour exists within the community as typified by the Passover Sacrifice, when the men and boys in ceremonial attire perform specific if unrehearsed tasks. The males directly participate in the singing, handling of animals, slaughtering and the public aspects of the ceremony.

Women also perform an essential but more unseen role. Just as they prepare the dough for the *Matzoh* Passover bread, which is then baked by the men (see illustration 10) – they cook, and prepare the households for the Passover. The role of women as producers of children and keepers of the home is of course vital to the Samaritans. As a patrilineal society where the visible aspects of the faith, priests and ceremonies are distinctly male, the presence of the (originally) non-Samaritan female is less obtrusive than it would otherwise be.

Samaritan ritual serves its ostensible purpose of thanking and placating a jealous and demanding God whilst serving to bolster a sense of bounded solidarity and shared identity among the group. The rituals construct order through what Maurice Bloch would see as symbolising and confirming a timeless, unchanging world (Gellner 1999: 149). The rituals of the feast and the synagogue are activities set apart from the mundane activities of everyday life. The sacred and the profane are undertaken respectively by the men and the women.

Opinion on the acculturation of Samaritans varies within the community as we have seen. This could be generational as with Ya'acov a younger man more relaxed relating to intermarriage or dietary restrictions than Fayyad an older man. Likewise there are differences in the type of acculturation; Yusuf is comfortable with a Palestinian Arab influenced lifestyle whereas Holon Samaritans enjoy the discotheque and beach life of Israeli Tel Aviv.

The population has been accultured to the dominant groups around them (see illustrations 11 and 12), but, despite the language and environmental differences between Samaritans, their religious festivals reinforce communality. Ironically the modern process of Israelisation of both groups may strengthen their cohesion.

Chapter 3

'We have all the problems of a nation'[84]

This final chapter examines current external factors with reference to recent history and the economic and

political environment that the Samaritans find themselves in. Examples of obstacles and assistance afforded by the Palestinian and Israeli authorities are referred to. The Samaritan abandonment of a tradition of political passivity, whilst striving to maintain neutrality and how they are preparing for the future is considered.

As far as identity is concerned a Samaritan can conceivably have several ethnonational identities including - Samaritan, Israelite, modern Israeli, Palestinian and until the late 1980s Jordanian. Today Samaritans are in a very precarious position perceived externally as quasi-Jews (they refer to themselves as Israelites) whilst being the most continuously enduring identifiable Palestinian population. As careful diplomats the Samaritans have managed to use such an identity to avoid antagonising their more numerous neighbours. This chapter considers how they achieve this and in what ways the community is now seeking to use its "halfway house" status not only to protect Samaritan interests but to encourage reconciliation and conflict resolution between their Arab and Jewish compatriots. An examination is made of recent history and the present and the question of inclusion and exclusion of the Samaritans within the wider Judaeo-Israeli and Palestinian Arab framework of political, cultural and social life. This looks at who provides the amenities and what obstacles and assistance have come from the Palestinian and Israeli authotities.

Recent History

Fayyad: 'you have to know that the Samaritans suffered very much economically - leave other problems alone. When I finished my studies I had four years without work. I had to go from one house to another (in Nablus) seeking students to help them with their studies, and they used to give me (laughs) at that time about one dinar[85] – that's about five dollars to learn all month. It was very difficult – now thank God the economical situation is rather good. But as for the future that is not so easy to prophesy. We want there to be peace between the Israelis and Palestinians, because as you know half the Samaritans live in Palestine and the other half live in Israel. If there will be no peace they will suffer very much. We suffered eighteen years in the Jordanian era[86] when we were apart from our other half in Israel. For five years they did not come here and when they began to give permission (the Jordanian authorities), first they gave permission for them to come for one day – on the day of Passover. Then two days and then three, but for many years they prevented the youths from coming here. We suffered for about eighteen years and thought that we are going to be two nations not one. The children of the Israelites from Holon when they came here to the Passover you could see their children stand and play alone (separately) and ours here in Nablus used to stand and speak alone (separately). So you could feel that we were really going to be two parts but thank God in 1967 the two parts rejoined and we are now one group.'

There was a risk that the isolation of the two communities from each other in the years 1948-67 would create a schism with a lay clergy developing in Holon.[87] Ironically, despite the separateness of the two Samaritan bodies and their acculturation and interaction with other populations, we can see a reinforcing of Cohen's five conditions of identity authentication. The relatively recent experience of a threat to the distinct group identity has strengthened their resolve to emphasise their cohesion.

