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SCRIPTURE NATURAL HISTORY
CONTAINING A DESCRIPTIVE ACCOUNT OF THE
QUADRUPEDS, BIRDS, FISHES, INSECTS, REPTILES,
SERPENTS, PLANTS, TREES, MINERALS, GEMS, AND PRECIOUS STONES,
MENTIONED IN THE BIBLE.
BY **WM. CARPENTER**

FIRST AMERICAN, FROM THE LATEST LONDON EDITION, WITH
IMPROVEMENTS,
BY **REV. GORHAM D. ABBOTT.**
ILLUSTRATED BY NUMEROUS ENCRAVINGS.
TO WHICH ARE ADDED
SKETCHES OF PALESTINE, OR THE HOLY LAND.
BOSTON:
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(p. 389).....

Nablous (as it is pronounced by the Turks and Arabs, or Naplosa, as the Christians who speak Italian call it—a corruption of Neapolis, or New Town) is one of the Jew places in the Holy Land, the ancient name of which appears to be superseded by that which it has received from its foreign conquerors. Its position identifies the site, beyond all question, with the Shechem of the Old Testament¹ and the Sychar (or Siehem, as Jerome contends it should be) of the New, the ancient capital of Samaria. Josephus says that the natives called it Mabartha, but by others it was commonly called Neapolis. Few places exceed it in the romantic beauty of its position. It is situated in a narrow valley between Mount Ebal and Mount Gerizim, having the former on the north, and the latter on the south; but it is correctly described by Maundrell as lying under Mount Gerizim, being built at the acclivity on the southern side of the valley. It was from Mount Gerizim that God commanded the blessings to be pronounced upon the children of Israel, and from Mount Ebal the curses, respectively annexed to obedience and disobedience, on their entering the promised land by way of Jericho and Ai: half of the tribes were to be encamped over against the one hill, and half against the other,² The modern town consists of two long streets, running through the centre of the valley, and intersected by several smaller ones, mostly crossing them at right angles. At the present time it is populous and flourishing, and the environs bear the marks of opulence and industry, being adorned with small gardens that skirt the banks of the stream by which the valley is watered. 'We passed,' says Dr. Richardson, 'its scarcely moistened bed, and a little above the town saw an

¹ Gen. xxxiii. 18 : xxxvii. 13 : Joan. xxiv. 32 ; Judges ix.

² Dent. xi. 29: xxvii. 12,13 ; Josh. viii. 33.

ancient bridge with twelve arches, which were still capable of maintaining the communication between the two sides of the valley.' Dr. Clarke, in approaching it from Jennin, was struck with its flourishing appearance. 'There is nothing in the Holy Land finer,' he affirms, 'than the view of Napolose from the heights around it. As the traveller descends towards it from the hills, it appears luxuriantly embosomed in the most delightful and fragrant bowers, half concealed by rich gardens, and by stately trees collected into groves all around the Id and beautiful valley in which it stands.' 'Within the town are (p. 390) six mosques, five baths, one Christian church of schismatic Greeks, an excellent covered bazar for fine goods, and an open one for provisions, besides numerous cotton-cloth manufactories, and shops of every description.' Dr. Clarke says, the principal trade is in soap; but the manufactures of the town supply a very widely extended neighborhood. The watermelons too of Nablous are equal, he says, to those of Jaffa. The resident population is supposed to amount to 10,000, though Mr. Buckingham thinks this is rather over-rating the numbers. These are almost all Mahommedans, the Greek Christians scarcely amounting, he says, to fifty. But Mr. Connor states that there are about a hundred. They have one church and two priests. Though the commerce is so considerable, there are few Jews, owing perhaps to a religious prejudice against the place; Mr. Buckingham says, none among the permanent residents,—Mr. Connor says, 'about fifteen individuals.' Of the Samaritans, of whom a respectable remnant existed here so late as the time of Maundrell's journey, about a century ago, the reverend gentleman last mentioned gives the following interesting account. 'I immediately made inquiry about the Samaritans. 31 y host stepped out, and fetched their priest: he sat with me some time: his name is Shahnor ben Tabiah ; he is a native of Napolose, and is about forty years of age.

'There are about forty Samaritans in Napolose. They have but one synagogue in the town, where they have service every Saturday. Four times a year they go, in solemn procession, to the old synagogue on Mount Gerizim; and, on these occasions, they go up before sunrise, and read the law till noon. On one of these days of they kill six or seven rams. The Samaritans have one school in Napolose, where their language is taught. The head of the sect resides in Paris.

