Picturesque Palestine, Sinai, and Egypt,

By **Sir Charles William Wilson**

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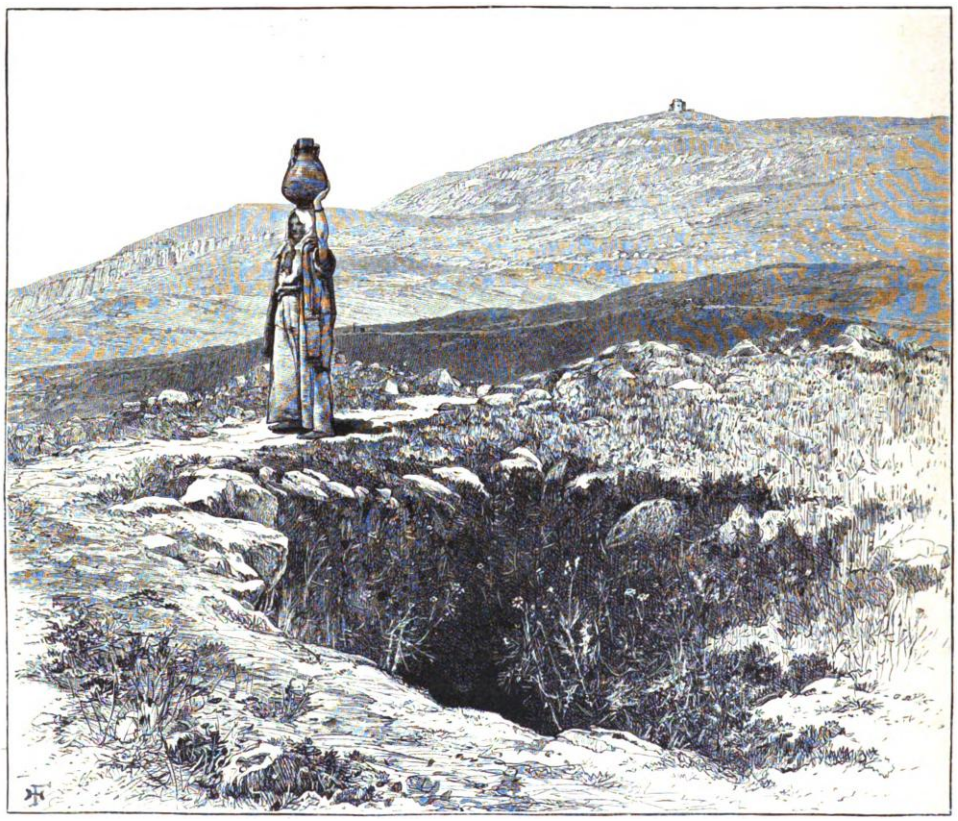
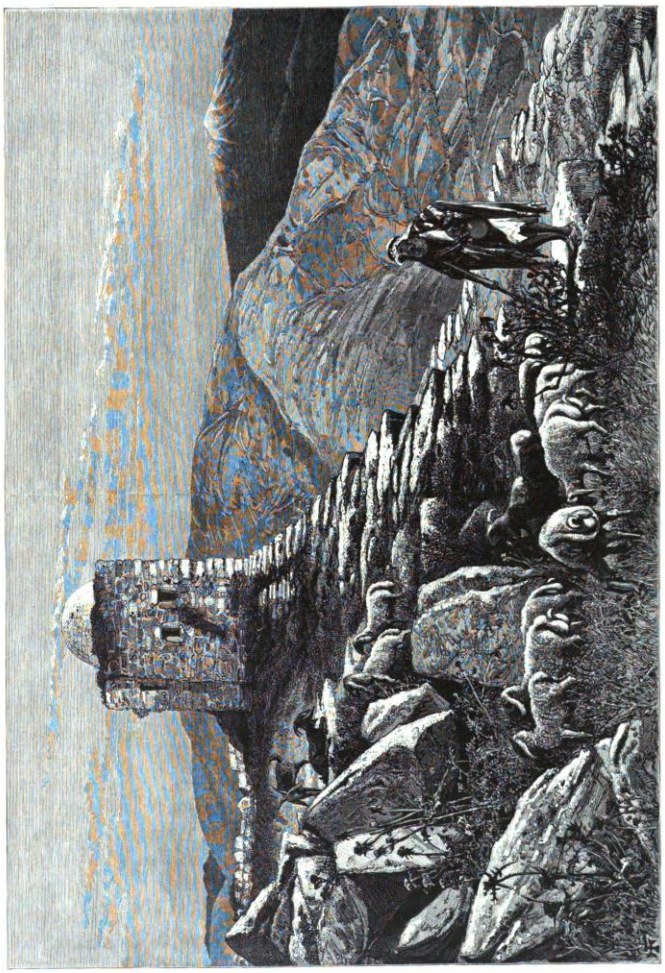
(pg. 230)



JACOB'S WELL AT THE FOOT OF MOUNT GERIZIM
The true mouth of the well is in the floor of a little vaulted chamber below the surface of the ground.

(pg. 232) Pere Lievin, the able author of the Catholic guide-book for pilgrims, seems to have been the first to discover that Khan Sawieh stands close to the ruins of an ancient village called Berkit, a discovery which has since been verified in a satisfactory manner. Now Josephus tells us that Anuath, or Borceos, was the boundary town between Samaria and Judaea; and the distance noticed in the Onomasticon (or Topographical Dictionary of Eusebius and Jerome) between Anuath and Nablus brings us on the map to the neighbourhood of Khan Sawieh. East of the road, at some little distance, is a ruin called 'Aina, and this with Berkit represent probably Anuath and Borceos, thus fixing the boundary at this point. When, in addition, we remember the sites of Keruthim, Beth Laban, and Beth Rima, already noticed, and know that Antipatris was also a border town, we are able to identify the boundary between Judaea and Samaria with the great valley already noticed, generally called Wady Deir Ballut. Acrabbi, again, is noticed by Josephus as on this border, and is represented by the modern village 'Akrabeh,

immediately east of which the valley first sinks from the watershed. At Khan Sawieh, therefore, we stand at the boundary of Judaea, and as we pass the stony valley **(pg. 233)**



RUINS OF THE SUMMIT OF MOUNT GERIZIM, ON THE SITE OF THE SAMARITAN TEMPLE.
In the distance, on the right, the snow covered peaks of Mount Hermon are visible.

(pg. 234) immediately north of it, we cross into the region of Samaria and become concerned with Samaritan traditions and topography.

The fine oak-tree near the spring of Khan Sawieh is one of the few large trees of Southern Palestine, the number of which can almost be counted on the fingers. Three species of oak exist in Syria, of which the evergreen oak attains the largest size, and is called *ballut* in Arabic. The second species, called *sindian* and *afs*, forms a brushwood of prickly shrubs eight to twelve feet in height; and the third, the gall oak, grows as a small tree twenty feet high, called generally *mallul*, but sometimes *sindian*. The large single oaks, like Abraham's oak at Hebron, are rare, but the gall oak is very common in parts of Galilee, growing in thick woods and open glades west of Nazareth, on Tabor, near the sources of Jordan, and in the northern part of the plain of Sharon. The second species flourishes in the copses which cover the hard limestone of the spurs west of the watershed, but never occurs in the soft chalky districts, which are bare of brushwood.

