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STONES CRYING OUT
AND
ROCK-WITNESS TO THE NARRATIVES OF THE BIBLE
CONCERNING THE TIMES OF THE JEWS.
THE EVIDENCE OF THE IAST TEN YEARS

Collected by
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Chapter III "Ephraim is My First Born"

(p. 68).....

THE OFFERING OF ISAAC.

To return to Abraham's sacrifice, and to the burning lamp, which a second time signified the "appearance of Jehovah," and ratified the promise of the gift of the (p. 69) land to the seed of the yet childless man, who were to be in number as the stars.

That the vision took place on Gerizim, and that this first covenant with the "father of the faithful" was confirmed on the same spot, seems implied by the promise of Gen. xv. 16, "In the fourth generation they shall come hither again."

Between that "coming again" intervened the birth of Ishmael and of Isaac, and the offering up of Isaac himself for sacrifice, probably about forty years after the time of the vision, and when Isaac, as Josephus says, was about twenty-five years old. Josephus is often proved to be right, but not always or invariably so. It is on his tradition and authority, rather than on any statement of the Scriptures, that the scene of Isaac's offering has been transferred, in popular belief, to Mount Moriah, one of the hills of Jerusalem. Yet when the destroying angel stayed his hand at the threshing-floor of Araunah the Jebusite (2 Sam. xxiv. 16), there is no allusion made to any previous act of the Lord's mercy shown in that locality; and neither at the building or at the dedication of So was to be "laid waste;" the house of Jeroboam which was to be "given to the sword." "Our fathers worshipped in this mountain," said the woman of Samaria to our Saviour, when He came to Sychar, in the days of His flesh, and although He answered her, in an era when the prophecy of Amos had been long fulfilled,— "Ye worship ye know not what, the hour cometh when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father,"—the reply recognized the two high places of the chosen people, of which Gerizim stood first in venerated antiquity and in chronological order. "When Isaac was to be offered, Abraham was in the land of the Philistines. From Beersheba, or Gaza, the

southern point of Palestine, he would move along the plain, and on the morning of the third day would arrive in Sharon, where the massive height of Gerizim is visible 'afar off/ see Gen. xxii.; and from thence half a day would bring him to its summit, whereas Mount Moriah, at Jerusalem, is not visible till the traveller is close upon it."¹

SCENES AT SHECHEM.

The locality thus sacred in the lives of ABRAHAM and ISAAC, was not less so to JACOB. He, too, pitched his tent, and built his altar in Shechem, and when he left it in sorrow for the violence of his sons, and put away from his household their strange gods, and went up to Bethel, he hid the idols and the ear-rings under "the Oak of Shechem." It was a place of oaks (terebinths) then, as it is of olives now.

It was at Shechem the cruel brethren sold their father's favourite, Joseph, to the Ishmaelites going down to Egypt with balm and spicery (the first caravan we hear of in Scripture), and so led their own way into the (p. 71) land of bondage. It was to Shechem and Gerizim that they came again in the fourth generation, according to the vision of their great forefather, bringing Joseph's bones, which they had carried with them, by his desire, through all their forty years of desert wandering (Gen. 1. 25); and they buried them in Shechem, in the inheritance of the children of Joseph (Josh. xxiv. 32). "At the mouth of the Valley of Shechem two slight breaks are visible, in the midst of the vast plain of corn—one a white Mussulman chapel, the other a few fragments of stone; the first covers the alleged tomb of Joseph, Ishmael's mark of present triumph over Isaac's exiled race; the other, THE WELL, choked up by ruins, but still the well of 'our father Jacob.'"

Here, while the ark remained in the valley, up the sides of the twin mountains stood the thousands of Israel, the chiefs, the judges, the Levites, the women, the children, and the stranger, six tribes uttering the curses from the barren Ebal, and six the blessings from the pleasant Gerizim, and as each curse and blessing was pronounced there came with a vast voice from each of those living hills the Amen of the consenting multitudes (Josh. viii. 33).

Shechem was afterwards named as one of those six cities of refuge where the avenger of blood stayed his hand, and might not take his prey.

And now there is another scene at Shechem. The stalwart Joshua, the Lord's captain, "goes the way of all the earth, and again he gathers all the tribes here, and the elders and the judges present themselves before God." After reciting the Lord's dealings with them he says—

"Choose you this day whom you will serve! ... but as for me and my house we will serve the Lord.

(p. 72) JOSHUA AND GIDEON.

"Now therefore, put away, said he, the strange gods which are among you. ... So Joshua made a covenant with the people that day, and set them a statute and an ordinance in Shechem.

