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**Egyptian Sepulchres and Syrian Shrines
Including Some Stay in the
Lebanon, at Palmyra, and in Western Turkey**
By **Emily A. Beaufort**

With Illustrations in Chromo-Lithography and on Wood,
From Sketches by the Author, and a Map
In Two Volumes
Vol. II.

London: Longman, Green, Longman, and Roberts
1861

(p. 75)....

Noble and grand as Samaria must have been, the site of Nablous is more picturesque and beautiful. The town is fixed on a low eminence damming up the centre (p. 76) of the narrow valley—almost hidden by, but with its domes and minarets rising out of the rich olive gardens and deep foliage of all kinds; the one is proudly "set upon a hill," the other lies nestling in the shade. There are not many cities older than Nablous,—the "place of Sichem " was known in the days when Abraham pitched his tent in the forest of terebinth, called Moreh, or Moriah, as it is written in the Samaritan scripture—but the city was probably founded by Shechem, son of Hamor, the Prince of the Hivites in the time of Jacob, and it was here that the bones of Joseph were buried after they had been brought up from Egypt; the possession of the "land of Israel" was declared by Joshua when, having crossed the Jordan and taken Jericho and Ai, he advanced straight to this valley, and having ascended Mount Ebal, built an altar, on which he offered sacrifices, and read out to the people all the words of the Law of Moses. Abimelech the unworthy Judge, and Rehoboam the wicked king, were both proclaimed here, and Shechem was for some time the capital of the kingdom of the Ten Tribes; it had originally fallen to the lot of Ephraim, but was afterwards chosen as a Levitical city. When the Assyrians came to Syria under Tiglath Pileser (Arbaces), all the wealthy or influential inhabitants of Samaria were carried off, and made emigrants by force to the countries watered by the Euphrates,—their places were filled by various peoples brought from other parts of the vast Assyrian empire—and again, in the invasion of Shalmaneser, the same thing took place, and still more strangers were brought into the land — probably it was chiefly the men who were carried off, and the Assyrians who took their places married the Samaritan women who had remained in the country. These people, who went under the generic name of the (p. 77) Cuthaeans, each served idols after the custom of the several countries they had come from, until, having suffered much from wild beasts and disease, they began to think that they must be offending the "God of the land:" so they petitioned for the return of one of the priests who had been carried from hence into exile, and under his instructions, they "feared the Lord," keeping up, however, their own idolatry at the same time. The restored priest of Samaria, who established himself at Bethel, probably taught them to worship Jehovah under a visible image—that of the golden calf set up by Jeroboam, until the good king Josiah, by breaking all their images, forced them ostensibly at least to worship