From the oak tree of Khan Sawieh we now march outward into Samaria, and gain the crest of a ridge whence Gerizim and the Mukhnah plain are distinctly visible. We enter upon a region of sacred tombs, and find the old heroes of the Hebrew invasion lying buried round the Mount of Blessing. Were these sites only venerated by the Samaritans, we might feel doubtful of their authentic character, but Jew and Christian agree in pointing to the same sites for the tombs of Joshua, Caleb, and Nun, Phinehas, Eleazar, and Ithamar, and that of Joseph rather farther north. The modern Samaritans identify Timnath

Heres, where Joshua was buried, with the village Kefr Haris, on the hills south of Gerizim, where are three square domed buildings, sacred respectively to Neby Lush'a, Neby Nun, and Neby Kifl (an historic character of the age of the Prophet). In the fourth century St. Jerome apparently speaks of this same place in describing the route of Sta. Paula, in connection with the other sacred tombs lying in this district, and as being still venerated. “Much she wondered,” he writes, “that the divider of the possessions should have chosen for himself a lot so rugged and mountainous." A remark which applies well to the rough mountains round Kefr Haris. In the fourteenth century Marino Sanuto makes Kefr Haris and the tomb of Joshua in correct position on his map, but the Jewish descriptions of the place are still more important.' Rabbi Jacob, of Paris, in 1258, notices the three tombs of Joshua, Caleb, and Nun at Kefr Haris. Estori Parchi gives the distance from Shechem as two leagues. Rabbi Gerson, of Scarmela, in 1561, speaks of the monuments over the tombs, and of the caruba and pomegranate trees growing beside them. And finally, in 1564, Rabbi Uri, of Biel, gives a sketch showing three domed buildings with two trees, and lights burning inside the domes. As regards these sepulchres, we have thus an accord between four distinct lines of tradition, and the existence of the name of Mount Heres in the modern form of Haris.

The plain called El Mukhnah, which we now approach, is a plateau larger than any previously crossed, though smaller than the watershed plains north of Shechem (see page 237). It measures about nine miles north and south, by four miles east and west, and consists of **(pg. 235)** corn-land, with small olive groves covering the low rocky swells which rise from the plain and form sites for the villages. The present name Mukhnah is taken from the ruin of the old Samaritan town so called on the slope of Gerizim, and means “the camp." The Samaritans call it Merj-el-Baha, “the Flat Meadow," and identify it with the plain of Moreh, mentioned in the Bible as near Shechem. In the middle of the plain stands the village of ’Awertah, on rising ground among the olives, and well supplied with water. Here in the village itself is the ancient monument called by the Samaritans the tomb of Phinehas; and on the west, shaded by a magnificent terebinth growing in the paved courtyard, is the domed tomb-house of Eleazar, with a Samaritan inscription of the last century. Ithamar is also said to be buried with Abishua not far off. The village mosque is, however, consecrated to a Moslem sheikh. There seems little doubt that 'Awertah represents Gibeah Phinehas in Mount Ephraim, where Eleazar, the son of Aaron, and his family were buried. The Samaritans called the place Kefr Awerah and Abeartha, and the medieval Jewish travellers all notice the tombs of Eleazar, Phinehas, and Ithamar, the latter as lying among the olives below the village. Rabbi Gerson also describes a vaulted chamber, as yet unknown to modern travellers, where the seventy-elders were entombed. Following the path worn in the white chalk along the feet of Gerizim, we pass by the spring of Sarina, to which a Samaritan legend similar to the story of Susanna attaches, and descend to the Vale of Shechem, west of the little village of Balata, with its fig garden and clear spring.

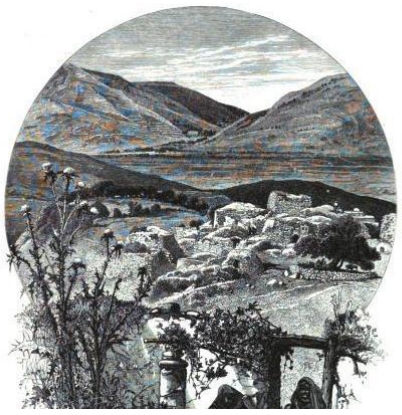
Balata is one of the cities the importance of which is little recognised. Jerome identifies it with the oak of Shechem, which was by the Holy Place of Jehovah; and the Samaritans give to the spot the names Ailon-Tubah and *Shejr el Kheir*, “Holy Oak,” or “Tree of Grace." This sacred tree appears more than once in the Old Testament history; first, perhaps, as the oak of Moreh beside the makom, or “place,” of Shechem, where Abraham built his first altar; and again as the oak where Jacob hid the teraphim; apparently the same tree which was by the Sanctuary of the Lord, or altar El-Elohe-Israel, erected by Jacob on the parcel of ground which he bought from the children of Hamor. By this oak Joshua erected a great stone, which is noticed later as “the monument" by the oak of Shechem; and the Oak of the Meonenim, or soothsayers, near Shechem, is not improbably the same place. The tradition which fixes the site of this sanctuary farther west, at the little “Mosque of the Pillar,” appears to be more modern, and, with several other sites round Shechem and on Ebal, seems to belong to the Crusading topography which connected Ebal and Gerizim with the Dan and Bethel of Jeroboam’s calf-worship.

This ancient sanctuary, the site of the first oak-tree beneath which the father of the Hebrews spread his tent in the promised land, and of the first “place,” or makom, where he erected an altar, is naturally to be sought in the immediate vicinity of the well dug by his grandson Jacob; and the undisputed site of that well is to be found immediately east of Balata. Not only is the Bir Y'akub the only well anywhere in the neighbourhood, but its existence so close to beautiful springs of water gushing out at the feet of Gerizim could scarcely be **(pg. 236)** accounted for were it not for the jealousy with which—as we learn from the Book of Genesis-— the old Canaanites preserved their rights to the springs. For his own use, on his own land, the patriarch dug the well, leaving the fountains in possession of the native inhabitants. As we

approach the spot we see a dusty patch of ground within a broken down stone wall. Scattered stones and mounds of rubbish cover the plot, and the shafts of three granite columns stand up in the middle, their bases buried underground. At length we find a hole, in the roof of a little modern vault about twenty feet long east and west, with a pointed arch. The floor is piled with the *débris* of the roof, and the well-mouth is choked, but the well itself, seventy-five feet deep, and seven feet six inches in diameter, is quite clear (see page 230).

The ruins which surround the well are those of an ancient church. In another small vault to the north-west, now closed, the tesselated pavement may still be seen, and the bases of the pillars already noticed. In 383 A.D. Sta. Paula visited the church; in 700 A.D. Arculphus gives a rude plan of it as cruciform. It was standing in the eighth century, and was rebuilt in the twelfth; for Theodorus, in 1172, speaks of the well as enclosed in the church—just as Sta. Paula found it—before the high altar. Even as late as 1550 an altar stood in the vault, and the site still belongs to the Greek church. Looking northward from the well, we see the dome of the little mosque by Joseph's Tomb a site mentioned from the earliest time by travellers, Jewish, Samaritan, or Christian, and venerated by all sects alike the companion of Jacob's Well, and probably as genuine a site, being authorised by that rare consent of various traditions which is found especially in respect to places near Shechem. The tomb stands in a little courtyard adjoining the ruined kubbeh, and is surrounded by plastered walls, renewed—as an inscription in English, on the south wall, tells us—by Consul Rogers, the friend of the Samaritans, in 1868. At either end of the rude cenotaph is a pillar on which lamps may be placed; and the monument must be older than, from its rude construction, would be supposed, for in 1564 Rabbi Vri, of Biel, gives a sketch of Joseph's Tomb which would correctly represent the present structure with its pillars. Jew, Samaritan, Moslem, and Christian venerate the site alike, although Josephus says that the bones of Joseph were carried to Hebron, and Saewulf notices, in -1100 A.D., the same supposed tomb, which is still shown attached to the outer wall of the Hebron haram (see page 231).

