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(p. 159) A SAMARITAN PASSOVER MANUSCRIPT

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SMITH COLLEGE

IN the Forbes Library at Northampton, Mass. is a manuscript of the Samaritan Passover service. It was purchased in 1905, probably in a collection of books, for the library has no special record of its purchase, and the librarian is unable to tell where it came from. It lay for years untouched in the store-room, no one who saw it knowing what it was.

The manuscript is of heavy paper and contains 123 leaves. The leaves are 8 ½ x 5 ½ inclusive, the space written covering 4 ½ x 4 inches, with from 22 to 34 lines on a page. The writing is in general very plain and excellently preserved. The latter part of the manuscript is usually more compactly and obscurely written than the first part. It is bound in heavy embossed leather, but it may be surmised that this is not the original binding, for leaves 12 to 21 are placed between 1 and 2. Leaf 2 is a title page, in Arabic, giving the name of the scribe, Yahud Ibn Ishak, and the date, twenty ninth of Sofar, 1151 (1735 A. D.). Leaf 65 reverse, also repeats the name and date of year.

The manuscript seems to be a complete copy of the Samaritan passover service with all the Scripture readings. Its excellent condition makes it an interesting exemplar of the Samaritan liturgical manuscript. I understand that such liturgical manuscripts are not uncommon, but I doubt if outside the larger libraries many exist which are in finer form or better preservation than this.

Red ink is used abundantly, and occasionally green and brown, as variations from the black of the manuscript. Not only are the (**p. 160**) headings and rubrics usually in red, but it is used in the text for purely decorative purposes. Alternate lines are sometimes in color. Sometimes colored inks are used to make a symmetrical design on a page of prose (leaf 90), and occasionally lines of verse are arranged in triangles of alternative red and black (leaves 85, 86). Purely decorative designs are not uncommon.

The Passover service as given in the manuscript corresponds in general to the liturgy as printed in Cowley, *The Samaritan Liturgy* (Oxford 1909), pg. 93—128, except that Cowley does not print the Scripture selections. The headings, which are often in Arabic, frequently vary widely from the printed text; but there is no standard for these. Cowley remarks that they "have no literary character and may be varied according to the will of the scribe. They are very cursively written, often hard to read and harder to explain" (*op. cit.* xlii). Sometimes Arabic and Samaritan characters are used interchangeably.

Variations from the printed texts, however, are by no means confined to the headings. On the reverse of leaf 44 the scribe wrote, in alternate lines of red and black, a passage of 7 lines, and omitted a poem of 20 lines with heading, in Cowley, p. 100,101. A later

scribe has copied the omitted poem, with a variant heading, bottom side up on the margin.

The long passages from the bottom of leaf 54 to 58 reverse are not at that place in Cowley.

The passage beginning with the last line of 60 and continuing to 61 is not in Cowley p. 110, nor do I find it elsewhere indexed.

Leaf 91 contains a poem of 9 lines not in Cowley, but the last 6 lines of the page, to which this is prefixed, are in Cowley, p. 116, line 20 ff. On leaf 92 reverse, instead of the alphabetic poem in Cowley, p. 117, the manuscript inserts a long passage beginning with an account of creation.

In the middle of leaf 95 begins an alphabetic poem, placed by Cowley not in the Passover series, but among the Common Prayers (p. 5, line 10 ff.). The first stanza varies from the printed text and uses \beth at the beginning. The poem is incomplete, closing at the top of leaf 96 with the \beth stanza.

It is followed by another alphabetic poem, but using \aleph instead of \beth at the beginning, copied with variations and from the (p. 161) Common Prayers, Cowley p. 56, line 8 ff. It also is incomplete, ending on leaf 96 reverse with the \beth stanza. At the bottom of leaf 121 begins another alphabetic poem from the Common Prayers, which is found in Cowley, p. 12, the last line, to p. 14. The manuscript here also is defective, omitting the stanzas after \beth , excepting the \beth stanza, with which it ends on leaf 123.

In the Scripture passages there are some readings which seem to be scribal errors; there are readings phonetically accounted for, like the interchange of gutturals; but there are also expansions, condensations and paraphrases. I have had no opportunity to compare these with other manuscripts containing the Scripture passages, which Cowley does not print. There is, however, one notable peculiarity. It is the superabundant use of the word "Joseph" in certain passages from the story of that patriarch, on leaves 8 (reverse), 9, 11, 102, 103. The scribe has inserted the name often once or more in every line. On some pages he has so arranged the text that the repetition of the name falls in a column, extending on leaf 103 from the top to the bottom of the page. Such an extravagant repetition of the word destroys the meaning of many passages and makes their translation quite impossible. It might be called the Samaritan equivalent of the Japanese use of "pillow words" in poetry, used here, not for reasons of meter, but to honor the great Samaritan patriarch. Whether done in other liturgical manuscripts I am unable to say, but the Samaritan Pentateuch as published by Hildesheim, has no such superabundant use of the name.

Comments on this section from the Editor of theSamaritanUpdate.com

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(notes: Forbes Library, Northampton Mass. A manuscript of 1735, now missing)