The effects of the current escalation of conflict and recent Israeli reoccupation of the West Bank with human rights abuses against Palestinian civilians and Palestinian groups attacking local Jewish settlements may well have compromised the security of the Kiryat Luza Samaritans and their relations with Arab Palestinians. In recent months extremist Jewish settlers from the unofficial Bracha 'B' outpost[88] have begun unprecedented verbal and physical attacks on Mount Gerizim.[89]

The Israeli government and the Palestinian National Authority both outwardly appear to have Samaritans' interests at heart. Fayyad is sceptical and believes that the PNA want to show the world that they have 'Jews' among them who they treat well and so could be expected to extend magnanimity to Israelis who would fall

among them who they treat well and so could be expected to extend magnanimity to Israelis who would fall under the sovereignty of a Palestinian state. The status of a minority religion in the Middle East is precarious. 'To understand this you must be a member of a minority.'

Fayyad draws an analogy with the Christians of Palestine who numbered 'hundreds of thousands' during the British Mandate.[90] 'They left because they felt that as a minority they could have no real freedom, so they moved to countries with a Christian majority. At the time of the Mandate there were 10,000 Christians in Nablus and now they are fewer than the Samaritans. You see this is something you have to understand in our Middle East.'

The future looks uncertain according to Fayyad. '(After) the British Mandate … we had many different kinds of people who tried to control – Syrians, Iraqis, Saudis, some people from here – until Jordan came along and put its rule in the West Bank. Then we had Israel, then we went back to the Palestinians. Nobody knows what the future is going to be. As a community you have to expect government. You can't get rid of this authority… if you are very few you have to go with the government so as to live and (allow) the government … to take care of you and defend you from other people. It is very important – you see the Druze, they are 100 times more than the Samaritans, but even they always go with the government of the country they live in.[91] They can have no other method.'

Samaritans need to be good diplomats and although people, especially the youth, were happy to give me their unsolicited political opinions it was strictly off record. Fayyad: 'you can't give, especially with the Palestinians, the idea that you know best. ...you have to give him (sic) the feeling …that you are impressed with his methods'.

Certain Samaritans in Holon have amicable relations with the Israeli government having worked in civil service positions and enjoying the support of Samaritan friendly politicians such as Yitzhaq Ben Zvi.[92] At the same time the current high Priest Saloum and his son work with the Palestinian National Authority. The High Priest is a personal friend of Yasir Arafat and employs several Palestinians in his home.

Despite careful diplomacy and neutrality the Samaritans are under direct physical threat from the continuing violence between the Israeli military and Palestinian armed groups. On several occasions over the last year Samaritans have been erroneously shot at and wounded. Yusuf HaCohen, one of my interviewees was unfortunate enough to have been wounded by both Palestinian militiamen and IDF soldiers whilst driving his car on the mountain road.[93] The move from Nablus was precipitated by the previous intifada and the Nablus synagogue was damaged in fighting between the Israelis and Palestinians.[94]

The End of Political Passivity

An important factor to remember is that the Samaritans have no diaspora at all to lobby on their behalf. Famously the Jews and to a lesser extent the Palestinians have been able to mobilise financial and political support from compatriots and co-religionists. The Samaritans need to use their polemic and diplomatic skills to ingratiate themselves with their sometimes capricious neighbours.[95] Emphasising commonalities and avoiding overt criticism has served the Samaritans as well as could be expected. For the longer term however the Samaritans need to guarantee strong support from outside the region. This entails a relentless petitioning of governments in Europe and North America, informing and reminding established and incoming administrations of the Samaritans and their concerns.

A report in Benyamim Tsedaka's AB Samaritan newspaper indicates both the lack of external investment and the new politicisation of the Samaritans. The Samaritans were suffering as an indirect consequence of the IDF's general curfew in Nablus.[96] They were not allowed to shop in the city and were forced to travel as far

IDF's general curfew in Nablus.[96] They were not allowed to shop in the city and were forced to travel as far as Ariel and Holon to buy products at much higher prices. The curfew and roadblocks by the IDF also obstructed the entry of services contractors from Nablus. Consequently putrid rubbish piled up in the streets of Kiryat Luza, with the cemetery becoming overgrown with thorns and thistles as the Palestinian workers were afraid to come to tend them. The IDF tanks were also destroying the asphalt roads and the unsurfaced access roads, rendering them unusable. 'Surrealistic scenes of Israelite Samaritans praying with the uproar of screeching tanks in the background have become common place'.