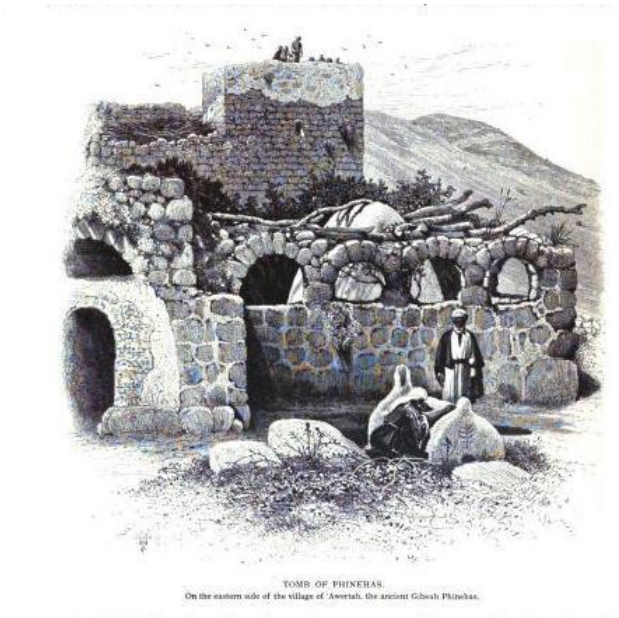
On the side of Ebal, above Joseph's Tomb, is the rude hamlet of 'Askar, with its rock-cut channel leading to the spring and its ancient sepulchres. The old Samaritan name for the place is Ischar, almost identical in sound with the Sychar which is mentioned in our version of the fourth Gospel. Jerome and other authorities, indeed, support the reading which substitutes Shechem for Sychar, and Dr. Robinson has proposed the theory that Sychar means “drunken,” and was a Jewish nickname for the Samaritan capital. The spelling of the old Samaritan name shows, however, that the derivation was from another root, meaning “to surround;" and Shechem is too far from Jacob’s Well to fit the narrative of Christ’s conversation with the Samaritan woman. Nor is the expression, “Sychar, a city of Samaria," likely to have been used by a Jewish author with reference to the famous Shechem which **(pg. 237)** is mentioned by name in the Book of Acts. Sychar was well known to the early pilgrams as being near Jacob’s Well, and about a mile from Shechem; but the Crusaders confused the two sites, much as modern authors have done when unaware of the existence of ‘Askar.



THE VILLAGE OF SALIM.

Opposite the eastern entrance to the Vale of Shechem, which is seen beyond the broad plain of Mukhnah. It probably represents the Salem near to which John baptized his disciples.

Here, then, at the mouth of Jacob's Well, we stand on one of the few spots where we can feel any certainty that the feet of Christ must actually have trod. We look round on the same scene which greeted his eyes: we behold the same monuments venerated in his days. The **(pg. 238)** grey olive groves hide Shechem from our sight; the rough rocky side of Gerizim rises to the ruins of that temple where the Samaritan still worships (see page 233). The tawny slopes and precipices of Ebal, the mountain of the curse, where, according to the quaint legends of the Middle Ages, Cain raised his altar and Jeroboam set up his golden calf, appear to the north. On the white chalk stands the humble hamlet of Sychar, beneath it the rude but ancient Tomb of Joseph; while to the east the eye ranges to Salim near Ænon



TOMB OF PHINEHAS.
On the eastern side of the village of 'Aertah, the ancient Gibeah Phinehas.

(see page 237) and to the wooded hill of Phinehas, where the great priests of the time of the conquest sleep in hallowed shrines. Long may the venerable well repose in its ruins, set in scenery as venerable in its associations, unspoiled by the jarring inconsistency of Frankish restorations, and hallowed by the memory of the Master who rested once upon its brink!

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(p. 239) SAMARIA AND PLAIN OF ESDRAELON.

There are few places even in Palestine in which, within so narrow a compass, so many interesting associations are centred, or where the history of the past is so vividly illustrated, as in the narrow Vale of Shechem, which is formed by the near approach of the two terraced mountain ridges of Ebal and Gerizim; and certainly there is no spot throughout the Holy Land which can rival it in beauty.
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All travellers, ancient and modern, speak in glowing terms of the peculiar loveliness of this valley, and many are the improvised songs which are sung in its praise, in the present day, in the pleasant gardens of Nablus, by the "Moslem successors of the Shechemites, who proudly quote? their prophet Mohammed himself as an authority for saying that “it is the place beloved by Allah above all other places," and “ His blessing rests upon it continually." **(pg. 240)**

And Shechem must have been regarded as a specially favoured and hallowed spot in patriarchal times. It was the first halting-place of Abraham after he had passed over the Jordan and entered the land of Canaan, and the first altar erected to Jehovah in the Promised Land was that which Abraham then built at the “place” of Shechem among the oak-trees of Moreh, where it is said “the Lord appeared unto him " (Gen. xii. 6, 7).

To this neighbourhood, and probably to the same camping ground, Jacob in after years was attracted. “And Jacob came to Shalem, a city of Shechem” (Gen. xxxiii. 18). About three miles to the east of Shechem there is a little village called Salim. It is plentifully supplied with “living water" from two sources, one of which is called ’Ain Kebir, the Great Fountain. Probably Salim is the modern representative of the city near to which John the Baptist found a convenient place for baptizing his disciples, “because there was much water there" (John iii. 23). This village, Salim, represented on page 237, has also been pointed out as Shalem, the “city of Shechem " to which “Jacob came; " although the highest authorities among Hebrew scholars and annotators of the Bible agree that Shalem does not in this passage indicate the name of a place, but simply means “safe," like the Arabic word Salim, and the verse should be read thus: “And Jacob came safe to the city of Shechem and pitched his tent before the city. And he bought a parcel of a field, where he had spread his tent, at the hand of Hamor the Hivite, prince of the country, for a hundred pieces of money." Here he dwelt with Leah and Rachel, and their handmaidens and men-servants and women-servants; his wealth, like that of a Bedouin chieftain of the present day, consisting of “flocks and herds and camels."

That the “parcel of ground" acquired by Jacob was situated at the eastern entrance to the Valley of Shechem (see page 237), where it widens and meets the Plain of Mukhnah, there seems to be very little doubt, for here, at the foot of Mount Gerizim, we find the deep and unquestionably ancient well which bears his name (see page 230), and a quarter of a mile to the north of it, exactly opposite Nablus, the ancient Shechem, stands the traditional tomb of Joseph, Israel’s beloved son. The illustration on page 231 does not show the interior of the irregularly shaped little court which encloses the tomb, so a few words must be added in description of it. From the entrance, in the north wall, a narrow, irregular, and rudely paved path leads to a Moslem prayer niche in the south wall. In the southwest corner, at about five feet from the ground, there is a splay in which is formed a round headed niche, in the direction of the site of the Samaritan temple on Mount Gerizim, the Kibleh of the Samaritans. On the east side of the path there is a raised dais about seven inches high, for the use of devotees who come to rest, or read, or pray. Opposite to it on the west side of the path the tomb itself appears on a raised base. It is a clumsy-looking simple structure of stone and plaster, about three feet high and seven feet long, and as it is not parallel with the west wall, near to which it stands, the effect is very peculiar. The top terminates in a blunt-pointed ridge. At the head and the foot a rudely formed pillar of plastered stone is set up, about the same height as the tomb. These pillars are seven- **(pg. 241)** teen or eighteen inches in diameter, and resemble rude altars, their summits being slightly hollowed. In the shallow basins thus formed I have seen traces of fire, as if votive offerings had recently been burnt there. It is said that small objects, such as kerchiefs of embroidered muslin or silk shawls and other trifles, are occasionally sacrificed at this tomb by Jews. The burial of Joseph in Shechem is recorded in Joshua xxiv. 32, and the next verse states that “Eleazar the son of Aaron died; and they buried him in a hill that pertained to Phinehas his son, which was given him in Mount Ephraim."

