

A Passover Night on Gerizim

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WHILST sojourning at Jerusalem for a few days in the early part of April, 1868, with my father, an elder brother, and two other friends, we received a pressing invitation from Yakub esh Shellabi, the Sheik of the Samaritans, to visit the encampment on Mount Gerizim, or as he would call it, "Jebel-el-Tor," and witness the Passover sacrifice. We were to be accompanied by a friend, then resident in Jerusalem, to whose offices we were indebted for Yakub esh Shellabi's communication. The Samaritan Passover, like that of the Jews, is always celebrated on the full moon of the month, Nisan, (page 194) fell that year on the night of Monday, April 6. One of our party was unequal to a ride of twelve hours in the day (the distance between Jerusalem and Nablus), and we were all anxious to have the privilege of spending our Sunday at Christ church, Mount Zion; we therefore left the city at ten o'clock at night, the Sabbath being then virtually over, and rode to Ram Allah, a distance of three hours. As we passed the crest of Scopus, we could not but turn round again and again to take another and yet another parting view of el-Kuds. We left the city bathed in the clear silvery light of the Paschal moon. The night was intensely cold. As I dismounted, and tried to get some warmth into my feet by a run on the hard ground, where the rain-pools were already coated with ice, I could not but be vividly reminded both by time and place, as well as by the object of our journey, of Him who on the slope below had spent the same hours, prostrate on the frozen ground, under the same clear light, and yet who had in the depths of his untold agony sweat drops of blood falling to the ground. It was not till afterwards that I thought of one of those undersigned coincidences with which the Word of Truth so richly abounds. We are told that on the very night before the true Passover sacrifice, "the servants and officers.... made a fire of coals; for it was cold: and they warmed themselves: and Peter stood with them, and warmed himself" (John xviii. 18).

We were traversing the great northern road, but few traces of Roman engineering remain. At one time our friend F_____ pointed out Nob, to our left (1 Sam. xxi. 1), and then farther on, to our right, Juleil-el-Ful (Gibeah of Saul, 1 Sam. xxii.6); but houses and terraces, rocks and ruins, could hardly be distinguished. The cry of a Jackal ravaging a tomb near at hand, where was no Rizpah to scare off "the beasts of the field by night" (2Sam. xxi. 10), broke the intense stillness. After a time we turned off the Nablus road to enter Ram Allah (probably the Ramathaim Zophim, of Mount Ephraim, 1 Sam. i.1). No sooner did we approach than all the dogs in the village awoke the echoes of the night. I must tell the reader that our tents had been previously sent on to Gerizim, and that we had arranged that one of our muleteers should take a letter to the schoolmaster of Ram Allah, and a good mule's load of bedding, so that we might on our arrival at once proceed to the schoolroom to sleep. (Ram Allah is a station of the Church Missionary Society.) We knocked at the door of the good catechist's house. The first intimation of life within was

the cry of a baby- reminding more than one of the party of dear ones far away- and then voices were heard in a language not quite so cosmopolitan as that of the child; a head was put out of the window, and F_____ was recognized. Our letter and baggage had not arrived, so we spent our night as best we could on the earthen floor of the schoolroom, whose only furniture was a mat or two, a large jar of water, a stand for the master's book, and a few large Arabic Bibles, one of which, with some qualms of feeling, I used as a pillow. Only a mile or two from this place Jacob had used a stone; but then he doubtless had what we had not- the good thick hood of his abayer as a comfortable pad between his head and his bolster.

