Haifa: or, Life in modern Palestine
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(p. 345) SACRED SAMARITAN RECORDS.

HAIFA, Oct. 15.—The chief interest connected with Nablous lies in the fact that it is the residence of the remnant of those Samaritans who were colonized here by Shalmaneser, King of Assyria, when he carried away the children of Israel captive. From the Biblical record (2 Kings xvii.), it would appear that the new settlers were drawn from mixed nationalities and various cities within his dominions. Some came from Babylon itself, some from Hamath, a town between Damascus and Aleppo, and others from Cuthah—probably the Kutha of Arabian geographers, a town and district between the Tigris and Euphrates—some from Ava, which has been identified with the modern Hit, and some from Sepharvaim, once the famous city of Sippara, both cities on the Euphrates, in lower Mesopotamia.

We are also told that the new colonists petitioned the King of Assyria to be taught the religion of the Jews, and that he sent them a Jewish priest to teach it to them, and that they added it on, after a curious fashion, to the various forms of idolatry which they had imported from their different localities, and hence established a mongrel sort of worship, which became afterwards purified, but which nevertheless rendered them especially obnoxious to the Jews of Judea, all the more so because they intermarried with the remnant of the tribes of Israel which had escaped the captivity, thus forming a race as mongrel as their religion. It is about twenty-six hundred years since this event took place, but the ancient worship of the Samaritans exists to this day; so also does the bitter antagonism which they and the Jews entertain for each other.

This is the oldest national feud, probably, in existence, but is as fresh as if it only originated yesterday. Like the Jews, the Samaritans have managed to survive all the vicissitudes (p. 346) of fate, but with the difference that a small remnant has clung through them all to the locality in which they were originally established, though they have dwindled in numbers to one hundred and sixty souls. As an ethnological fraction of antiquity they are, perhaps, the most interesting group of people extant. The first one I ever made acquaintance with was a young man who called upon me in a mysterious manner one day in Haifa. He handed me a document in Arabic, in which, after stating that for certain reasons, which he implied were by no means discreditable to him (he was an outcast from his own people), he implored charity, and requested me "to cast upon him a regard of compassion and benevolence." The document further said:

"All that I have inherited from my parents and ancestors is a manuscript written in ancient Hebrew, nine hundred years old, containing two chapters of the Bible, including the commandments, which I beg to offer you, in the hope that you will recompense me in return by a sum which will relieve my distress."

He signed himself "Shellabi, the son of Jacob, the Samaritan." Now, I knew that Jacob es Shellabi was once the spiritual head of the sect, for he had been in London under the title of "The Prince of the Samaritans," and the romance which attended his style and dignity had, it

was reported, even captivated a fair Englishwoman, who was willing to become a Samaritan for his sake. Fortunately for her "the Prince" was already married, a fact which I believe he only divulged on his return to his native land.

Anyhow, here was the son of a prince in distress, and here was an extremely ancient and curious manuscript for sale. The youth looked such a scamp, however, that he did not enlist my sympathies. I suspected that he had lost his money by gambling, which proved afterwards to be the case; so when he said he considered the manuscript worth ten dollars I offered him one dollar, on which he retired indignantly. A few days later, however, he reappeared, took his dollar thankfully, and I retain possession of the manuscript. It is on coarse parchment of a yellowish-brown color, two feet six long, and fifteen inches wide. It was evidently originally longer, but has been torn off. One edge has been subjected to the action of fire. The writing is in transverse (p. 347) columns, each column thirteen inches long by five wide, and containing from sixty to seventy lines. The characters are of the old Samaritan type, small, rude, and irregular, differing in many important respects from the ancient Hebrew, and illegible to a good modern Hebrew scholar to whom I have shown it. I have no doubt, however, that it could be deciphered by an expert in such matters, who would also be able to establish from the formation of the characters its antiquity.[1]