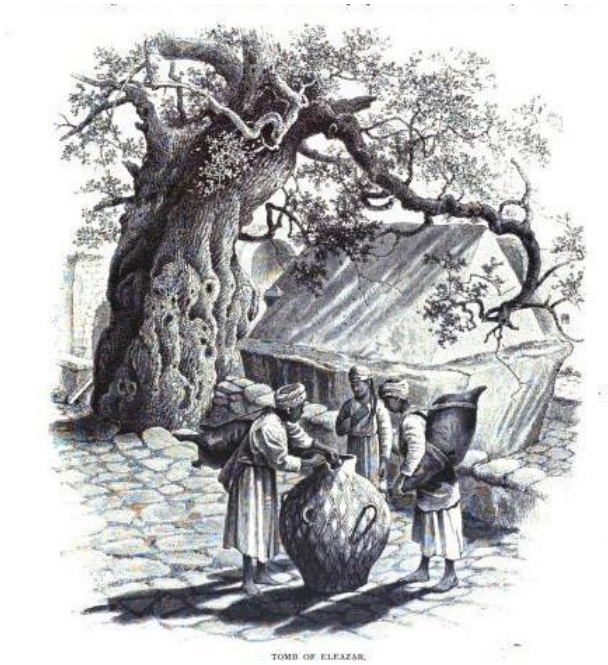
About three miles and a half due south of Joseph’s Tomb stands the picturesque and flourishing little village of ’Awertah, surrounded by extensive olive-groves and fig-orchards. Numerous rock-cut tombs, cisterns, and wine-presses, unused for centuries, prove ’Awertah to be a very ancient place. It is regarded with great veneration by Moslems, Jews, and Samaritans, for here, according to the Samaritan chronicle, are “the tombs of the holy priests Eleazar and Phinehas." ’Awertah was inhabited by the Samaritans until the seventh century of our era. It is now occupied exclusively by Moslems. They, however, not only guard the sacred tombs reverently and keep them in good repair, but willingly and with

evident pride point them out to passing travellers. The traditional tomb of Phinehas (Kubr el ’Azeirat) is a rude structure of stone and plaster, about fourteen feet in length and seven and a half in breadth, with a high gabled top (see page 238). The tomb of Eleazar (El ’Azeir) is on a mound on the west side of the village, in a large paved court, in a corner of which there is a mosque dedicated to a Moslem sheikh. This tomb is eighteen feet three inches in length and fifteen feet and a half in breadth. A low stone wall immediately surrounds it, and a grand old terebinth-tree overshadows it. A large jar of coarse pottery is generally kept here, filled with water for the use of pilgrims (see page 242).

In nearly every mukam, or shrine, held sacred by the Moslem, this welcome refreshment is provided either by endowment or by the dwellers in the neighbourhood, as a means of propitiating the goodwill of the saint or prophet to whom it is dedicated. On entering one of these sacred enclosures it is customary to say “Destur ya Sheikh!" or “Destur ya Neby! " —that is, “Permission, O Sheikh!" or, “Permission, O Prophet!" as the case may be.

Every village in Palestine has its sacred “place; " sometimes marked only by a heap of stones or by a venerable tree on which votive offerings are suspended, but more generally by a whitewashed structure of plaster and stone, surmounted by a dome (kubbeh), built over the grave of a famous chieftain or a revered “wely," that is, a Moslem saint-—in which case the building itself is familiarly called a “wely." Similar structures are erected on spots connected with traditions relating to heroes and prophets and saints of old, including Pagans, Hebrews, Samaritans, and Christians. A building of this kind is called in Arabic a “mukam;" that is, a station, literally a "place," like the corresponding Hebrew word “makom."

Local traditions thus preserved, have in many instances assisted explorers in the recovery of Biblical sites. The entrance to these sacred enclosures is rarely provided with a door, and yet peasants often deposit their ploughs and other implements and tools within a mukam, or **(pg. 242)** wely, or even outside it, close to the walls, and leave them with perfect confidence under the protection of the invisible guardian of the place, after perhaps lighting a little lamp to propitiate his or her goodwill. These localised saints and prophets are feared as fully as they are trusted, for it is very generally believed that they have



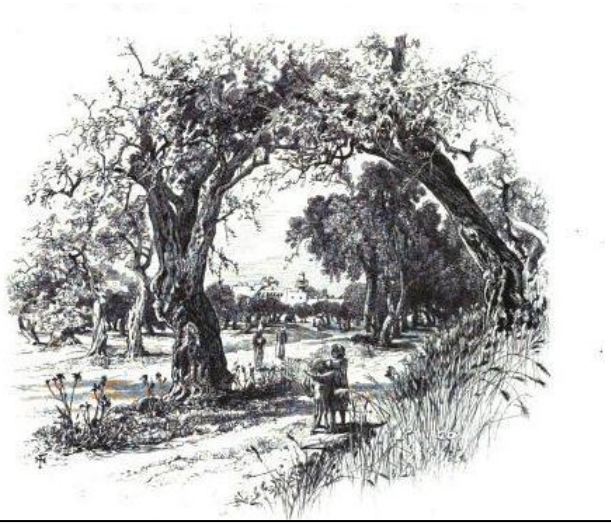
TOMB OF ELEAZAR.

Under an ancient terebinth-tree, on an eminence to the west of the village of 'Awertah (Gibeah Phinehas). Water-carriers filling a water-jar for the use of visitors to the shrine.

power to punish as well as to protect, consequently a promise made by a peasant 1n the name of the enshrined guardian or patron-saint of his village is a surer guarantee than any other. There are many

such sanctuaries in **(pg. 243)** the Vale of Shechem, to which we will now return, pausing for a few moments on our way by Jacob's Well.

When Maundrell visited this well in March, 1697, it must already have been partly choked by the débris of fallen buildings, but he states that it was then one hundred and five feet in depth, and had fifteen feet of water in it. Dr. Robinson states that Messrs. Hebard and Homes, in May, 1838, found the well dry, but their measurement of its depth corresponded exactly with that of Maundrell, namely, one hundred and



THE APPROACH TO NABLUS, THE ANCIENT SHECHEM
Through the olive groves on the eastern side of the city; the gate is shown beneath the minaret.

five feet. In April, 1839, the Rev. S. Calhoun found ten or twelve feet of water in the well. In April, 1843, Dr. John Wilson induced Jacob esh Shellaby, then a boy of fourteen years of age, to go down to the bottom of the well to search for a Bible, which had been accidentally dropped into it three years previously by the Rev. Andrew Bonar of Callace, who states that in the act of descending into the vault built over the mouth of the well the Bible escaped from his coat-pocket, “and was **(pg. 244)** soon heard plunging into the water far below." Jacob esh Shellaby was let down into the well by means, of ropes supplemented by two long shawls, which formed the turbans of two Samaritans who were present. The well was fortunately dry, and after some searching among the stones (which are constantly being thrown into it by travellers), the Bible was found and conveyed safely to Dr. Wilson, to his very great satisfaction. It was currently believed in Nablus that it was a book of necromancy for the recovery of which so much trouble had been taken. The well was at that time, 1843, found to be “exactly seventy-five feet deep," consequently if the measurements made in 1838 were accurate, débris to the amount of thirty feet had collected in the well in the short space of five years!

