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**CHRISTIAN RESEARCHES
IN SYRIA AND THE HOLY LAND,
IN MDCCCXXIII, AND MDCCCXXIV,
IN FURTHERANCE OF THE OBJECTS
OF THE CHURCH MISSIONARY SOCIETY**

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WITH
AN APPENDIX,
CONTAINING
THE JOURNAL OF MR. **JOSEPH GREAVES**,
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**Christian researches in Syria and the Holy Land in MDCCCXXIII and
MDCCCXXIV ...**

By William Jowett, Joseph Greaves, Church Missionary

(p.193)

.....NABLOUS, OR NAPOLOSE.

Wednesday, Nov. 19, 1823—We set off, considerably before day-light, for Nablous. The air was extremely keen for the first two hours; and, gradually, when the sun had risen, its burning heat came upon us, with a doubly-exhausting effect.

It was about an hour after mid-day that we had our first view of the city of Nablous, romantically situated in a deep valley, between the mountains of Ebal on our left and Gerizim on the right. There is a kind of sublime horror in the lofty, craggy, and barren aspect of these two mountains, which seem to face each other with an air of defiance; especially as they stand contrasted with the rich valley beneath, where the city appears to - be imbedded on either side in green gardens and extensive olive-grounds— rendered more verdant, by the lengthened periods of shade which they enjoy from the mountains on each side. Of the two, Gerizim is not wholly without cultivation.

We had always been informed, that the facility of passing by way of Nablous depended very much on the character of the Governor of the city. Our case was singular; for we had to learn, what kind of (p. 194) reception a city without a Governor "would give us; the

Governor having died this very morning. On coming within sight of the gate, we perceived a numerous company of females, who were singing in a kind of recitative, far from melancholy, and beating time with their hands. If this be mourning, I thought, it is of a strange kind. It had indeed, sometimes, more the air of angry defiance. But on our reaching the gate, it was suddenly exchanged for most hideous plaints and shrieks, which, with the feeling that we were entering a city at no time celebrated for its hospitality, struck a very dismal impression upon my mind. They accompanied us a few paces: but it soon appeared that the gate was their station; to which, having received nothing from us, they returned. We learnt, in the course of the evening, that these were only a small detachment of a very numerous body of *cunning women*, who were filling the whole city with their cries—*taking up a wailing*, with the design, as of old, to make the eyes of all the inhabitants *run down with tears, and their eyelids gush out with waters* (Jerem. ix. 17, 18). For this good service, they would, the next morning, wait upon the government and principal persons, to receive some trifling fee.

On entering the city, we reached, in a short space, the quarters of the Greek Priest; where we obtained a room, a very dirty one indeed, but the best that was to be had.

The Christians in this city are all of the Greek Communion. The Priest's name is Baba Ysa. They are, in number, between twenty and thirty families: there are between seventy and eighty males who pay the capitation-tax. We found them (p. 195) to be in mean circumstances, but very friendly. They purchased a few Arabic Testaments.

CONVERSATIONS WITH THE SAMARITANS.

In the evening we visited the Samaritan Priest, Shalmor Ben Tobiah. He seemed surprised that we should know his name, and asked us how we had heard of him. When we informed him that we knew him through previous travellers, he shewed us the Letter of a French Gentleman, who had travelled three or four years ago this way, and had sent to make certain inquiries of him.

In a little time, we were joined by various others of his people, in number about twelve. I was struck to observe that the character of the Priest's physiognomy was far from Jewish: that of some of the party was Jewish. He informed us, that, among their people here, some were of the Tribe of Levi; namely, his own family, consisting of four boys and a girl: only this family, however, as he is the only man of that tribe. He said that there are four or five families of the Tribe of Manasseh, and that all the rest are of Ephraim; excepting one of the Tribe of Benjamin, who, while we were speaking, came in. In all, they are between twenty and thirty houses. About sixty males pay the capitation-tax. We asked him, how they would supply the priesthood, in case his family should fail: several replied, together, "It never fails." The Priest, and his sons, alone, have the privilege of standing on the raised step before the Torah in their Synagogue.

They said there were in Nablous a few Jewish Houses, fewer than their own. To our inquiries, whether there were any other Samaritans in the (p. 196) world, he replied there were—some in England, some in America, some in Benderbeshire* near India: there had been very many in France; but they were now reduced to three or four: and, finally, there

* I suppose him to mean Bushire, in the Persian Gulf, west-southwest, about 100 miles, from Shiraz. Bender is a Persian word, signifying a Mart or Emporium.

were some at Sabbath. His replies were given in a manner, which implied a desire to represent the numbers of his people as considerable; rather than in a way, which at all convinced us of his knowing the condition, or even the existence, of his brethren in other countries, concerning whom he offered this information. He stated the fact of the Babylonish Captivity; and said that they were of the remnant which remained in the land, and of those who subsequently returned; but the narrative in 2 Kings xvii. 24 &c. they reject as a fabrication.

On producing the Hebrew New-Testament, we asked if it was lawful for them to read it: the Priest said that there was no restraint upon their reading any books whatever, and accepted the copy which we offered. We also gave him an Arabic New Testament.