What a contrast were the hills and valleys of Ephraim to the bare mountains and wadies of Judah! We pass through glens rich with corn and wine, mulberry and pomegranate, early wheat, and olive, and we think of Ephraim's blessing: "Blessed of the Lord be his land ... for the precious fruits brought forth by the sun ... for the precious things of the lasting hills, and for the precious things of the earth and fulness thereof" (Deut. xxxiii. 13-16). We are too pressed for time even to turn aside and see Seilun (Shiloh). We have but one object in view to-day. We have promised Yakub to reach his encampment before evening. Seilun lies some twenty minutes to our right. Lubban (Lebonah), where we are to lunch, is half-an-hour to the north. How accurate is the Bible in its geographical descriptions! My father turns to Judges xxii. 19, and reads, "Shiloh ... which is on the north side of Bethel, on the east side of the highway that goeth up from Bethel to Shechem" (the highway along which we are travelling), "and on the south of Lebonah." F_____ comforts me when I find that Shiloh must be given up by saying that it is absolutely featureless, and we remember the words of God, by Jeremiah, to Jerusalem: "But go ye now unto My place which was in Shiloh, where I set My name at the first, and see what I did to it for the wickedness of My people Israel" (vii.12). We rest for a short time under the shadow of some trees by a ruined khan. What a change of temperature between the heat of midday and the cold of midnight! In a half-an-hour we stand on the crest of a hill, and a view opens out before us, which causes each one to "pull up" whilst we drink in the features of the scene.

Our first glance is at the white Wely, the well-known landmark which crowns the summit of Gerizim, at two hours' distance. Far away to the north we descry the snowy head of Jebel-esh-Sheikh (Hermon). Our next look is one of gratified surprise at the size of the plain of Mukhna, at our feet, the largest in the highland district which lies between the maritime plain and the valley of the Jordan.

To the ordinary reader perhaps no plain in Palestine is so little known as that of Mukhna, and yet no plain comprehends such a confluence of sacred association, and in no part of Syria do you come in contact with so many reminiscences of the past. Here are Shechem (Gen. xii. 6), now called Nablus; Shalem (Gen. xxxiii. 10), the present village of Saim; Joseph's tomb, and Jacob's well, etc. The very length of the shadeless plain seemed to suggest the reason why Jesus should have been so "wearied with his journey" (John iv. 6). It was of this plain He spoke when He said, "There are yet four months, and then cometh harvest." The Samaritans still dwell in the same city of Shechem where they lived in the time of our Lord. Where the Wely crowns the summit of Gerizim was the sanctuary of which the woman of Samaria said, "Our fathers worshipped in this mountain" (John iv. 20); and on the same mountain, after eighteen hundred years, we are about to witness the continuance of the same Mosaic observances.

What an expanse of corn-land it is! One great field, unbroken by a single house or fence. If it were not for an olive here and there it would be as smooth as the surface of an inland lake. We should wonder who cultivated the soil, did we not see several villages on the slopes around. To the east a low line of hills here and there jut out into the plain, (page 195) forming charming bays and corners, green with early wheat. We trace our path on the west and which rise higher and higher until they reach Gerizim, which, like Saul, is "head and shoulders" taller than its neighbours. Ebal lies just behind it, and between the twin mountains is the entrance by Jacob's well and Joseph's tomb into the valley of Shechem, a "parcel of a field" so fertile as this, even apart from its associations so hallowed in the history of his family.

We descend, pass one or two villagers, one of them armed to the teeth, and get surly replies, when F___ asks, "Is there any way to the top of Gerizim from this side? We wish to go up to the Samaritan encampment, and do not care to go round the mountain and ascend from Nablus." Our good dragoman for once is sulky. Easterns are thoroughly Conservative. "He has been to Nablus eleven times, and always gone one way; dragomans before he was born have all gone the same road. Never heard of any one who had ascended Gerizim from this side." We at last get a villager more civil than his neighbours to act as guide, save an hour by being for once "Radicals" and overturning old-established institutions, and after a stiff climb we see over the crest above us a union-jack "bobbing about" in a frantic manner, which tells us that we must not come near the Samaritan encampment. We have hardly dismounted when Yakub esh Shellabi, who had been choosing the site for our tents, comes forward.