The IDF was not providing alternative services, neglect and dereliction in Kiryat Luza were increasing and the final straw was the ruining of the only access road to the Samaritan village from the direction of Bracha settlement. In desperation some two hundred of Luza's 310 residents organised a spontaneous demonstration on July 14 2002 shortly before midnight.

This unique first ever protest on Mount Gerizim, achieved what dozens of communications and correspondences with the Israeli authorities had not. The following day heavy vehicles arrived repairing the Kiryat Luza and Bracha roads and removing all the refuse.[97]

Benny Tsedaka notes that this indifference from the Israeli authorities is not atypical. Apart from a few thousand dollars for the annual Passover sacrifice on Mount Gerizim, the Palestinian Authority has rejected all Samaritan applications for regional development claiming that it lacks funds. Similar appeals to Israel to participate in the development of Mount Gerizim were met by meagre funding inadequate for starting any serious development (Tsedaka 2002: 7).

The Samaritan community in Holon are also suffering as a result of the inaction of local authorities. Housing expansion plans for the Newe Marqah neighbourhood have been delayed for almost twenty years forcing more than 20 young Samaritan couples to look for housing in nearby Jewish areas.[98]

The Present and the Future

The desire of the national governmental authorities to ostensibly include Samaritans politically or as citizens and to address their interests is relatively recent. The President of the Palestinian Authority (PA) backed the election of a Samaritan as a member of the 88 strong Palestinian legislature despite his community constituting a tiny fraction of one per cent of the Palestinian population of the PA. At the same time there are issues raised of PA funds not being channelled towards the Samaritans (although the same could be held true of the wider Palestinian population not benefiting from EU funding of the PA). Likewise the Israeli government has extended citizenship to the Nablus Samaritans and a freedom of movement denied to Muslim and Christian Arab Palestinians. The Samaritans were however compelled to take the Israeli government to court in order to have pay parity with Jewish rabbis for the Samaritan clergy.[99] (interview Benny Tsedaka 16/12/01)

Members of the community are actively petitioning internationally for a role as an "Island of Peace" within the troubled Israeli-Palestinian discourse. A Samaritan delegation led by the Samaritan High Priest Shalom b. Amram (Saloum) and Benyamim Tsedaka the Director of A.B. - Institute of Samaritan Studies visited the seat of the European Union in Brussels on April 1, 2002 to conduct meetings with its representatives to promote the idea of developing Mount Gerizim as a centre for peace between Arabs and Jews.

Of course Mount Gerizim is of archaeological significance, and the Samaritans could earn money from tourism projects. This difficult situation (the current tense Israeli/Palestinian conflict) stops many initiatives. If peace comes many problems will be solved.[100]

Since December 1969 Benny and his brother Yefet have published and circulated "A.B. Samaritan News" - the first Samaritan newspaper, which appears twice monthly. It keeps the community abreast with developments in both centres and is printed in four languages, all in the same edition: ancient Hebrew, modern Hebrew, Arabic and English.

Israel Tsedaka is busy compiling a Samaritan version of the Torah and a prayer book on his computer. As noted in Chapter 1 he has worked with Israeli academics for more than fifty years researching the Samaritan history and language. He emphasised that it was very difficult to raise the Samaritan profile internationally despite the efforts of several people from Holon and Kiryat Luza. An absence of a Samaritan academic means that the community lacks leverage (interview Israel Tsedaka 19/04/02).

When asked if he thought that the Samaritans would continue to grow in number Israel replied 'yes, slowly but most of us prefer modern life so the population grows slowly.[101]'

'It is very difficult to be Jewish, it is more difficult to be Samaritan. But we are very proud. I am Samaritan, I am of the ancient Israel. I am the real Israel. I (the Samaritans) don't leave this country for one minute.'

The Samaritans are so few in number that they are not seen as a threat by their neighbours. Israeli Jews see them as a quaint curio harking back to their own biblical antecedents and generally they have good relations with the IDF. Demographically the Samaritans are insignificant to the Palestinian National Authority and with half of the community speaking Arabic and studying and working among Nablus' citizens they can be afforded the status of Palestinian quasi-Jews. They are not considered legitimate targets by the Palestinian and Israeli authorities or any of the armed militias. The escalation of violence in the previous and the current intifadas has seen a respective flight from Nablus and economic hardship as a result of curfews.