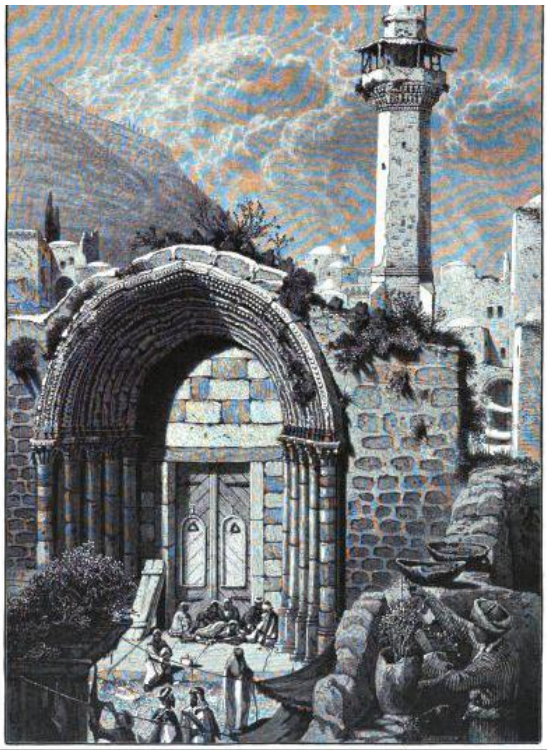
In the month of May, 1866, Captain Anderson, R.E., in order to thoroughly examine the well, caused himself to be lowered into it by means of a knotted rope. He states that the mouth of the well has a narrow opening “just wide enough to allow the body of a man to pass through with arms uplifted; this narrow neck, which is about four feet long, resembling the neck of a bottle, opens out into the well itself, which is cylindrical, and about seven feet six inches in diameter. The mouth and upper part of the well are built of masonry, and the well appears to have been sunk through a mixture of alluvial soil and limestone fragments, till a compact bed of limestone was reached, having horizontal strata which could be easily worked, and the interior of the well presents the appearance of being lined with rough masonry."

The depth was the same as it was in 1843, namely, seventy-five feet, and when Lieutenant Conder measured it in 1877 he found no alteration. Probably this represents not much more than half the original

depth of the well, for it was “undoubtedly sunk for the purpose of securing, even in exceptionally dry seasons, a supply of water, which at great depths would always be filtering through the sides of the well, and would collect at the bottom."

Captain Anderson's descent into the well was rather a perilous one, for he fainted during the process of lowering. As the rope had fortunately been securely and skilfully lashed round his waist, and his feet rested in a loop, he reached the bottom safely though unconsciously. Suddenly he heard the people shouting to him from above, and when he began to move he found himself lying on his back at the bottom of the well, from whence “the opening at the mouth looked like a star." Fortunately his ascent was accomplished in safety.

From Jacob’s Well the road, evidently an ancient one, takes a north-westerly direction, skirting the base of Gerizim. On the right is the ancient pasture-land of Jacob and his descendants, now well cultivated, and yielding abundant harvests of wheat and barley, and a good supply of beans, lentils, sesamum, cotton, and tobacco, and a wealth of wild flowers on every uncultivated patch of ground, especially mallows and anemones of many colours and ranunculi (see page 230). A spur of Gerizim runs northward as if to meet a corresponding but less developed spur advancing southward from Ebal, the twin mountain opposite; the point of their nearest approach is the true entrance to the Valley of Shechem. As we follow the path, which takes a westerly direction round the northern extremity of Gerizim, the whole length of the valley comes suddenly into sight, with its terraced hillsides, its running streams, **(pg. 245)**



ENTRANCE TO THE GREAT MOSQUE (JAMIA EL KEBIR), NABLUS.
AT THE EAST END OF THE CITY: IT WAS ORGINALLY A CHURCH DEDICATED TO St. John.

(pg. 246) and olive-groves and orchards, above which the mosques and minarets and white house-tops of Nablus appear, rather more than half a mile distant.

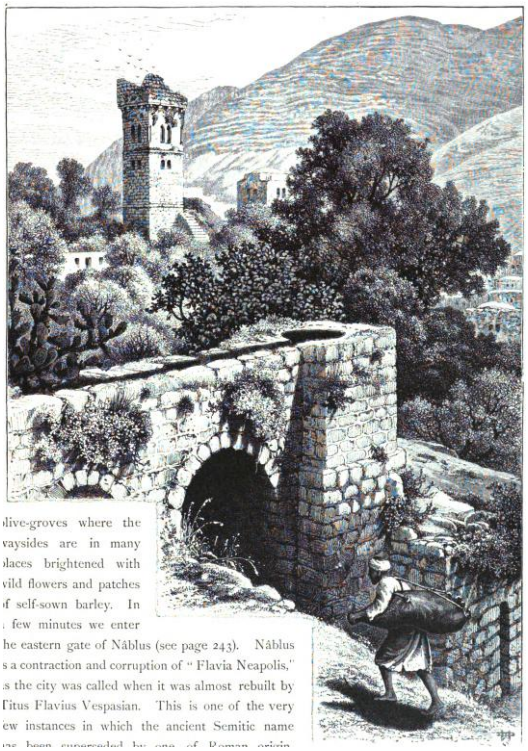
We pass the spring of Defneh (Daphne) and then the new barracks, to build which many of the stones of the ruins around Jacob’s Well were carried away. A distant view of this long white building is shown in the illustration on page 237. Here the valley seems to widen again, for the steep slope of Gerizim is

broken by a deep wady which forms a vast natural amphitheatre. Immediately opposite there is a corresponding ravine reaching almost to the summit of Ebal. It has been conjectured by several writers that it was here that Joshua, after having taken possession of the Promised Land, assembled the tribes of Israel, and having erected an altar on Mount Ebal and offered sacrifices thereon, he read the blessings and the curses, and all that is written in the book of the law, before all the congregation of Israel. It would be difficult to find a more appropriate spot for the celebration of the solemn ceremonies described in Deut. xxvii. and Joshua viii. 30-35. We may imagine the Ark of the Covenant placed in the centre of the valley where the four ways meet, guarded by the priests, “the sons of Levi." And all the tribes of Israel, their elders, officers, and judges, on this side and that side of the ark, half of them ranged on the slopes of the picturesque reft of Gerizim responding joyously to the promised blessings, the other half standing on the rock ledges and mounds of the grand gorge of Ebal re-echoing the threatened curses, while loud “Amens," uttered simultaneously by the whole congregation at regular intervals, resounded from hill to hill.

But the scene changes. the Ark of the Covenant is lost and the children of Israel are scattered. Instead of the ark, we see in the middle of the valley a few Bedouin tents and laden camels, and groups of Arab labourers at work in fields and orchards; instead of the tribes of Israel, we see little detachments of Turkish soldiers hurrying towards the new barracks at the entrance to the gorge of Gerizim, the lower part of which is well cultivated and planted with trees, for, unlike the opposite wady of Ebal, it is well provided with water. Here in an enclosed garden is the little Moslem shrine already referred to, called Jamia el ’Amud, the Mosque of the Pillar, where forty Jewish prophets are said to be buried. Black goats, seemingly innumerable, are leisurely climbing up the gorge of Ebal, steadily following their leader and browsing on the scanty and prickly pasture that springs up among the rocks and stones. It is only at this point, however, that there is any marked difference with regard to fertility between the “Mountain of Blessing" and the “Mountain of Cursing." Many experiments have been made here to ascertain at what distance the human voice can be heard singly and in chorus; the results have often created surprise. Peasants, and especially shepherds and goatherds, often call to each other from hill to hill, and even contrive to carry on a conversation where favourable positions have been discovered.