Jehovah: they are believed at this time to have received the Pentateuch from the hands of the King of Judah. It was in consequence of this strange anomaly—the mixture of idolatry and true religion—that the Samaritans or Cuthaeans were refused a share in the building of the Temple under Zerubbabel, and although closely intermixed with a few of the old Jewish families of Samaria they were ever cordially hated by the Jews. In the time of Darius, Manasseh, the brother of Jaddoua, the High Priest of Jerusalem, who had married the daughter of the Persian Satrap of Samaria, Sanballat, got permission from the Persian king to set up a rival temple on Mount Gerizim, of which he was himself to be High Priest; and a few years after it was duly established, the people of Shechem—a mixture of old Assyrian colonists, a few older Ephraimites, and those Jews who did not choose to conform themselves to the stricter laws and vigorous reforms of Ezra and Nehemiah—declared it their opinion that Moses had clearly indicated their mountain, Gerizim, as the place whereon the sanctuary was to be established; they rejected all (p. 78) Jewish traditions, as well as the Books of the Prophets, accepting the five Books of the Pentateuch as the only really sacred Scripture. Seventy-six years after the Samaritans applied to Alexander the Great to accord them the same favours as he had accorded to the Jews, but as they could not reply with a direct affirmative to his question whether they were Jews or not, he said he would tell them his wishes at another time, and meantime, he accepted their addition of 8000 men to his army, to whom he afterwards assigned lands in the Thebaid. On his return from Egypt he found the governor he had left in Samaria had been foully murdered, and he expelled the Samaritans entirely from the city; they settled at Shechem, at the foot of Gerizim, and when Antiochus Epiphanes forbade the celebration of the Jewish religion under pain of death, they declared themselves descendants of the Baal-worshippers of Sidon, and dedicated their temple to Jupiter Olympius. This Temple was entirely destroyed by John Hyrcanus, the Jewish prince, in B.C. 129, but the Samaritans, with their hatred to the Jews redoubled, continued to perform their own rites on the ruined site of their 200-years-old Temple. Vespasian rebuilt the city and called it Neapolis (whence its present name of Nablous), but it is believed that the temple on Gerizim was never rebuilt. The message of salvation through Christ was first taught here by the Saviour Himself in His memorable conversation with the woman at the well, and afterwards by the Apostles, and Christianity appears to have flourished here early, bishops and martyrs bearing witness to the true faith. One church was enclosed in a strong fortress built by the Emperor Justinian, and there were probably others. The Samaritans had colonies in Gaza, Damascus, Cairo, and even in some parts of Europe, but the little community of 133 souls at Nablous are all that now exist in the (p. 79) world. They believe Mount Gerizim to be the Moriah on which Abraham was ordered to sacrifice his son Isaac, because of its original name, but the distance from Beersheba would appear to be far beyond the foot journey in three days, of men laden with wood.

The first person we saw, on reaching Nablous, was Jacob Shellaby, a Samaritan who went to England some years ago, and having interested very many learned and pious clergy and laymen in the present state of the Samaritan sect, returned to his home with a rich harvest of subscriptions to aid in their education and general improvement. He speaks English well, but he can neither read nor write in *any* language, even Samaritan, although he professes to be able to do so: as he is the showman-general of the place, and we then knew no other, we set out under his guidance to see the schools, &c. He took us first to his own house to show us a large stone covered with an inscription cut in Samaritan characters, which he says he found fixed in a wall in a dark lane, where a Samaritan synagogue once stood. He told us the

inscription was of the Ten Commandments, but on his giving us a copy of a translation made by Mr. Rogers, the English Consul at Hhaiffa, we found it was a short summary of the first chapter of Genesis, in which the name of God is given as "the Ancient;" but it is written *Shema*, which Rabbi Schwartz says, quoting from the Talmud, was the word used by the Samaritans to express GOD, from the name of the idol worshipped by those who came from Hamath (see 2 Kings xvii. 30), an idol made in the form of a goat; the idol of those who came from Cutha was made in the form of a cock, and called *Nergal*, which meant a bird, and Schwartz says that they had a bird carved in wood always fastened on the upper end of the rolls of the Law. Dr. Levisohn, however, a learned Jew, who since his conversion to Christianity has devoted himself to the study of the Samaritan Pentateuch while living in Jerusalem, maintains that the Samaritans are but Hebrews of the tribe of Ephraim, declares that this is all Jewish fable, that they have no carved birds on the Law, and that the word *Shema* here used is *Ha-shema*, "the name," a reverential manner of alluding to a name too holy to give more definitely. The Samaritan language is the same as the Hebrew but written in a different character, the Samaritan character having been formed on the model of the more ancient Phoenician, while what is now called Hebrew, or square writing, was modified from the Samaritan, little by little under the influence of the Chaldean writing, with which the Jews had become familiar in their exile, until at last the more ancient Samaritan finally disappeared among them, and was replaced by the Chaldean character, which is retained to this day, and to which the Palmyrene was closely assimilated.¹ It is interesting to observe an incidental proof that this change had been fully established before the Christian era, in our Lord's reference to the *Yod*, as the smallest of letters (Matt. v. 18), which it is in the later writing, but was not in the Samaritan. When the Asmonean or Maccabean princes restored the Jews to be a free and independent nation, and established a coinage of their own, they inscribed it with the more ancient character, from a natural wish to return to the purer times of Israel's glory; five final letters have been added in the later writing: while the earlier is evidently an alphabet more suited for carving upon wood or stone.

