

Records of the Past

Vol. IX Part III

Bi-Monthly

May-June 1910

(p. 131)

THE SAMARITAN PASSOVER

THIS unique ceremony that is annually observed on Mt. Gerizim by the smallest ancient religious sect is of unusual interest to the Bible student, for it is the only Jewish institution that has come down to us from Mosaic times with its original and elaborate ceremonial, repeated in all its essential outward features, though differing in some minor details.

It was a great disappointment that I was unable to witness this remarkable religious feast on my first visit to Palestine some years ago, and hence in my subsequent travels of three months in the Holy Land, I arranged my itinerary so as to be at Nablus at the time of the Samaritan Passover. On my way from Jerusalem to Jaffa I stopped at Ramleh in order to visit the interesting excavations made by Mr. McAllister at Gezer which have shed much important light upon some dark problems of Old Testament times.

It is a long and tedious day's drive from Jaffa to Nablus some 30 miles to the northeast. The City of Nablus is on the site of ancient Shechem and occupies a central position in the physical geography of Palestine, for the great central plateau extending north and south is here completely broken through by a deep gorge running east and west, with Mt. Ebal on the north and Mt. Gerizim on the south. The location is one of the most beautiful in all Palestine. It is bounded by Ebal and Gerizim the highest of which rises nearly three thousand feet above sea level and eleven hundred feet above the valley. The scenery is strikingly picturesque and the ground (p. 132) watered by numerous springs and copious streams is attractive with the luxuriant growth of vegetation and a variety of fruits that nourish in this well cultivated garden enclosed by nature's fastnesses.

It is also a place rich in historical associations, for hither came the patriarch Abraham who pitched his tent under the oak of Moreh, and builded an altar unto Jehovah, the first sanctuary raised in the land of Canaan. In the amphitheatre of the valley between Ebal and Gerizim Joshua had the ark of the covenant placed and the law was read to the assembled people who renewed their covenant relations to Jehovah. It was in Shechem that in later years Israel went to make Rehoboam king and he made the city the capital of the northern kingdom. Long before, Jacob had a well dug near the opening of this valley, and this was made still more memorable in later years by the interview of Jesus with the woman of Samaria, who had come hither to draw water.

The city itself possesses no special attractions for the ordinary traveler, for though there is a population of about 25,000 the plain and substantial stone houses are without architectural beauty. Whilst the buildings have the appearance of strength because of their massive material, the location would render it defenseless for warfare. I found little of interest in the streets for the familiar scenes are only a repetition of what we see elsewhere in Palestine. The great Bazar is picturesque with its arched roof, but not of special interest to those who have seen greater ones, and the variety and character of articles offered for sale are regulated by the needs of a plain people. The interior is not the most pleasant place for spending much time for, inasmuch as the sunshine is excluded, it is a gloomy, damp and musty place, and malodorous to such a degree that even their pungent oil of roses does not neutralize it.

The chief object of attraction to the intelligent traveler is the Ghetto, in the southwest quarter of the city, where the members of the smallest distinguished religious sect in the world live in plain houses crowded about their small and severely plain Synagogue, but it is the holy place to every member of the Samaritan community. There is no beautiful portal to their house of worship, and no distinctive architectural design to indicate its purpose. The interior is just as plain as the exterior, with limited dimensions, for it is less than

40 ft. in length and a portion of this at the end facing Gerizim is partitioned off as a recess for enclosing the several manuscripts treasured here and especially that very precious and venerable one, which according to an inherited fiction based upon an interpolation of the transcriber they claim to have been written by Abishua the great grandson of Aaron. The interior of this Synagogue is without any decorations, there being no sculptured columns, no stained windows, no frescoed walls and ceiling, but all covered with a plain and cheap whitewash, a commentary upon the simplicity and poverty of this feeble sect. Hence there is nothing to engage the time and attention of the visitor to this sacred shrine except the famous Samaritan Pentateuch. This has special interest not only as being the sacred canon or writings of this historic sect but it is the most ancient Hebrew manuscript known, for others do not antedate the X century, whilst this was written some centuries earlier at least, although the (p. 133)



PORTION OF THE GREAT COLONNADE ON THE CAPITAL HILL OF SAMARIA

exact age is still uncertain. We saw this on our first visit to Palestine, and again during the celebration of the Passover on Gerizim and hence we shall refer to it later.

I would also mention the great Mosque for it is a building of some interest and worth seeing because of its early history, and the beautiful portal of the facade, for it was once the entrance to a Christian church, dedicated to St. John in the days of the Crusaders. The deep recessed arch rests upon a number of short and slender columns surmounted by capitals but this sculptured door-way is now altogether out of harmony with the present structure. I regret that it is not the only Christian church in Nablus that has been dismantled and converted into a Mohammedan place of worship and such monuments afford sad reflections upon the religious changes that have taken place in the land once hallowed by the sojourn of our Saviour.

The vast population of this secluded city being Mohammedan, the people are bigoted and at times their fanaticism breaks out in such a dangerous degree that travelers are warned to exercise the utmost caution so as to avoid any possible trouble that might arise, and I recall my first visit when the country was in rather an unsettled state owing to the war between Russia and Turkey, and when a great number of refugees were quartered in the immediate vicinity. At that time we were accompanied by a resident missionary in addition to our experienced dragoman, but we did not escape insulting (p. 134) remarks and the manner of some who crowded us in the narrow streets with sinister looks led our guides to conclude that it was a challenge for serious trouble, and that it was no longer wise nor safe to remain in the City, and we withdrew to our camp outside. I recalled this event when I saw the Mohammedan boys creating a disturbance at the Passover.



