

Reproduced from the Library of the Editor of [www.theSamaritanUpdate.com](http://www.theSamaritanUpdate.com)  
Copyright 2008

Pages from  
**The Recovery of Jerusalem**  
**A narrative of Exploration and Discovery in the City**  
**And the Holy Land**

Book By Capt. Wilson, R.E. Warren, R.E.,  
ETC, ETC, ETC.

Part II.

The Survey of Palestine by Lieutenant Anderson, R.E.

D. Appleton & Company, New York  
1871.

Pages 361-

In the course of our day's journey from Esdraelon we passed through a succession of narrow valleys, occasionally relieved by strips of plain, and these are the chief characteristics of the central portion of Manasseh's territory. After seven hours' traveling the path skirts the western shoulder of a very prominent hill, and then descends into the vale of Nablus.

This spot, the site of the ancient Shechem, the City of Refuge, is unrivalled in Palestine for beauty and luxuriance. There are two mountains parallel to each other, almost meeting at their bases, but one mile and a half apart at their summits. They enclose a beautiful little valley between them, not more than 100 yards wide at the narrowest part, and widening out in both directions. The town of Nablus is situated at the narrowest part of the vale. The mountain on the north is Ebal, that on the south Gerizim, and the vale lies east and west. The site of the town is admirably chosen, on the water-shed, in the middle of the pass, easy access to the Jordan country eastward, and to the sea-coast on the west. The whole of Mount Gerizim was thoroughly examined, and the plan of Justinian's church disclosed by excavation. It had been built upon older foundations, probably those of the old Samaritan temple. An excursion was made to the summit of Mount Ebal, 1,200 feet above the vale. The summit is rocky and bare, and there are no ruins on the mountain-top, except a curious square enclosure, with very thick rude walls. Just below the summit there is a break in the regular slope of the hill, and a small but steep valley comes up from the vale below almost to the summit, forming a vast natural amphitheatre, in height equal to that of the mountain. Immediately opposite to this the steep slope of Mount Gerizim is similarly broken by a valley forming a second natural amphitheatre (page 362) of equal beauty and grandeur. In these two lateral valleys were assembled the twelve tribes of Israel under Joshua, six tribes on Gerizim and six on Ebal. The Levites and the ark were in the strip of the vale, and the blessings and cursings were read before the whole congregation (Josh. vii. 32 to 35, and compare Deut. xxvii. 11). Nothing is wanting in the natural beauty of the site to add to the solemnity and impressiveness of such a scene. The best view of the town of Nablus is from Ebal. It seems to repose so snugly in the little vale, and while the houses seem to shrink from the base of the Ebal slope, they cling to and attempt to climb the slope of Gerizim, the mountain of blessings. At the edge of the plain of Mukna (Moreh), a mile and a half east of the town, is Jacob's Well, on the piece of ground he purchased from the Shechemites. Not far from the well is the site of Joseph's Tomb. The identity of the well has never been disputed. Christians, Jews, Moslems and Samaritans, all acknowledge it, and the existence of a well in a place where water-springs are abundant is sufficiently remarkable to give this well a peculiar history.

Some men were set to work to clear the mouth of the well, which was being rapidly covered up. A chamber had been excavated to the depth of 10 feet, and in the floor of the chamber was the mouth of the well, like the mouth of a bottle, and just wide enough to admit a man's body. We lowered a candle down the well and found the air perfectly good, and, after the usual amount of noise and talking among the workmen and idlers, I was lashed with a good rope round the waist and a loop for my feet, and lowered through the mouth of the well by some trusty Arabs directed by my friend Mr. Falcher, the Protestant missionary. The sensation was novel and disagreeable. The numerous knots in the rope continued to tighten and creak, and after having passed through the narrow mouth I found myself suspended in a cylindrical chamber, in shape and proportion not unlike that of the barrel of a gun. The twisting rope caused me to revolve as I was being (page 363) lowered, which produced giddiness, and there was the additional unpleasantness of vibrating from side to side, and touching the sides of

the well. I suddenly heard the people from the top shouting to tell me that I had reached the bottom, so when I began to move I found myself lying on my back at the bottom of the well; looking up at the mouth, the opening seemed like a star. It was fortunate I had been securely lashed to the rope, as I had fainted during the operation of lowering. The well is 75 feet deep, 7 feet 6 inches diameter, and is lined throughout with rough masonry, as it is dug in alluvial soil. The bottom of the well was perfectly dry at this time of the year (the month of May), and covered with loose stones. There was a little pitcher lying at the bottom unbroken, and this was an evidence of there being water in the well at some seasons, as the pitcher would have been broken had it fallen upon the stones. It is probable that the well was very much deeper in ancient times, for in ten years it had decreased 10 feet in depth. Every one visiting the well throws stones down for the satisfaction of hearing them strike the bottom, and in this way, as well as from the *debris* of the ruined church built over the well during the fourth century, it has become filled up to probably more than a half its original depth. I was drawn up without mishap, but was bumped about sadly from side to side in consequence of the Arabs pulling me up by jerks, and at the same time the rope and its burden revolved. My kind friend and host the German missionary was glad to see me up again, and remarked, "Now I had fear for you, lest the rope did break." The mouth of the well is close to the high-road from Jerusalem to Galilee.

The gardens in the vale of Shechem were looking very beautiful at this time (May 1<sup>st</sup>). The fig-trees, the latest of all, were in full leaf, and the people commenced to reap in the plain of this day. It was high time too, for the young locust were commencing their ravages, and the people seemed really roused to exertion at this critical time.

While we were breaking up our camp and preparing to (page 364) start, the lepers of the town gathered round the camp, making their piteous appeals for money. These unfortunate people, both men and women, were ordinarily found sitting on the heaps outside the town wall, close to the wayside. They were most distressing specimens of humanity; most of them without hands, some with no teeth or hair, and shunned by every one....