Yakub has really a fine commanding presence. Some of my readers may have seen him, as he was in England three years, I believe, from 1853-1856, about Samaritan affairs. He spoke English well. F___ introduced him to us with oriental courtesy as "Yakub esh Shellabi, the Prince of the Samaritans, handsome in name" (Shellabi signifies "the Handsome one"), "handsome in person, handsome in fortune, and handsome in deed." "Blessed be your coming," says Yakub. "Blessed by your appearing," say we. We are soon resting on comfortable cushions in Yakub's tent, where all is ready for our reception. The inevitable nargeeleh is handed round, and then follow sherbet, a bowl of sweet cream, wine and Passover cake. Yakub apologizes for not joining us, saying that the day is observed as a strict fast, even from tobacco. He talks to us whilst we form spoons from the unleavened cake, dip them into the common bowl of cream, swallow spoons and all, and find them by no means indigestible. a great many compliments pass. Yakub's wife left the tent as we entered, but by no means so hastily as not to get a good view of her husband's guests. He fetched his little son- a most amusing pocket edition of the grand folio before us. We had been previously introduced to his young daughters, who were dresses in hideous yellow Manchester prints. Every one in the camp evidently wore his best attire. Our host asks most anxiously after the health of the Bishop of London (the present Archbishop of Canterbury), his good friends Dr. Pusey and Rev. George Williams. We satisfy his mind on these points to the best of our ability, then start to explore the ruins on the summit of the mountain, whilst Yakub again and again assures us that he is very glad to see us; he is anxious that we should see everything about the coming sacrifice; we are his guests, etc. I have tasted Yabub's salt, or I could say much. As I lingered behind my party for a moment he surreptitiously took out a manuscript from beneath the extemporised divan, which he said he was anxious to sell me. "Very

ancient, very ancient." I am no expert, but I imagine that I might have said, as Mr. Coxe of the Bodleian did to that modern Chatterton, Constantine Simonides, who presented for his purchase a manuscript in uncial letters, that "I thought they might date from about the middle of the nineteenth century."

As we walked through the encampment, which consisted of some twenty tents arranged in a spheroidal form, we saw the seven lambs which were to be sacrificed at sunset quietly grazing near the scene of their slaughter on the verge of the encampment to the east. They had been separated four days previously, on the "tenth day" of the month (Nisan), and were males "of the first year, "without blemish." Their white fleeces said much for the care which they had been washed. The place of sacrifice consisted of a small square, inclosed on three sides by a low wall. On the fourth and open side was an oblong shallow pit, some four to five feet long, which served as a fire-place to heat the cauldrons of water used in the sacrifice, and afterwards for consuming any remains, according to the Mosaic injunction: "And ye shall let nothing of it remain until morning; and that which remaineth of it until morning ye shall burn with fire" (Exod. xii. 10.) A little to the north-east of this inclosure was a pit nine or ten feet deep, roughly walled round with stones. This pit is the oven where the lambs are to be roasted. A man was kindling the fire as we passed, and near him was a large heap of brushwood ready for fuel. I would here say that the Samaritans keep the Passover, as well as the two other great festivals, on Mount Gerizim, and not in their homes in Shechem below. In doing this they follow the command of Deut. xvi. 16: "Three times in a year shall all thy males appear before the Lord thy God in the place which the Lord shall choose." The Samaritans believe Gerizim to be this place of God's choice. We left the encampment, which was on a plateau a few hundred yards below the summit, and ascended to the Moslem Wely.

I was astonished at the ruins and the size of the beveled stones. These ruins consist of two vast rectangular fortress-like buildings. The chief structure measures 250 feet by 240, and is flanked at each corner by square towers. The second building, which lies north of the one just mentioned, covers an area of 150 feet by 100. For details I must refer the reader to the pages of M. de Saulcy, Dr. Robinson, Mr. Mills and Dr. Thomson.