He said they were all in expectation of the Messiah—that the Messiah would be a man, not the Son of God—and that this was the place, which he would make the Metropolis of his kingdom: this was the place, of which the Lord had promised, He would place his name there. We asked what passages of the Pentateuch, according to their views, spoke of the Messiah. He quoted, *A Prophet shall the Lord your God raise up like unto me &c.* This (p. 197) promise-of the Messiah was not fulfilled in Joshua, for he was not a prophet.

We begged to see the celebrated Manuscript. He made many difficulties, though he readily allowed us to see the Synagogue. We pressed our wishes, however; when he said there were many things previously requisite: he must go first to the bath—he must light up many candles, &c. We knew what this meant, and said that we would pay for all the candles[•]; on which he consented to shew us the Manuscript the next morning.

We then went down into the Synagogue with his Son and many of the company; but he did not accompany us. They made us take off more of our dress, than I had ever been despoiled of before—both my outer and inner shoes; and my "ferwi," a warm dress lined with fur. We saw several Samaritan Manuscripts on a shelf, wrapped up in cloth: they were written on skin. On our asking their price, a young man said that they were not to be sold; that to sell them was "Haram," "prohibited;" and that every letter was worth a sequin. The Samaritan Character they call Ebrani; and refuse the type which we call Hebrew, as an innovation.

Thursday, Nov. 20, 1823—Early this morning, according to appointment, we visited the Samaritan Priest. We waited for him some time; during which we placed in order our Bibles, and selected some texts on which we desired to converse with him. At length he made his appearance, and accompanied us into the Synagogue. With great reverence, he produced the venerable Manuscript, which he said (p. 198) was written by Abisha[♦], Grandson of Aaron thirteen years after the death of Moses, now three thousand four hundred and sixty years ago[◦]. We were not permitted to touch the sacred book, but only to look at it, at about a foot distance: the page at which he opened shewed, certainly, a very ancient Manuscript, with the characters yet sufficiently distinct. He then shewed us

[•] Candles, being very much used in Places of Worship in the East, are almost a standard of ecclesiastical fees.

[♦] We understood him to say Grandson; but Abishua was Great Grandson. See 1 Chron. vi. 4.

[◦] According to our computation, it should be 3261 years ago. Probably the mistake was ours in hearing him.

another of a similar form—apparently an exact copy—which he said was eight hundred years old. He also produced a few tattered leaves of Walton's Polyglott—part of Genesis. We asked if they did not consider the Books of Joshua and Judges as sacred, in the same manner as the Torah: he replied, "By no means: these two Books we have, and we reverence them; but the Torah is our only Sacred Book. Joshua was not a Prophet, but the disciple of a Prophet, that is, of Moses."

We inquired in which direction they turn their faces, when they pray: he waved his hand in the direction a little right of the angle behind the altar, that is nearly southward. In this direction is the city of Luz, which afterwards was called Bethel; the place which the Lord appointed to set His Name there.

We went out, and he directed his hand toward the Hill Gerizim, to a point, a little beyond which is the spot whither they go "to bless." It may be observed, that the Samaritans here, according to the account which the Priest gave of their Tribes, (p. 199) are all within the enumeration of those six tribes mentioned Deut. xxvii. 12, 13, whose lot it was to repeat the blessings; the other six being appointed to curse on Mount Ebal. He also directed his hand toward the spot, where those were to stand who were appointed to curse.

We asked if the report was true, that, in any way, they worshipped the symbol of a Dove—looking, at the same time, to see if the emblem of the Dove was anywhere to be seen on the curtain, which screens the Altar, as some had said. He replied, "It is a falsehood of the Jews, who endeavour to calumniate us."

As to Jerusalem, they have no respect for it as a holy city; regarding the Jews as their rivals, and speaking entirely in the spirit of the Woman of Samaria (John iv. 20): *Our fathers worshipped in this mountain.*

We then produced a few passages in the Pentateuch, concerning which we desired to know his opinion, whether or no they referred to the Messiah. Genesis iii. 15 (*I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed: it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel*) he said did NOT refer to the Messiah. Genesis xlix. 10 (*The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come*) they consider as a prophecy of the Messiah, who is Shiloh: and, when pressed on the circumstance, that the sceptre was already departed from Judah, he gave the explanation which many of the Jews give, that Judah has always hitherto existed and still exists somewhere in the world, exercising regal authority; although he acknowledged that he did not know where. We asked if there were any (p. 200) other passages: he quoted no other this morning; but, yesterday, he had already cited Deut. xviii. 15.;

On coming out, we asked how long this Synagogue had been occupied by them: he pointed to a small marble slab inserted in the wall, engraven with Samaritan characters; which, he said, recorded the period of their occupying this building—now four hundred and ninety years. There were two or three other slabs with Samaritan characters, inserted in like manner in the wall. That which records the date of their possession of the Synagogue is in a small recess, on the left side of the door.

Three times a year they go up Mount Gerizim: but we did not understand what their Services were on these occasions; not, he said, to sacrifice, for fear of the Turks. When

they do sacrifice, it is done in some private place, and in the city, that they may not be molested. We understood them to say that they had not a daily sacrifice⁺.