This incident excited my interest in the Samaritan question, and when I was at Nablous I visited the synagogue, examined the ancient Thorah, or book of the law, and have since looked into the subject generally. The ancient synagogue was appropriated by the Moslems some centuries ago. The modern building is a small, unpretentious, oblong structure. The walls are rough and whitewashed, and the roof is vaulted with two little domes in the centre. The mizbah, or altar, is about five feet square, covered with a veil of yellow silk. Within are receptacles for the sacred books. Of these the most valuable are never shown to strangers. One or two persons have, however, seen the most ancient, which the Samaritans claim to have been written by Abishua, the son of Phinehas, thirty-five hundred years ago. It is only seen by the congregation once a year, when elevated above the priest's head on the Day of Atonement.

The Thorah was rolled round a cylinder of wood similar to those used in ordinary Jewish synagogues, and I was gratified to observe that it exactly resembled the fragment in my possession. It was evidently very ancient. The priest who showed me the synagogue was a remarkably handsome, dignified-looking man about forty years old. I asked him whether he was the chief priest. He said he was, and that Jacob Shellabi no longer had any position among them. I then said I had obtained a. piece of manuscript from his son, to which he made no reply, but at once turned the subject. I suspect the youth was a *mauvais sujet,* who committed an act of sacrilegious theft before leaving the paternal mansion, and who did not, therefore, deserve more than he got.

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Now, with regard to the sacred books which I did not see: They are in some respects in the highest degree interesting, as throwing light upon the Biblical record. In the first place, from what is known of the most ancient version, claiming to be by Abishua, Gesenius and other great scholars have given it as their opinion that if it could be collated, it would be found in many cases to preserve the sense, which has been lost in the Jewish version. This opinion is founded upon the results of such collation as has been possible with Samaritan texts which have fallen into the hands of scholars.

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[1] This MS. has since been examined, and is pronounced to be part of the Pentateuch in Samaritan characters of the fifteenth century.

Besides the most ancient roll there are three other books known to be in the possession of the Samaritans.[2] These are the Samaritan book of Joshua, the Samaritan Chronicle, and the so-called "Fire-tried Manuscript." The Samaritan book of Joshua probably dates from the thirteenth century. It was published at Leyden about forty years ago from an Arabic manuscript in Samaritan character, and is thought to have been compiled from an early Samaritan and three later Arabic chronicles. It is invested with a peculiar interest from the fact that it helps to supply a remarkable lacuna in the Biblical record, which does not appear to have received the attention it deserves from Biblical students. It is, in fact, evident that a large portion of the present book of Joshua is missing. That book purports to be an account of the conquest of Canaan and its allotment among the twelve tribes. Under these circumstances it is most remarkable that we have no account of the conquest of Samaria, though the campaigns in the south, including the siege and taking of seven cities, and the invasion of Galilee, and the defeat of the league of six kings of Northern Palestine, are fully described. Then we have no list of royal Samaritan cities, though all of them in the other parts of the country are carefully enumerated. We have no description of the boundaries of the two tribes to which Samaria was allotted, nor any list of the cities awarded to them. Some of the Levitical towns mentioned in Chronicles as belonging to Samaria are not to be found in Joshua. It will be found also that, taken (p. 349) as a whole, there are only about forty Samaritan places noted out of some four or five hundred places in Western Palestine.

The Jewish hatred of the Samaritans rose in the early Christian period to so great a pitch that the Mishnic doctors avoided even mentioning the name of Samaria. Thus, in the Talmud only some half-dozen Samaritan towns are noticed. In describing Palestine the Mishna divides it into Judea, Galilee, and Peraea, leaving out all mention of Samaria. It is just possible that long before this an omission may have been purposely made by the early transcribers of the Biblical book of Joshua in regard to Samaria. At all events, the meagre record which it contains is richly supplemented by the Samaritan book of Joshua, which brings down the history of Israel from the date of the conquest to the time of Samuel, whose predecessor, Eli, was, from a Samaritan point of view, the earliest schismatic, and the founder of a new and heretical temple at Shiloh in opposition to that built by Joshua on Mount Gerizim. The divine glory rested upon Gerizim for two hundred and sixty years, or during the reign of nine successors of Joshua, the schism between the children of Judah and the orthodox, as the Samaritans call themselves, dating from the time of Sin, after the death of Samson.

