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**JOURNAL OF A DEPUTATION SENT  
TO THE EAST  
BY THE COMMITTEE OF  
THE MALTA PROTESTANT COLLEGE,**

**IN 1849:**

CONTAINING AN ACCOUNT OF THE

PRESENT STATE OF THE ORIENTAL NATIONS, INCLUDING  
THEIR RELIGION, LEARNING, EDUCATION,  
CUSTOMS, AND OCCUPATIONS:

WITH OUTLINES OF

THEIR ECCLESIASTICAL AND POLITICAL HISTORY; OF THE RISE AND DECAY  
OF KNOWLEDGE AMONG THEM; AND OF THE DOCTRINES AND  
DISCIPLINE OF THE ANCIENT CHRISTIAN CHURCHES.

BY A LAY MEMBER OF THE COMMITTEE.

PART II

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(1854)

(p. 417) NABLOUS.

Nablous is the Neapolis of the Romans, the Sychar of the New Testament, and the Shechem, or Sicheim, of the Old Testament. Mounts Gerizim and Ebal rising precipitously to a height of about 800 feet, leave between them a small, deep valley, not more than 500 yards wide in the part occupied by the present town; both mountains are rocky and sterile, with the exception of a few olive-trees, and patches of verdure, seen scattered over Gerizim; there are numerous ancient sepulchres excavated out of the rock at the foot of Ebal. The town, which is long and narrow, lies at the basis of Gerizim, and consists of well-built, high, stone houses, with domes on the roofs. The waters from the

fountains flow both east and west towards the Jordan and the Mediterranean, a circumstance first noticed by Dr. Robinson.

The population amounts to 8,000, of whom 500 are Christians, belonging to the orthodox Greek communion; 150 are Samaritans, and about as many Jews; all the remainder are Mohammedans. There is a Greek bishop, who resides at Jerusalem. The people were always of a restless, warlike disposition, frequently in insurrection against their rulers, and ever ready to plunder travellers. They have, however, conducted themselves peaceably for some years, and, living in a rich country, they are generally in easy circumstances. The narrow vale, for some distance round Nablous, has a soil consisting of black vegetable mould, abundantly watered by copious fountains; and it is laid out in orchards and gardens, producing a great variety of fruits, vegetables, and flowers. The luxuriant vegetation and rich verdure in which the town is thus embosomed form a scene of great beauty.

When six of the tribes of Israel were stationed on the sides of Gerizim, and the six others on the sides of Ebal, they could hear with sufficient distinctness the united voices of priests and Levites standing round the ark of God, in the narrow valley beneath, pronouncing first the curses, to which those on Ebal responded, Amen; and then the blessings, to each of which the tribes on Gerizim also responded, Amen.<sup>Ω</sup> This deeply solemn renewal of the national covenant before Jehovah, must have been a highly impressive, and truly sublime scene. How terribly have the curses been fulfilled upon apostate Israel! The sides of Gerizim are in some places precipitous, and overhang the town; so that when Jotham repeated the parable of the trees, from one of the summits of Gerizim, his voice would well be heard by the people in the town below.<sup>Ξ</sup> Some cultivated fields .....

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THE SAMARITANS.—We visited the Samaritan synagogue, where we met the high priest, and several members of this singular and ancient sect. It is a plain room, with an arched recess, in which stands the tabernacle, or heikal, wherein are kept the copies of the law; this recess is at the south-east side of the room, so that the worshipper looking out, may have his face turned towards the site of the old temple on Mount Gerizim; it is screened off with a large thick curtain of green and gold silk brocade. We were shown several copies of the Pentateuch, and other religious books, both in the Samaritan language, and in the Hebrew language, with the true Hebrew (Samaritan) character. Some of these were of high antiquity, especially one large roll, well preserved, and highly valued as the most ancient of all, and which they are reluctant to exhibit to strangers.