"And Joshua wrote these words in the Book of the law of God, and took a GREAT STONE (for a witness), and set it up there under an oak that was by the sanctuary of the Lord" (Josh. xxiv. 15, 23, 25, 26).

JOSHUA is the great hero of Ephraim in his day, GIDEON its great judge. The Prophet SAMUEL, though a Levite, was a native of Ramah in Mount Ephraim; and Saul belonged

¹ "Sinai and Palestine," p. 248.

to a tribe closely allied to the family of Joseph. So that during the priesthood of the former, and the reign of the latter, the supremacy of Ephraim may be said to have been practically maintained.

Gideon had seventy-one sons, and the mother of one of them was a native of Shechem. That son, Abimelech, slew all the others except one, named Jotham, that he might reign alone over the men of Israel. They made him king by the plain of the pillar in Shechem (probably Joshua's pillar). And when Jotham, who had hidden himself and escaped the slaughter, heard that Abimelech was king, he went and stood in the top of Mount Gerizim—the public or sacred place of the city—and lifted up his voice, uttering the parable of the trees, suggested no doubt by the varied foliage of the valley below. They had chosen the bramble for king, as he said; and the same chapter records Abimelech's beating down their city and sowing it with salt, "all their evil being rendered on their own heads, according to the curse of Jotham the son of Jerubbaal" (Judges ix. 57). Shechem is then no more mentioned till its rebuilding in the period of the monarchy.

IT IS THEREFORE IMPORTANT FULLY TO REALIZE THE IMPORTANCE OF THE CENTRES OF SHECHEM AND SHILOH, FOR THE SPACE OF MORE THAN 400 YEARS TO ANCIENT (p. 73) ISRAEL. AS the kingdom of Chaldea in reference to the Second Babylon,—so was Samaria, or the land of Ephraim, in reference to Judah and Jerusalem. How rich are the archives of its first era in patriarchal history!

The stories of the election of the kings of Israel in SHECHEM opens its second chapter and a new era. It was the first capital of the new kingdom of Israel as distinguished from the kingdom of Judah after the rise of Jerusalem into the capital during the reign of David.

The territory of Ephraim was central for situation, it lay in the way of communication for travellers through Palestine. From north to south, from Jordan to the sea, from Galilee and Damascus to Philistia and Egypt, the road lay "through Samaria." Shechem is considered to be the portion given to Joseph by Jacob when near his end—" the portion above his brethren." This central tract and this "good land" were naturally allotted to the powerful house of Joseph in the first division of the country; and it is very true, as Stanley says, that "we are so familiar with the supremacy of the house of JUDAH, that we are apt to forget its recent date comparatively with that of EPHRAIM."

Alas! as the psalm of Asaph tells us (Ps. lxxviii. 9):—

"The children of Ephraim being armed, and carrying bows, turned back in the day of battle.

"They kept not the covenant of God, and refused to walk in his law. . . .

"Then the Lord refused the tabernacle of Joseph, and chose not the tribe of Ephraim:

"But chose the tribe of Judah, the Mount Zion which He loved."

But notwithstanding this, ere Rehoboam, the foolish son of the wise Solomon, ascended the throne of all Israel, the Lord turned once again to Ephraim, his firstborn, with a tenderness that belongs only to that dear (p.74) relation; and taking Jeroboam, the Ephrathite of lowly lineage, declared to him the rending of the kingdom by the mouth of Ahijah the prophet, and accompanied the information with the startling offer of ten parts of that kingdom to himself—" If thou wilt walk in my ways, and do that which is right in my sight, as David my servant did, then I will be with thee, and build thee a sure house, as I built for David, and will give Israel unto thee." Jeroboam rebuilt Shechem and dwelt there, but his reign of twenty-two years did nothing but confirm his people in idolatry; the first of nineteen evil kings, whose dominion endured in Samaria for two and a half

centuries. We will not investigate any details of their history till, in a future chapter, we can compare Assyrian records of them, lately disinterred, with those given us in the Scriptures.

SHILOH.

It is surely not without a deep and marked intent of God, that in this present generation the attention of European travellers and explorers, and consequently of most thinkers and readers, is chiefly fixed on the localities of SCRIPTURE HISTORY. We have seen that the capital of Ephraim and of the kingdom of Israel was Shechem; its great sanctuary was SHILOH.