The book opens much in accordance with the Biblical narrative, but no less than four chapters are devoted to the history of Balaam and his death, being an enlargement of one Biblical verse. The conquest of Shechem by Joshua contains an account of the miraculous discomfiture of the enemy, and of a letter sent by him announcing it to Eleazar, the priest, fastened to the wings of a dove. It contains also the account of a new league against the children of Israel under a king called Saubac, in conjunction with the kings of five other towns, which can all now be identified. A thrilling narrative of the battle which takes place between Joshua and these kings at El-Lejjun, on the ancient Megiddo (Armageddon), is also given. With this episode the history of the war ends. The chief value of the book lies, however, in the light it throws upon the ancient geography of Samaria. Out of a total of thirty-one places mentioned in it, thirteen (p. 350) are within the confines of Samaria, and most of these are not to be found in the Bible.

The Samaritan chronicle goes back to the beginning and gives the astronomical reckoning from Adam. Some of its topographical details are of much value. Thus it contains a list of

[2] I am indebted to the researches of the Palestine Exploration Fund for these details.

twenty-two towns where the high-priest who succeeded Tobiah resided, all being apparently in Samaria as far as they can be identified. It is known that in the second and third centuries the Samaritans were in a very flourishing condition, and had colonies in Egypt, and even a synagogue in Rome. The chronicle gives their possessions in Palestine as allotted by the High-Priest Baba the Great, about one hundred and sixty years after the destruction of Jerusalem. This description is interesting, as it seems to include all Palestine, with the exception of Judea proper, to the mountains of which the Jews are confined.

At a later period the chronicle gives a list of those towns which were inhabited by the Samaritans after the Hegira. This is a period when very little is known of this nation. The places mentioned extend nearly over the whole of Palestine outside of Judea, and colonies are also mentioned in Damascus, Cairo, and Baalbek. There is a ruin about five miles from Haifa called Kefr Samir, or the town of the Samaritans, which I occasionally visit to grub for inscriptions, which was one of their colonies. Those at Gerar and Gaza lasted till the present century, but none are to be found now outside of Nablous. It is only to be expected that the chronicle should centre all the holy places of the Samaritans at Shechem or Nablous.

The fifth article of the Samaritan creed was the assertion that Gerizim was the chosen abode of God upon earth. Here Adam and Seth raised altars; here Melchisedec, servant of the Most High God, was met by Abraham—for Gerizim the Samaritans hold to the present day is the highest mountain in the world, the only one not covered by the flood. Here Abraham offered up Isaac, the very spot being shown on the eastern brow of the mountain; and, indeed, as Dean Stanley has argued, it is as likely to be here as at Jerusalem, as Josephus and the Talmudists affirm. Gerizim was also the site of Jacob's vision, and, finally, it was on (p. 351) Gerizim, and not on Ebal, just opposite, as stated in the Bible, that, according to the Samaritans, Joshua erected, first an altar, afterwards the tabernacle, and lastly a temple.

The fourth and last of the known ancient sacred books of the Samaritans is the fire-tried manuscript. It consists of two hundred and seventeen leaves, containing the law from the twenty-ninth verse of the first chapter of Genesis to the blessing of Moses in Deuteronomy. It is much worn; the letters are not so small as those of Abishua's roll, nor as large as those of the later roll. The hand is steady and uniform, and the character of the letters indicates that it is of very ancient date. A note at the end of the book of Numbers connects the manuscript with a story in the Samaritan book of Joshua. It runs:

"It came out from the fire by the power of the Lord to the hand of the King of Babel in the presence of Zerubbabel the Jew, and was not burned. Thanks be to the Lord for the law of Moses."

THE TEN LOST TRIBES.

