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**JOURNAL OF A TOUR IN THE HOLY LAND  
IN MAY AND JUNE, 1840  
BY  
LADY FRANCIS EGERTON**

WITH LITHOGRAPHIC VIEWS, FROM ORIGINAL DRAWINGS,  
BY LORD FRANCIS EGERTON

FOR PRIVATE CIRCULATION ONLY; FOR THE BENEFIT OF THE  
LADIES HIBERNIAN FEMALE SCHOOL SOCIETY

LONDON  
PRINTED BY HARRISON AND CO., ST. MARTIN'S LANE  
M.DCC.XLI

(Page 50) ..... We now proceeded to the house of the Samaritan Patriarch, a venerable old gentleman with a milk-white beard, and surrounded by his children to the third generation. Her we sat upon our heels, and partook of coffee and sherbet as usual, and discoursed a little by means of Assaad, after which we went to the Samaritan Church, in which is kept this famed copy of the Pentateuch. It was produced by the Rabbi and shown to us. They affirm it to be 3000 years old, and to be the writing of Phineas, the grandson of Aaron; at the captivity of the ten tribes it was buried, say they, in the ground, and afterwards dug up and preserved by one of the brethren who returned to Samaria; they also affirm that it has never been out of this place. I should wish for further evidence of these things before I can (page 51) attach any credit to this account; the appearance of the manuscript did not impress me with the notion of its being anything like so ancient as they pretend. It would be desirable, however, that it should be examined by competent authorities, and collated with other versions, particularly as the Samaritan version of the Pentateuch varies from that of the Hebrews. They next produced an original letter, written to them by some Samaritan brethren in India about 160 years ago. The occasion of its being written was this: 160 years ago, an Englishman of the name of Roberts, informed the Samaritans of Nablous of the existence of some of their brethren in India. Upon this the Nablous Samaritans sent them a copy of the Pentateuch, but with one chapter short, with a view to ascertaining whether they would discover the omission. They did discover it, as the letter will show. In return for this the Indian Samaritans sent to their brethren of Nablous, a printed copy of the Pentateuch, in three or four languages, together with the subjoined letter; both of which were shown to us. They were obliging enough to send us a copy of this letter, translated into Arabic. Assaad having interpreted it for us, I have given it below.

(Page 52) *Letter of the Samaritans of India to those of Nablous.*

“In the name of God, our God, who has built up our souls by his righteousness, who has sent Moses his Prophet and, by his hand, his Law;- Who has commended to us, and caused to exist, the Holy Mountain of the Statues, (Mount Gerizim,) and the House of the Almighty; we send our peace, O Israel our brethren, who dwell in the Holy Land of Canaan with the great priest, Peace be unto you!  
\*\*\*\* We inform you that your letter has come unto us, and we learn that you are the holy people,

pure from all uncleanness, and that amongst you are men of learning and ability. We have noticed your sweet words, also the Bible which you have sent has reached us. It is a holy faithful law, but it is short one chapter. Blessings be upon all Israel! You have also mentioned the keeping of the Sabbath and the feast. We do what you do. One law is come unto us both, with the exception of the Passover. (Which they can only sacrifice on Mount Gerizim.) We pray every evening and morning, and all the unclean things you have mentioned. We have a high-priest full of all learning, honouring the name of the Most High. He is descended from Phineas, the son of Eleazar, and he dwells in the (page 53) city of Aknuz\*. He numbers his flock twice a year, and in this year their number is 127,968. The Levites are 2600, and they dwell in seven provinces. We are under the government of the Afingay; (query, Affghan<sup>†</sup>) Every year we pay them each man one shekel of the shekels of Jerusalem. The name of the chief we have now is Zdud, of the tribe of Ashur, and for forty years he has dealt in righteousness, and employed all his energies in preventing evil. He dwells in the city of Aknuz, the largest in our country. We have seventy elders and I am one of them, and my name in Joseph, the son of Gilead of the sons of Nun. We have governors and learned men, and we have twelve judges. Our prayers are many, and each feast has its own prayer. On each Sabbath we take our books and read the lessons to the people, on the feast we take out the fire, as also on the tenth day of the fast. \*\*\*\* The day of our fasting is not like that of the Jews, for we have abstained from their ways. In the time of prayers we sing hymns and read a chapter of Joshua and the ten commandments. We calculate the time in a true way, and we know the eclipses of the sun and moon, and thus we know the beginning of the year, the month of (page 54) April and the seventh month. We cannot reach the land of our Fathers. We do not burn fire on the Sabbath-day, or on the day of atonement. \*\*\*\* We pay tithes to the Levites, and also make offerings to God as Moses has commanded. You have requested us to send you a book of the Law; the Law is *one*, (meaning that having one law in common, it was unnecessary to send it; they did, however, send a copy of the Pentateuch,) and you have asked of us two men of learning. Know ye, O our brethren, that we cannot reach you by sea on account of the Sabbath, (alluding to the Jewish law, which does not admit of travelling on the Sabbath-day,) but if you can send us any person we will pay his expenses. (It appears they were less scrupulous on this head for their friends than for themselves.) We beseech you to salute on our part the High Priest, and our brethren the elders, so that they may intercede for us, and we shall do the same for them. \*\*\* Send us the book of Joshua, the son of Nun, as also the book of Prayers, and inform us whether the altars still exist on the Mount of the Covenant (or statues), and whether the rock of the Word (or Joshua's altar) is still preserved, and whether you are walking as he ordered you. Whether the Messiah is come, and what is his name. Give (page 55) us the details of all this, and the names of the cities in which you dwell, that we may know the facts. Also how many wives you take, for we cannot take more than two by the law, but the sons of Judah take four. But it is better for us to keep the statues of our fathers, as they were delivered by the hand

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\* We were unable to make out from these people from what part of India this communication emanated, and their pronunciation of the names of the places necessarily gave no light upon the subject.