ANCIENT STAIRWAY, RECENTLY UNCOVERED, LEADING TO THE SUMMIT OF SAMARIA

The time for us was favorable, for we had just come from that intensely religious atmosphere of divers religious ceremonies in the City of Jerusalem where we had spent three weeks, living in the historic past as we sought out the archaeological remains of the ancient city that the excavators have brought to light and during the last week the days were crowded with a variety of observances that claimed to be the objective representation of the teachings and practices of primitive Christianity. We had passed through the various solemn observances of Holy Week, and had seen the large contingent of pilgrims from Spain and Italy, and some thousands of the peasants from Russia, and we had witnessed the religious bathing of several hundred of these Russians in the Jordan. We had also been present at the ceremony of feet washing performed by the Patriarch in front of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, and we saw that most highly spectacular and fraudulent religious performance of the descent of the Holy Fire, and after these startling and often strange exhibitions of religious devotion and at times of intense frenzy, as in the case of that wonderful exhibition of fanaticism run mad on the annual day of the Mohammedan pilgrimage from Jerusalem to the fictitious tomb of Moses. Hence we were in a measure at least prepared for extraordinary surprises and the most extravagant contrasts in the remarkable Passover that we saw enacted with all its primitive and thrilling realism on Mt. Gerizim. (p. 135)



SAMARITAN ENCAMPMENT ON MOUNT THE CAMP AND LAMBS FOR THE GERIZIM SACRIFICE

We had been assured by those who never saw it that we would be disappointed for they said it would be very much like the sacrifice of the kids that we had seen at the Kalighat in Calcutta, for whether lambs or kids were sacrificed that would not materially affect the character of the ceremony, nor change the impressions made upon the beholder. This is very true, so far as the substitution of different animals in the sacrifice are concerned, but the distinctive character and meaning of the ceremony are so absolutely different in themselves that there is no comparison whatever, and no matter what religious observances we may have seen elsewhere that of the Samaritan Passover is certainly unique, and no serious student of either the old or the new Testament will ever be disappointed in witnessing it on the spot from the beginning to the close. I say "witnessing it on the spot" for I suspect that a few who have written upon it

derived their material, or information if not from their inner consciousness, then from other sources than from personal impressions received from having been actual witnesses. I recall an instance that was referred to during my interview with Prof. Harnack in Berlin, who had not witnessed the Passover himself, but who knew of a book in which the writer described the lambs as having been *flayed* instead of *fleeced*, and I suggested that the writer had fleeced the public.

It was on the morning of April 29th, 1904, that we left the town and after paying another visit to Jacob's well at 10:00a.m. we mounted our horses and made the ascent of Mt. Gerizim by a bridle path winding along the slope by an easy grade and an hour later we had gained the summit. We were at once attracted by the Samaritan encampment of about 40 white tents which occupied somewhat lower ground in a depression of the Mount. We were conducted to the tent of the high priest whose name is Jacob the son of Aaron, a man above the average in height though rather slender in form, but erect, with fair complexion, expressive eyes, a kindly beaming face, a well formed nose, and wearing a full beard streaked with gray, and on the whole having an attractive physiognomy, with a reserved and quiet manner. We were very favorably impressed with the general appearance of (p. 136) these Samaritan survivors of the ancient race. They have an erect and manly bearing, though humble and without any of the sinister look of the Shylock. They had good features, with expressions of kindness and simplicity, and their complexion is fairer than that of the orientals about them. They did not impress me with having great physical strength, nor as being a hardy people for most of them were slender and some looked as if they were underfed, having a pale face with a thin and prominent nose, although there were some strong and able bodied looking men among them. Most of the men wore a very plain and ordinary dress. The women also were in plain attire and without any bright colors. In fact the head dress of the men was the most picturesque feature for the scarf wound around the red fez was conspicuous at least.

We were also introduced to the other members of the high priest's family, including his wife and sons, the youngest one of whom, boy like, did not subsequently hesitate to solicitate backsheesh. We had a long and interesting conversation with the high priest during the time before the Passover. He told us much about his family, the historic sect and their experiences with the Mohammedans. He also informed us that his successor would be a nephew instead of one of his own sons, according to the Oriental Law of succession. He gave me his photograph which appears on another page.

His tent was very plain as well as all its appointments, for as he told us his people were very poor. Whilst he wore a loose outer dark robe of a purple shade, that distinguished him from the others, the long under garment reaching to his heels was plain and once white, but now faded and made of a very cheap material like cotton, but possibly linen. The faded border of the brownish coat that once marked his position, had evidently seen service and lost its original color, and his head covering was perhaps the most distinctive mark, except the darker material and particular cut of his garment. We observed that he did not wear the phylacteries when reading the sacred scriptures as we had seen practiced by the Jewish readers in their Synagogues in Jerusalem. He told us that the Mohammedan officials in Nablus had refused to send the policemen or military officers to preserve order and protect them against any intrusion during their ceremonies, and they had no redress, for they were few in number, and without political influence and too poor to pay the price necessary to secure the presence of such a safe-guard as an officer of the law, although the subsequent demonstrations on the part of lawless ones showed that it was greatly needed.

We met the high priest on different occasions later in the day when he returned to his tent during the long intervals between the different parts of the Passover, and he was always ready to engage in conversation, and in many ways he made us feel welcome and he gave us abundant assurance that our presence was a real pleasure, and no intrusion. He insisted upon our occupying the best place in the tent and here we ate our noon and evening luncheon, having been urged to remain for this purpose. Our pleasant experiences in this respect were in striking contrast with a writer who states that they were compelled to withdraw to a place some distance (p. 137) from the camp, in order to eat their luncheon, for to have partaken of food in the vicinity of the camp was forbidden by the Samaritan community, lest some fragment of leavened bread falling upon the ground should render their camp unclean. I rather suspect that some officious guide volunteered this information, for the dreaded ceremonial defilement was wholly imaginary and the precaution evidently unnecessary, for we ate our luncheons with several friends in the

very tent of the high priest, whilst engaging in conversation with him and there was no embarrassment nor suggestion as to our leavened bread rendering the camp unclean, for we enjoyed this special hospitality on the personal invitation and urgency of the high priest although his tent was the nearest one to the Tabernacle in which the Passover itself was to take place.