HAIFA, Oct. 25.—In my last letter I gave some account of the ancient literature of the Samaritans, which is still extant and in their possession. The people themselves, however, are such an interesting ethnological fragment of a remote past that there are many points connected with their origin and history which are worthy of consideration, the more especially as they bear upon a problem which has, of late years, exercised a singular species of fascination over a certain class of minds. I refer to the so-called "lost" ten tribes. It may be a disappointment to the Anglo-Israelites to suggest that they are more likely to be found in the neighbourhood of the country they were carried from than in England; but, under the circumstances, it is certainly a more rational and less strained hypothesis, as I think may be clearly shown by a reference to existing traditions, facts, and records.

It would appear from the recently discovered cuneiform tablets which are now under the investigation of Assyrian scholars, that, while they substantially afford a remarkable confirmation of Biblical history, there are certain discrepancies in regard to the capture of Samaria and the carrying away of the Israelites into captivity, which make it somewhat

difficult to determine the exact date and nature of that event. The complete recovery of the records of Shalmaneser (IV.), who no doubt did besiege Samaria, will clear this up, and throw light upon the records of his successor, Sargon, who seems to have succeeded to the throne about the time of the capture of the city, after a three years' siege, and who in that case would be the monarch who actually carried off the Israelites. If this were so, then, according to the date of his accession, the captivity must have occurred before the invitation which Hezekiah sent out through the (p. 353) country of Ephraim and Manasseh inviting Israelites to the Passover at Jerusalem, where we are informed that large numbers attended it (2 Chron. xxx. 18) ; and it would put beyond a doubt, what is in fact most probable, that Sargon, in carrying away the Israelites captive, did exactly what Nebuchadnezzar also did not long afterwards, when he carried off the tribes of Judah and Benjamin, and left a large population of the poorer classes behind, who were not worth taking.

Indeed, when one comes to consider the population which we know to have inhabited Samaria and Galilee at this time, it seems incredible that any conqueror would have burdened himself with a host which must have numbered at the lowest estimate over a million souls and probably a great many more; and this conjecture is borne out by the fact that we read, in Jeremiah xli. 5, that a deputation of fourscore Israelites came to Jerusalem after its destruction, or more than a hundred years after the captivity of the Israelites. That the Israelites thus left intermarried with the colonists sent from Assyria on the adoption by these latter of the Jewish religion, under the instruction of a priest sent for the purpose, is extremely probable. The Samaritans themselves, however, deny all intermixture with the colonists, and maintain they are pure-blooded Israelites; and in confirmation of this we may mention their marked Jewish type of countenance, their possession of an ancient text of the books of Moses, and their observance of the Jewish Passover according to the most ancient forms of that rite.

The Samaritan account of their origin and composition is, as may be supposed, diametrically opposed to that contained in the books of Ezra and Nehemiah. They assert that at the time when the two tribes returned from the captivity a large number of the ten tribes also returned to Samaria under Sanballat, called by Nehemiah a Horonite, but the Samaritans call him a Levite. The Samaritan account goes on to state that while the two tribes under Zerubbabel repaired to Jerusalem, the rest of the congregation, three hundred thousand in all, besides youth, women, children, and strangers, were led to Gerizim, where they established the Temple. Then came the quarrels between the Jews at Jeru- (p. 354) salem and the Israelites at Samaria about the building of the Temple; and the accounts contained in the books of Ezra and Nehemiah and the Samaritan records are not very discordant. Making allowance always for the fact that the Biblical books do not admit that the Samaritans were Israelites at all, though they admit that Sanballat's son was married to the daughter of Eliashib, the Jewish high-priest, while this latter is stated to have allied himself with Tobiah, who was a Samaritan priest. This caused great displeasure to Nehemiah, and increased the schism, but it goes, too, far to confirm the supposition that Sanballat and Tobiah were Israelites.