The sites of heathen oracles had been always shrines for classic pilgrimages, but the site of SHILOH was completely forgotten from the time of Jerome until the year 1838.² Yet here the tabernacle of the wilderness erected by Joshua abode 300 years (Josh, xviii. 1). The "tent" or "tabernacle," that last relic of the nomad life of the chosen people, is described in the Rabbinical traditions as a structure of low stone walls, with a tent (p. 75) drawn over the top, exactly answering to the Bedouin villages of the present day, when the stone enclosures often remain long after the tribes and tents have vanished. But for the precision with which the site of Shiloh is described in the Book of Judges (ch. xxi. 19), its situation could never have been identified with the present "Seilun:"—

"Shiloh, which is on the north side of Bethel, on the east side of the highway that goeth up from Bethel to Shechem, on the south of Lebonah" (Lebanon).

Shiloh is ten miles south of Shechem, and twenty, five north of Jerusalem. The area of both the kingdoms of Israel and Judah at the death of Solomon was scarcely 13,000 square miles, or rather more than that of the six northern counties of England. The kingdom of Judah was rather less than Northumberland, Durham, and "Westmoreland, 3683 square miles; the kingdom of Israel nearly as large as Yorkshire, Lancashire, and Cumberland, 9433 square miles; and if Jeroboam, living B.C. 957, could bring into the field 800,000 fighting men of twenty years old and upwards (see Numb. i. 3), the whole population of Israel may perhaps have amounted to about four millions.

POPULATION.

Reckoning from similar data, when Asa some thirty years afterwards brought into the field 580,000 men, it would imply a population of nearly three millions in Judah, or seven millions in both kingdoms.

The population of the counties above named in our own country was, by the census of 1861, over four millions. That of London is now supposed to be more than three millions (and this has increased by the number of half a million in the last ten years). It may give us a (p. 76) comparative idea of the whole Hebrew population in the palmiest days of their dominion to suppose that it more than doubled that of London, or was by a third larger than the population of our northern counties. For a sparsely peopled country of similar size and character to Palestine, we may look at Wales with its million of people, but the well-nigh sevenfold populousness of Syria in the past is well attested by universal witness, and we need not doubt it.

We pass within the borders of the Land, aware of its small extent; that its length from Dan to Beersheba is not two hundred miles, and that the breadth of Western Palestine, from Jordan to the Mediterranean, is rarely more than fifty. We behold it as it is, "the

² See "Robinson's Researches," vol. iii., pp. 87, 88.

land of ruins," above all other countries in the world. Not of ruins on a scale like those of Greece, or Italy, or Egypt, but of ruins everywhere; not a hill-top but is covered by the vestiges of some fortress or city of former ages. The Saracens, the Crusaders, the Romans, the Greeks, the Jews, even the Canaanites, have all left their tokens in the land,—so long the "battle-field of Babylon and Egypt," the "high bridge between the Nile and the Euphrates," the "thoroughfare and prize of the world."

And if the above be the picture of Western Palestine, the good land beyond the Jordan, the features of desolation are equally marked in Eastern Syria, especially as inclusive of Hauran and the Lebanon. Here the relics of Baalbec and Palmyra still tower in the wilderness, while hundreds of deserted villages dot the red desert. Eastern Syria has for the last 1500 years nearly, for the last four hundred utterly, been deserted by civilized and almost by nomad population, "desolate with desolation," as the margin reads of Isaiah vi. 11—13:— (p. 77)

"Then said I, Lord, how long? And He answered, Until the cities be wasted without inhabitant, and the houses without man, and the land be utterly desolate,

"And the Lord have removed men far away, and there be a great forsaking in the midst of the land.

"But yet in it shall be a tenth, and it shall return, and shall be eaten; as a teil-tree, and as an oak, whose substance is in them, when they cast their leaves: so the holy seed shall be the substance thereof."

This prophecy was uttered in the year that king Uzziah died, the tenth king of Judah, B.C. 758, rather more than a hundred years before the final resolve of Jehovah concerning their dispersion (see p. 18), as attached to the sin of Manasseh in Jerusalem.

THE CURSE AND THE PROMISE.

For more than five and twenty centuries has Israel now been "outcast," and Judah "dispersed" to the four corners of the earth, hated and slaughtered, despised and oppressed. How is it, that when the Gentiles reckon up her scattered children and count them, "sown among the nations" from all countries, they seem still to be seven millions, no fewer than in the days of their glory! And they are to number yet more than this. The prophet Hosea confirms the promise to Abraham (Hos. i. 10); he depicts their outcasting and also their return:—

"Yet the number of the children of Israel shall be as the sand of the sea, which cannot be measured nor numbered; and it shall come to pass, that in the place where it was said unto them, Ye are not my people, there it shall be said unto them, Ye are the sons of the living God.