<sup>†</sup> See Appendix C (page 136) In Vol. I. of the Supplement to Sir William Jones's works, we find a translation of the *History of the Afghans*, by Mr. H. Vansittat, by which it appears that they derive their own descent from the Jews. On this history, Sir William Jones writes the following note. "This account of the Afghans may lead to a very interesting discovery. We learn from Esdras, that the ten tribes, after a wandering journey, came to a country called Arsaret, where we may suppose they settled. Now the Afghans are said by the best Persian historians to be descended from the Jews; they have traditions amongst themselves of such a descent, and it is even asserted that their families are distinguished by the names of Jewish tribes, although, since their conversion to the Islam, they studiously conceal their origin....." "Every- (page 137) thing considered, I think it by far the most probable that the Afghans are the descendants of the Jews who were led away captives by the Assyrian kings." **Dr. Adam Clarke's Commentary on 2 Kings xvii.**

of Moses our Lord. May God take you, and cause you to reside on the mountain of His Majesty! May he raise you in the day of resurrection, and may He reward you according to His riches! And now be not backward in writing to us, for your letters are very delightful, like the books of the law.  
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“We have written this, 20<sup>th</sup> April, year of the world, 6112.”

We had a visit in our camp this morning from the priest of the Christian church at Nablous. He is a friend of Assaad's. His flock consists of forty families or individuals, I could not accurately learn which; probably the former, as he has in addition to it twenty-five children, whom he educates in a school. May not this be a remnant of the Church founded by our Lord? For we read that after his conversation with the woman of Samaria, he abode two days at Sychar, and many believed on him there.

*Wednesday, May 13<sup>th</sup>.*

This morning we rode up Mount Gerizim. The ascent is steep to the greatest degree, and (page 56) requires about an hour and a quarter. At the summit is a fine view, but, being hazy, we could not discover Mount Lebanon satisfactorily. The fertile valley in which the Israelites lay encamped, when, by the command of Moses, Joshua blessed them from Mount Gerizim, and cursed them from Mount Ebal, stretched beneath us. The mountains however are infinitely too high to admit of those blessings and curses being heard by those for whose comfort and admonition they were intended \*. We were escorted by a Samaritan Jew who acted as Cicerone. This expedition was a curious one, inasmuch as we had an opportunity of examining into the peculiar tenets of the Samaritan Jews, with regard to these two mountains. In our version of both Deuteronomy and Joshua, God commands that an altar shall be raised on Mount Ebal, whereon burnt-offerings are to be offered up, and He also directs that the stones which Joshua was required to erect in Gilgal, to commemorate the passage over Jordan, shall be carried up that mountain.-(See Joshua iv. 8; Deut. Xxvii.) The Samaritan version, however, has it, that Mount Gerizim was the place commanded, and they consequently ascend it twice a year, and sacrifice to the Lord their God. They also affirm (page 67) that the sacrifice of Isaac took place *there*, and not on Mount Moriah, according to our version. On examining the top of the mountain, we found some very curious remains. There appears to be a sort of stone platform placed there, which, at first sight, has the appearance of the solid rock, but which, on closer inspection, is evidently the work of man's hand. These stones are put together after the fashion of those remains usually termed Cyclopean. The platform is on a slight inclination, declining to a deep arched pit. Now what can this be? The Samaritans declare it to be the altar which Joshua erected. It has not the appearance of an altar such as we commonly understand the term to indicate, but it seems to be a work in which no edged tool has been used, and its inclination to the pit may have been a means of allowing the blood of the victims to run off. Should this be Joshua's altar, it would be a strong testimony in favour of the Samaritan version of the passage in question, and I understand, moreover, that Dr. Kennicott defends it. Be it as it may, it would, I think, be very desirable that persons competent to judge, should visit the place, that the question may be solved. In the afternoon we rode, or rather walked, up Mount Ebal, for the path is not fit for horse. I was anxious to ascertain whether there were anything in the shape of an altar *there*, but the guide took us to the wrong part of the mountain. We should have (page 58) gone to the eastward, where it overlooks the plain opposite Mount Gerizim, in which, doubtless, the Israelites were camped. We found nothing, and had a severe tug of it. ....

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\* I have seen in some book of travels an affirmation that upon a still, calm day, the voice from the summit of these mountains would be heard in the plain beneath. I confess I should conceive this quite impossible.

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

In 1840 the Samaritan High Priest would have been High Priest Shalma b. Tabia.

Calculating the 'year of the world, 6112,' which seems to corresponds to 1840 – 160 years which would be 1680 ce. The Samaritan Israelites conclude that this is 6440 (as of today Dec. 26, 2010) – 6112 (when letter was written) = 328 years ago. 2010- 328 years = 1682 CE. Concluding that the calculations are correct the letter from the Samaritan in India (today's Afghanistan) was wrote in 1682.