#### SAMARITAN PENTATEUCH—RELIGIOUS OBSERVANCES. (p. 419)

They assert that it was written by Abishua, the son of Phinehas,<sup>•</sup> the son of Aaron, and that it is 3,600 years old. The Samaritans have eighteen recognised sections of the law in Genesis, and eight in Deuteronomy; while the Jews have twelve in the former, and ten in the latter book. Many of the Samaritan manuscripts have been procured at different

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<sup>Ω</sup> Deut. xxvii. 12

<sup>Ξ</sup> J"dg. 7—20.

<sup>•</sup> 1 Chron. vi. 3, 4.

periods, by the learned in England, France, and Germany, and some have been published in the great works, especially of Kennicott,<sup>+</sup> and Gesenius<sup>∇</sup>. The Samaritan language is a mixture of Hebrew, Chaldaic, and Syriac words, with peculiar grammatical inflexions; the present Samaritans can speak very little Hebrew, and their ordinary language is Arabic. Gesenius has ably shown that little value should be attached to the characteristics of the Samaritan Pentateuch; that no critical reliance can be placed on it, and that there are no good reasons for using it as a standard for the correction of the Hebrew text. It is believed to belong to the first or second century of the Christian era.

The Samaritans keep the Jewish passover, naming it *Afseh*, though they do not consider the sacrifice to be typical, but one only of commemoration and thanksgiving. They keep also the feast of weeks (*Hamsin*), corresponding with Pentecost; the day of atonement (*Kibbor*), which they pass in fasting and sorrow for their sins; and the feast of tabernacles (*Sikot*); but they reject all ceremonies not recognised by the law. They expect a great instructor and guide, whom they call Hathab, (or *el-Muhdy*, the guide..) to appear in the world. They believe in the doctrine of the resurrection and day of judgment. They will not eat with Mussulmans or Jews. They practise circumcision, abstain from polygamy, except in the case of barrenness, and keep the Sabbath very strictly. They maintain that it was on Gerizim Abraham was about to sacrifice Isaac, and call the spot Land of Moriah. It was close to this spot they erected their temple, or *Kibleh*, the site of which, now a bare rock, surrounded by vestiges of a wall, they consider holy ground, and tread it only barefooted. They believe this to be the place where the tabernacle of the Lord, with the ark of the covenant, had been pitched. For the same reason, no dead are buried on the sanctified hill, but at its base; not far from the site of the temple there are extensive ruins of a fortress and town.

They keep the passover, by sacrificing as many lambs or kids, a year old, as may be required for the repast of each family, abstaining for seven days from the use of leavened bread. On this and the other

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festivals, they pitched their tents, in former times, upon Gerizim all night, and offered their sacrifices not far from the site of the ancient temple. This spot, which is called Mazhih, "place of sacrifices," is indicated by two rows of stones laid on the ground, and a round pit stoned up, in which the flesh was roasted. But they have for many years desisted from this custom, and kept the festivals in their houses, on account of the exactions and oppressions of the Turkish governors. On the day of Pentecost, each individual kills a cock, which is likewise the custom of the Jews, who name the cock Kapparah, or "expiation." Since, however, the destruction of the Temple of Jerusalem, the Jews can offer no Paschal lamb, and they only observe those parts of the feast, which include the use of the unleavened bread, herbs, and wine. May not this feeble remnant of the ancient Samaritan nation have been preserved, for the express purpose of transmitting to the present times, without any intermission, an example of the commemoration of the blessed ordinance so mercifully instituted in remote ages as typical of the one and all-sufficient sacrifice of the promised Messiah? The Samaritans are thus living witnesses to

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<sup>+</sup> Kennicott, Diss. General, ed. Brum. p. 359, et seq.

<sup>∇</sup> Gesenius, Comment. de Pentateuchi Samaritani Origine, Indole, &c., Mais 1815.

the authenticity of the Levitical law, so rashly impugned by some modern philosophizing Christian teachers.

The Samaritans assert that Joshua deposited on Gerizim the twelve stones brought from the Jordan. They shew, also, a spring, near the site of the Temple, named *Najij*, at which, they believe, the great Prophet, or the Messiah, whom they call *El-muhdy*, the Guide, will appear, when he comes upon the earth. They go, four times a-year, in procession, to the top of Gerizim, at their great festivals, reading the law all the way.