One of the most interesting surprises in store for us in visiting the High Priest in his tent was when he brought forth from its guarded place their most precious treasure, the sacred codex of the Pentateuch, and though it is not so venerable in years as they claim when they tell us it was written by Abishua the great grandson of Aaron, nevertheless it is probable that its origin antedates by some centuries that of any Hebrew manuscript of the Old Testament extant. With feelings of reverence he opened before us this most sacred treasure of their religious inheritance. The roll was enclosed within a cylindrical silver case, embossed with appropriate designs or symbols of their historic faith, including the plan of the ancient tabernacle. This was protected by a richly embroidered crimson satin covering, and when this was removed the silver case was opened by a pair of double hinges and was supported by the three iron rods that served as a tripod, their upper ends being adorned with three large silver knobs. He began slowly to open the sacred parchment which was soiled and discolored by age and much handling, and at places in need of repair. The unknown writer or copyist employed the oldest form of Samaritan letters and the columns were about 7 in. wide with about 70 lines to the column. Whilst they hold the Pentateuch alone as canonical and all the rest of the Old Testament as apocryphal nevertheless they have a profound reverence for the books of Joshua, Judges and Job. In addition to the various readings that occur in all the manuscript copies of the Old Testament, the famous Samaritan Canon has certain remarkable ones that were evidently interpolated to favor their particular sect, for in Deuteronomy xxvii: 4, 5, they have substituted the word Gerizim for Ebal; but most remarkable of all is the lengthy addition which they have made to the Ten Commandments, and which reads as follows:— "And it shall be when the Lord thy God shall bring thee into the Land of the Canaanite, whither thou goest in to possess it, thou shalt set up for thyself great stones, and thou shalt plaster them with lime, and thou shalt write upon these stones all the words of the law, and it shall be when ye pass over Jordan, ye shall set up these stones, which I command you this day, on Mt. Gerizim and thou shalt build there an altar to the Lord thy God, and thou shalt offer upon it sacrifices to the Lord thy God, and thou shalt sacrifice peace-offerings, and thou shalt eat there, and rejoice before the Lord thy God. That mountain is beyond Jordan after the way from the rising of the sun, in the land of the Canaanite, (p. 138) who dwelleth in the West, over against Gilgal, nearby the oak of Moreh, over against Shechem."

From the summit of Gerizim we obtain a magnificent view of the country round about, for we can see southwest as far as Jaffa nearly 35 miles away on the shores of the Mediterranean and even further toward Gaza, and though Jerusalem was not in view owing to the intervening country, we could see far beyond. Directly across the narrow valley of Shechem rose Mt. Ebal to the height of nearly 3000 ft. or 300 ft. higher than the summit of Gerizim. The view presented a beautiful landscape and in the foreground of the great plain of Muknah we looked down on Jacob's Well and Joseph's Tomb, and on Askar the site of ancient Sychar, whilst eastward we had an extended view beyond the great depression through which the Jordan plunges on its swift and winding course to the Dead Sea.

The vast ruins that crown the summit of Gerizim do not mark the site of the old Samaritan temple as some have claimed, for the Samaritans hold that it was built over a cave not far away, but many centuries ago was covered with masonry and used as a cistern. Near by is the rocky platform or original altar, and is still the holy of holies to the devout Samaritan who approaches it with reverence, for it possesses for him all the sanctity of a remote tradition of the primitive celebration of the Passover many centuries ago.

The place for the present observance of the feast is about a half a mile away and it is a question why they abandoned the sacred altar. It would seem more natural for them to celebrate the Passover on the site of the ancient temple, and yet they doubtless have a reason for the change, possibly because of the profane intrusion and at times disorderly interference of the Moslems, which might appear like sacrilege if perpetrated on the Holy place that had been hallowed by their remote ancestors, as the place for sacrifice. Possibly too, there may be a reason that grew out of the fact that for a long time they were not allowed to maintain the annual celebration of the Passover on Gerizim, but observed it without ostentation

quietly in their homes, and when they renewed it on the Mount they selected a less venerated, and more sheltered place on lower ground.

It is only within the last 70 years or less, in recent times, that they have been able to celebrate their Passover on Gerizim and even now at times their public ceremonies are interfered with in a most disgraceful manner, but they bear the insult with patient forbearance lest any resistance should furnish the coveted excuse for violence and bloodshed on the part of their overbearing Moslem neighbors who so greatly outnumber them. Had the Samaritans dared to interfere in a similar manner with the worship of the fanatical Mohammedans they would have been torn to pieces by an infuriated mob in the name of Mohammed. I felt keenly for the defenseless Samaritans, for it was an outrage to interfere with their feast, merely because they were in a helpless minority, and especially since they are in all respects a peaceful and law-abiding people, and they have a right to worship God according to the dictates of their own conscience without being molested and made afraid. (p. 139)

As we arrived a long time before the hour for the Passover, and before the crowd appeared, we improved our opportunity to study the ground and to examine the preparation for the coming feast. We saw them heating the pit or well which was walled around and had been used for many years and into which they threw quantities of coarse grass, weeds and brushwood until it was heated hot as an oven and in this the dressed lambs were to be roasted.

The high priest in answer to my questions informed me that the total number of the Samaritans was about 200, a larger number than that usually given by writers, although we may take the word "about" with some latitude of meaning. However, from the number of tents that I counted, 40 in all, we might conclude that they had provided for as many as 200 persons. Besides a few may have been too feeble from age and sickness to come up from the city to spend the week on the mountain, and whilst I am confident that I did not see as many as 75 persons present at the ceremonies or perhaps not more than 50, yet we must make allowance for the women and the children who with few exceptions remained in the tents. Unfortunately for the future of this small sect the proportion of the males is greatly in excess of the females, and as the Jews have rejected all overtures to inter-marry with them, their future seems somewhat precarious, and yet it is not safe to prophesy as to the extinction of a race, for we must always calculate with that other important factor—the persistency of a species," especially of the Jewish race, and inasmuch as this particular sect seems to increase rather than diminish in spite of all the continued prophecy against its existence, therefore it is purely speculative to attempt to forecast their immediate extinction, and no doubt another century will still witness them celebrating their Passover.