The Samaritans are, indeed, in the peculiarities of their doctrine, almost identical with the original Jewish party— the Karaite and Sadducean sects. They are even called Sadducees in Jewish writings, and their denial of the resurrection was, like that of the Sadducees, based on the declaration that nothing was to be found in the law of Moses on the subject. Again, their version of the law is closely similar to that of the Septuagint, which was a translation authorized by a Sadducean high-priest from a text differing from that finally established by the Pharisees. It is often supposed that the Samaritans borrowed their doctrine from the

Sadducees, but it seems more rational to admit that they were a sect originally identical, because originally Israelite. The animosity of Josephus, who was a Pharisee; the fierce denunciation of the Talmud, written by Pharisees; the destruction of the Gerizim temple by Hyrcanus, also a Pharisee—all combine to indicate that the Jewish hatred had nothing to do with any foreign origin of the race, but was rather roused by the religious differences of a people whom they knew to be their own kith and kin.

If we adopt this theory the fate of the ten tribes is no longer a mystery. As we know that before the captivity they were addicted to strange gods and strange marriages, it is not improbable that a large proportion lost their tribal identity while in captivity by intermarrying with the people by whom they were surrounded, and became merged with them. It is also probable that a certain number, according to the Samaritan chronicle three hundred thousand (but it (p. 355) need not be so large a number), returned from their captivity at the time when the two tribes received permission from Cyrus to return. It is also likely that others who still retained their religion did not return, and are the ancestors of certain Hebrew nomads still wandering in the desert. The Jews from Yemen, for instance, assert that they are of the tribe of Dan, while there are Jewish shepherds in Mesopotamia whose ancestry seems not distinctly traceable to the two tribes.

The fact that those who returned to Palestine have dwindled numerically to so small a number is no reason why they should not have been at one time a considerable nation, as indeed we know they were from their subsequent history. They made serious revolts against the Romans in the time of Pilate, and again during the reigns of Vespasian and Severus, but under Hadrian they assisted the Romans against the Pharisees. In the sixth century they attacked the Christians and put the Bishop of Nablous (or, as it was then called, Neapolis) to death, being at that time spread over Egypt and the whole of Palestine, except the hills of Judea. Clinging to the unity of God, they hold Moses to be the one messenger of God, and Gerizim to be the earth's centre, as it is the shrine of their faith. In this they are supported by the fact that while blessings and curses are invoked on the two Samaritan mountains in the books of Moses, there is no mention in those books of Jerusalem.

They also believe in a state of future retribution, and of angels and devils as ministers of God in the unseen world. They look for a Messiah who is to be of the sons of Joseph, and they hold that he is now on earth, though not yet declared. His name is to begin with the letter M. His titles are Taheb, "the restorer," and El-Mahdi, "the guide." Under his direction the congregation will repair to Gerizim. Under the famous twelve stones they will find the ten commandments, and under the stone of Bethel the golden vessels of the Temple and the manna. After one hundred and ten years the Prophet, who is considered inferior to Moses, is to die, and be buried beside Joseph, whose tomb they show in the valley. Soon after, on the conclusion of seven thousand years from its creation, the world is to come to an end.

(p. 356) The Samaritans keep the Feast of the Passover on Gerizim, near the ruins of the ancient temple; here they pitch their tents, and at sunset they slay sheep and bake them for several hours in a huge oven in the ground, which is lined with stone. The men are girded with ropes, with staves in their hands and shoes on their feet, as though prepared for a journey. They generally eat standing or walking. After the women have eaten, the scraps are burned and a bonfire kindled and fed with the fat. The rest of the night is spent in prayer, and the following day in rejoicing. Besides this, the Feast of Tabernacles is also held on the mountain, where they construct arbors of arbutus branches. The Feasts of Pentecost and of Purim and the Day of Atonement are also observed.