The origin of the Samaritans dates from the Babylonish captivity, after which Shechem was always known as the chief seat of the people bearing that name. Shalmaneser peopled the cities of Samaria with men brought from Babylon and Assyria, instead of the banished Israelites, "and they possessed Samaria, and dwelt in the cities thereof."<sup>d</sup> They were called, in Hebrew, Cutheans, from *Cuthah*, a place in Assyria, and, in Greek, Samaritans. It is, however, stated by some historians, that only the rich, and the strong, able to bear arms, among the Israelites were carried away, and that the poor and feeble were left, so that the Samaritans were a *mixed* race of Jews and Gentiles.<sup>Ω</sup> The Lord having sent lions among them for their sins, the people applied to the King of Assyria for an Israelitish priest, "to teach them the manner of the God of the land." One was sent, who resided in Bethel; but, while professing to fear the Lord, they corrupted His

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laws, by serving their own idols, "and made unto themselves, of the lowest of them, priests of the high places," for which they were repeatedly visited with severe punishments.<sup>□</sup> The Samaritans having desired to be allowed to assist the Jews in the rebuilding of their Temple, after the captivity, were refused, on account of their foreign origin, and this gave rise to the bitter enmity that ever after existed between the two races; the Samaritans hindered, in every way in their power, the rebuilding both of the Temple and City, and were stimulated, by jealous rivalry, to erect a temple of their own, under the protection of Alexander the Great, while he was besieging Tyre;<sup>X</sup> they appointed as their high priest Manasseh, son of the Israelitish high priest Joiada, who had been expelled Jerusalem.<sup>±</sup> Shechem then became the metropolis of the Samaritans, and was the resort of all the apostate Jews. The Temple on Gerizim was destroyed by John Hyrcanus, B.C. 129, after having stood about two hundred years.<sup>∅</sup> The enmity and feuds between the two sects increased. Jesus was called a Samaritan, in scorn; and the woman of Samaria was surprised at Jesus asking her to give him to drink, because the Jews had no dealings with the Samaritans.<sup>∩</sup> The greatest hatred is still exhibited at this day between the Jews and the small remnant of Samaritans at Nablous. About two centuries ago there were small communities of Samaritans at Cairo, Gaza, Damascus, and Jaffa; the

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<sup>d</sup> 2 Kings xvii. 3,6, 24.

<sup>Ω</sup> Hengstenberg, *Authentic, des Pentat.* i. p. 50.

<sup>□</sup> 2 Kings xvii. 29, &c.

<sup>X</sup> Joseph. *Antiq.* 11, 7, 2. The building of this temple is believed by some writers to have been earlier than the time of Alexander.

John iv. 9.

<sup>±</sup> . Nehem. xiii. 28.

<sup>∅</sup> Joseph. *Bell. Jud.* i. 2, 6.

<sup>∩</sup> . John iv. 9.

Bene-Israel of Bombay are also considered by some, though erroneously, to be the descendants of the Samaritans. All these communities have, however, become extinct, with the exception of the small remnant at Nablous. Shechem, called also by the Jewish common people Sychar, received the name of Neapolis, under Vespasian, as is shown by the inscription, "Flavia, Neapolis," on some of the coins of that period. Ancient Neapolis extended, probably, further along the valley than the present town. The people often rose up against their governors, and about A.D. 200, Neapolis was deprived by Septimus Severus of its rights as a city. They broke out again in a violent rebellion against Justinian; after this, the Samaritans spread widely over the East and West, employed as merchants, and money-changers. The town was repeatedly laid waste by the Mohammedans.