The present temporary enclosure or so-called tabernacle on Mt. Gerizim in which they celebrate the Passover, is open to the heavens and all the ceremonies are exposed to the profane gaze and even intrusion of the disorderly Mohammedan rabble, for it consists of a quadrangle merely enclosed by an uneven wall of rough and loose stone, about 4 ft. high. It was located near the southeast end of the camp and was divided by a low partial wall into two equal portions, and in the one nearest the camp was a trench about 8 ft. in length in which a hot fire was burning and over it hung two large kettles, filled with boiling water to scald the lambs as soon as killed so as to remove the fleece. It was around these cauldrons that the lambs were killed, and just outside the wall, at a distance of a few rods was a heated oven for roasting the lambs. Outside the enclosure and in the direction of the tents were a dozen or less one-year-old lambs huddled together, preparatory for the sacrifice. These lambs had all been selected from the flock with special care, for according to the ancient law they must be physically perfect, that is without spot or blemish, and outwardly they all seemed to have answered the most rigid requirements for there were no lame or scrawny ones among that select group, and yet there was an imperfect one among them as was subsequently discovered, and it was rejected with a sort of abhorrence as though it were a sacrilege, to present such an offering for sacrifice although the blemish was a very trivial and apparently superficial one. (p. 140)

The entire quadrangle was perhaps 60 ft. long by 20 ft. wide and the farther half was reserved for the more strictly religious services, which consisted in reading from their sacred books, and though this ritual was divided into different courses, several hours at least were occupied at different times in this part of the ceremonies.

It was after the sun had reached the zenith and the noon hour had passed before the high priest left his tent, followed by the men who had assembled, and together they proceeded to their place in the farther part of the enclosure. The high priest knelt on a small rug facing the east and looking toward the site of their ancient Temple, the women and the children also with few exceptions remained in the tent. The high priest with solemn composure raised his eyes and then suddenly began to repeat the sacred account of the institution of the Passover on that memorable night of Israel's departure from Egypt. The members sat and then knelt with faces to the ground, and then arose and stood for a time, suiting the action to the word according to the portions read. They all chanted or repeated from memory with few exceptions and with great rapidity and emotion. Whilst this feature detracted from the dignity and reverence of the occasion, perhaps it was none the less impressive because of the tumultuous haste, inasmuch as it was a constant reminder of the haste and confusion on the night of its original institution.

Whilst the high priest chanted appropriate passages from the Torah, they changed their posture frequently and suddenly from kneeling to standing, and at times gesticulated violently, as if under great mental excitement, stroking their beards or breasts, and drawing their hands over their faces, perhaps in deep reverence at the mention of the name of Jehovah. The high priest alternated his posture at times, but with slow movement.

Whilst they were reciting the historical account with vehement fervor, 7 men entered the space in great haste, dragging the 7 lambs that had been selected for the Passover. They were all left standing together in the corner and so near the high priest that he could have touched the nearest one with his hand. Back of him were grouped about 40 or 50 men, with white robes, but some wore dark overcoats. No doubt the particular number of lambs used would be regulated by the number of people to eat the Passover. Perhaps an hour was taken up in this first part of the ceremonies. When the high priest read: "And the whole assembly of the congregation of the children of Israel shall kill it in the evening:" then all suddenly arose and certain ones seized the Pascal lambs that had hitherto been uninterested observers, some standing and others lying on the ground during all the noise, and unconcerned for they were unconscious of the part they were to play in the ceremonies. But in a moment these innocent lambs were not merely "led," but quickly rushed to the slaughter in the adjoining end of the enclosure, around the cauldrons. They were thrown violently upon their sides and men held them firmly on the ground. In the meantime all had crowded into this quarter, and the curious spectators were crowding them still more, almost to the provocation of violence, for each one was intent upon seeing every feature of the ceremony. During all this time the high priest remained at his place reciting from the Pentateuch. The signal for the bloody sacrifice (p. 141) to begin was when he read the words from Exodus xii: 5, 6, "Your lamb shall be without blemish, a male a year old: ye shall take it from the sheep or from the goats: and ye shall keep it until the 14th day of the same month: and the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel shall kill it." As these last words were repeated the assistant hurried around that circle and cut the throat of each of the lambs. He drew the knife quickly back and forth several times so as thoroughly to sever the arteries, and the animals soon bled to death without any noise and with little visible struggle.

There was tremendous excitement during all this, because of their excessive haste and the crowding of the spectators, for all wanted the nearest view possible. The scene seemed rather a cruel performance for sensitive nerves and had rather the appearance of a slaughter house, as compared with the essentially spiritual worship of the Christian religion. However, in charity we must recognize the power of religious education which gives each one his own point of view, and which has changed the Christian conceptions of worship from those that prevailed among the Jews at the time of Christ's sojourn upon the earth, when the Apostle Paul himself was one of the most devout and zealous adherents of the same blood ceremonial, and not only entered his vehement protest against any seeming interference with it, but even thought that he did God service in persecuting the followers of Christ. I distinctly recalled the words that Jesus addressed to the woman of Samaria at Jacob's Well: "God is a spirit: and they that worship him must worship in spirit and in truth."

Some writers have given a much more spectacular account of this part of the ceremony, than I have although from my nearness to the high priest nothing of importance even to the smallest detail escaped my observation, and I have given an unembellished description. On this occasion there was no dramatic brandishing or "flashing in the air of 7 knives," but one man with a plain long knife killed the 7 lambs,

neither did a youth with a white turban run with a bowl of blood and a bunch of hyssop to the tents, striking the blood in the door of the tents, for the high priest informed us that this striking of the lintels and doors with the blood was observed only with the original celebration; neither did any young men dip their fingers in the blood and put it on the nose, forehead and ears of the boys as some have stated, although such details may have been observed in the past, and I only mention what I saw, for it has no doubt varied somewhat at times, in minor details.

There was much for study and reflection in the strange, rapid, loud and accentuated manner of the worship. They employed tremendous energy in their hurried and tumultuous haste, for everything seemed to have been done in a hurry and under pressure of great excitement. This was true of the entire religious service of chanting and repeating their sacred scriptures with powerful expulsive utterances, and every movement that followed whether the seizing, dragging, and killing of the lambs, the process of scalding them, the removing of the fleece and the right foreleg and entrails, and the violent throwing of these into the fire, spitting the carcasses, and transferring them to the tent, and later dropping them into the hot oven— all was done in haste. I can easily understand why the man who entered (p. 142) the oven after the lambs had been roasted, to throw them out so that all might eat the Passover did his work as quickly as possible, for the pit had been heated like an oven, and when he came out he looked like a man emerging from a turkish bath. It was not possible for him to endure the heat any longer.