"Then shall the children of Judah and the children of Israel be gathered together, and appoint themselves one head, and they shall come up out of the land: for great shall be the day of (God's seed) Jezreel."

THE SAMARITANS AT NABLOUS.

The last ten years have been fruitful in fresh sketches and interesting descriptions of that remnant of Israel (p. 78) who, under the name of SAMARITANS, yet dwell on the site of the ancient Shechem; about 150 in number, in their humble synagogue, at the foot of Mount Gerizim, a few of them worship still—the oldest and the smallest sect in the world.

Distinguished by their noble physiognomy and stately appearance from all other branches of the race of Israel, they are left "in the midst of the land," as the gleaner grapes when the vintage is done. Some graphic details from the pen of George Grove,

Esq., who visited them in October 1861,³ will introduce the reader to this singular people. This gentleman was so fortunate as to be present at their celebration of the Yom-Kippoor, or Day of Atonement, the one only fast which they keep in the year, with ultra-Jewish rigour. Not any food then passes their lips for twenty-four hours, and during that time the whole Pentateuch is recited from beginning to end by the priests, and all the congregation with them as far as their memories allow, in a sort of plain song, but in hideous discordance. Meantime their unfortunate children wail and cry from hunger and thirst, which must not be satisfied. Towards the close it becomes a furious race of screeching recitation; then the worshippers approach and kiss, or touch, the rolls of the Law, and are dismissed with a blessing to their pipes, for smoking is generally their first refreshment.

Mr. Grove was present at the beginning of the recitation in the evening, and left them to continue it through the night. He rejoined them the next afternoon about two hours before the close, and gives us the following picture, in words, of what he saw and heard:— (p. 79)

RECITATION OF THE LAW.

"The sound of the service was much the same as it had been last night, only, if possible, more discordant; but the aspect of the scene was most pleasing, and struck me even more than at first. Many of the men were models of manly beauty, tall and dignified in form, and with lofty, open, and most engaging countenances. There is no posture in the world more noble and graceful than that in which Orientals sit on the ground. But all these were not sitting. A few were standing in a still more striking posture; propped up against the wall, like Belisarius in the well-known picture, on long staves, and holding out both hands in an attitude of deprecation or adoration.

"The pure white dresses, just relieved by the little dash of colour in the crimson tarbooshes, emerging from their white turbans, or of a red or yellow scarf escaping here and there; the quaint charm and glister of the antique glass chandeliers, the venerable vaults above, and the rich solid hue of the carpets under foot, were all tempered by the sweet soft light of the Eastern afternoon as it flowed in at the door, or wavered down from the apertures overhead—these things combined to form a picture, which, to a deaf man, would have been without alloy, and was so beautiful as to make even me (who am not deaf) forget the discordant voices for a few moments as I contemplated it.

"When at length the two great songs, with which Deuteronomy concludes, had been reached, there was a general stir, and a movement towards the front of the sanctuary. The priests came forth from behind a curtain of dull red and gold, clad in dresses of very light green satin down to the feet, and the recitations proceeded with (p. 80) greater clamour and impetuosity than ever. Then the two great rolls, which, according to the Samaritans themselves, have stood to them in the place of the ancient glories of their temple ever since its destruction, and have certainly been the desire and despair of European scholars since Scaliger's time, were brought forth, enveloped in coverings of light blue velvet, and placed on a sloping stand in the centre of a recess. And at last the reading of the law was ended, amidst a perfect tumult, by the reiteration of one syllable—AH or LAH— at least thirty times.

"Then the two priests again emerged from behind the curtain, this time with a white cloth, or shawl, covering the head, and reaching nearly to the knees; they put off the

³ • Vacation Tourists' Notes of Travel, Vol. ii. Macmillan and Co. 1862.

velvet coverings, and exposed the cases of the rolls to view. That to the right was bright silver, and evidently of modern make, the other puzzled me more. It was too distant for me to see any of its details, but the whole effect struck me as being Venetian Oriental work, of the time of those fine silver and silver gilt articles which have been reproduced lately by Elkington in London. This was the signal for prostrations, fresh prayers, and fresh responses, which lasted at least a quarter of an hour.

"And now came the great event of the day, and of the year. The priests opened the cases, so as to expose their contents to view; and then, with their backs to the congregation, and their faces to Mount Gerizim, held them up over their heads, with the sacred parchments full in view of the whole synagogue. Every one prostrated himself, and that not once, but repeatedly, and for a length of time. Then the devout pressed forward to kiss, to stroke fondly, to gaze on the precious treasures. Several children were allowed to kiss. Fresh (p. 81) intoning and vociferation followed, which I can compare to nothing but the Psalms for the day as performed at St. George's-in-the-East during the riots, when a majority SAID and a minority SANG them; and even that wanted the force and energy which here lent such a dreadful life to the discord. These responses, I was afterwards told, were avowals of their beliefs in Jehovah and in Moses.