Although politically the Palestinian and Israeli administrations have positive relations with the Samaritans they suffer from a benign neglect. This has led to the Samaritans becoming more politically active as highlighted by the example of the Kiryat Luza demonstration and the constant efforts of Benny Tsedaka the de facto roving ambassador and others to lobby European and North American governments raising the profile of the community.

To protect their future the Samaritans are promoting their heritage among themselves and to the world at large. One can see the effort that individual Samaritans like Benny Tsedaka, Israel Tsedaka, Osher Sassoni (a co-editor of Samaritan Update the online news bulletin) and others are doing to help their community survive and develop. Instead of fearing the modern, secular world and change they are utilising its media to raise their profile internationally and consolidate their security locally.

Conclusion

As noted in the introduction to this paper Anthony P. Cohen outlined five conditions for the authentication of identity 'predicated as it must be on the presence of a significant boundary'. I support my assertion that all Cohen's preconditions and the maintenance of that bounded identity are present in the case of the Samaritans – and contribute to their continued survival as a distinct ethnoreligious group. This conclusion takes evidence from the three preceding chapters to match each of the criteria to the assertion.

'The 'experiential' nature of the boundary'. Through interviews and observation the opinions and interpretations of Samaritans are articulated through their experience. Yusuf Cohen articulates the need for Jewish women to marry into the community in the second chapter by reference to his own family's situation.

‘The implicit and tacit knowledge of it shared among those bounded by it’. This has been achieved through the socialisation of each generation of Samaritans through participation, education and the passing down of tradition such as the ancient songs and prayers. As Benny indicated in Chapter 2 the Passover Sacrifice was unrehehearsed, almost as if the family groups worked together instinctively.

‘Its capacity to contain and insulate their culture and worldview, even while they interact routinely with others and appear to have become absorbed in larger, hybrid forms’. The socialisation is mobilised against the threat of coeducation and everyday economic and social interaction with the more dominant groups around them. The dietary restrictions and ceremonial dress demarcate the Samaritans from others.

‘Its consequent resilience and exploitation of its apparent peripherality to denigrate, and thereby to disempower the putative centre’. This is achieved by externalising those outside the boundary of Samaritanism excluding them from participation, for example the taboo on non-Samaritans eating the sacrificial meat.

‘Its plasticity and assimilability to the widely diverse identity claims made on it.’ In Chapter 3 we saw the multiplicity of ethnonational identities that can be ascribed to Samaritans. The careful political neutrality and diplomacy of the Samaritans ensures that they emphasise their commonalities of language and culture with non-Samaritan compatriots.

A more complex analysis of the discourse on boundaries and how this relates to the Samaritans is a consideration for further research. However in this preliminary study I judged that a deeper investigation of discourse would have detracted from the ethnographic aspects of the dissertation. As noted in the introduction a disadvantage as far as researching this paper is concerned was the dearth of anthropological work specifically related to the Samaritans. This does however provide an element of originality to this project.

Of course Samaritanism is also about religion and the symbolism that invokes. Samaritan ritual serves its ostensible purpose of thanking and placating a jealous and demanding God whilst serving to bolster a sense of bounded solidarity and shared identity among the group. Religious prescription is used to facilitate necessary change as much as it is to maintain a status quo. The Samaritans have recognised the need to change, but on their own terms. They had to change basic precepts followed since antiquity. Due to a scarcity of women and widespread congenital defects caused by centuries of endogamy they have modified the taboo on intermarriage and now allow Jewish wives. These wives are then in practice considered Samaritans.

Adversity has also been used by the community to its longer term advantage. Instead of threatening the group identity/unity of the Samaritans the dual location allows for a spiritual home and a lobbying home with easier access to the tools of modern media and a stronger economy. The 1948-67 separation of the two halves of the Samaritans strengthened the resolve of the community to remain a cohesive unit. Even the hardships endured as a result of the intifada and the abandonment of the Samaritan quarter in Nablus have meant a bringing together of the Israeli and Palestinian Samaritans with their own dedicated space.

Useful further research would be a study of how young Samaritans negotiate between enjoying modern consumerist society and its values and retaining commitment to their ancestral faith and its traditions. Much of this dissertation deals with historical and theoretical materials relevant to the Samaritans and I see the work that I have already done on it as contributing to any further field research.

