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Intelligence

WESTERN ASIA.—SAMARITAN JEW.

THE following conversation took place between Mr. Wolff, a Missionary in the employ of the London Jews' Society, and a Jew.

Dec. 29, 1821. Mr. Joseph Damiani introduced me to day to Israel, from Naplus, (Sichem,) Scrivano to a Turkish merchant at Jaffa. He is one of those few descendants of the Samaritans residing at Naplus. He received me with great cordiality ; I addressed myself to him in the Hebrew tongue, he was only able to understand the expression Lasan hakodesh, (the holy language.) I asked him, namely, whether he speaks the holy language, (the Hebrew ;) he showed me three Samaritan manuscripts, the first contained the fourth part of the books of Moses, the second, a book called Mimar, old sermons of their priests, which he affirmed were above 1600 years old, and the third manuscript contained a catechism for the Samaritan youth, which consisted of the Ten Commandments of Moses ; all these manuscripts were written in the Samaritan language, which I was not able to read. Israel is of an amiable countenance ; another Samaritan was there beside him.

I. Do you sell these books?

Israel. No Samaritan will ever sell his books!

I. Are you in the possession of the Prophets and the Psalms of David?

Israel. We do not acknowledge any other prophet besides Moses, we do neither acknowledge Isaiah, nor Jeremiah, nor Ezekiel, nor the Psalms of David, nothing, nothing, nothing but the books of Moses, we despise likewise the Talmud and the Mishna. There is much to be found in the books of Moses, not every one is able to understand them nor can enter into the depth of them.

I. Why do you not believe in the Prophets?

Israel. Ye shall not add unto the word which I command you, neither shall ye diminish ought from it, that ye may keep the commandments of the Lord your God, which I command you.

I. What do you think about Messiah, whether he is already come, or shall come?

Israel. He shall surely come, and his coming will be glorious, a (p. 239) fiery column shall descend from heaven, and we shall see signs and wonders before his coming! Believe me, my lord, I am young, but I have studied the books of Moses diligently.

I. Who shall be the Messiah?

Israel. There shall be two; the first (but not the chief one) shall be Joshua, the son of Nun, the disciple of Moses; the other of the tribe of Joseph.

I. Have you any communication with the Jews.

Israel. No; an enmity from the time of Joseph, the son of Jacob, whose descendants we are, exists between us.

I. What was the cause of your first enmity?

Israel. Joseph was a good child, and beautiful, and beloved of his father; his brethren, Simeon and Levi, hated him, and when his father sent Joseph in the field, an angel appeared to him, and said, " Thy brethren are in Dodaim;" he went to them, they saw him, and tried to kill him; but Judah, who had much authority among his brethren, persuaded them to sell him to a caravan of merchants, and thus came Joseph into Egypt; there he became the first after Pharaoh, and there he begat Manasseh and Ephraim, and we are his descendants. Joseph, our father, has pardoned them their offence, but we his children, would never forget that Joseph, our father, was so rashly treated by his brethren! And from that time is the division, till we finally separated from them, and worshipped no longer at Jerusalem, but upon Gerizim.

I. Will you give me letters for your brethren at Naplus? I love you, and will inquire into your state, and many of my friends in England will be rejoiced to hear more about you.

Israel. With the greatest pleasure will I give you letters; we know that when nations from afar shall come to inquire into our state, the time will not be far off, the time of the redemption, the time of the arrival of the Messiah! Tell me, my lord, are not some of our brethren in England

I. I do not know.

Israel. We have heard that some of our brethren lived in the desert of Moscovia.

I. I would advise you to enter into a correspondence with my friends in England about your nation; I will forward the letters.

Israel. I will give you letters for all my brethren; you may live with them, and they shall love *your lordship*. I. I love you, very much, *my brother*. Israel. What is your name, my lord?

I. *Joseph Wolff*.

Israel. Joseph ? Joseph ? Joseph ? and repeating my name, he looked continually in my face, and said, Yes, I will give you letters; you will not find many Samaritans, but the Lord does not consider the number, he considers those who love him and keep his commandments. God blessed Ishmael, and made him fruitful, and multiplied him exceedingly, and begat twelve princes, and made him a great nation; but he established with Isaac his covenant, and the Lord drove Hagar out of the house of Abraham. He gave Isaac to eat of the (p. 240) manna which was endowed with the tastes of the best fruits of several kinds

I. We do not find the latter observation in the book of Moses.

Israel. I have told you from the beginning, that the book of Moses contains many hidden things, but not every one enters into the depth of them.