We obtained from Shellaby a copy of this inscription, (p. 81) but we learned afterwards in Jerusalem that though genuine, it is impossible to be sure that the stone is very ancient, as up to fifty or one hundred years ago it was the Samaritan custom to place such inscriptions on the lintels of their doors, and to use them as ornaments on their walls; this one therefore may have belonged to some Samaritan house, taken down to make way for the Mosque which now stands on the site of the old Synagogue.

We then went to the school, which is held in the outer room of the Synagogue. Shellaby said that he paid the schoolmaster entirely from his own funds, and that there were usually about twenty scholars,— at this time there were only ten or twelve, but nearly half the number were girls—quite a new admission into a Samaritan school. One pretty little creature, who wore quantities of rings and gold ornaments and was about seven years old, read to us with much clearness and fluency, from the Samaritan Pentateuch, blushing immensely at this exhibition of her accomplishment. She is the first Samaritan girl who has learned to read, and he said she had been in school only eight months; she, as well as all the other children, had the most extraordinary ears — large round constructions of flesh falling forward like elephant's flappers; they were intelligent looking children.

The Synagogue is a small low room, with two recesses, in one of which the Law is kept behind an old curtain, embroidered with a pattern something like censers. It is rolled round

¹ See Munk, p. 437.

two tubes of metal and each end of the vellum is cased in metal — it was wrapped in a crimson velvet embroidered cover: the handwriting on the roll is remarkably fine and firm; the parchment on which it is written is old and torn and has been remounted on (p. 82) another vellum now in its turn alike old, dirty and ragged, at least in the middle,— but the Law is read out from a copy in a book in order that the ancient roll may not be handled. Shellaby affirmed in the most positive and solemn manner that this was really *the* ancient copy—the Roll of the Pentateuch, written, as they affirm by the hand of Abishua, the son of Phinehas, the grandson of Aaron—that is, about three thousand years old—though most of the Samaritans believe that it was written in the time of Moses. But Amram, the High Priest of the Samaritans, assured Mr. Mill² that *the* old copy has *never* been shown to *any one* but a member of their own congregation, and we found afterwards that there was so little dependence to be placed on Shellaby's word, that this is probably the truth. Numbers of dirty, torn books were lying on a shelf at the end of the room, seeming still less cared for than the dirty room itself. A few tin lamps and a broken stool, besides one desk, were the only furniture or ornaments. The men and women sit separate. They assemble in Synagogue every Saturday, and the Roll is read through once in the course of each year. The Priesthood is hereditary, descending from father to son.

Almost at the summit of Mount Gerizim, at the foot of the crowning knoll, there is a level piece of ground, to which the Samaritans ascend four times a year—at the Passover, Day of Atonement, Feasts of Tabernacles and of Dedication,—and pitch their tents here; a small pit in the ground is lined with stones, a fire lighted within it and the paschal lambs, suspended from sticks laid across it, are roasted, or rather baked in the hole: (p. 83) there is another small pit, where they are cleaned, and a trough into which the calcined bones are afterwards thrown; when all is ended the oven is unbuilt, and the stones dispersed, lest infidel hands should touch them. The Passover is eaten standing, with a staff in the left hand, while, with the right, each person seizes from the animal whatever portion of meat he can reach; they afterwards wipe the grease from the hand with handkerchiefs, which are then thrown into the fire — and the remaining bones are burned. They have no objection to Mooslim or Christian being present at the sacrifice, but they must not taste the lamb—and they have been sometimes obliged to pay a penalty of five thousand piasters to a Turkish Governor, rather than allow him to eat of the smallest morsel of it.