"At intervals during this time the kissing and stroking of the rolls, as they lay in state on the sloping stand, was going on to an extent which must seriously injure them, and would be fatal if it happened oftener. The one in the old case was the favourite, for it is brought out with great reluctance, and all kinds of subterfuges are resorted to to avoid showing it to travellers.

"My weariness now became extreme, and meanwhile the poor fainting children lay strewn around, like so many Ishmaels in the last stage of existence for the want of water and food. At last the Holy Books were consigned to their retirement behind the veil, there to remain for another year, and by degrees the community dispersed. A little lamp was lowered from the ceiling, lighted, and left burning in the twilight before the sanctuary, and the *Yom-Kippoor* for the year 1270 (as the Samaritans reckon, according to the Mohammedan era) was at an end.

CASE OF THE GREAT ROLL.

"Later in the evening, when all the rest of the quarter were in bed, through the good offices of my host, he and I met the priest at the synagogue, and in consideration of a liberal BACKSHEESH, and the present of my knife, I was allowed to examine the *case* of the Great Roll, and even to make some rubbings of parts of it— very imperfectly, for I had not at all the proper things (p. 82) DATE OF THE CASE. with me. He began by assuring me it was 1400 years, old. I told him if he took away 1000 years, I thought he would not be far from the truth, and so it proved, for not only was my former conjecture confirmed, but on examination, the priest himself found a date which he read as equivalent to A.D. 1420.

"It is a beautiful and curious piece of work; a cylinder of about two feet six inches long and ten or twelve inches in diameter, opening down the middle. One of the halves is engraved with a ground plan of the Tabernacle, etc., showing every post, tenon, veil, piece of furniture, vessel, etc., with a legend attached to each, all in raised work. The other half is covered with ornament only, also raised. It is silver, and I think (but the light was very imperfect) parcel gilt. My visit would, no doubt, have been very much resented by the community if they had known of it; and the feeling of this added to it a curious

zest. As it was, I could not help fancying that I was committing sacrilege; stealing in in the dark and thus handling holy things. Of the roll itself I say nothing, partly because, knowing nothing of the subject, I hardly looked at it; and, partly, because it had been thoroughly examined by, or for, a Russian Jew named Levisohn, at Jerusalem, who is devoting himself to the Samaritan Pentateuch, and will very soon publish his discoveries."

VISIT OP THE TRINCE OP WALES TO NABLOUS.

The visit of His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales to Nablous during the summer of the year 1862, has served to draw renewed attention to the precious manuscript above described, and to the Fountain of Inspiration at the source whence it sprang.

The wonderful art of photography has lent its aid to



THE SAMARITAN PENTATEUCH.

(p. 83) THE ROYAL VISIT. repeat and prolong the enjoyment of the Royal tour; and by expending a shilling the humblest Englishman in London might have followed in the route, and beheld the *Shechem* of the Old Testament, the *Sychar* of the New, the Neapolis or *Nablous* of modern days, nestling between the Mounts of cursing and blessing, the *Ebal* and *Gerizim* represented at the beginning of this chapter, our woodcut being an excellent representation of the photograph.⁴

By the gracious permission of His Royal Highness, and also of Mr. Bedford, the photographer, we are also able to present to our readers a beautiful woodcut of the celebrated Roll in its Case, from that most pictorial sun-painting which memorialized the Prince's visit. The silken embroidered cover is here distinctly visible. The character in which the MS. is written is given below:

⁴ A collection of photographic pictures, taken during the tour in the East of His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales, was exhibited on his return for some months at the German Gallery, 168, Kew Bond Street.

THE SAMARITAN ALPHABET.



It is called the Samaritan, and is the oldest form of Hebrew. The people who use it consider the square Chaldaic alphabet introduced by Ezra as a most wicked innovation. Their own dialect was never spoken beyond their own limits, and now belongs only to their manuscript, for the few remaining guardians speak Arabic, the tongue of their Mohammedan conquerors. They are, however, taught their ecclesiastical language. "I (p. 84) SAMARITAN PENTATEUCH. brought away," says Mr. Grove, "a primer, from which the little Samaritans are taught in the school at Nablous, and it is covered with the thin sprawling form of venerable letters, much more rude and complicated than the usual Samaritan type in the Polyglots."