We hasten onwards, with Gerizim on our left and Ebal a little farther off on our right, but they are gradually approaching each other. We cross and recross winding streams and artificial water-courses in gardens and cultivated fields, then pass through picturesque **(pg. 247)**

MOUNT EBAL, FROM THE GARDENS S.W.S. OF NABLUS.
Showing the square tower of the Moasque El Khadra, and part of an aqueduct on the slope of Gerizim.



olive-groves where the waysides are in many places brightened with wild flowers and patches of self-sown barley. In few minutes we enter the eastern gate of Nâblus (see page 243). Nâblus is a contraction and corruption of “ Flavia Neapolis," as the city was called when it was almost rebuilt by Titus Flavius Vespasian. This is one of the very few instances in which the ancient Semitic name has been superseded by one of Roman origin

Olive-groves where the waysides are in many places brightened with wild flowers and patches of self-sown barley. In a few minutes we enter the eastern gate of Nablus (see page 243). Nablus is a contraction and corruption of “Flavia Neapolis,” as the city was called when it was almost rebuilt by Titus Flavius Vespasian. This is one of the very few instances in which the ancient Semitic name has been superseded by one of Roman origin. The Arabs cannot pronounce the letter “p” so of Neapolis they made Nablus or Nabalus. **(pg. 248)**

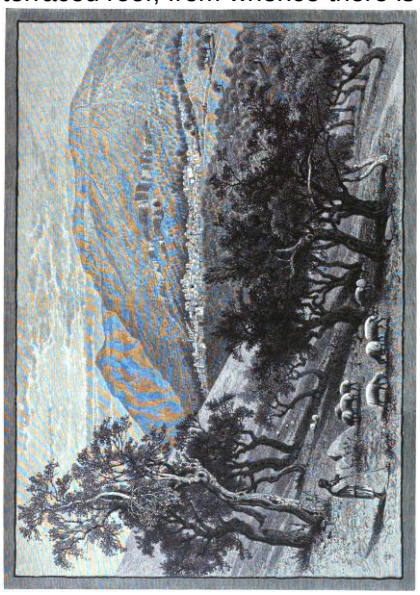
The town, which is about three-quarters of a mile long, is built on the water-shed in the narrowest part of the valley, where it is eighteen hundred and seventy-seven feet above the level of the sea, and only one hundred yards wide. It is said that there are no less than eighty springs of water in and about Nablus, each having its special name. The water is conveyed from these springs to the mosques and other public buildings and to private houses, and then irrigates the gardens in and around the city. Many of the streets have little channels of clear water running through them. After being thus utilised, the streams on the western side of the city are allowed to unite and form a stream which turns several mills and flows towards the Mediterranean; those on the eastern side irrigate the gardens east of the town, and then, with a rather abrupt fall, flow towards the river Jordan.

There are no very ancient buildings in Nablus, and scarcely anything remains to remind us of the “New City" of Flavius but the mutilated vestige of its name. The Crusaders, however, have left several memorials of their influence here. We at once recognise their work in the facade of the principal mosque, which was originally a church dedicated to St. John. It is at the eastern end of the city, and is called Jamia el Kebir (the Great Mosque). The chief entrance consists of a deeply recessed pointed arch resting on short columns, five on each side, with foliated and varied capitals (see page 245). In the central court there are several ancient columns of Egyptian granite.

From this point we enter the bazaars, which are better built and kept in better order than those of Jerusalem. Those, however, in which vegetables and prepared food are sold are rather difficult to traverse during certain hours of the day. Turkish soldiers hurry by, some of them carrying large metal dishes containing a mélange of chopped vegetables, or deep earthenware plates filled with stiff cold pottage made of peas or beans and garnished with slices of lemon floating in oil; others push their way through the crowd with bowls of steaming soup held at arm’s length before them, which very effectually clears the way.

There are small arcades especially devoted to the sale of tobacco, others which are filled with the refreshing odour of green lemons, oranges, citrons, and shaddocks. The long narrow bazaar, where dried fruits, olives, rice, cheese, and butter are sold, leads to another Christian church of the twelfth century, now converted into a mosque called Jamia el Nisr, the Mosque of the Eagle. Here also are some ancient granite columns. Making a *détour* through a street almost blocked up with camels, we pass into the principal bazaar, the finest arcade in Palestine. Here European goods are displayed, such as Manchester cottons, printed calicoes, Sheffield cutlery, Bohemian glasses for narghilehs, and crockery and trinkets of all kinds from Marseilles. But the brightest shops are those in which Damascus and Aleppo silks, embroidered jackets, and crimson tarbushes appear, with stores of Turkish pipes, and amber rosaries from Stamboul, and glass bracelets from Hebron. An opening in this arcade leads into the old khan on the north side of the city, the Khan of the Merchants (Khan Tujjar). It consists of an extensive square space enclosed by a two-storied range of buildings. A stone stairway leads to the

terraced roof, from whence there is an interesting view in every direction. **(pg. 249)**



NABLUS AND GERIZIM FROM THE SOUTH-WESTERN SLOPES OF EBAL.
Just above a broad belt of olive-trees. The whole extent of the city and the western approaches to it are shown.

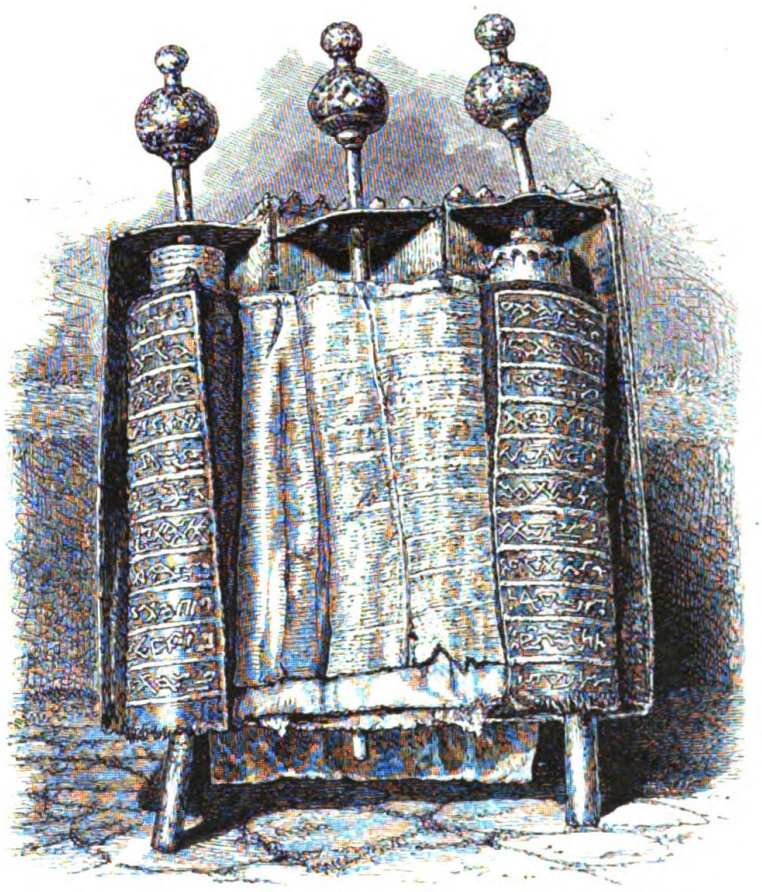
(pg 250) The chief trade of Nablus is in wool, cotton, olive oil, and soap of excellent quality. There are no less than twenty soap factories in the city. A native of Nablus will sometimes offer a present of soap to a friend living in a less favoured district, saying, " I bring you soap made of the purest olive oil that your face may shine upon me; " or, " I bring you some soap that your heart may be clean towards me." At Nablus goat-skins in great numbers are converted into khirbehs for carrying water. Sometimes the floor of this khan may be seen half covered with the inflated skins laid out for seasoning. Returning to the arcade, we pursue our way westward through narrow bazaars, where smiths, carpenters, weavers, tailors, and shoemakers may be seen at work; then, turning southward, we traverse tortuous lanes and gloomy streets, arched at intervals and built over in many places, till we reach a passage which leads us out of the town just opposite to the terraced gardens on the slopes of Gerizim, where flourish all "the precious fruits brought forth by the sun" (see Deut. xxxiii. I4). Oranges, lemons, figs, apricots, pomegranates, mulberries, walnuts, grapes, and almonds follow each other in due season, and hedges of cactus afford the cooling fruit commonly called prickly pear. On one of these garden terraces Jotham, perhaps, stood when he cried, "Hearken unto me, ye men of Shechem," and spoke his parable of the fruit-trees and the bramble, with olive, fig-trees, and vines around him, and thorns and brambles overgrowing the garden landmarks (Judges ix. 7-21). From a certain point in these gardens, looking towards the north-east, an excellent general view is obtained of the city, a faithful representation of which is given on page 249. From nearly the same standpoint, turning towards the north-west, we see the outline of the western heights of Ebal, and in the foreground the tall square tower (remarkably like the White Tower of Ramleh) which adjoins the Mosque El Khadra, the Green Mosque, another appropriated church of the Crusaders (see page 247). In the front of this tower a slab is fixed, on which there is a Samaritan inscription. The Samaritans state that they once had a synagogue on this spot, which is popularly known as the Mukam Hizn Yakub, that is, "The Place of the Mourning of Jacob," for, according to local tradition, it was here that Jacob stood when the coat of his beloved son Joseph was brought to him, and where, believing him to be dead, "he mourned for him many days." A very old mulberry-tree stands in the court of the mosque, the representative of one which is said to have withered when the death of Joseph was reported, and became green again when he was found to be living. Not far from the summit of the mountain peak which appears in the illustration behind the tower, there stands a Moslem mukam called 'Amad ed Din (the Pillar of Faith), which gives its name to this part of the mountain range. It has been suggested that this may mark the site of the altar erected by Joshua on Mount Ebal; it is, however, locally regarded as the restingplace of a Moslem saint so named, said to have lived about four hundred years ago. On the slope of the nearer hill, there is a greatly revered shrine of a Moslem female saint named Sitti Eslamiyeh, the Lady of Eslam; from her Mount Ebal derives its present name, Jebel Eslamiyeh. The highest point of the mountain, which is three thousand and thirty-two feet above the level of the sea, is more easterly, and not shown in the illustration. Turning away **(pg.**