A little above this place there is a natural ledge of rock cropping out, divided at rather equal distances by chance cracks,—these, they say, are the twelve stones brought by Joshua from the Jordan. They also declare that a sloping mass of bare, smooth rock near this is the spot where Abraham commenced the offering of Isaac, and they show the natural cavern evidently existing underneath as the pit into which the blood was intended to run off. This sloping rock they believe to have been also the scene of Jacob's vision of the heavenly ladder. Some old ruins on the summit of the mountain (which is 2650 feet high) have been thought to be the remains of the Samaritan Temple, but Dr. Robinson considers them to be some of the stones of the fortress built by Justinian: the church which then stood there is now represented by a small Mooslim wely: probably the Temple of the Samaritans enclosed the sloping rock and that they had chosen it in imitation of the Sacred Rock in the Temple of Jerusalem: they entertain the most (p. 84) profound reverence for it — never approaching it without taking off their shoes — and it is said that they always turn to it — as the Mooslims to the Kiblah — in prayer; there are some very old-looking remains of walls near it.

² The author of "The British Jews," whose acquaintance we had the pleasure of making in Jerusalem.

The view from the summit is extensive — including an expanse of sea, with Jaffa among its green gardens and light-coloured sands,— but it prepares one for the Judaea one is to enter at a very few hours' distance, so barren and dreary are the mountains all round: one is glad to have one last view of pale, blue Hermon.

The eastern end of the narrow valley, in the centre of which Nablous stands, opens out into a small circular plain called the Wady el Mokhua: just before the plain commences there is a semi-circular recess exactly corresponding, on each side of the valley— and hence it *seems* self-evident that this was the spot (as no other appears as suitable), where Joshua assembled the children of Israel, and, ranging six tribes in the one recess on Mount Ebal, and six in the other on Mount Gerizim, with the elders and officers, the judges and the Levites assembled round the Ark in the centre, read out "the blessings and the cursings" and all that was "written in the book of the law." How often, in after times, did these two mountains that then echoed back the solemn words of warning and of promise, resound to the tumultuous shouts of the idolatrous multitudes who brought "strange gods" from their heathen homes to be worshipped in the once holy valley!

Just at the commencement of the little plain the *eye*, as it were, of the valley—are the melancholy remains of "Jacob's Well,"—somewhat further on a little wely marks the site of Joseph's Tomb,—and on the slope of the hill, to the east, "before the city" of Shechem, is the village of Saleem, the ancient Shalim,—there (p. 85) Jacob pitched his tent and built an altar to the Lord God of Israel, "the parcel of ground" which he bought and gave to his son Joseph, and in which Joshua laid the bones which he had brought up from Egypt.

But nearly all one's interest settles in "Jacob's Well," of which now alas! one can see only the site, as even the hole still visible is but the choked up entrance to the vaulted chamber above the well, part of a Church which was standing in the time of Bishop Arculf, A.D. 700: strange, indeed, it seems that a spot, revered alike by Christians and Jews, Mooslims and Samaritans, and a site in which all traditions have ever and ever agreed without shadow of doubt or question, should have been allowed to fall into such a miserable state of ruin and decay,—it will not, however, remain so much longer, for on our inquiring in Jerusalem whether we might be permitted to restore it into use and order, we found that only two or three weeks before, the Greeks had bought it, intending to build a Russian convent around it. The well is said to have been excavated entirely in the solid rock, with the sides hewn smoothly and regularly in a perfect circle—the last measurement known of it gave nine feet in diameter and seventy five in depth,—but it was then probably much filled up at the bottom. There are few sites more interesting to a Gentile than this, few where the scene around has been so little changed in the long intervals of ages—we looked now on the fields that were then "white already to harvest"—yonder is the path by which the "disciples had gone away into the city to buy meat"—women carrying pitchers on their heads were passing to and fro—and towering grandly above us was the head of "this mountain" of Gerizim, to which the Samaritan woman (p. 86) pointed as she spoke of the Temple wherein "our fathers worshipped,"—one fancies one hears the grand message of universal salvation in the spiritual religion of the true and pure heart, echoing silently, as it were, still in this quiet spot,— one enters into the mingled astonishment and joy of the woman, who perhaps had felt something stirring in her heart, a groping after something better and holier than the jumble of idolatrous fetishes around her, who, accustomed only to the harsh bigotry of the narrow-minded Jews, heard now for the first time that religion was confined neither to one place nor to one name—that God was not "like unto gold or silver, or stone, graven by art or man's device," but a

Spirit "in whom we live and move and have our being;"—that Messiah was come neither to judge nor to condemn, nor to destroy, but to save men— to gather them into one fold under one Shepherd, Whose yoke was easy and Whose burden was light— Who was ready to lay down His life for His sheep, and to be "indeed the Saviour of the world."