'I accompanied the priest to his house, and sat a long time with him. There were several Jews present: they seem to live on friendly terms with the Samaritans here. The priest showed me part of the first volume of the English Polyglott, mentioned by Maundrell: it consisted of about adozen tattered leaves. He showed me also a manuscript Samaritan Pentateuch, with an Arabic version at its side; this version, however, is not used in their synagogue. He afterwards took me to see the synagogue, making me first take off my shoes: it is a small gloomy building. I observed a number of copies of the Samaritan Pentateuch, carefully enveloped in linen, and laid on a shelf in the synagogue. Expressing a wish to see the ancient manuscript, said by the Samaritans to be 3500 years old, the priest paused, and hesitated some time. I pressed him. Having laid aside his upper garments, he at length entered the sanctuary, and produced the venerated manuscript. It is well written on vellum, in the Samaritan character, and is preserved in a tin roller: it bears the marks of age, and is rather tattered. The priest would not permit me, nor any one present to touch it. He was very inquisitive about the Samaritans who, he had heard, were in England.'

(p. 391) The accounts which we have of the ancient Samaritans, (or Cuthaeans, as they are called by the Jewish writers, from the founder of the sect, Sanballad, a Cuthite,) have

come to us chiefly through their inveterate enemies the Jews; whose contempt and hatred were apparently excited by their being a mixed race, of doubtful genealogy, and schismatical in their creed. In rejecting the whole of the Old Testament excepting the Pentateuch, they were countenanced by the Sadducees. Our Lord, however, declares, that they worshipped they knew not what;³ which seems to imply that, although they cherished, in common with the Jews, the expectation of a Messiah, their worship had still an idolatrous tincture : they 'feared the Lord,' but, if they did not still 'serve graven images,' like their ancestors,⁴ they did not worship God as a Spirit. Notwithstanding their enmity against the Jews, they joined in revolt against the Romans, and shared in the calamities of the guilty nation. After the fall of Jotapata and Jaffa, eleven thousand six hundred of them are stated to have posted themselves on Mount Gerizim; as if, like the Jews of Jerusalem, trusting to the protection of their temple, or resolved to perish on the sacred spot. The Roman general Ceiealis, with 600 horsemen and 300 footmen, blockaded them here; and after inviting them to surrender, which they obstinately refused, put the greater part to the sword. .

Five centuries after the Christian era, the Samaritans, who still remained a distinct, though motley race, had so increased in strength that they rose in arms, under the standard of a desperate leader, to protect themselves against the persecution of the emperor Justinian. They were, says Gibbon, ' an ambiguous sect, rejected as Jews by the Pagans, by the Jews as schismatics, and by the Christians as idolaters. One hundred thousand, it has been computed, perished, or were sold as captives in the Samaritan war, which converted the once fertile province into a wilderness. A remnant, however, have always rallied on this consecrated spot, under the shadow of Mount Gerizim. In 1676, a correspondence took place between their chief priest at Nablous and the learned Scaliger, on the differences between the Samaritan and Hebrew Pentateuchs, in the course of which information was elicited respecting the opinions then held by this ancient sect. The summary of their creed was to this effect: That they believe in God, and in the laws of his servant Moses; they practise circumcision; keep the sabbath with all the rigor of a penance; observe the passover, the pentecost, the feast of tabernacles, and the great fast of expiation most strictly; and never offer any sacrifice but on Mount Gerizim. The head of their religion must reside at Shechem. In 1697, Mr. Maundrell had a personal conference with the Samaritan chief-priest, on the subject of a singular discrepancy between the text of the Samaritan Pentateuch and the received Hebrew text. The passage in question occurs Deut. xxvii. 4: 'Therefore it shall be, when ye be gone over (p. 392) Jordan, that ye shall set up these stones, which I command you this day' (inscribed with the words of the law) 'in *Mount Ebal*; and thou shalt plaster them with plaster ; and there shall thou build an altar unto the Lord thy God.' The Samaritan Pentateuch has *Mount Gerizim* in this place; and the chief-priest contended that the Jews had maliciously altered the Hebrew text out of odium to the Samaritans:' putting, for Gerizim, Ebal, upon no other account but only because the Samaritans worshipped in the former mountain, which they would have for that reason not to be the true place appointed by God for his worship and sacrifice. To confirm this, he pleaded that Ebal was the mountain of cursing, Deut. xi. 29, and in its own nature an unpleasant place; but, on the contrary, Gerizim was the mountain of blessing, by God's own appointment, and also in itself fertile and delightful;

³ John iv. 22.

⁴ 2Kings xvii.41.

from whence he inferred a probability that this latter must have been the true mountain appointed for those religious festivals, Deut. xxvii. 4, and not (as the Jews have corruptly written it) Hebal. We observed that to be in some measure true which he pleaded concerning the nature of both mountains; for, though neither of the mountains has much to boast of as to their pleasantness, yet, as one passes between them, Gerizim seems to discover a somewhat more verdant, fruitful aspect than Ebal. The reason of which may be, because fronting towards the north, it is sheltered from the heat of the sun by its own shade; whereas Ebal, looking southward, and receiving the sun that comes directly upon it, must, by consequence, be rendered more scorched and unfruitful. The Samaritan priest could not say that any of those great stones which God directed Joshua to set up, were now to be seen in Mount Gerizim; which, were they now extant, would determine the question clearly on his side.'