The attitudes of the generation who are children now with Jewish mothers and paternal Jewish grandmothers is a future area of study as is the process of acquiring a new identity – becoming a Samaritan. This dissertation has concentrated on the success of the Samaritans surviving and thriving against the odds, from the 146 souls mentioned in Chapter 1 to over 650 now. An interesting proposition for further examination would be the

longer term effect of increased numbers of Samaritans. What individual responsibility for being keepers of the faith will there be among future generations of several thousand?

The research undertaken will hopefully lead to more understanding of the position of an ancient and tiny ethnoreligious community straddling the often fiercely antagonistic Palestinian/Israeli discourse. As an ethnography it should contribute to the greater sum of anthropological knowledge incorporating identity, ritual and belief, especially as it relates to a community about whom there is a paucity of recent academic research. A report has already been submitted and accepted for publication in the CBRL newsletter. Among the journals that I intend to approach are the Palestine Exploration Quarterly, the Levant (the CBRL journal), the Journal of Middle East Studies and perhaps the Journal of Palestine Studies. If suitable my findings will also be made available to the Samaritan News and Samaritans Online website.

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[1] The most important Samaritan festival usually held in April.

[2] Any conversations with women were informal and unplanned. Women were not introduced to me for interview purposes and did not volunteer themselves.

[3] This proved to be very true, nobody refused to talk to me.

[4] 'It is very difficult to be Jewish, it is more difficult to be Samaritan. But we are very proud. I am Samaritan, I am of the ancient Israel. I am the **real** Israel. I (the Samaritans) don't (sic) leave this country for one minute.'(Israel Tsedaka interview 19/04/02)

[5] Related to or deriving from experience.

[6] Israel Tsedaka the 71 year old former secretary of the Samaritan community has collaborated with Ben Hayyim since boyhood.

[7] The Tolidah or Chronicle is discussed in Chapter 1.

[8] Israel Tsedaka interview 19/04/02.

[9] An invaluable source of reference material and the Samaritan world view.

[10] See glossary.

[11] Israel the divine covenant with God, not the temporal modern state.

[12] Filial sub-tribes of the tribe of Joseph, one of the Twelve Tribes of Israel

[12] Final sub-tribes of the tribe of Joseph, one of the Twelve Tribes of Israel.

[13] Some time between the 6th and 4th centuries BCE (Pummer 1987: 8).

[14] Jabal at Tur in Arabic, located in the Samarian hills facing the biblical Mount Ebal (Jabal Aybal in Arabic) with the nearby Palestinian city of Nablus lying in the valley between the two.

[15] 'The Jews and Samaritans were once one nation – same prophets, same sacred book – but some Jewish prophets changed things to keep with the Jewish state at that time' Fayyad.

[16] Interviewee. See Introduction.

[17] Its rise extinguished Samaritanism in Europe (Schur 2002: 1).

[18] The greatest change came in the Abbasid period in Palestine 750-878 CE. Almost all the Samaritans living in rural communities converted to Islam, leaving only a few hundred city dwellers adhering to the faith (Schur 1992: 93-97).

[19] The last of the Gaza community died out in c1799 see Schur.

[20] A few prominent Muslim families of known Samaritan origin still exist in Damascus: Dar Malisan, Dar Ghafari, Dar Nahas, Dar Rumali, Dar Mes'id, Dar al Asali and Dar Shahun (Schur 2002: 2).

[21] This disinterest in detail when referring to Samaritans is also to be found in the Western media. A Guardian article by Chris McGreal 05/02/03, covering Palestinian and Israeli casualties, casually mentions the Shomronim a 'Jewish sect' without even explaining that these are the Samaritans so famous to Christians via the New Testament.

[22] The late Israeli President Yitzhaq Ben Zvi encouraged the priesthood to sanction the marriage of Samaritans to Jewish immigrants

[23] Samaritan Update 14/02/02 and interview with Shalom HaCohen HaGadol.

[24] In Europe they successfully lobbied to persuade the Tsarist authorities- and later the Nazis- that they were not Jews.

[25] See glossary.

[26] Samaritan Update 14/02/02.

[27] See glossary.

[28] Partly because of the inclusion of contemporaneous Greek vocabulary.