I. Have observed that the Samaritans, notwithstanding their rejection of the Talmud, have adopted notions of that book; as for instance, that an angel appeared to Joseph, and of the several tastes the manna was endowed with; fables taken out of rabbinical books. Or, perhaps, the rabbies have taken those notions from the Samaritans. I continued to ask him,

I. Have you still sacrifices ?

Israel. (With a joyful countenance,) Yes, we sacrifice once every year an animal, on the feast of Passover, and we have a high-priest from the family of Aaron.

Poor Samaritans, no fire comes down from heaven to receive your sacrifice, it is no longer a sweet-smelling savour unto the Lord. Come to that High-Priest after the order of Melchisedek, who in the days of his flesh, offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears, unto him that was able to save him from death, and was heard in that he feared! Poor Samaritans, I shall have many things to say of him to you, on my arrival at Naplus. Dear Samaritan brethren! turn your eyes to that High-Priest, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens, who did offer up once a sacrifice for the people's sins, when he offered up himself.

Israel, (continued) I still could tell you more of the mount Gerizim, which was blessed, and mount Ebal, which was cursed, but you will be well informed at Naplus; but I must ask thee a question, my lord—We received some years ago, a letter by the way of Aleppo, which was written in France by two gentlemen, the name of the one was Gragier, but I have forgotten the name of the other.

I. What did they write to you?

Israel. They asked us deep questions, and among others, they asked us the reasons of our having given up the trial to seek every year for such and such an ox? Dost thou know, my lord, whether Gragier, and the other whose name I do not remember, reside in a city called Paris?

I. Gragier, is most probably Monsieur Gregoire, and the other, perhaps, Sylvestre de Sacy. I could not understand well the description of that ox, nor was Mr. Joseph Damiani, who interpreted as often as I wanted a word, able to explain to me the meaning of it. I hope to inquire at Naplus; for that kind Samaritan gives me tomorrow letters for Naplus, so that I shall have a lodging in the house of a Samaritan Jew.

On my returning to the house of Mr. Damiani, Assaid Ahya Effendi, formerly commander of the castle at Jaffa, and now residing at Jerusalem, a Mussulman, entered the room of the Consul. As I had just with me the Arabic New Testament translated by Sabat, I showed (p. 241) to him, and desired him *to* read something in it, and tell me his observations about it. He read attentively the genealogy of Matthew, and he exclaimed suddenly, " I observe a great error!"

I. Be so kind as to show me the error.

He showed me Matt. i. 24, and said, " And took unto him his wife," this is not true, for Jcsus was not the son of Joseph, the Nabi, (prophet.)

I. The following verse answers your difficulty, " And knew her not, till she had brought forth," &c.

Assaid Ahya Effendi. Then the word *wife* is not well chosen, he ought to have said *bride*. The second error he found, was, that Matthew ought not to have said, Joseph was a just man; but that he was a *Nabi*, (prophet.)

He gave me n letter of introduction to a learned Mussulman at Jerusalem, whose name is Said Effendi, who will give me lessons in Arabic.

Dec. 30, 1821. Israel, the Samaritan, called again on me, and gave me a letter of introduction to his relatives at Naplus, the ancient Sicheim. I asked whether they had the book of Joshua; he told me that they are only in possession of the history of Joshua, but the book itself is lost. I asked further, what do you think about the character of those men whom Jews and Christians consider as prophets?

Israel. Those persons have been the reasons that the schism among the Jews became every day stronger and stronger, and the enmity from the times of Joseph was established for ever. Ali, an old man, called by the Jews Elijah, came to the king of Samaria, who was a young man, and he (Ali) thought himself not honoured enough by the young king, and therefore, went about and exasperated the minds of the people against their king. Certainly, that was not the reason Elijah grieved, but rather that Ahaziah inquired of Beelzebub, as if there was not a God in Israel.