Both Mount Gerizim and Mount Ebal deserve to be explored. Their altitude appeared to Mr. Buckingham to be nearly equal, not exceeding 7 or 800 feet from the level of the valley, which is itself elevated. Captains Irby and Mangles are the only modern travellers who appear to have ascended either. They say: 'We went to the summit of Mount Gerizim, and found the ruins of a large town, with a tank near a conspicuous sheikh's tomb.' They do not appear, however, to have bestowed much attention on these ruins, among which some traces of their boasted temple must, one would imagine, be still discernible; nor do they notice any synagogue there. Mount Ebal they did not ascend.⁵ In the Itinerary of Benjamin of Tudela, the Cutheans are stated to offer sacrifice on Mount Gerizim, on an altar constructed of stones brought from the Jordan by the children of Israel. He describes this mountain as full of fountains and gardens, and Ghebal (Ebal) as arid and rocky. As a topographical authority, the Itinerary is unquestionable. With regard to the point at issue, it may be thought only to state (p. 393) the matter agreeably to the Samaritan tradition. There is certainly much plausibility in the arguments in favor of the Samaritan texts; which, in many other instances of variation from the received text, is admitted by Biblical critics to preserve the genuine reading. It is very probable, that a further collation of Hebrew MSS. will throw some light on the question.

The town is governed by a Mutsellim, or Beg, subject to the Pasha of Damascus, and having under his command about 400 Arnaout soldiers. The prevailing costume is the Turkish dress: the women wear a colored veil, concealing the whole face, as in the towns of the Yemen; the scarf thrown over the head and shoulders is of a yellowish white, with a deep red border. Nablous is in long. 35° 22' E. lat. 32° 16' N.; and is thirty-four miles N. of Jerusalem.

The only object of antiquity noticed by travellers within the town, is the eastern front of a ruined church, the site of which is now occupied by one of the mosques. It presents a fine pointed arch, supported by Corinthian columns, the upper part highly ornamented, in the style of some of the Saracen doors in Cairo: within are seen plain granite pillars; and the whole exhibits, Mr. Buckingham tells us, a singular mixture of orders, in the most grotesque taste.

Just without the city, towards Jerusalem, is a small mosque, said to have been built over the sepulchre purchased by the patriarch Jacob, and bearing the name of Joseph's Sepulchre: it is at the foot of Mount Gerizim. Mr. Buckingham, noticing the

⁵ Dr. Richardson says: 'On Mount Ebal we saw a considerable village, and a large building like a ruined fort. But he did not ascend its summit.'

Mahommedan buildings here, 'either mosques or tombs, says, they are now called *Mahmoodea*. 'On the left,' he adds, 'at the foot of Mount Ebal, were several well-hewn grottoes in the rock, some with arched, and others with square doors, most probably ancient sepulchres.' These he had no time to examine, although the most interesting antiquities of the place. That these caves may have been used as places of retreat or ascetic seclusion, is very probable; but there is no room to doubt their sepulchral character. They may, or may not, be of remote antiquity; but of this description, and not far distant, must have been the burial-place of Joseph, whose bones were brought up out of Egypt to be laid in Shechem. To the practice of burying in the sides of mountains, we have repeated references in the Old Testament. Abraham was buried in the Cave of Machpelah before Mamre; Joshua, on the north side of the Hill of Gaash in Ephraim ;⁶ Eleazer, the son of Aaron, in a hill within the same district; and Aaron himself in Mount Hor.⁷ The 'parcel of ground' given by Jacob to his son, is generally supposed to be the 'wide field,' as Maundrell terms it, into which the Valley of Sichem opens at the Well of Samaria; and which he describes as 'exceeding verdant and fruitful,' being watered with a fresh stream, rising between it and the town. The (p. 394) precise limits of this purchase it would be ridiculous to attempt to ascertain. All that we know is, that it was near Sichar, 'before,' or eastward of the city; that it contained a well—a possession of the greatest importance in those parts; and, like 'the field of Ephron' purchased by Abraham,⁸ a burying-place. A place of burial seems to have given a sacredness to the property in which it was situated, and to have rendered the inheritance inalienable; it established a right of proprietorship, and, connected with this, what we should call *a right of common* to the neighboring pastures. Thus, we find the sons of Jacob leaving their father's residence in Hebron, to feed his flocks in Shechem, by virtue of this right, long after he had been compelled to remove from this neighborhood. The burial-place was, no doubt, (as that of Abraham and that of Joshua were,) at the 'end of the field,' on the 'border of the inheritance,' which must have been Mount Gerizim itself; and, if the mosque should prove to conceal the entrance to a lateral excavation or grotto, of the kind universally chosen for sepulchres of distinguished persons by the ancient Jews, it may possibly mark the identical place 'in Shechem where the bones of Joseph were laid.'

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

This book is not referenced 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

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<sup>6</sup> Gen. xxv. 9 ; Josh. xxiv. 22,29.

<sup>7</sup> Num. xx. 28; Deut. x. 6.

<sup>8</sup> Gen. xxiii, 17.