[29] Yusuf Cohen predicated our interview with a refusal to discuss any politics.

[30] See MacDonald (1964) and Coggins (1975).

[31] Post Exilic book of Hebrew Masoretic Text Bible and Old Testament

[32] Cuthaens. See also 2 Kings 17:24.

[33] Ya'akov gave me the figure of 70% of Holon Samaritan marriages being with Jewesses. Unfortunately I have no hard facts to support this.

[34] Yusuf Cohen interview 25/04/02. Yusuf has travelled to Egypt, Jordan and Turkey. Others e.g. Benny Tsedaka and Fayyad/Zebulan Altif have travelled much of the world.

[35] Especially since the mid twentieth century CE and the legacy of Professor Ben Hayyim.

[36] The estimate of 118 generations ago for the split between the three Samaritan lineages corresponds with accepted traditions of the origin of this sect (Bonne-Tamir et al 2002).

[37] See glossary.

[38] See glossary.

[39] See glossary.

[40]Throughout their history they adhered to an endogamous marriage system that was practiced not only within the limits of the community but also often within the limits of the lineage. Since the Samaritans maintained extensive and detailed genealogical records for the past 13-15 generations, it is possible to construct accurate pedigrees and specific maternal and paternal lineages. (Bonne-Tamir et al 2002).

[41] The Samaritans suffer a very high incidence of Usher Syndrome *American Journal of Physical Anthropology* (1997) 104: 193-200

[42] The same patronymic custom is observed by Ethiopian Jews see Korinaldi.

[43] The only religious intermarriage permitted in Israel as there is no civil marriage.

[44] The late Israeli President Yitzhaq Ben-Zvi, a close ally of the Samaritans was instrumental in encouraging the Samaritan priesthood to sanction intermarriage with Jewish immigrants in the 1920's. (Schur 1992).

[45] See glossary singular *mitzvah.*

[46] The great majority of the Samaritan-Jewish marriages take place between Holon Samaritans and Jewish Israeli women.

[47] Samaritan conscripts are exempt from duty in combat regiments in acknowledgement of their small number and to pre-empt compromising the welfare and status of their Nablus co-religionists.

[48] Which applies to Jews or anyone with at least one Jewish grandparent allowing them to settle in Israel and take up citizenship.

[49] For more detail on the socio-economic and political factors see Chapter 3.

[50] Fayyad seems a bit despondent about this and the next day when I visit to say goodbye he pointedly gave me some homemade unleavened Pesach bread and biscuits.

[51] Samaritans are educated in Nablus among Muslims and in Holon with Jews.

[52] See glossary singular *yeshiva*.

[53] See glossary. The shisha is ubiquitous in Egypt and the Levant and smoking one is a typical Arab way of socialising and relaxing.

[54] This is typical of all the houses I observed belonging to year round residents of Kiryat Luza

[55] Kosher prohibition on mixing meat and dairy foods.

[56] When I met Benny in London I noticed that he was strictly vegetarian. Samaritans will not eat meat that is not Samaritan kosher.

[57] Both members of the Cohen subgroup.

[58] Israel Tsedaka and Fayyad Altif. 'Don't tell me what your father is, what are you?' Fayyad.

[59] http://www.mystae.com/reflections/messiah/news/samaritannews4.html August 2002.

[60] Interview with Fayyad.

[61] Ya'akov interview. He mentions that although his mother is Samaritan she is not from the Cohen family but originally a Tsedaka.

[62] Observed by the author Friday 26/04/02 at the sacrificial site at Kiryat Luza on Mount Gerizim.

[63] According to Benny Tsedaka in informal conversation 27/04/02.

[64] See glossary.

[65] See Appendix 1.

[66] To commemorate the lamb's blood daubed on the doors of the Israelite houses protecting the occupants from the Angel of Death delivering God's retribution upon the Egyptians. **Exodus 12:13 'and the blood shall be to you for a token upon the houses where ye are: and when I see the blood, I will pass over you, and the plague shall not be upon you to destroy you, when I smite the land of Egypt.'**

[67] See glossary.

[68] See glossary.

[69] See glossary.

[70] See glossary

[71] See glossary.

[72] An observation made "For instance: my host and several others came in, and taking their places here and there, went through a series of prostrations and elevations, of the same kind as the ordinary prayers of the Moslems,"(*Nabloos and the Samaritans* by Sir George Grove) and also "Once in the shade, but otherwise in sight of all the congregation, he spreads his quilted praying mat towards Gerizim and abandons himself to a

form of adoration closely resembling the Moslem's devotions towards Mecca." (*The Samaritan Passover* by Owen Tweedy) see Schur 1986.