In the centre of the main inclosure are the foundations of the church erected by the Christians of Nablus in honour of the Virgin, after the Samaritans had been driven from their sanctuary. The fortress which incloses it was doubtless constructed by Justinian for its defence. The Samaritans simply call these ruins el-Kuleh, "the Castle." The view from the Wely commanded one of the finest panoramas which I have seen on the west of the Jordan. As we looked down on the maritime plain, stretching (page 196) from Carmel to the plain of Philistia, far south of Jaffa, and saw the Mediterranean gleaming in the sun, which was fast declining, and then looked to the mountains east of the Jordan, one of the party took out his Bible and read Deut. xi 29,30: "Thou shalt put the blessing upon Mount Gerizim, and the curse upon Mount Ebal. Are they not on the other side Jordan, by the way where the sun goeth down, in the land of the Canaanites, which dwell in the champaign over against Gilgal, beside the plains of Moreh?" If we had been standing on the mountains due east of us, we should have seen the sun go down between the gap or opening of the twin mountains.

We examined with some interest the platform at the base of the western wall, where are the pieces of the rock called by the Samaritans "The ten stones," and beneath which lie,

say they, the twelve stones which the Israelites took out of the Jordan, and which they believe to have been subsequently removed from Gilgal (Josh. iv. 19-24). One is astonished to find an intelligent traveller like Mills writing: "It is not impossible that the Gilgal stones are here, or even the ones written upon by Joshua." No tradition seems to me more certain than that of the Samaritans. On the occasion of a subsequent visit to Gerizim, on my return by Kurn Surtabeh from the east of the Jordan, I visited the bare platform of rock to the south-west of the great inclosure. This bare rock is the Samaritan "Holy of Holies." My guide took off his shoes as we approached it. The Samaritans believe that on this rock the ark rested after the Flood; that there Abraham offered up Isaac; that this is the true Bethel where Jacob had his vision, and that afterwards it was the site of the temple I observed no ruins immediately near the rock, excepting that of a large cistern almost filled up with debris. Dr. Robinson saw traces of former walls, which might, he thinks, be the walls of the ancient temple. This hardly seems likely, when we remember that this temple was in ruins at the time of our Lord, and must have afforded a convenient quarry for the erection of the various buildings to which we have just referred. Josephus tells us that this temple was erected by Sanballat for his son-in-law, Manasseh, the brother of Jaddua the High priest, who had been driven from the altar at Jerusalem on account of his illegal marriage with a foreigner. "Sanballat promised him, not only to preserve to him the honour of his priesthood, but to procure for him the honour and dignity of a High Priest.... He also told him further, that he would build for him a temple like that at Jerusalem, upon Mt. Gerizim, which is the highest of all mountains that are in Samaria" ("Ant., c. xi. viii.2). The supposed site of this temple is to the Samaritans what the Kaaba of Mecca is to the Moslem, and what the temple was to the devout Jew. It is their Kibleh, towards which they always turn in prayer.

As we descended to our tents we received a message from Amram the priest to say how pleased he would be to see us. We found him, though much shorter in stature than Yakub, a fine venerable-looking old man, with a white flowing beard, who impressed us with the simplicity and apparent sincerity of his character. He introduced us to his nephew as his future successor in the priesthood. There were two or three women in the tent, but they remained quietly seated on the divan. Two of them were Amram's wives; the third, I believe, the wife of his nephew. The usual compliments, repeated over and over again after the Eastern fashion, opened the conversation. "Blesses be thy presence." "And yours." "How is your health?" "It is well; and thine?" "Also well; and you are well? etc. I wish that the space of this article allowed me to recall all the interesting conversation that followed. Amram's great trouble seemed the marriage question- the difficulty of getting wives for the men of the community, as they do not intermarry with strangers. F---- told him what the men of Benjamin did at Shiloh under similar circumstances and advised him to think over the plan. The old man seemed much amused at the suggestion. Never shall I forget his answer to the question, "What do you think of Jesus of Nazareth?" He thought for a moment, and then said with great emphasis, "I am sure he was a good man, or else the Jews never would have crucified him."