The House of this Priest, and the Synagogue which adjoins it, are very clean—a perfect contrast to the inveterate filth of the Jewish Houses and Synagogues, which we had seen at Tiberias and Safet; one only excepted, that of the Austrian Consul at Tiberias. Whether this is owing to the national character of the Samaritans—if NATIONAL be a term applicable to a hundred persons—or whether it is owing to their being in tolerably easy circumstances, or whether it is the case with the Priest's house alone, which was the only one we visited, it is not in my power to judge.

(p. 201) The Priest, in a very friendly manner, asked us: to take up our lodging with him for the night; as he had done on the evening before: but we designed to leave at noon; and, therefore, bid him farewell. He desired us to join our fingers together with his, in token, as he said, that the English were his friends; adding, that he wished to be considered as under English protection*.

REMARKS ON THE SAMARITANS.

The character, and indeed the existence to the present day, of this now-diminished people, must appear a very singular fact. They seem to have made Nablous, what it anciently was to the Israelites when its name was Shechem, their *City of Refuge*; (p. 202) and here, in some faint sense, to have found security. Were their own account of their genealogy to be admitted, they might almost be regarded—according to our view of the division of the Twelve Tribes between Rehoboam and Jeroboam—as representing the most ancient Schism in the Church of God. This would place them on a footing of greater antiquity than even the Karaim; who claim for their date the return from the Babylonish captivity.

Of the true origin of the Samaritans, however, we naturally judge from those Scriptures, which are by us received as Canonical. A mingled race—principally Cuthaeon, though partly, perhaps, of Israelitish blood—they have, in the course of ages, vainly endeavoured to claim as an hereditary right every privilege of Israel; and to identify themselves, almost in a more exclusive manner than the Jews themselves, with

⁺ When, on a subsequent occasion, I passed through Nablous, the Chief Layman of the Samaritans told me, that, at the Passover, they still sacrifice and eat the Paschal Lamb.

* On the subject of the Samaritans, the Reader may consult Basnage's History of the Jews; and also Prideaux's Connection, Part I. Book 2. The following Extract is from Prideaux:—

"There is an old Copy of the Samaritan Pentateuch now shewn at Shechem, (or Naplous, as they now call it,) the head seat of that Sect, which would put this matter beyond all dispute, were that true which is said of it. For they tell us, that therein are written these words: '*I Abishua, the son of Phineas, the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron, the High Priest, have transcribed this copy at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation, in the 13th year of the Children of Israel's entrance into the Holy Land.*' But Dr. Huntington, late Bishop of Rapho in Ireland, having, while Chaplain to the Turkey Company at Aleppo, been at Shechem, and there examined this copy upon the spot, found no such words on the Manuscript, nor thought the copy ancient. Whether the Samaritans did, in ancient times, absolutely reject all the other Scriptures besides the Pentateuch, some do doubt; because it is certain, from the discourse of the Woman of Samaria with our Saviour, that they had the same expectations of a Messiah that the Jews had; and this they say they could no where clearly have, but from the Prophets. And it cannot be denied, but that there is some force in this argument. Perchance, although they did read the Pentateuch only in their Synagogues, yet anciently they might not have been without a due regard to the other Sacred Writings, whatsoever their sentiments may be of them at present."

the great Hebrew Legislator. Their pretensions have never been, to this day, admitted by the Jews; and, by our Lord Himself, they were repeatedly spoken of and treated as strangers.

It is easy to account, therefore, for their repugnance to receive a large portion of the Books of our Holy Scriptures.

The History of the Kings of Judah and Israel, (although they acknowledge the fact, there recorded, of the Babylonish Captivity,) must be, above all, peculiarly obnoxious, as fixing upon them the stigma of a spurious and idolatrous origin: see 2 Kings xvii. 24—41.

The Psalms, designed for the spiritual edification of the Church in every place and age, yet record their rejection, and declare the superior favour shewn to their rival city Jerusalem: *Moreover, he refused (p. 203) the tabernacle of Joseph, and chose not the tribe of Ephraim. But chose the tribe of Judah, the Mount Sion which he loved.* (Ps. lxxvii. 07, 68, with other similar passages.) This invaluable treasure of devotion is, therefore, in a manner, lost to them.

Isaiah must offend them, as he everywhere uses the terms of Zion and Jerusalem, in describing the seat of the Messiah's Kingdom. Jerusalem confirms the expressions quoted from the Psalms (Jer. vii. 15. also iii. 17). Micah gives to Bethlehem the honour of Messiah's birth. Daniel, in his prayer, declares Jerusalem to be *the holy mountain of God*. And thus it is with many other passages of the Old Testament.

Having, with much difficulty, compelled our guides to prepare for departure from Nablous, they declaring that the whole city and country were in confusion on account of the death of the Governor, we set off, at length, considerably after twelve o'clock. At the gate, our servants were long detained for a trifling exaction; which we desired them, for the sake of all future travellers, to resist as long, and reduce as low, as possible. For about two shillings, they at length escaped with a great deal of abuse of us as Franks and Christians.....

From the Editor

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

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