The Samaritans say that their roll is the identical one written by Abishua, the great grandson of Aaron, fourth high priest, but even more reasonable critics carry its date back to centuries before the coming of our Lord.

The Jews "had no dealings with the Samaritans," but the Saviour had. He abode among this people for two days, after conversing with the woman of Samaria as He sat on the well at this same Sychar, and "many believed because of His own word." Did He point them to this copy of their venerated law, and determine that it should endure among them till the hour of His coming again as a witness to Him in the place of its earliest utterance in the Land of Promise?

However that may have been, in Nablous alone are found the remnant of these few Samaritans. Their race has died out of Cairo, Gaza, and Damascus—where they used to be occasionally met with,—and amidst all the vicissitudes of all these years, Gerizim, the oldest sanctuary in Palestine, has retained its sanctity to the end.

There are copies of that priceless treasure, the SAMARITAN PENTATEUCH, in Europe. There were copies in the early Christian era; yet its existence was lost sight of for a thousand years, until it was inquired for by the great writer, Scaliger, about three hundred years ago, and then the learned men of Europe opened a negotiation with the Samaritans to obtain fresh copies. It was not, however, till 1623 that a fac-simile seems to have reached the library of the Oratoire in Paris. In 1630, Archbishop Usher obtained six copies, and about seven- (p. 85) teen are now in England, which have been critically examined. Six of these are in the Bodleian Library at Oxford, and one (in the form of a book) in the Cotton Library in the British Museum. They are all written either on parchment or on silk paper; one of them is attributed to the eighth century, the age of Mohammed. This treasure has, of course, been multiplied by printing it. It was printed first from the copy in Paris, and afterwards as corrected from three of Archbishop Usher's MSS. for the London Polyglot.

The copies of the Samaritan Pentateuch differ in some points from the Hebrew. That these differences are at least 2000 years old is rendered very probable, by many of them being found also in the Greek Septuagint, which translation is known to have been made in the third century, B.C. The discrepancies chiefly concern the chronology, as the Samaritan gives 3044 years between the Deluge and the Birth of Christ. The Hebrew

gives 696 years less = 2348; the Septuagint 672 years more = 3716. The authority of the Hebrew is generally considered paramount.

ISRAEL AND JUDAH.

With the Jews, the Passover has long ceased to be more than the feast of unleavened bread; but the Samaritans encamp on the mountain for a whole week, and slay, and roast, and eat the lambs, with their loins girt and staves in their hands, observing the Mosaic Ritual in the most minute particulars. And so in purification and other small enactments, they observe the regulations of the law in a far stricter manner than the Jews of Palestine, or any other country. We know from their letters to Scaliger, in 1589, that they kept up all these things as strictly, three centuries ago as (p. 86) they now do, and this is a strong evidence that many of these observances date from a still earlier age.

That they are a most conservative people there can be no doubt. But then comes the question: What is it they preserve? Are they Israelites? or, are they—as usually seems to be taken for granted—mere heathens, who adopted a mixed Jewish religion for their own ends, and whose whole system is an imposture? I will content myself with naming one or two circumstances which incline me to the belief, that in their seclusion they have preserved many traits of the Israel of the Bible, and of the ancient Worship of Jehovah, which the Jews (properly so called) have lost during their closer intercourse with nations and institutions differing so extremely from their own.

"I use the words 'Israel/' and 'Israelite' advisedly, because, **THOUGH THE JEWS WERE ISRAELITES, YET THE ISRAELITES WERE NOT JEWS.** The word Jew (Judaeus) is really 'Judaeus/' and dates only from the return from Babylon, when Judah became the head and representative of the nation. The Samaritans always call themselves the children of Joseph, and the Jews 'Yehudhim/' or 'Judathites.' Nothing is more striking than their habit of insisting, in the nineteenth century of the Christian era, on the distinction between 'Judah and Ephraim/' with all the strength and animosity that can have been thrown into the terms in the days of Jeroboam or Amaziah. The same distinction constantly occurs in their letters to Scaliger, concerning their MSS.

"It is usually assumed that the kingdom of Samaria was completely cleared of its Israelite population before the Assyrian colonists were sent there. Was this the case? Subsequent occurrences seem to show that it is at least doubtful.

(p. 87) SAMARITAN PRIESTS.

"The 'remnant of Israel' are mentioned in the reign of Josiah, as being sufficiently numerous to make it worth while to collect their subscriptions for the repair of the Temple at Jerusalem. Yet when it came to be rebuilt the leaders of Judah would not hear of receiving their assistance in the work. This was the beginning of strife between them, a strife destined to cause the perpetual isolation of the Samaritan community.