The mutual aversion of Samaritan and Jew still exists. They trade together, but nothing would induce either the one or the other to eat or drink in each other's presence. As in the time of our Lord, "The Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans." It is an interesting fact, with reference to Amram's remark, that there is the following entry in the Samaritan chronology: "In the year 4281 from Adam, and in the nineteenth year of the priesthood of

Jehoiakim, Jesus, the son of Mary, was crucified in cursed Salem.” Amram told us that there were now only one hundred and thirty-three persons in the Samaritan community. He spoke with no little pathos of the gradual extinction of his people, who have been well designated as “the oldest and the smallest sect in the world.”

We returned to our tents, and sat down to a hurried dinner. As the time was fast approaching for the Passover observances, I would here interpolate that the Passover is the most important festival in the Samaritan calendar, and regulates the times at which the other feasts are held. Like the Jews, the Samaritans have both a civil and an ecclesiastical year. The former commences with the month Tisri, the latter with Nisan, the month in which the Passover is always held. “This month shall be unto you the beginning of months: it shall be the first month of the year to you” (Exod. Xii.2). At the feast of Tabernacles they dwell in booths, as did the Jews. Odd to say, they observe the feast of Purim. I say “odd” because the Samaritans only acknowledge the Pentateuch. Moses, however is substituted for Esther, and his mission to Pharaoh to deliver Israel, for the deliverance of the Jews from the decree of Haman. I would also add that I soon came to the conclusion that the Samaritans have no clear, definite mode of observing their festivals. In several respects the Passover services in 1868 differed from those described by other travelers. Doubtless, year by year, the changes will increase; the rites will be modified; and, to quote the words of Dean Stanley, when writing of the Passover sacrifice on Gerizim, “This is perhaps the last generation which will have the opportunity of witnessing this vestige of the earliest Jewish ritual.” And again, “Perhaps in another century the fire on Mount Gerizim will be the only relic left of this most interesting and ancient rite.”

When we approached the place of sacrifice, the service was about to commence. Two caldrons filled (page 197) with water were on the fire. Near by was a large copper tray covered with small heaps of bitter herbs finely cut. A group of from thirty to forty adults were present. The women and the children remained in their tents. Amram, taking his place, stood on a stone to the south of the inclosure. He wore his ordinary dress. On each side of him were thirteen or fourteen men and youths; as many as the inclosure would well hold. The seven who afterwards took part in the sacrifice were dressed in white. They all put off their shoes as they entered the inclosure, and stood upon carpets. Their white stockings said much for the cleanliness of their housewives. Most of them stood on the west side, so as to face the “Kibleh.” They commenced by chanting, not unharmoniously, a few sentences in unison. They had all books in their hands, except Amram. Then gradually they increased their recitation, not only in speed but in noise, until it became a rapid series of howls. Yakub, who took no part in the service, and seemed ashamed of the whole thing, said they were reciting the account of the Plagues of Egypt. Then came some words the burden of which was “Gerizim, Gerizim.” Yakub, who stood near, said “They were praising the sanctity of Gerizim.” I have discovered that in the Samaritan Recension, after the Ten Commandments, there is an interpolation which refers to the holiness of their mountain sanctuary. This probably was the passage, but I cannot speak with certainty.

The reader must not imagine that the service had any semblance of a religious character, or seemed in any way the expression of a religious feeling. The howling and gesticulation increased as the service proceeded, until the performers had worked themselves up to a state of great excitement. One or two of the younger men seemed in a