Shechem was a remarkable place in the earliest periods of Jewish history. Abraham first came, in the land of Canaan, "unto the place

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of Sichem, unto the plain of Moreh ;<sup>⊃</sup> and Jacob, on his return from Padan-aram, came to Shalim, a city of Shechem, corresponding to the village of *Salem*, east of Nablous. It was then, having pitched his tent, he purchased "the parcel of ground," still occupied by his well and the supposed tomb of Joseph. It was here Dinah was carried away by Shechem, son of Hamor, prince of the country. Jacob sent his flocks for pasture in these fields when residing at Hebron, and it was on a visit paid there that Joseph was sold by his brethren. After the passage of the Jordan, the Israelites were directed to set up great stones and build an altar on Mount Ebal. Shechem fell to the lot of Ephraim—but was assigned to the Levites, and made a city of refuge. Under the rule of the Judges, Abimelech treacherously got possession of the city, when Jotham reproved him, by delivering his beautiful parable from Mount Gerizim. All Israel came together at Shechem, to make Rehoboam king. It was here the ten tribes rebelled, and Jeroboam, for a time, made the city his royal residence.<sup>∠</sup>

RELIGIOUS AWAKENING, AND SCRIPTURE SCHOOLS AT NARLOUS.

—We felt a particular interest in visiting this place on account of its being one of the first in the south of Palestine, where the Christian inhabitants have, under the instruction of a native Scripture Reader, manifested a thirst for Scriptural knowledge, and a desire for a Reformed Church. In the course of last year (1848), about forty of the Christian families openly declared their wish to secede from the Greek Church, and to found a new Church on scriptural principles. But as Bishop Gobat could neither receive them into his Church, nor provide them with an ordained Protestant clergyman, they have remained for the present in their own communion. The Bishop purchased, however, a good house, in which a school has been kept, and the Bible taught. We found an attendance of about

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⊃ Gen. xii. 6.

∠ 1 Kings xii. 1, 12, 16, 25. Much valuable information respecting the history and literature of the Samaritans has been collected in the learned works of the Rev. Dr. Robinson, and the Rev. Dr. Wilson, entitled "Biblical Researches," and "Lands of the Bible," to which the reader is referred for many additional interesting details.

thirty-five boys in this school, instructed by an intelligent-looking young native, under the superintendence of some of the respectable inhabitants. The school was first opened by the native Scripture Reader, Michel, who accompanied us from Jerusalem. We were very much pleased with our examination of the boys on doctrinal points, as well as with their reading, writing, and arithmetic; some of them appeared to possess superior intelligence, and likely to become hereafter good pupils for Malta. The prospectus of the College was read with satisfaction by some of their parents, and their reluctance to part with their children

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will, I doubt not, give way to their earnest desire for their improvement.~

These inquiring Christians were, at first, excommunicated and persecuted by their priests; but the Turkish Governor of the town having shown his determination to protect them from interference, either by Priest or Moslem, they have been left for some time unmolested. They propose establishing a girls' school. We resided in the house of one of the elders, and all those with whom we conferred appeared sincere and earnest in their new religious profession.

(p. 424) SAMARIA.

Samaria, called in Arabic, *Sebastieh*, and, more commonly, *Sebaste*, is about two hours' distance from Nablous. Nothing can exceed the beauty of the scenery through which we passed, for several miles; the road is broader and more level than is generally the case in Palestine, and was no doubt the royal highway to the capital of the Kings of Israel. The

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~ The following extract, from a Report of the proceedings of the Jerusalem Mission, contains some interesting details of the Reformation movements at Nablous:—

"Formerly the natives cared not for the Bible, or for Christianity, or for knowledge. Now they willingly receive the Scriptures, and thirst for instruction. Ere long Nablous (Sychax) took the lead, and sent a deputation to Jerusalem, to declare their fixed determination to separate themselves from the communion of the Greek, and to beg the Bishop to receive them into the communion of the English Church. This request the Bishop refused, and advised them to return home, and give themselves to the study of the Bible, and to prayer. After the lapse of about four months, they returned again, asking for the establishment of a school. He directed them to petition the Greek Patriarch at Jerusalem, who twice positively refused the prayer of the petitioners. Then the Bishop granted their request, and purchased, at his own expense, premises for a school, which was placed under the superintendence of a *member of the Greek Church*. The school was opened with twelve scholars, but soon increased and prospered, in spite of an excommunication from the Patriarch, and an insidious effort of that prelate to induce the Mohammedan Governor to destroy the school, and burn the classbooks, though he knew that the Bible alone was used in the school. The Bishop offered also a large salary to the native teacher of the school to leave it, and take charge of a school under his direction; but this was faithfully rejected. It now numbers forty scholars, male and female. The progress in scriptural knowledge evinced at the first examination, had most important results; a light from above broke in upon them, and the intellectual illumination that they had acquired became, by the Divine blessing, the dawning of the 'day-star in the heart' to many.