The Crusaders had a Church in Nablous, which is now of course a Mosque, but the nearly perfect doorway is well worth seeing:—it is in the Gothic style, then prevailing in France, with a good dash of Saracenicism in it—it is very richly and well carved. We found the people of Nablous, unlike their former selves of even only ten years ago, remarkably civil and obliging: the present Governor punishes any instance of incivility in the severest manner, and it is now an agreeable resting-place for travellers: we stayed two days and walked much about the town, admiring the handsome and well-dressed women and children.

(p. 477)....

NOTE III.

ON THE PALMTRENE WRITING.

THE Phoenician (or Canaanite) and Hebrew languages were so nearly identical, as to form but one branch of those languages to which the general appellation of *Semitic* has been given (although some of those who spoke them—*e.g.* the Phoenicians and Ethiopians—were descended from Ham): the Hebrews evidently spoke the same language as that of the people whose (p. 478) country they entered³, but they afterwards imprinted a distinct character of their own upon it, in order to express the religious and moral ideas peculiar to themselves. The characters they employed during their golden age were those now called *Samaritan*, from their being employed to this day by that sect; later on, that is, about the time of Ezra, the Assyrian, or rather Chaldaic, character, became customarily used among the Hebrews, as they had been familiarised with it during their exile in Babylon, and had probably half forgotten their own,—to which, however, the Maccabean princes returned, chiefly out of patriotism, partly perhaps also to facilitate their commerce with the Phoenicians; they therefore placed it on the coins struck during their dynasty; but the use of the Samaritan was limited to the money, for the Chaldaic writing had as completely superseded the stiff, ancient character, as the Chaldaic dialect had superseded the old Phoenician-Hebrew language. The new writing was much more flowing and elegant; and it is in a still more demotic, or cursive, form of this character that the Palmyrene dialect is written — the same letters rendered more regular and more graceful. The actual inscriptions existing at Palmyra are not of an earlier date than the Christian era, but it is believed they they precisely retrace an ancient Aramean character used, or at least understood, by the Hebrews, some centuries prior to this date.— See Munk's *Palestine*. Paris.

³ Witness the men sent by Joshua conversing 'with Bahab, and the Gibeonites and others speaking with Joshua without an interpreter, Josh. ii. and ix., though when such was required it is mentioned as in Gen. xlii. 23; see also Ps. lxxxii. 5. And again the host of Canaanitish names given in Scripture, which are also of *distinctly Hebrew* etymology, such as Baal, Melchizedek, Abimelech, Kirjath Sepher, Kiryathaim, &c., &c though the numerous Egyptian, Assyrian, and Persian names given also, show that it was not the habit of the Hebrew writers to translate names—or at least special mention is made of it when this was done, as in Num. xxxii. 38, Josh, xix 47; and Josephus certainly speaks of the "Hebrew language" and the "Phoenician language " as if they were identical.

This reference is not located 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

Emily A. Beaufort is [Emily Anne Beaufort](#) (1826-1887) (Strangford, Emily Anne (Beaufort) Smythe, Viscountess)

Her husband was **Percy Ellen Algernon Frederick William Sydney Smythe, 8th Viscount Strangford** (November 26, 1826–January 9, 1869) was a British nobleman and man of letters. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Percy_Smythe,_8th_Viscount_Strangford
Emily Anne Smythe (viscountess Strangford.)

Her visit was November 1859.

Many names are mentioned in her book, including Mr. Finn.