state of hysteria. At one time they all shouted at each other, then simultaneously they held out their palms, clasped their hands, Amram's nephew acting as a sort of master of the ceremonies, and dropped on his knees, resting their bodies on their heels, after the eastern fashion, in prayer; they then prostrated themselves. I was feeling that I had had quite enough, when Yakub's patience became exhausted; he called out to them to stop; still the performance went on, until at last he angrily stepped into the inclosure and dangled his watch before the face of Amram, after the fashion of Frederick of Prussia, who expected his army to stop praying at the roll of the drum. The effect of this proceeding was painfully ludicrous; to quote my brother's letter, written on the following morning: "They literally howled and prayed with their heads, books, and hands of Yakub." I do not forget a service in the synagogue of the Chasidim at Jerusalem, when the so-called worshippers shouted out in every possible key the words of the Psalter, clapped their hands, swayed their bodies, like the pendulums of so many clocks in a watchmaker's shop, in a supposed accordance with the words, "All my bones shall say, Lord, who is like unto Thee?" (Psa. Xxxv. 10)., and where a good dose of brandy was found conducive to the fervour of their exercises. I do not forget this, when I say that next to the performance of the Howling Dervishes at Cairo, this part of the Samaritan service was the greatest burlesque and parody on religion which I ever witnessed, or ever expect to witness again.

The sun was now setting (Deut. Xvi.6.). At a word from Yakub the seven youths fetched the lambs to the trench. The men within the inclosure commenced a rapid though less boisterous recitation of Exod. Xii. The lambs were thrown on their backs, two knives were produced, and at the moment Amram commenced the words, "And the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel shall kill it in the evening," I saw a knife rapidly drawn across the throat of a lamb. I turned my head to avoid the site; an instant afterwards I heard a cry, and then a general hubbub. I turned round to seek an explanation of the excitement, and found that one of the young men in cutting the throat of a lamb had inadvertently cut his finger; his blood had mingled with the blood of the sacrifice. The lamb was seized, as if the poor carcase had been guilty of the pollution, and was cast outside with gestures of disgust. As I looked on the six bodies before me, whose limbs were still quivering with life, I was deeply impressed with the force of the picture, and relished as I never did before how vividly the type must have suggested to the thoughtful Israelite the idea of innocence suffering for guilt, and how the "dumb" creature must have foreshadowed to his mind the expiation of sin through the sacrifice of the Lamb of God. The young men, dipping their fingers into the warm blood, marked the foreheads and noses of several boys. One of them went to the tents to give a similar mark to two or three women and children. This sprinkling with blood was by no means general. The men then joyfully saluted each other, kissing one another, after the Oriental fashion, on each side of the head, as if to express congratulation after an escape from an impending danger.

Hot water was now brought from the caldrons and poured over the lambs, whilst many hands speedily plucked off every particle of wool. The bodies were then skillfully opened, the operators evidently remembering the injunction, "neither shall ye break a bone thereof" (Exod. Xii. 46). The entrails were removed, and then one of the men carefully cut off the right shoulder and the hamstrings of each lamb. One of these was laid on one side for Amram, as in the case of a peace-offering, when the heave-shoulder was reserved for the priest. The other five shoulders, together with the fleece, which had been carefully collected, the entrails, and the lamb which was no longer "without

blemish," were, after the removal of the caldrons, consumed in the fire, as if for a burnt-offering. The carcasses of the lambs were then spitted on long poles. I was not aware at the time that the Mishna enjoined that these poles should be of pomegranate, as not exuding sap, which would otherwise mingle with the substance of the lamb, and also of wood, and not of iron, that the bodies might be roasted entirely by fire and not by the hot metal. The lambs were not to be boiled, for the same reason, viz., lest particles foreign to the bodies might become part of the substance. "Eat not of it raw, nor sodden at all with water, but roast with fire" (Exod. Xii.9). The six poles had a transverse bar, about two feet from the end, upon which each carcass rested. This short bar suggested to the mind of the early Christian Apologists the idea of the Saviour's (page 198) cross. It is an interesting fact that Justin Martyr, who was a native of Shechem, then called Neapolis (hence the present name Nablus), and who wrote in the second century, must have witnessed the Passover sacrifice on Mount Gerizim, when he says, "The Paschal lamb that is to be roasted is roasted in a form like to that of the cross. For one spit is thrust through the animal from head to tail, and another through its breast, to which its forefeet are attached." The transverse bar is placed not across the breast, but beneath the body, to prevent it from slipping down into the bottom of the oven, and so being consumed with fire instead of being roasted.