[73] Yusuf: 'We have to pray two times a day – morning and evening, seven times on *Shabbat.* We always go to the synagogue (on Shabbat), just the men. The women keep the house – it is forbidden for the men and women to pray together. All our mind must be given to prayer, but if you have a lovely girl in view in the synagogue, maybe your mind will go to the girl and the prayers will go away'

[74]Harun/Aharon the High Priest's son later confirms that this is a blessing.

[75] While Passover Shabbat is one of the holiest days of the year, in Judaism even the strictest of Shabbat laws falls to the side when a person's life is in danger. The principle - "Pikkuah Nefesh" - or the saving of one's life overrides all observances of Shabbat. That is why doctors are allowed to work on Shabbat. Some Orthodox doctors will actually "work" on Shabbat, visiting their patients in the hospital, but having an attending nurse along to write out prescriptions, since Orthodox Jews don't write on Shabbat www.Jewish.co.uk

[76] Fortunately his mother received medical attention in good time.

[77] See glossary.

[78] See glossary.

[79] I was entreated to turn lights on and off, and of course make the telephone call on behalf of Altif and his mother. Palestinian employees also seemed to perform some of these tasks.

[80] See glossary.

[81] Although at the time of Miriam drums and other instruments were used, Fayyad.

[82] http://www.mystae.com/reflections/messiah/scripts/alphabet.htm

[83] But at the same time inclusive – observing the sacrifice, preparing the *matzoh* bread dough, blessing the Torah scroll and themselves in the synagogue.

[84] Fayyad Altif interview "we have all the problems of a nation, all the problems of England although we are only 625" interview Kiryat Luza 26/04/02

[85] This was in the 1950's.

[86] From 1948 until the June war of 1967 the West Bank and its Samaritan population were under Jordanian rule.

[87] The Holon Samaritans did not have the spiritual leadership of the High Priest except for restricted visits to the Passover feast.

[88] As distinguished from the more established Har Bracha settlement metres from the Samaritan village.

[89] 'Radicals and Eccentric Hassids are Waylaying Samaritans on the Road to Mt. Gerizim' http://www.thesamaritanupdate.com/update10.24.2002b.html

[90] 51,000 Palestinian Christians live in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, while there are 114,000 Palestinian Christians in Israel itself 41.3 per cent of all Palestinian Christians world-wide. The Christians of the Occupied Territories are only 2.9 per cent of the entire Palestinian population. http://www.caabu.org/publications/christianity_abandons.html **Christianity Abandons its Holiest Land by Trevor Mostyn**

[91] The Druzes live as minority populations in Syria, Lebanon, Israel and Jordan. In each of the countries they swear allegiance to the government. Religiously they have practised taqiyya through the centuries see glossary.

[92] The former Israeli President a champion of the Samaritans who co-founded their Holon neighbourhood with the Holon Samaritan leader Yefet Ben Avraham Tsedaka in 1955

[93] http://shomron0.tripod.com/update1.17.2002.htm

[94] AP Online Mohammed Daraghmeh 31/10/00 http://www.acj.org/oct_31.htm#5.

[95] The predecessor of the current high priest, Levi Ben Abisha HaCohen managed to transcend political boundaries. In 2001 he blessed Ariel Sharon the incoming Prime Minister of Israel. At the same time he enjoyed excellent relations with Yasir Arafat and the PLO Governor of Nablus Mahmoud Alul (Joffe Guardian Obituary of Levi Ben Abisha HaCohen).

[96] 'Samaritans on Mount Gerizim demonstrate for the first time in history to improve the quality of their life,' AB Samaritan News August 2002. See

http://www.mystae.com/reflections/messiah/news/samaritannews4.html

[97] AB Samaritan News August 2002. See

http://www.mystae.com/reflections/messiah/news/samaritannews4.html

[98] http://shomron0.tripod.com/update4.25.2002i.htm

[99] See also The Israeli Government made the First Step Towards the Equalization of the Status of the Samaritan Priests to that of Jewish Rabbis. http://shomron0.tripod.com/update7.18.2002s.html

[100] Interview with Fayyad.

[101] Israel Tsedaka interview.