The mountain is very barren, rising abruptly to a height of one thousand feet above the valley in which the town is situated. The ruins which are to be found upon it are described in

the guide-books, so I shall only allude to what is new in regard to them. Considerable excavation was carried out here by Captain Anderson under the auspices of the Palestine Exploration Fund, and plans made of what remains of the Fortress of Justinian, which is one of the most valuable monuments of Byzantine art in Palestine, and of the church said to have been built by Zeno. The twelve stones, traditionally said to have come from the Jordan, were also excavated, and found to be large, unhewn masses of rock placed upon two other courses of stone rudely dressed and not squared. Some paved platforms were also laid bare. These, together with the twelve stones, may possibly have formed part of the temple built by Sanballat on Gerizim. Curiously enough, there is a sacred rock here, with a cave under it, not very unlike the rock and cave over which the Mosque of Omar is built in the Haram at Jerusalem, and with the same traditions attached to them. There is also a large ruin on Mount Ebal, enclosing an area ninety-two feet square, with walls twenty.feet thick; but the excavations which were made here were attended with no result, and conjecture is at fault as to what it may have been.

Perhaps the most interesting spots at Nablous are Jacob's well and Joseph's tomb, but this from the point of view (p. 357) purely of association. Where sites which can be identified with any certainty are so rare, these two spots stand out preeminently as places about which there is a unanimity of agreement and force of tradition which go far to confirm their authenticity. They are venerated by the members of every religious community in Palestine. Here also we may look with almost positive certainty upon the position taken up by the Israelites when they stood "half over against Gerizim" and "half over against Ebal," to listen to the reading of the law. Great pains have also been taken to discover the position of "the great stone" which Joshua "set up under an oak that was by the sanctuary of the Lord" when he made his covenant with the people in Shechem immediately before his death, and not altogether without success. The exactitude with which the tombs of Joshua, Eleazar, and Phinehas are described in the sacred record enables us to regard the ancient sepulchres which are still pointed out as theirs with far less skepticism than usually accompanies our notice of such memorials of the dead.

Altogether, the extreme antiquity of Shechem as a site, and the important events of which it was the scene in the earliest period of Jewish history, invest it with an interest denied to every other locality in Palestine, excepting Jerusalem itself, while the well of Jacob must ever be memorable—if, as was most likely, it was the spot where Christ met the woman of Samaria—for perhaps the most remarkable of all his utterances. When we remember the religious fanaticism which characterized both Jew and Samaritan, and the bigoted prejudice which envenomed the inveterate hatred they felt for each other, and which turned principally upon the rival claims for sanctity of Jerusalem and Gerizim, it seems almost incredible that a Jew could have been found, and he a carpenter, gifted with such lofty courage and such high spiritual intuition that he should dare to say: "Woman, believe me, the hour cometh when ye shall neither on this mountain, nor at Jerusalem, worship the Father. They that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth."

(p. 358) RESEARCHES IN SAMARIA.

HAIFA, NOV. 3.—While at Nablous I received information that a large piece of ancient sculpture had been discovered by a man in excavating some foundations. I procured a guide, and proceeded to his dwelling. It was evidently the residence of a man of means, and stood in a large courtyard, at the entrance to which I knocked for admittance. After hammering for some time a voice from within asked who I was and what I wanted. On my shouting a reply, I was abruptly told to go away, and all was silent. Now, the accounts I had heard of this

antiquity stimulated my curiosity to such a degree that, in addition to the indignation I felt at this treatment, my desire to see the relic overcame my forbearance, and, seizing a stone, while I ordered my attendant to take another, we made the quarter ring with our blows. After a time the voice was heard again: "Why don't you go away. I won't open the door."

"I won't go away, and I will break open the door if you don't open it," I shouted.

"But I am the chief of the police."

"I don't care who you are; open the door," and bang went a stone against it.

There was silence for a moment, and then another and a milder voice: "Wait a moment. I will let you in," and the door opened and revealed an empty courtyard and a youth.

"My father was angry because you disturbed him so early," he remarked, apologetically, and I then observed many signs betokening a recent rapid evacuation on the part of the female members of the family.