Six young men now carried the uplifted lambs like banners to the mouth of the oven. In no part of the ceremony was the effect so striking as at this moment. The moon was obscured, so that when armfuls of brushwood were thrown into the pit, as the flames leaped up, they lit up the pale eager faces of the men gathered round its mouth, the white robes of the youths, and the bodies of the lambs. The fortress-like buildings above us loomed in the darkness, whilst the white Samaritan tents stood out spectrally on the dark background beyond. I never expect again to see so weird-like a tableau. Yakub, for the first time, took part in the sentences which were now chanted. The lambs were cast into the pit, the hurdle was placed over its mouth; the ends of the six poles protruding through the trellis-work, to prevent the bodies of the lambs from coming into contact with the sides of the oven. The hurdle was then carefully covered with moistened earth, so that not a particle of heat or smoke could escape.

As the night was bitterly cold and it was now ten o'clock, we retired to our tents. We had just finished our short evening service, not forgetting, I trust, the words of our blessed Lord, repeated by Jacob's well in the plain beneath to the woman of Samaria—words rendered all the more striking by the circumstances of the scene which we had just witnessed: "The hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship Him. God is a Spirit: and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth" (John iv. 23, 24)—when Amram and Yakub both appeared. They had come to return our afternoon visits. As a matter of hospitality we offered them coffee, but they refused to take refreshment before midnight. Our half-hour's chat was full of interest. I was much amused by Amram's feeling towards Yakub. Church and state were evidently not in harmony.

F_____ said to the old priest, after one of Yakub's speeches, by way of conciliation, "Yakub is a wise man, but not a priest." Said old Amram, "He is neither a wise man nor a priest, but a rich man." The last clause meant much. The Samaritans owe all their religious liberty, such as it is, amid the fanatical Moslems of Nablus, to British interference. The efforts of Lords Clarendon and Stratford de Redcliffe with the Turkish

authorities were spoken of with gratitude. Then came up the question of the Samaritan Pentateuch.

“Did the Prince of Wales,” said one of the party, “see your most ancient Pentateuch?”

Yakub replied, “You think the Price of Wales saw it-I don’t. What do you think?”

Amram, however, acknowledged that he did.

They told us, of course, the old story of its great antiquity- that it was written by Abishua, the son of Phinehas. They gave us the well-known inscription: “I, Abishua, son of Phinehas, son of Eleasar, son of Aaron the priest, to them be honour from Jehovah, and His will, wrote this Holy Book in the land of Canaan, with its boundaries, praise Jehovah.” This inscription has, however, never been discovered, and if it were would be of no authentic value. Mr. George Grove, who in 1861 (the year before the visit of the Prince of Wales) carefully examined the silver-gilt cylinder in which it is enrolled, has given an accurate description of it in his “vacation Tourists.” He showed his rubbings to the authorities of south Kensington Museum, and they pronounced it Venetian work of the fourteenth or fifteenth century.* The roll itself may, of course, be much older. In 1872 I saw all three rolls. When we were not satisfied with the first two, with a show of reserve, which was simply a bid for a higher “bakhshish,” Yakub, Amram’s nephew, brought out the Samaritan Codex, which by this time has been seen by so many and has been so often described. I cannot forbear to mention, although I am only casually alluding to the Samaritan Pentateuch, that Josephus has a very interesting passage which indirectly proves that the Samaritans had a copy of the Pentateuch separate from the Jews in the time of Ptolemy and Cleopatra: “Now it came to pass that the Alexandrine Jews and those Samaritans who paid their worship to the temple that was built in the days of Alexander at Mount Gerizim, did now make a sedition the one against the other, and disputed about their temples before Ptolemy himself.” The dispute was referred by mutual consent to the law. The Samaritans must evidently have depended for their verdict on Deut. Xxvii. 4, where Gerizim is in their version substituted for Ebal.

