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**PRIMITIVE SEMITIC
RELIGION TO-DAY**
A RECORD OF RESEARCHES, DISCOVERIES
AND STUDIES IN SYRIA, PALESTINE
AND THE SINAITIC PENINSULA
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APPENDIX F
THE SAMARITAN PASSOVER

The following description was given by an eye-witness, Dr. Daud Katibah, Nablus, July 26, 1900. I have preserved the language of the communication without essential change.

"The observance is celebrated on the fourteenth of Nisan, which varies according to the lunar year. When Saturday falls on the fourteenth, they celebrate the Passover on the preceding Friday.

"They go to the top of Mount Gerizim, at least a week before the feast, pitch their tents, and there they remain two weeks. They observe the feast seven days.

"In the Samaritan community there are forty men; including women and children, the whole number may be estimated at one hundred and fifty or two hundred. [Baedeker, Palestine and Syria, Leipzig, 1898, gives the number at 170.] They all attend the festival, even though they are ill; *e.g.*, a man went up this year (1900) who had not recovered from pneumonia.

"They reckon each day from sunset to sunset. The observances on the day of the Passover are as follows: They begin at sunset with singing, in which all take part. As a rule they kill the lambs needed for the congregation at sunset. These are white, one year old, without blemish. Should Saturday fall on the fourteenth of the month, they kill at noon on Friday, and eat at sunset. As a rule they eat the lambs late at night.

"All the people are dressed in white, and they begin with prayer and singing. There are several priests to kill the animals with special knives. The knife must be put in under the larynx. If an animal is not properly killed they call it unclean, and give it to the Moslems or the Christians. During the slaughtering they sing (shout) in Samaritan.

"While slaughtering the animals they make a fire ready in two places. One of the fires is prepared for burning the wool, the hoofs, the horns, and the entrails. Everything that is not eaten is burned. They do not remove the skins of the animal. They scald (p. 265) them and pull off the wool. Two men then hang the lamb on a pole by its hind legs, placing the pole on their shoulders. Then the priest opens the belly of the animal and removes the entrails, the liver, and the fat on the kidneys. These he burns with fire.

"The other fire is prepared a long time before the sacrifices. They dig a pit, ten or twelve feet in depth, and in this they make the fire five or six hours before they sacrifice. A special priest feeds the fire all the time. When the lambs have been made ready by the priests, they put the poles through the animals from end to end. At a signal from the priest they quickly put the lambs, seven or eight in number, into the pit. All the while they are singing in the Samaritan language. Then they cover the pit with a network of wood, and afterwards cover it with earth. No air gets inside, so there is no conflagration, only heat. The lambs remain in the pit three or four hours.

"After they have placed the lambs in the pit, they all go to a special place on the mountain, including men, women and children, and kneel in rows. The priest has the law of Moses. When he prays he has a special mantle on his shoulders. They repeat their prayers by rote, with their faces toward the south, and assume different attitudes.

"When the time comes for removing the sacrifices, the priest approaches the pit and makes a brief prayer. Then the people remove the covering from the top of the pit, and afterwards lift up the poles, on which are the lambs, one by one. Sometimes the poles get burned, and a man who has covered up his face and hands is let down with ropes or by their hands, and he takes up the lambs.

"By this time the people are very hungry. None can eat of the lambs but those who are circumcised, and who are (ceremonially) clean. Each family, and those who are reckoned with them, take a lamb and put it in a basket, and sit around it in a circle. The priest begins with a short prayer and song. After this, standing, they eat the flesh of the lambs in haste with unleavened bread and bitter herbs. None of the Moslems and Christians who are watching this ceremony may partake of the lamb, though some of the generous Samaritans offer them unleavened bread and bitter herbs."

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**Comments on this section from the Editor of theSamaritanUpdate.com**

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