Now that I was in, with a large fragment of a beautifully carved frieze staring me in the face, I could afford to be civil. I was profuse in my apologies, and promised to dis- (p. 359) turb no one if I were only shown the antiquities. But I was destined to experience another reaction of disappointment when the mild youth informed me that this was all there was left. The others had been sent to the museum at Constantinople. Fortunately antiquities, especially when they are massive, travel slowly in this country, and as I had an opportunity of seeing these before they left Haifa, and made such careful copies of them as time permitted, I will describe them.

The peculiar interest which attaches to these remains, which evidently belong to the Graeco-Roman period, arises from the fact that they may possibly have formed part of the great pagan temple which is represented on the Greek imperial coins of the ancient Acropolis. The main objection to this theory is that the temple, it is supposed, was erected on Mount Gerizim, and the coins show that it was approached by a handsome flight of steps, whereas these remains were found not far from the base of the mountain, though sufficiently on its slope to warrant the approach of a flight of steps. The fact that the subjects of the tableaux are all taken from Greek mythology would indicate that there must have been a large population in Samaria in those days, who, so far as their worship was concerned, were not Samaritans.

Besides two draped figures, unfortunately without their heads, one life-size and one fifty inches in height, there was a pedestal forty inches high, triangular in shape, and on each face were two tableaux in bas - relief, making six carved representations in all, in a very perfect state of preservation, with inscriptions in Greek above them, of which, however, I have only been able to make out the general tenor in some cases. Besides copying the inscriptions, I made such sketches as I was able of the tableaux. Where many figures are crowded together this is a very difficult operation. The first scene represents a chariot drawn by serpents, in which is a robed female, while on the left a woman is crouched down under a tree. The second consists of Artemis, Apollo, and Leto, with their names inscribed above them, while on the right is the serpent Python, his head pierced by an arrow. The third represented an infant struggling with a (p. 360) serpent between two draped female figures, evidently Hercules strangling the serpents sent against him by Hera; for above were the words," *Trophoi Erakles."* These formed the upper tableaux. Below them were three other tableaux, illustrating the legend of Theseus, the inscription being "*Theseus gnorismata,"* above a tableau in which he is represented raising a stone under which are hidden the sword and shoes of his father Aigeus. In the second he is kneeling on one knee in a struggle with the Minotaur, while behind him arc a group of boys whom he came to save. In the third he has

slain the robber, who is lying prostrate at his feet. Theseus is nude and leaning on his club, with three other persons all robed standing by him.

There can be little doubt that had any one been present when this discovery was made, a fuller excavation would have been amply repaid, and that the house of the ill-tempered old Moslem stands on a site of the highest interest. I have carefully noted its position, in the hope that at some future day conditions may exist which would render possible an examination of his garden, which is now surrounded by a high wall. It would require little digging to determine whether this was the site of the celebrated temple or not.

I now left Nablous for the purpose of visiting the ruins of the ancient city of Samaria, distant about five miles, and formerly the political capital of the country. It is placed in a most commanding position, and, from a strategical point of view, was well chosen. Nothing can exceed the beauty of the prospect of the surrounding country which is obtained from it. We first inspect the Crusading church of St. John the Baptist, which must have been a beautiful edifice in its day. The walls alone are now standing. In an underground crypt, now held sacred by the Moslem peasantry, the saint is supposed to have been beheaded. The tradition, though erroneous, is ancient, and existed in 380 A.D. It has some colour, from the fact that the wilderness in which John preached is near this, and not near Jericho, as is generally supposed. It can be pretty well identified by the description " Onon, near to Salem," where John was baptizing, "because there was much water there." Both (p. 361) these places retain their names, and there is an abundant supply of water, which flows hence into the Jordan. The fact that Bethabara must be placed much higher up the Jordan valley than the position usually assigned to it by tradition makes it pretty certain that the Wady Far'ah, the head of which is near Samaria, in which are Onon and Salem, and which flows into the Jordan not far from the probable position of Bethabara, was the scene of John's ministrations.

