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THE SAMARITANS' PASSOVER FEAST IN 1880.

THE Rev. J. G. Wilson, writing from Jerusalem, communicates to a contemporary the following account of the celebration this year :—" The Passover feast of the Samaritans was celebrated at Nablous, the ancient Shechem, on the 14th day of the month Nisan, the 23rd (p. 206) of April. On the preceding day the congregation camped on mount Gerizim for a festival of seven days. There were thirty tents arranged in parallel lines, with a broad avenue between them, on one side of those who were permitted to eat the Passover, on the other of those who, on account of ceremonial uncleanness, might not even eat of it; and without the camp, an enclosure of stone fence, were three or four tents of those who might not even enter into the congregation. The ceremonies commenced at 12 M. with prayers and chants, led by the high priests. Then the lambs—there were seven of them,—after having been examined and pronounced to be perfect and without blemish, were slain, the knife for the sacrifice having been given by the high priest to the executioner. The animals having been slain, the people dipped their fingers into the streaming blood and crossed or marked their foreheads with the symbol of the covenant and embraced and kissed one another, as if in an ecstasy of joy. In a short time the lambs were fleeced and dressed (nearly all the congregation participating in the labour), and placed on spits, a long sharp-pointed pole being thrust through each, one end placed on a hurdle, a framework of poles and branches, and carried to the mouth of the oven, where was another ceremony of prayers and chants, after which they were deposited in the oven, the heads downwards, each one sustained by the spit, a stake having been driven through the pole about two feet from the end, and the top of the pole extending above the mouth of the oven Then the hurdle was placed over the oven and covered with green grass, and this was covered over with mortar and closely packed. Then the people returned to their tents for rest and refreshment. The lambs remained in the oven three or four hours, and were thoroughly roasted or steamed, for the mark of fire was not found on the wood. At one half-hour before the setting of the sun—which at the Orient is 12 o'clock—the trumpet was sounded, and the people again assembled, and after prayers the oven was opened and the flesh distributed in seven large baskets, and placed side by side on the green sward, covered with carpets, and half-an-hour was spent in prayers, chants, genuflexions, and prostrations, with their faces to the ground, and all the while facing the highest summit of the mountain, a little distance east by south, for wherever they may be the Samaritans worshipped towards the Holy Mountain. After the ceremonies the feast began of bread and flesh, portions being sent on plates to the tents of the women, who do not participate in the formal and public ceremonies. The ceremonial observances were performed in a decorous and graceful manner. The high priest especially and his nephew, the son of the late high priest—for it is not the son that inherits the priesthood, but the eldest son of the family—are models, physically, of graceful manhood; and generally the people are erect, active, fine-looking, and graceful in all their movements. The high priest claims to be a lineal descendant of Aaron."

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This reference is not listed 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