"The first examination of the school at Nablous attracted so much notice, that applications immediately poured in for similar institutions from Tiberias, Nazareth, Jaffa, Gaza, Ramleh, Bethlehem, Beit Jula, Ram-Allah, Kerac (an important fortress on the cliffs which overhang the eastern shores of the Dead Sea), and from Salt, on the eastern side of the Jordan, the Ramoth Gilead of Scripture. From all those localities came the same complaint, 'We have been brought up in utter ignorance; our priests cannot, or will not, help;' and the expression of the same determination, 'We will have our children delivered from this miserable situation,' and the same request, 'Establish schools among us.'" The Protestant congregation at Nablous now numbers two hundred.

valleys are abundantly watered with meandering streams, flowing down in all directions from the surrounding hills; such a copious supply of water invariably produces in hot climates the most luxuriant vegetation, and richest verdure. The sides of the hills, as well as the valleys, are highly cultivated, being laid out in well-tilled fields, luxuriant pasturage, groves and gardens, where the fig, olive, orange, aromatic laurel, walnut, almond, medlar, and other trees, are seen heavily laden with blossoms and fruit.

Several villages lie embosomed in these beautiful plantations, and the country presents a combination of well-cultivated green hills \* and dales, forming the richest and most picturesque landscape. The double blessing of Jacob and Moses upon the fruitfulness of the land of Joseph continues thus to be realized, although in a minor degree, compared with ancient times. "Blessed of the Lord," said Moses, "be his land, for the precious things of heaven, for the dew, and for the deep that coucheth beneath, and for the precious fruits brought forth by the sun, and for the precious things put forth by the moon."<sup>∞</sup>

After leaving the valley we ascended some hills, where the soil was too thin for the growth of trees, but was covered in several places with the ranunculus, anemone, and lupine, of great size, and of the brightest blue and white. On reaching the high ridge we came in sight of the Mediterranean, expanding beyond the sandy plain of Sharon, and of the insulated hill or mountain on which stood Herod's imperial city of the ten tribes; it is oblong, and rises about eight hundred feet on the eastern side of a wide and fertile plain, encompassed by hills of a still greater height, so that the prospect is extensive, rich, and varied. The city was built on its eastern slope, and the present village stands upon a belt about half-way up; the houses are very miserable, although constructed partly with fragments of the stone of the ruins; the inhabitants have long been notorious for their wild, predatory character.

Near the village are the remains of a large church of the time of the Crusaders, raised, however, on foundations evidently Jewish, as

#### RUINS OF ANCIENT SAMARIA (p. 425)

they consist of very large, bevelled stones. There is a tradition believed by Christians and Moslems, that John the Baptist was both executed and buried in this church, which is now converted into a mosque; but Josephus relates expressly that he was beheaded in the Castle of Machcerus, on the east of the Dead Sea. This church is the only solid ancient building, now remaining on the site of Samaria; for ascending to the top of the hill, and surveying its sides, nothing is seen but large, loose stones, and broken columns; some fallen, others standing erect, on the surface of ploughed and well-cultivated fields. There is every appearance of the ancient buildings having been destroyed, and their materials cast down from the brow of the hill, in order to clear the land for cultivation; masses of stone are thus seen hanging on the steep sides of the hill, accidentally stopped in the progress of their descent by the rude dykes and terraces separating the fields.