After the departure of our guests, we tried to get a few snatched of sleep. I had just reached a happy state of oblivion when Yakub, according to promise, appeared to say that it was now midnight, and that we must at once go to the place of sacrifice if we wished to see the rest of the service. We soon joined the group round the oven. In a moment after our arrival the hurdle was removed; there was a sudden outburst of smoke and steam. I pressed forward to see the carcasses raised, when I was pushed out of the circle. Again, when the scorched bodies of the lambs were laid on mats near the trench, only thinking of Yakub’s oft-repeated words, “You must see everything,” I eagerly pushed among the crowd. This time two men simply jostled me outside the circle, and it was only then that I remembered the words, “A foreigner and an hired servant shall not eat thereof;” and again, “No uncircumcised person shall eat thereof” (Exodus xii. 45, 48). A young man handed round the tray with unleavened bread and the bitter herbs, whilst two or three men joined Amram in the inclosure in the recitation of sentences from Exodus xii.: “And they shall eat the flesh in that night, roast with fire, and unleavened bread; and with bitter herbs they shall eat it” (ver. 8). In the meantime the half-dozen (page 199) youths, who had so officiated resting upon their haunches, tore off the flesh by handfuls, whilst others handed them round. By this time the whole community were present with the exception of one or two women, who from ceremonial reasons remained in their tents, and morsels of meat were carried to them. Most of the men stood with staves in their hands; several of

them had robes round their waists by way of girdles; all had shoes on their feet. "And thus shall ye eat it; with your lions girded, your shoes on your feet, and your staff in your hand" (ver. 11). They certainly obeyed the next injunction, "Ye shall seat it in haste." But I imagine that the long fast, and their ravenous state of hunger, had very much to do with the fulfillment of this part of the command.

I was by this time so thoroughly cold that I was obliged to return to my tent. The last glimpse which I had of the ceremony was to see the venerable form of Amram, as he stood upon the stone which had acted as his prayer-desk, with his head bowed, leaning like Jacob upon the top of his staff, and engaged, I believe, in silent prayer. In a very few moments the whole of the lambs were consumed, fresh fuel was thrown on the fire and candles were lit, whilst diligent search was made for any remnant of the sacrifice. Any such remains, together with the bones, were thrown upon the fire.

The next morning early I visited the scene of the previous night's performances and found nothing in the fire-place but heaps of white dust and a few small calcined bones. I was struck to see several women in the inclosure engaged in prayer. During the previous week we had spent a morning in visiting the synagogues at Jerusalem. Observing that I had seen no women either enter or depart, I said to an old rabbi, though a friend, "I am surprised to see no women in your synagogues." The answer was, "What does a woman want at a synagogue?" I said, "Women have souls to be saved as well as men." The reply was this: "If a woman knows how to make good Passover cake, I think this is about all the religion she wants." The Samaritan women in this respect seemed of a better mind, however superstitiously they attached all the merit of their prayers to the sacredness of Gerizim. Our friends were in no hurry to descend into Shechem. They had spent the previous fortnight on Gerizim, and Yakub said, "they would leave the mountain during the day." They seemed in this case not to observe the injunction, "Thou shall turn in the morning, and go unto thy tents" (Deut. xvi. 7).

If space allowed, I should like to tell you of the work going on in connection with the Church Missionary Society; of souls won from the dark corruption of eastern Christianity to the simple faith of the gospel, and even of fanatical Moslems silently influenced by Christian truth; to ask you to visit the excellent schools, examine the children, and listen to their songs of praise, whilst the good schoolmaster's face beams as we express our gratification and surprise. But I must forbear; and whilst waving adieu to Yakub esh Shellabi, and thanking him heartily for his hospitable entertainment, I must also wish you 'farewell.'

(One paragraph remains but of no interest here)

*A correct drawing is given in "Those Holy Fields," by the Rev. Dr. s. Manning, published by the Religious tract society, with interpretation of the symbols on the cylinder.

This article is not the opinion of the Samaritans and has been displayed for educational reasons only of a Christian's opinion in the year shown.