"But it so happened that Manasseh, son of the high priest at Jerusalem, and himself acting high priest, having married a daughter or grand-daughter of Sanballat, the Samaritan chief, was expelled from Jerusalem by Nehemiah, upon which he went over to his father-in-law, with a large number both of priests and laymen, and became the first priest of the sanctuary on Gerizim. Thus the religious establishment of the Samaritans was actually inaugurated by a high priest of Jehovah directly descended from Aaron, in a city, the inhabitants of which, to use the words of Josephus, were chiefly 'deserters from the nation of the Jews.' The facts certainly seem to indicate a very strong connection

between the Samaritan people and ancient Israel. They had at least the true succession in their priesthood."

And it is also to be remembered that a priest of their own people was sent by their conqueror Shalmaneser, to teach "the manner of the God of the land" (who was supposed to be offended) to the people whom that monarch had transferred to this district, after he made it desolate. He had "brought men from Babylon and from Cuthah, and from Ava and from Hamath, and from Sepharvaim, and placed them in the cities of Samaria, instead of the children of Israel." (See 2 Kings xvii.)

(p. 88) SAMARIA'S BLESSING.

It is said that this priest taught them how they should fear the Lord, and perhaps the teaching was not all in vain, though the majority made gods of their own whose fear was mingled with that of Jehovah. (Alas! Israel had done the like.) The mingled seed of their successors have endured much persecution. From the time when Vespasian slaughtered 11,000 of them on their holy mountain, to that of the petty oppression of the Turkish beys, the hand and tongue of every dweller in the East, Heathen, Jew, Mohammedan, seems to have been against them. This persecution has had its usual effect. It has attached them more closely than ever to their faith, and has perpetuated their peculiarities, their rites, their books, and their alphabet, to a degree of minute conservation, which is almost incredible.

The very name Samaritan was with the Jew a term of extreme reproach and contempt; they said to our Lord Himself, "Thou art a Samaritan and hast a devil," John viii. 48. *But the Samaritans expected the Messiah*, John iv. 25, and when He came many of them received and believed on Him. We are thrice told in the Acts of the Apostles that there were churches of God in Samaria, Acts viii. 1, ix. 31, xv. 3. The apostle Philip was a preacher of the Gospel there "working miracles," and the people with one accord gave heed to him and were baptized, both men and women, Acts viii. 5. *By Peter and John they received afterwards the gift of the Holy Ghost*, v. 17. These Apostles preached the Gospel in many villages of the Samaritans, following the example of their Master, who "must needs go through Samaria," and forgot not His ancient ISRAEL.

How interesting would be any relics of these Apostolic Christian Churches! The point in question now, however, is the continued celebration on this very spot (p. 89) of the rites of Ancient Judaism. The population of Shechem is now reckoned at 10,000, who are generally Mohammedans. A dozen or fifteen Jews are found there, and perhaps 100 Greek Christians. Ishmael hath still the dominion over the high places of Isaac.

THE SAMARITAN PASSOVER.

Dean Stanley gives us an account of the celebration of the Samaritan Passover as seen by the Prince of Wales. On the evening of Saturday, the 13th of April, 1862, they ascended Mount Gerizim, and arriving on its rocky platform, found the whole community of 152 persons encamped in tents a few hundred yards below the summit. The women were shut in the tents. Fifteen of the men, with the priest Amram (a Levite), were clothed in long white robes, with their feet bare. This priest has no son to succeed him.

It is only within the last twenty years that the Samaritans, chiefly through the intervention of the English consul, have regained the right to hold their festival on Gerizim. For a long time they celebrated it like the modern Jews in their own houses. Its solemnization on Gerizim is in conformity with Deut. xvi. 15. "A seven days' feast in the place the Lord thy God shall choose."

"Half an hour before sunset, all the men gathered round a long trough dug in the ground, and the priest ascending a large rough stone, led a loud chant in praise of Abraham and Isaac. Sometimes they knelt and stretched out their hands towards the holy place on the summit.

"Presently there appeared among the worshippers six sheep, driven up by six youths, dressed in white shirts and drawers. The sun, which had hitherto burnished (p. 90) the Mediterranean, now sank to the ridge overhanging Sharon. The recitation became more vehement, and the whole history of the Exodus, from the plagues of Egypt, was then furiously chanted. The sheep innocently playful, were driven closer together; the setting sun touched the ridge;⁵ the youths with a wild murmur drew forth long bright knives and brandished them aloft, the sheep were thrown on their backs, the knives rapidly drawn across their throats; a few convulsive silent struggles, "as a sheep—dumb—that openeth not his mouth," and the six forms lay lifeless on the ground, the blood streaming from them—the one only Israelitish sacrifice lingering in the world. The young men dipped their fingers in it, and a small spot was marked on the foreheads and noses of the children.