Whilst I could not escape the impression of the unbecoming haste and the decided want of reverent and serious religious solemnity of this celebration of the Passover, yet it was done to represent the haste and history of the original institution and this fact we must keep in view, for I would not impugn their real motives, nor question the genuine sincerity and deep convictions of the worshippers. With them at least it was no mere stage performance, a playing to the spectators for public effect, and they would resent such an implication, just as any Christian Church would repudiate such a charge against the elaborate and gorgeous paraphernalia, extensive ceremonialism and genuflections in its formal worship and why not extend to them the same standard in judging their sincerity? for with them it was their great religious service of the year, the consummation of their worshipful spirit, the killing and eating of the Pascal lambs at the great annual feast of the Passover. However, its striking contrast with the spiritual character of Christian worship, gave new emphasis to the outward ceremonialism of Judaism.

As soon as the lambs had been killed they took large dippers of boiling water from the huge kettles and poured it on them, and at once with great haste the men crowded over them to remove the fleece. Then the hamstrings were slashed and a stick of strong wood was run through and in this position the animal was suspended by the ends of the piece of wood resting upon the shoulders of two men. Then the right shoulder was cut off and the entrails removed and both were cast into the fire and burned. The shoulder was not given to the high priest according to the ancient custom, at least I saw the most of them thrown into the fire as though rejected. The liver was preserved with the heart and these were later placed within the carcass. Each animal had been carefully examined in the dressing to see that there was no blemish among them. All the lambs had been previously selected with special care so as to fulfill the strict requirement of the law, and no outward defect was apparent. However, each animal was still further carefully scrutinized when dressing it, for the discovery of any physical imperfection would render it unfit for the Passover. The 1st, 2d and 3d were pronounced worthy for the sacrifice, but there was a sudden excitement when the 4th had been subjected to a critical examination, for that revealed a strange natal blemish, a slight imperfection in its organism, lacking one of the *testes*, and after a brief consultation they referred the case to the high priest, who had remained in his quarters at the other end of the tabernacle, reading the appropriate lessons. He came with suppressed emotion but with evident mortification because of the failure in not having detected the unworthy lamb at an earlier stage, instead of its having escaped their discovery until this hour, for they had accepted it through that long religious ceremony and it must now be rejected and another substituted. The high priest carefully referred to the copy of the Pentateuch which he held in his (p. 143)



3

4

1. EXAMINING THE PASCAL LAMBS
2. INTENSE EMOTION, SUITING THE ACTION TO THE WORD
3. BEGINNING THE PASSOVER SERVICES, THE SEVEN LAMBS IN FRONT OF THE HIGH PRIEST
4. CROWD ABOUT THE WORSHIPERS AND SEVERAL OF THEIR CHILDREN

hand, and then again examined the carcass in the light of the divine requirement, taking considerable time, for with the sacred canon he was now most deliberate, and then consulted with his associates. I can still see his intent examination and interested look, and keen disappointment and embarrassment because of the absence of that small male member that caused so much trouble, but when the decision was rendered the men seized the lamb as though it had been morally responsible for its slight defect and with looks of indignation they became more demonstrative than ever, as they hurried it away and threw it with fury into the fire, where it was burned, for it had been rejected as unfit for the Passover. I see that picture still in all its vivid realism as though I had witnessed it but yesterday, and it gave me a commentary on the kind of animals that were to be offered for sacrifice, and it produced a deep impression such as I had never realized before. I recalled the scathing rebuke of the prophet Malachi against the people who brought the blind, the lame and the sick animals, "a blemished thing" for sacrifice unto the Lord. As the rejected animal had been thrown into the fire, several men rushed out where a few lambs had been kept in reserve for such a possible but unexpected emergency, and after carefully examining them, so as not to have a repetition of a lamb with a blemish, they dragged another into the enclosure and after the high priest had made a further examination and whilst holding a knife between his teeth, at a given signal the

lamb was thrown on its side, and after he had carefully separated the wool at the neck, he himself cut the throat of the victim getting some of the blood stains on his left hand and wrist.

After the lambs had been thoroughly dressed, a slender pole for spitting the animal lengthwise passed through the hamstrings of both hind legs that had been placed across each other and which held them in position, whilst a transverse piece of board fastened to the end next to the head prevented the carcass from slipping off when once transferred to the oven. In the meantime they were carried to the tent near the place of the high priest, having been thoroughly salted within and without and there they remained until the oven was sufficiently heated. Just outside the enclosure on the northeast side was the pit about 4 ft. in diameter and 9 ft. deep which had been heated for some hours. At a given signal and amid great excitement 7 men came from the tent within the Tabernacle each holding aloft the lamb by the pole that had transfixed it. They bore them in haste and the crowd pressed upon them as they approached the pit, and stood around it, holding the lambs over the oven that was to roast them. The director of ceremonies gave the signal and at once all were expected to drop the lambs together into the oven, but in the midst of the haste and excitement, a young man was slow and did not let his go until the others had dropped in and as a result there was some difficulty in crowding his down between the rest. His embarrassment showed his genuine regret for the unintentional failure to act in concert with the other 6, but so serious did it seem to the infuriated master of ceremonies that he was goaded on to fury and he not only upbraided him with violent language but in uncontrolled rage, he used the sharp pole that he held in his hands and made several thrusts with the pointed end at the face of the offender, and left an (p. 145) ugly scar under his eye. Such a violent exhibition of anger was wholly unjustified by the circumstances and greatly marred the spirit of the occasion for it was not in harmony with such a solemn religious ceremony. In deep humiliation the young man hung his head and bore the pain and public insult in silence, with that meek submission that an underling is expected to show in the Orient. His master should have suppressed his feeling on such an occasion instead of yielding to an outburst of anger. It was unbecoming enough to denounce the young man as he did with a loud and harsh voice, accompanied by violent gestures, but he shocked and filled everyone with indignation when he thrust the sharp pike into his face. If he had only given vent to his spleen and struck some of the insulting and crowding Moslems, then there would have been at least the semblance of justification for his violent act, but that would have provoked a riot, and this he was prudent enough to avoid.