The most interesting ruins, however, are those of Herod's Colonnade, to the west of the modern village. It seems to have run round the hill on a flat terrace, in the middle of which rises a rounded knoll, on which the temple dedicated to Augustus, and stated by Josephus to be in the middle of the town, presumably stood. The remains are most perfect on the south, where some eighty columns are standing. These are mainly monolithic. The width of the cloister was sixty feet, and the pillars are sixteen feet high and six feet apart. The whole length of what must have been a most imposing colonnade was about two thousand yards, or nearly a mile and a quarter. Josephus makes it nearly two miles, but this is exaggerated. There is another street of columns at the bottom of the hill running in a line oblique to the sides of the upper colonnade. The colonnade was entered by a gateway, flanked by small towers, the scarps of which still remain.

Samaria is not to be compared in antiquity with Shechem, its most flourishing time being, probably, during the reign of Herod, when, in fact, all Palestine enjoyed a period of architectural magnificence greater than anything it had previously known. If, instead of following the ordinary road from Samaria, we ascend, from the large village of Burka, a steep hill, we burst upon a view which is well worth the climb, which has also the advantage of being a short cut. We look down into a fertile basin covered with olive groves and villages, and in the distance can sed a considerable extent of coast line near Caesarea, while the familiar outline of Carmel to the northwest closes the prospect. Then we plunge down into the gardens of the village of Fendakumiyeh, where there is a sacred cave worth visiting, contain- (p. 362) ing two recesses, before which there is a detached block of stone like an altar. It may probably have been an ancient rock-cut chapel. Close to this village is another called Zeba, which I was sorely tempted to visit, as I had received an invitation to do so from the sheik who lives here, and who is one of the richest and most powerful sheiks in the

country. He had already called upon me in Haifa, and represents the great family of Jerrar, who once exercised an almost independent rule in this district, setting the Turkish government at defiance, and levying blackmail on the inhabitants, while they were in perpetual feud with rival families who claimed a like local supremacy in other parts of the country. The whole of this system was broken down during the Egyptian occupation of the country by Ibrahim Pasha. When, by British intervention, it was handed back to the Turkish government, the latter succeeded in preventing its recurrence—not, however, without the application of force. More than one of these local sheiks can point out to you a hole in the wall of his house which was made by a Turkish cannon-ball. They are by degrees submitting to the influence of civilization, and, finding that it is no longer possible to compete successfully with the officials in plundering the peasantry, are making friends with these latter, so as either to go shares with them, or to obtain their favor and assistance in their own agricultural operations, and thus avoid being robbed themselves.

Thus in the immediate neighbourhood of this village there is a plain called the Drowned Meadow, from the fact that during a great part of the year it is a marsh, and therefore unavailable for crops. Could it be drained it would add some thousands of acres of arable land to the village to which it belonged. Not long ago I was consulted in regard to the possibility of its being drained, and an engineer even went so far as to make an estimate of the probable cost of the operation. Although the sum charged was very moderate, it was more than the capitalists could venture upon, but the very fact that they could entertain such an idea was a marked evidence of progress on the part of men whose only notion of drainage heretofore had been confined to their neighbours' pockets.

(p. 363) Although probably I should have seen a splendid specimen of a native magnate's establishment,I found that a halt at Zeba would have lost me a day, and I therefore pushed on without allowing the sheik to suspect my proximity to his hospitable abode, still keeping to bypaths instead of following the beaten track to Jenin, the ancient Engannin, or Spring of Gardens. From thence, in a day's journey across the plain of Esdraelon, I reached Haifa.

Comments on this section from the Editor of theSamaritanUpdate.com
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

Laurence Oliphant has an article # 3607. “Notes on a Tomb Opened at Jebata and on monuments Found at Nablus.” *PEFQS* (1885): 94-97. But the article reflects a tomb and Roman stautes that do not reflect on the Samaritans themselves just the Roman occupation.

Laurence Oliphant (1829 – 23 December 1888) was a British author, international traveller, diplomatist and mystic. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Laurence_Oliphant_%28author%29

Laurence Oliphant was in Haifa in 1884.