251) from this scene, we climb to the head of the glen above the gardens, where there is a fountain of deliciously cool clear water called Ras el ’Ain, the “head of the spring." Here we find a few women washing their tattered garments in a stone reservoir, and a group of men repairing the stone walls of the water-course with rather clumsy-looking tools. We
follow the course of the duct, which conveys water -from the fountain to the terraced gardens below, running eastward all along the hillside, where it forms a kind of coping to the tree-shaded pathway. The stones of this aqueduct are moss-grown, and from between them spring up bright leaves of the most vivid green. At short intervals there are square apertures, through which we can see the running limpid water in a framework of maidenhair and other ferns and white and lilac blossoms. A branch from this aqueduct, carried on arches, is shown in the illustration on page 247.

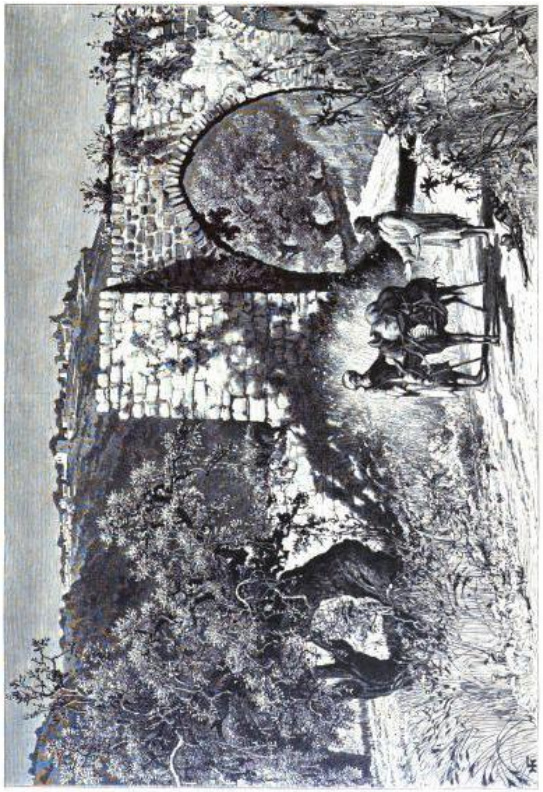
Presently we come to a large square pool or reservoir well filled and in good repair. It is nearly opposite to the handsomest ‘house in the city, which is worthy of notice as a good example of modern Oriental architecture uninfluenced by European taste. This house was erected in the year 1855 by Mahmoud Bek Abd ul Hady, of Arrabeh, who was then Governor of Nablus. Its spacious courts, surrounded by arched corridors and lofty reception rooms, are paved with marble. The white walls of the principale rooms are relieved by arabesque borders of good design in two shades of blue, some being in fresco, others simply stenciled.

ANCIENT COPY OF THE SAMARITAN PENTATEUCH.
In a silver-gilt case; it is protected by a red satin cover embroidered with inscription in gold thread.

Many important buildings have been erected within the last twenty years, including a new khan, a military arsenal, a Latin monastery, increased accommodation for the Protestant mission, and several large new dwelling-houses, showing signs of local prosperity and progress. But the chief interest of Nablus is centred in a little group of irregularly built houses, clustered closely together in the south-west quarter, the most crowded part of the city. "



Here we find the last remnant of the once powerful Samaritan community. In 1874 they numbered one hundred and thirty-five individuals, of whom twenty-eight were married couples, ten were widows advanced in years, forty—nine were unmarried men and young boys, and twenty were young girls, many of whom were already promised in marriage. Since this date the numbers have decreased. Several marriages have, however, taken place. According **(pg. 252)**



THE HILL OF SAMARIA. The road by which it is approached from the south passes through an olive-grove and under a ruined aqueduct.

(pg. 253) to their records, the Samaritans once possessed territory in every district of Palestine with the exception of Judaea, and they had colonies in Cairo, Damascus, and Baalbec. But wherever they wandered it was towards Gerizim that they turned in prayer, and Nablus continued to be their head-quarters and the residence of their chief priest. Their only synagogue now is a small unadorned building, the approach to which is a crooked uncovered steep stone stairway leading to an open court, where a lemon tree grows near to an arched doorway, through which no one is allowed to enter until he has “put off his shoes.” The nave is

MOSLEM SANCTUARY…. NOT SHOWN IN THE ARTICLE

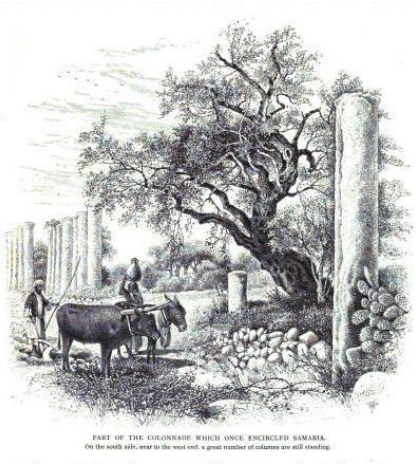
(pg. 254) lighted by a circular aperture in the vaulted roof, as is also the north-east transept through which we enter. On the south-east side, which is in the direction of the “Holy Place” on Gerizim, there is a veiled recess to which the priests alone have access. The veil which is commonly used consists of a large square curtain of white damask linen, ornamented very skilfully with appliqué work, apparently of the sixteenth century, though the Samaritans regard it as much older; pieces of red, purple, and green linen cut into various forms are sewn on to it so as to form a complete and harmonious design.