I clearly saw it all, for I occupied my commanding position on the low wall of the enclosure throughout the entire ceremonies of the day, making copious notes and using my kodak to the best advantage. I greatly regret that my photos are not as satisfactory as I would like to have them, for the light was not favorable, and the exceedingly rapid movements of the various parts of the ceremony, and the excessive crowding of so many into a small space made it exceedingly difficult to get even the results that I did. The participants always seemed to be impelled with tumultuous haste —recalling at times the rush of a modern college team of foot ball, and such confusion often gave me their backs when I wanted their faces and even obstructed my view of the Pascal lambs that they were dealing with, whilst the Moslem hoodlums plunged pell mell into the hurrying crowd and thus added to the wild disorder that at times put all the best efforts of an amateur photographer out of commission.

As soon as all the lambs had been crowded into the pit a hurdle was dropped over them and then several sacks of green grass were emptied in, the sharp ends of the poles extending through the trellis above the surface. The men and boys collected soil and threw it in until the pit was full, when they took some earth that had been mixed with water to the consistency of clay, and covered the mouth of the oven so as to keep in the heat, rounding the top like a dome, as they plastered it with their bare hands and then wiped them on their garments in true Oriental fashion.

Several hours were necessary to roast the lambs and we anxiously waited for the opening of that oven, for we wanted to see them eat as well as prepare and kill the Passover. Whilst waiting for this supreme moment we gained more information from the high priest. We learned that there were about 40 families of the Samaritans and of course some of the men are unmarried for there are not enough wives to go around as there are more men than women, and the Jewish women refuse to inter-marry with them, although some years ago they made special overtures to persuade them to furnish the needed wives, because of their own limited supply, which seemed to threaten the extinction of their small sect, but all

efforts to effect such a reconciliation after so many centuries of national bitterness were ineffectual, and the impassable breach continues. (p. 146)

There was another long religious ceremony conducted by the high priest in which the men united. This continued until nearly sunset, when at a given signal in great haste they went to the oven, and with their hands scratched away the covering of baked earth, removed the grass and hurdle, and then drew out the 7 poles or stakes with the roasted animals or that portion of the meat that still adhered to the skeleton, for the lambs had been so thoroughly roasted that large chunks had fallen off and were in the bottom of the pit. One of the young men jumped in, his head disappearing below the surface and he quickly collected the fragments into a sort of basket. When he came out of the steaming oven he was covered with perspiration and red as a parboiled lobster. All the meat was placed on 7 mat-like baskets and these were borne before the high priest who had occupied his regular station. I counted about 50 persons, all were men except a few boys. They sat in order, squatting on their feet, and arranged before them were 7 large and plain tin platters, about two feet in diameter, heaped up with green herbs and portions of the bitter herbs were rolled in small wads in the unleavened bread, one of which was passed to me. The green herbs had been chopped in small pieces. The folded mats that served for baskets in bearing the roast lamb from the oven were now spread out flat before them, and the savory meat smoked from the heat that had burned it almost black. The unleavened bread was like the thin wafer kind found everywhere in Palestine, resembling our dough after it has been rolled out for the pie, but much darker and only two thirds baked. It is a convenient form for the Oriental table, for it can be torn and rolled into any size and shape and becomes a useful substitute for a fork and spoon in eating from a common dish.

Before they began to eat the Passover the high priest introduced the readings from the sacred records of their fathers and they all joined in chanting with vehement haste, and at times turned their heads about with a significant movement, and their eyes were full of expression as they nodded assent to the statements concerning certain events in their national history, as they were then reciting them. There, all was reenacted before our eyes, and we saw the ancient Jews eating the Passover not merely in imagination from what we once had read but from what we now actually saw, for here in the presence of the high priest we beheld the lineal descendants of the old Jewish race, although with some remote admixture of blood from the Assyrian colonists, prepared to eat the Passover as their fathers ate it several thousand years ago. That was the Jewish Passover that had come down through the centuries from Mosaic times, and in all its essential features was the same that the Israelites had witnessed of old, and I had clear visions of that distant past and the history of these memorable ceremonies which had been preserved to our day and which were now being observed by a small remnant with all the deep fervor of their religious belief. They realized its religious significance and the importance of keeping this Passover, for their souls seemed to have been stirred and hence it was no mere acting, but the outward expression of their deepest conviction. They appeared at least as though they were filled with the spirit of that institution, and all the insults and disturbances of their enemies could not interfere with (p. 147)



3

4

1. NEARING THE MOMENT FOR KILLING THE PASSOVER
2. IN PROFOUND CONTEMPLATION OF THE HISTORIC PASSOVER
3. POURING SCALDING WATER OVER THE SLAIN LAMBS
4. HASTILY REMOVING THE FLEECE

(p. 148) their zealous observance. They were moved with deep emotion, and their highly dramatic action was expressive of their feeling, for they made vigorous and significant signs with their hands, that were full of meaning as they recalled the history of Israel during that memorable night in Egypt. They shook their heads, signalled with their hands, often stroking their beard or chin, bowing their head, passing the open or palm of the hand across the face and then bringing it down violently about the chin as if striking a phantom beard, for a real one was generally absent. All continued chanting for a long time, and I longed for the end to come so that I might see them eat the Passover.

The signs of the approaching end seemed near when there was an unusual outburst of excessively loud and vigorous chanting that had been prolonged for several minutes, and which seemed exhausting, but the climax had not been reached. However, I felt some relief when the chanting ceased and the son of the high priest brought a ewer and basin for his father who washed his hands, and then taking one of the servers gave a piece of the unleavened bread enclosing the bitter herbs to each of the Samaritans. Then all faced the east, the high priest recited alone for the time when the people bowed with their faces to the ground. Then they arose, followed by moments of silence, when they began to chant again, and then prostrated themselves several times as before, sitting at intervals but none ate the morsel of bitter herbs that had been handed to them. Whilst they were generally dressed in white, some

wore dark overcoats, and only one man had a towel girt about his loins, and none of the rest had their loins girt about, and all wore shoes. Then the exercises again varied; from sitting, they prostrated themselves, returned to the sitting posture, and toward the close especially there were violent symptoms of strange uncontrolled emotions, and unnatural hysterical jerking in their chanting, with loud expulsive voice, enough to exhaust their physical energies; and all was suggestive of great haste, except the prolonged length of the exercises, for they did not seem to be in any hurry to end them, although we felt that they might have shortened them without sacrificing the general effect. However, my interest was sustained to the last, and I followed the ceremony with unflagging attention, for there was great variety and hence it was not monotonous whilst the rapid movements of the ritual kept the beholders alert for any new feature that might appear, and the intense realism that it gave to this historic institution was a constant source of profound interest.