Another circumstance to be noticed is, that the materials of the ruins which have been gathered up from the surface of the fields, in order to facilitate their tillage, are piled up in large heaps, or used in the construction of rude stone fences; many of these heaps of

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<sup>∞</sup> Deut . xxxiii. 13, 14.

stone are seen in the plains at the foot of the hill. These are deeply interesting facts when compared with the prophecy delivered by Micah, above 2,500 years from the present time—" I will make Samaria as an heap of the field; and as plantings of a vineyard: and I will pour down the stones thereof into the valley, and I will discover the foundations thereof." <sup>z</sup> How truly wonderful has been the literal accomplishment of this prophecy! It is customary when planting vineyards to collect all the stones which are on the ground into heaps. By the repeated ploughing and digging of the fields, the foundations of the city have actually been exhumed, discovered, and poured down, forming a singularly striking contrast with the foundations and ruins of Jerusalem, which have remained buried and heaped up in mounds and indurated masses, fifty and sixty feet high, on the very site of the buildings of the ancient city. <sup>↓</sup>

Some traces of ruins are seen on the table-land at the summit of the hill, which may have belonged to the ancient fortress; but on the terrace-level, or belt lower down, and along the north-west brow, there are the remains of a splendid colonnade, consisting of a double row of columns at equal distances, and the width of the colonnade measuring fifty feet; the columns are sixteen feet high, and two feet diameter at the base; there are about ninety erect, but without any capitals, and many are fallen; the length of the remaining portion of this remarkable colonnade is three thousand feet, but it is not impro-

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bable that it may have encircled the entire hill, and is to be referred to the time of Herod the Great. The hill is well planted with the fig, olive, and pomegranate; its summit commands a splendid panoramic view, both of the Mediterranean and of the valleys and high hills of Samaria; these have been at all times beautifully wooded and richly cultivated, so that the ancient inhabitants, revelling in the fatness of the land, stood much in need of the warning of Isaiah, "Woe to the crown of pride, to the drunkards of Ephraim, on the head of the fat valleys of them that are overcome with wine." <sup>≈</sup> Samaria was the city where Ahab built his house for Baal, and ruled with wicked Jezebel, and where Elijah and Elisha so miraculously exhibited on many occasions the power and truth of God. <sup>→</sup>

Samaria was first built by Omri, King of Israel, B.C. 925. It was the capital of the ten tribes of Israel for two centuries, until they were carried away by Shalmaneser, under King Hoshea, about B.C. 720. Samaria had been almost continually the seat of idolatry, on account of which the inhabitants were punished by several severe famines; it was also the scene of various remarkable miraculous deliverances from the Syrians. <sup>≡</sup> After the dispersion of the ten tribes, the city belonged to the Samaritans; it was taken and razed to the ground by Hyrcanus, after a year's siege, but was built up again by Gabinius. <sup>#</sup> Augustus bestowed Samaria on Herod the Great, who having established there a colony

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<sup>z</sup> Micah i. 6

<sup>↓</sup> See p. 310.

<sup>≈</sup> Isai. xxviii. 1.

<sup>→</sup> 1 Kings xvii. 1.

<sup>≡</sup> 2 Kings vi. 24; vii.

<sup>#</sup> Joseph. Antiq. 13, 10, 3, and 15, 4.



of 6,000 persons, fortified, enlarged, and greatly adorned the city, and erected in the centre a temple in honour of Augustus, which was celebrated for its dimensions and magnificence.<sup>ø</sup> In the third century, it became an episcopal see, and continued to enjoy this distinction until the sixth century, when falling into the power of the Mohammedans, it was involved, as many other places of Palestine, in complete destruction. The bishopric was revived while the Crusaders had possession of Palestine, and the title continued in the Romish church until the fourteenth century. There are a few Greek Christians in the village, and a titular Greek bishop of Sebaste resides at Jerusalem.<sup>Ƴ</sup>

*From the Editor*

– *Shalma b. Tabia was the High Priest 1787-1855.*

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<sup>ø</sup> Ibid. 15, 7, 3.

<sup>Ƴ</sup> "Biblical Researches," vol. ii. p. 143, where a complete historical notice is given.