Within the veil are preserved with jealous care, among other literary treasures, three very ancient copies of the Samaritan Pentateuch, one of which is said to have been written by Abishua, the great-grandson of Aaron. This celebrated Roll of the Law, which is probably of the third century of our era, is preserved in a cylindrical silver gilt case, opening as a triptych does on two sets of hinges. The outside of the case is embossed, and in some parts engraved. On one of the divisions there is a representation of the Tabernacle of the wilderness with the Ark of the Covenant, altars, candlesticks, trumpets, and various sacrificial implements, with explanatory inscriptions. The two other divisions of the cylinder are ornamented with conventional designs in repoussé work. This case is said by experts to be Venetian work of the fourteenth or fifteenth century. The Samaritans regard it as much older. The roll itself is composed of prepared goat-skins twenty-five inches high and about fifteen feet wide; they are neatly joined together, but in many places have been torn and rather clumsily repaired with parchment of various qualities. This much-prized volume is exhibited to the congregation once a year by the chief priest and his assistant the ministering priest. The ceremony takes place on their only fast day, the Day of Atonement, and then the people, young and old, are permitted to kiss that part of the roll on which the Aaronic blessings are inscribed; the consequence is that the blessings are by degrees disappearing. A crimson satin cover, on which Samaritan inscriptions are embroidered in gold thread, envelopes the treasure (see page 251).

The Torah (Pentateuch) is the only portion of the Bible which the Samaritans hold sacred. It is their sole guide and rule of life. Their version differs in many points from the Hebrew version. The other historic portions of the Hebrew Scriptures they regard as spurious, and especially resent the account given therein of their origin. They describe themselves as “Children of Israel," but trace their origin chiefly to the two sons of Joseph. They date their separation from the Jews from the time of Eli the priest, whom

they regard as a usurper, he not having been of the priestly family of Eleazar, but a descendant of Thamar, Aaron's fourth son. According to the Samaritan Chronicle their high priests were true descendants of the sacredly appointed branch of the family until A.D. 1624, when the last male representative of the line died. Then, as it is recorded, "the consecration of Levites commenced; "sacrifices ceased to be offered up, and the ministrations were limited to such services as may legally be performed by them.

Selameh al Kohen, the correspondent of Baron de Sacy, was the chief priest of the **(pg. 255)** Samaritans when we visited Nablus in 1856. He was then a fine old man of seventy-three years of age. He was learned in Samaritan lore and had gained great influence not only over his own community, but over the credulous of other creeds, on account of his widely spread reputation for skill in occult sciences. Amran, his nephew and adopted son, next to him in age, and therefore his successor, was the ministering priest. He was forty-seven years of age, married, but with no surviving children. The next



PART OF THE COLONNADE WHICH ONCE ENCIRCLED SAMARIA.
On the south side, near to the west end, a great number of columns are still standing.

in order of .age and succession was his cousin Yakub, then an unmarried youth of fourteen years of age; and Amran greatly feared that the family might become extinct, in which case the people would be left without a priest. He asked us confidentially if we thought that the English people would be displeased and withdraw their protection from the Samaritans, if he, their priest, were to **(pg. 256)** take a second wife. He explained that the Samaritan law permitted him to do so under the circumstances. He soon afterwards married, with the consent and approval of his first wife, and there was great rejoicing in the house of Amran and throughout the community when a son was born; and they gave him the name of Isaac.

Selameh, the chief priest, died in the year 1857. Amran, who had been the ministering priest, became the chief priest, and died in 1875. He was succeeded by his handsome young cousin Yakub, above referred to. Since the death of Selameh and Amran the difficulties of governing and guiding the little community have continually increased, especially with regard to the distribution of property and the arrangements of marriages, the marriageable men being more numerous than the marriageable girls. Although the Samaritans always intermarry among themselves, they are as a rule intelligent, tall, strong, and handsome, and bodily defects are very rare among them.

During the feast of unleavened bread, from the 14th to the 21st of the first month (Nisan), the Samaritans, when it is possible for them to do so, close their houses in the city and live in tents pitched in the form of a half-circle on a sheltered plateau at some distance below the summit of Mount Gerizim (Jebel et Tur). Sometimes they go there a few days earlier, but more frequently they only remain on the mountain for two days, to celebrate the sacrifice of the Passover, and to partake of it during the intervening night.

The scene of the sacrifice is on a terrace a little way above the place of encampment. Here towards the close of the day all is in readiness for the service. Two cauldrons filled with water are standing over a long trench, in which a fire made of thorns and brushwood is crackling and blazing. A few paces higher up a deep circular pit is thoroughly heated to serve as an oven. Near to the trench, within a space

marked off by stones, stand twelve men in white garments and turbans, reciting prayers, their faces turned towards their “Holy Place," or Kibleh. In front of them stands the ministering priest looking towards the west, as if watching for the going down of the sun. At intervals he recites portions of the history of the Exodus. Behind him stand the spectators, while the elders of the congregation range themselves on one side, where the chief priest is seated on the ground. Presently six or seven youths, dressed in white, advance, each holding a white lamb, “according to the number of souls "about to celebrate the passover. (Until recently seven lambs were required.) They take their places near the oven, and behind them a little group of women and children stand. At the moment of sunset the chief priest rises, and with a loud voice pronounces a blessing three times, and repeats the words, “And the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel shall kill it in the evening" (Exodus xii. 6). The slaughterers stand with their knives ready, and as these words are uttered the lambs are slain, all at the same instant. The twelve men approach the spot reading the twelfth chapter of Exodus, and at the seventh verse they pause, while fathers dip their fingers in the warm blood of the victims and mark the foreheads of their children with it. Boiling water from the cauldrons is then poured over the fleece, which causes the wool to leave the skin without much diffi- **(pg. 257)** culty. It is plucked off with great nicety. Then each lamb is carefully examined lest there be any blemish. The right forelegs and entrails are removed and burnt with the wool. The lambs are rubbed with salt and spitted, and then forced into the glowing oven. A wooden trellis is placed over the top and covered with damp turf to keep in all the heat. In the meantime, unleavened cakes seasoned with bitter herbs are distributed by the chief priest. Soon afterwards nearly every one present retires to rest, except the twelve white robed men, who return to their original station within the enclosed space, and continue reciting and chanting by the light of the full moon until midnight, when the sleepers are aroused, and in the presence of all the men of the community the lambs are withdrawn from the oven and carried in new straw baskets to the enclosed space, where they are eaten “in haste," each man having “ his loins girt and a staff in his hand." There are slight variations from year to year in the manner of celebrating this festival, but none of great importance.

The plateau on the summit of Gerizim is two thousand eight hundred and forty feet above the level of the sea. It is crowned by a little Moslem wely which stands among the ruins of a fortress built by Justinian in the sixth century to protect, from the fury of the Samaritans, the church which had been erected there by Zeno. The foundations of this church, octagonal in form, have been traced. This possibly marks the site of the temple; but the “Holy Place” of the Samaritans is shown near to the edge of the plateau on the south side, and not far from it is a trough called the place of Abraham’s sacrifice (see page 234).

But we must hasten onwards to Samaria. Leaving Nablus by its western gate (see page 249), we follow the course of a mill stream which runs towards the west through ……

Comments on this section from the Editor of theSamaritanUpdate.com

These references are not listed in ***A Bibliography of the Samaritans, Third Edition, Revised, Expanded, and Annotated***, by **Alan David Crown** and **Reinhard Pummer**, ATLA Bibliography, No. 51, **The Scarecrow Press, Inc.** Lanham, Maryland, Toronto, Oxford. 2005

Sir Charles William Wilson (1836 - 1905) was a British military officer and geographer.

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Charles_William_Wilson

In 1864 he worked on the Ordnance Survey of Jerusalem where he discovered the eponymous Wilson's Arch.

He served as chairman of the Palestine Exploration Fund from 1901 until his death in 1905.