It gave us most vivid impressions of the ancient Jewish Passover that ceased with the destruction of their temple in the year 70 and which henceforth became obsolete for them, so far as the sacrificial rites were concerned, even though the fact of the institution itself was commemorated by a special brief ritual to keep it in everlasting remembrance, for the outward and elaborate ceremonial that was once inseparable from this memorable feast has been wanting among them since their worship in the temple of Jerusalem ceased, and hence as yearly observed by the Samaritans it is the solitary example of the Mosaic institution that has come down to our times. I was also impressed by way of contrast with the infinite superiority of the new dispensation over the old, for it was a bloody sacrifice, and was lacking in serious reverence and spirituality.



HOLDING THE LAMBS OVER THE OVEN, AND
WAITING FOR THE SIGNAL TO DROP THEM IN UNISON

Only a few had a staff to symbolize the ancient institution, but all sat and none stood whilst eating the Passover, although the same haste that characterized all their ceremonies was not absent from their eating, and no doubt their long abstinence had given them a keen relish for the feast, so that their haste in swallowing the food was wholly unassumed, and they entered upon this last feature of their ceremony with that same strange but to them apparently natural hurry that had marked all the various parts of the Passover celebration.

Never before from all my reading did I receive such vivid impressions of that memorable rite which was instituted on the night of Israel's deliverance from Egyptian bondage, as when I witnessed the celebration on Mt. Gerizim.

When the Jews who returned from the Exile rejected all overtures of the Samaritans to assist in rebuilding their temple, as though they were merely a degenerate race of Cushites, the scornful rejection

engendered a feeling of irreconcilable alienation and relentless hatred that often sought occasion to give vent to its injured pride and suppressed revenge. History records various events that show the intensely bitter and deadly feuds that existed between them. The contemporaneous literature shows that the proud Jews had as much disdain for the Samaritans as the haughty Brahman of today has for the Sudra and outcasts of India, and we must make some (p. 150) allowance if Josephus paints them in dark colors, for his sympathies are naturally with his own people. Of course, the Samaritans as a despised sect did not love the race that heaped contempt upon them, but may have sought occasion to retaliate with equal scorn and hate, as when on the appearance of the new moons they were charged with kindling, in advance, false lights on the summits of signalling stations to deceive and mislead the Jews who were dependent upon signals to enable them to prepare for their religious observances. Or even the more serious and unhallowed desecration of their holy temple that Josephus charges against them may be true, when in the year 6 A.D., availing themselves of the unsettled political state of affairs following the deposition of Archelaus: "the Samaritans became so aggressive that they came privately into Jerusalem by night, when the gates of the temple were opened just after midnight, they entered and scattered dead men's bodies in the cloisters to defile the Temple."

The references to the Samaritans in the New Testament present them in a rather favorable light, and in Christ's healing of the ten lepers he has immortalized the gratitude of the one who felt impelled by gratitude to return and give thanks to his gracious benefactor, and this grateful one was a Samaritan, although it does not necessarily follow that all the other nine were Jews, and that there was not even a Samaritan among them.

On another occasion, Christ brings out in striking contrast the respective moral traits of the Jew and the Samaritan, to the decided advantage of the latter. I refer to the parable of the Good Samaritan, and this marked contrast is even greater when we remember with what aversion the Jew looked upon the Samaritan and even treated him with social ostracism as a despised people. This fact is incidentally emphasized in this interview with the young lawyer who asked Jesus what he should do to inherit eternal life, and who after all that Jesus had told him, "desiring to justify himself," asked, "and who is my neighbor?" Then Jesus illustrated it with the familiar parable, closing with the direct question: "which of these three, thinkest thou, proved neighbor unto him that fell among the robbers? And he said, He that showed mercy." Had it been the *Jew*, he would have said so, with special pride and emphasis on that name which he gloried in, but he avoids the despised name of Samaritan, especially in an honorable connection. It is a forcible illustration of John's statement that "Jews have no dealings with Samaritans." Their scornful contempt for this hated sect may be inferred from that memorable incident in the life of our Saviour, when with uncontrolled rage and withering scorn, they reached the climax of their vocabulary of contemptuous epithets by replying to him: "Say we not well that thou art a *Samaritan*, and hast a demon?"

No doubt the Jews hated Jesus with relentless condemnation, because he recognized the Samaritans as belonging to that one great family of God our heavenly Father, for with their narrow bigotry as the only chosen people, they could not tolerate such a vision of the expansion of God's kingdom. On a previous occasion in the Temple they had shown their disapproval of such religious ideas of the extended brotherhood of man, when he stated that he would depart from them, for they said among themselves: "Whither will this man go that we shall not find him? Will he go unto the Dispersion among the *Greeks* and teach the *Greeks*?" We may well imagine with what (p. 151) emphasis they uttered the word: "*Greeks*," for to include the Gentiles among the chosen people of God, would be intolerable and unpardonable. The proud Pharisees could never brook nor forgive such teachings on the part of Jesus, for even his claims to Messiahship did not arouse their antipathy as much as his contention for the universalism of the Fatherhood of God, instead of restricting it to the narrow limits of Judaism, for in this important respect he did not meet the expectations of the leaders of the Jews, for their Messiah would have special regard for their own people instead of seeking the salvation of the world.

