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(p. 310) Palestine Mission:- Journal of Mr. Fisk - Oct. (1824)

.....*The Samaritans.*

After taking some refreshment we went to visit the Samaritans, having first sent to the Kohen, or Priest, to know if a visit would be agreeable. His name is Shalmar ben Tahiah. His first name he sometimes pronounces Salomer. I believe it is the same as Solomon, which the Jews in Jerusalem now pronounce Shloma. He received us in a neat apartment, and we immediately entered into conversation. Ten or twelve other members of the sect soon came in. Our conversation was in Arabic. They represent the number of their houses to be 20 or 30,—about 60 pay the capitation tax. They say there are no other Samaritans in this country, but they are quite disposed to think they are numerous in other parts of the world. In Paris they suppose they were very numerous, until, in a time of war between the French and some other nation, the Samaritans were dispersed. They say that there are, however, four still living in Paris. They inquired whether there are any Samaritans in England, and seemed not at all gratified when we told them no. On learning that I was from America, they inquired if there are Samaritans there. I told them no; but they confidently asserted the contrary, and that there are also many in India. They maintain that they are the lineal descendants of Jacob: the Kohen and his sons, only, of the tribe of Levi; one family from the tribe of Benjamin; four or five from Manasseh, and the rest from Ephraim. We asked what they would do for a priest, if the Kohen and his sons should die, and thus the tribe of Levi become extinct. They replied, (*bazah ma beseer*;) "this does not happen." They all speak Arabic, but their hooks and public prayers are in Samaritan. They call their language Hebrew, and that which we call Hebrew they call Jewish; for they say their language is the true Hebrew in which the law was given. The difference consists in the use of a different alphabet and different pronunciation. They go three times a year to Mount Gerizim to worship, but do not offer sacrifices there now, as they did formerly, lest they should be molested by the Turks. But they offer their sacrifices in a more private way, in the city. We understood them to say, that they have no

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daily sacrifice. We visited their synagogue. It is a small, dark, hut neat room, with an altar, but without seats. We were obliged, before entering, to pull off not only our overshoes, but also our slippers, which are not prohibited even in mosques; and Mr. Jowett was obliged to take off an outer garment, which he wears, that is lined with fur. No person can approach the altar, except the Kohen and his sons. They expect a Messiah, who is to be a Prophet and King, but a mere man, to live 120 years, as Moses did, and to

reign at Naploos over all the world. Those who do not receive him, are to be destroyed with the sword. The promise concerning the woman's seed does not, they believe, refer to the Messiah; but that, concerning a prophet like unto Moses, does refer to him, as does also that concerning Silob. Gen. 49:10. They admit the sense of this passage as given in our translation, and try to show that there is still a sceptre somewhere in the hands of Judah. The Messiah will come when Israel repent. They say the story of the separation between Israel and Judah, under Jeroboam and Rehoboam, is a lie of the Jews. The city of Luz or Bethel, they say, was on Mount Gerizim. Gen. 28:19. Jebus, they say, was also on this mount, and that Judges 19:10, as it stands in our copies, is not true.

20. We renewed our visit to the Samaritans. We had yesterday requested to see their ancient copy of the law. The Kohen objected, but after much persuading, and indirectly presenting the motive which generally prevails in this country, i.e. the offer of money, he at last consented to show it to us this morning. In order to do it, he said he must first bathe, and then put on a particular dress for the occasion. On our arrival at the synagogue, we waited a short time, and he appeared, entered the synagogue, approached the altar, knelt and put his face to the floor, then opened the little closet which contained the holy book, knelt and put his face to the floor again, then brought out the brass case, which contained the roll, and opened it so as to show us the manuscript, but we were not allowed to touch it. It is in the Samaritan character, and the Kohen says it was written by Abishua, the grandson of Aaron, thirteen years after the death of Moses, and 3260 years ago. See 1 Chron 6:4. Another brass case stood near this, containing an exact copy of the original manuscript, said to have been made 800 years ago. On a shelf, in the synagogue, were a considerable number of copies of the Samaritan Pentateuch. We saw also the relic of the Polyglott Bible mentioned by Maundril. The Bible of the Samaritans contains only the five books of Moses. They have however, Joshua and Judges, but in separate books. They say that since Joshua there has been no prophet. He was the disciple of Moses, and inferior to him. David was king in Jerusalem, but not a prophet. We inquired whether the Samaritans held it lawful to read the books of Christians. They said there was no law against it, and we left with them one Testament in Arabic, and another in Hebrew.

At noon we left Naploos. A little way from the gate we observed, on our right hand, a mosque, which I suppose to be the one that travellers have mentioned as the place bought by Jacob "at the hand of the children of Hamor, Gen. 33:19. Jacob's well is to be seen near by, but through the ignorance of our guide we missed it. At six o'clock we arrived at Singil, and took lodgings with a Greek family, the only Christian family in the place. Before our arrival, we were overtaken by a heavy rain.

(From page 210)

Palestine Mission, Journal of Rev. Pliny Fisk

The journal of Messrs. Fisk and King in Palestine, extracts from which were concluded in our number For April last continued the account of their labors and travels down to the 14th of July, 1823..

From the Editor

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