"Two holes had been dug upon the mountain, one comparatively shallow, close to the scene of the sacrifice. In this cavity, after a short prayer, a fire was kindled with a mass of dry heath, juniper, and briers, such as are named in Jotham's parable, uttered not far from this very spot. On this fire two cauldrons of water were heated, while bitter herbs were handed round, wrapped in a strip of unleavened bread.⁶ The water, boiling, was poured over the sheep by the youths, and their fleeces plucked off. Certain parts of the animals were then thrown aside and burnt, and they were afterwards spitted, each on a long pole, at the bottom of which was a transverse stick to prevent the body from slipping off. As we saw the ceremony, no part of the animal was transfixed by the cross stake.
(p. 91) THE CROSS-STAKE.

"The celebration of the rite is thus described by Justin Martyr, in the second century:—

"' The Paschal Lamb,' he says, 'is roasted in a form like that of the Cross. One spit is thrust through the animal from head to tail, and another through its breast, to which its forefeet are attached.'

"He naturally saw in it the likeness of the crucifixion. He was a native of Nablous, and made his observations in the second century, and he draws no distinction between the Samaritan and the Jewish celebration of the Passover.

"The sheep were then carried to the second hole mentioned, a circular pit, with a fire kindled at the bottom. It was about three feet in diameter, and five deep, roughly sheered. The six passover lambs, all now required for the community, were roasted together in this oven, by stuffing them in vertically and carefully head downwards. A hurdle was then placed over the mouth covered with bushes and wet earth, to keep in the heat till the meat was done.⁷

"Five hours or more now elapsed in silence, and most of the party retired to rest; but the Paschal Moon was still bright and high in the heavens, when the announcement was made that the feast was about to begin. The whole male community then gathered round

⁵ "Thou shalt sacrifice the Passover at even, at the going down of the sun."—DEUT. xvi. 6.

⁶ "With unleavened bread and with bitter herbs they shall eat it." —Ex. xii. 8.

⁷ "They shall eat the flesh in that night, roast with fire. . . Eat not of it raw, nor sodden at all with water, but roast with fire."— Ex. xii. 8, 9.

the oven's mouth, and with reluctance allowed any stranger to inspect their proceedings.⁸ The covering of the hole was torn off, and there rose into the still moonlight sky a vast column of smoke and steam.

“Smokes on Gerizim’s Mount Samaria’s sacrifice.’ Reginald Heber.
(p. 92) EATING IN HASTE.

“The six sheep were dragged on their spits back from the oven. They were hoisted aloft, and then thrown on large brown square mats, and wrapped in these, hurried down to the trench where the sacrifice had taken place, and laid in a line between two files of the Samaritans, still in white robes; but now with shoes on their feet, staves in their hands, and ropes round their waists.⁹

“Recitation recommenced, of prayer or Pentateuch, soon as suddenly terminated by their all setting down in Arab fashion, and beginning to eat. The feast was conducted in rapid silence as of hungry men.¹⁰ They tore away the blackened masses piecemeal with their fingers. In ten minutes all was gone but a few remnants. To the priest and the women, separate morsels were carried round. The remains, mats and all, were then burned on a hurdle over the hole where the water had been boiled; the ground being searched in every direction for each consecrated particle.¹¹

“By the early morning the whole community had descended from the mountain, and occupied their usual habitations in the town.”¹²

Such was the wild, pastoral, barbarian, yet still instructive commemoration, witnessed by our Prince of England, of the escape of the people of Israel from the yoke of the Egyptian king.

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

*The author L. N. R., is Ellen Henrietta Ranyard (1810–1879) was founder of the female bible mission.*

*The original footnote symbols were replaced with numbers for the rewrite.*

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>8</sup> A foreigner shall not eat thereof; no uncircumcised person shall eat thereof.

<sup>9</sup> "Thus shall ye eat it; with your loins girded, your shoes on your feet, and your staff in your hand."—Ex. xii. 11.

<sup>10</sup> "Ye shall eat it in haste."—Ex. xii. 11.

<sup>11</sup> "Ye shall let nothing of it remain until the morning; and that which remaineth of it until the morning ye shall burn with fire,;' etc.— Ex. xii. 10, 46; DEUT. xvi. 4.

<sup>12</sup> Thou shalt turn in the morning and go unto thy tents.