Their narrow vision is clearly and forcibly indicated in that famous Greek inscription now treasured in the National Museum in Constantinople, but which once occupied a place upon the balustrade about the temple,



DRESSING THE LAMBS, THE SAME POLE USED FOR SPITTING THE CARCASS, THE TRANSVERSE PIECE TO PREVENT ITS SLIPPING OFF

FAILURE OF THE ONE TO DROP THE LAMB IN UNISON

warning every alien or Gentile on pain of death not to enter within the precincts of the favored Jewish race. That monument from the time of Christ remains as a contemporaneous witness to the vast gulf that separated the Jews at the Passover feast from the rest of the world, but Christ broke down the middle wall of partition, for in him "there is no distinction between Jew and Greek: for the same Lord is Lord of all, and is rich unto all that call upon him."

I trust that this brief digression from my observations of the celebration of the ceremonies on Gerizim will not appear to the reader to be wholly (p. 152) extraneous to my subject, inasmuch as my purpose has been to revive the historic background when the observance of the Passover, both by the Jews and the Samaritans was their great annual feast to the exclusion of alien races, and thereby draw a contrast between the Old and the New Dispensation.

Whilst from a remote period a most bitter feud has existed between the Samaritans and the Hebrew race as a whole, which became intensified when they were forbidden to assist the exiles in rebuilding the temple, and whilst they had been stigmatized as Cushites and denounced for their heterodoxy, they are undoubtedly a Jewish sect, although their distant ancestors did inter-marry with the Assyrian colonists. But the great majority of the Jews of Palestine to-day, and those who claim to be orthodox are the descendants of foreign ancestors and the admixture of ethnic blood in their veins from other nations than that of the Jews, may be even greater than in the case of the Samaritans. At all events their rival co-religionists can lay claim to a longer period for their Passover observance in its fullest outward ceremony than the most orthodox Jews can, for whilst their temple on Gerizim was destroyed by John Hyrcanor 132 B.C., and through long periods of war and persecution their outward observances of the Passover were interrupted, nevertheless through all this time Gerizim continued to be their sacred shrine, and their faith adhered to the Holy Mount and under favorable circumstances they repaired their simple tabernacle and kept the Passover.

Ordinarily this observance begins in the evening just at sunset but occasionally at the noon hour, and then it is practically over soon after sundown or by the time it grows dark, and fortunately this was the convenient time when we witnessed it. When we looked over the tents of that encampment, where a week had been spent in preparation, we pictured to our minds the great annual feast that was celebrated at Jerusalem, for with the historic background of that ancient city and remote times, and with an imagination quickened by the scene before us we could easily behold tens of thousands of the faithful Jews as they came up to their Holy City, not only from the different parts of Palestine, but from the distant countries of Egypt, Asia Minor and far away Babylon to engage in similar solemn services, whilst a million or more dwelt in temporary booths on the slopes of Olivet, and in the public places and in the adjacent

villages. The vast numbers of people who could not attend because of distance and other disabilities still longed after Jerusalem, for they were loyal to their faith and craved the blessings of the feast of the Passover, and hence they sent the half shekel to defray the expenses of the temple services. It is true that the City of Jerusalem with its hallowed associations was not there on Gerizim nor the Holy Temple with its high priests and scores of assistants nor the thousands of animals for sacrifice, nor yet the countless- number of pilgrims who had come to the feast, for the historian Josephus informs us that according to the results of a census taken during the Governorship of Cestius Gallus it was found that more than two millions were present at a single Passover, for this institution meant everything to the pious Jews and great sacrifices were made in order to attend it. As an illustration of the important place that it had in the hearts of the faithful believer I need but (p. 153) refer to a familiar event in their history which transpired during the Nabatean siege of Jerusalem 65 B. C. Dr. Geo. Adams Smith in his recent work on Jerusalem in referring to this siege states that "as the nation was divided so also was the city. Aristobulus shut himself up in the Temple Mount with the Priests and probably the chiefs of the Sadducean party. The siege lasted some months. When the Passover came around they begged from their countrymen animals with which to celebrate the feast. After putting an enormous price on each of these and receiving the money, the besiegers treacherously refused to fulfill their engagements." It is not only an example of a gross violation of honor in refusing to deliver the lambs for which the besieged ones had paid an exorbitant sum, but the circumstances connected with their dire necessity and their readiness to submit to the unjust extortion demanded for the animals required for the Passover, rather than not keep the feast, shows the important place that the Passover had in the mind of the Jewish people.

Whilst the Holy Temple at Jerusalem has passed away, and whilst the local surroundings on Gerizim were different, yet we were in the midst of the historical associations, connected with a Samaritan temple that once stood near by us as a rival to that at Jerusalem, and which had been held in sacred memory through many centuries of religious devotion, for whilst the Jews had allowed the original Passover with all its former elaborate ceremonialism to cease with the destruction of their Temple, the Samaritans had preserved that ancient institution, and annually celebrated the feast of the Passover with all the essential and main features as their fathers had observed it. Hence with the important characteristics of this Mosaic institution of the ancient Jews enacted before our eyes, even in minor details, it was not difficult for us in imagination to reproduce the similar scene once witnessed in Jerusalem. For here was the actual observance of that same historic Passover. The high priest and people repeated the very words of that same original institution as their fathers did several thousand years before, and the different parts of that feast were enacted with all their objective realism by the slaying of the lambs, the roasting and eating of the lambs with bitter herbs and unleavened bread, not permitting any important feature of the ritual to be omitted as the Jews do in their quasi-memorial or spiritual observance of it.

That remnant of this most wonderful race still preserves the formal and outward ceremonies in all their essential detail, and according to the strict letter of the law as once did the entire Jewish people several thousand years ago. Nay more—they seem to be fully persuaded from deep religious conviction that in this manner they ought to observe the annual feast of the Passover, and hence they engage in the particular ceremony with all the ardor of their ancient belief, with impassioned enthusiasm, and at times their religious unctio rises almost to the pitch of frenzy. On that memorable day my long deferred hope was realized, for there I had seen this remarkable historic rite that Israel of old celebrated with impressive ceremonialism because it was dear to the heart of Israel, and this my eyes had now beheld celebrated in all its important features by this ancient Jewish sect on Mt. Gerizim. JEREMIAH ZIMMERMAN.

Syracuse, N. Y.

Comments on this section from the Editor of theSamaritanUpdate.com

These reference is #5399 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