

Reproduced from the Library of the Editor of
www.theSamaritanUpdate.com
Copyright 2011

The Holy Land
By **Lydia Dunford Alder**
Edited by Edward H. Anderson
The Deseret News
1912

(p. 200)

Nabulous, the old city of Shechem, lies between Mt. Gerizim, on the south, and Ebal, on the north. The power of the Samaritans was centered in this city, in early times. They are fast dying out, but retain their ancient traditions; they claim they are the true Israelites, and speak disparagingly of the Jews elsewhere. Today there is a high priest among them who claims descent from the tribe of Levi. A recent traveler there describes him "as about eighty years of age, of fine physique, and well preserved, possessing a refined and scholarly looking face, while his general appearance is that of a prophet of old." In the care of this high priest are the original manuscripts of the five books of Moses. He says they were written by one of the descendants of Aaron, and date back to twelve years after the Israelites came into the Holy Land; thus making them nearly four thousand years old. Says this writer, "they are the oldest Bible manuscripts in existence. They were written in the Hebrew of the times of Moses, upon long sheets of parchment, about two feet in width. The scrolls are rolled upon two rolls, each tipped with a silver knob, and are so arranged that they can be rolled and unrolled as they are read. The ink is still plain, and the letters distinct, although the parchment is yellow with age. These manuscripts, treasured by the Samaritans, are kept in a brass case, inlaid with gold. They are said to have been dug up about three hundred years ago, and have been the source of much controversy among Oriental scholars. Though they are believed by the Samaritans to have been written by the grandson of Aaron, the Jews reject them as false, and denounce the Samaritans as Pagan outcasts from the children of Israel."

There appears to be about two hundred of the sect living now, and they practice the same religion as in the days of Christ. They celebrate the feasts of the Passover (p. 201) and Pentecost as they did then, eating their passover with their shoes bound on their feet, and staves in hand, as if about to start on a journey. They camp in tents on the mountain top, and smear the blood of sacrifice on the tent doors, in commemoration of the passing of the death angel over their forefathers in Egypt. They select the male lamb, which is free from spot or blemish, as a sacrifice, and when the throat is cut, at the flow of blood, they shout over and over again, "There is but one God!"

"As soon as the animals are killed, they are scalded, and the wool removed, also the entrails, which are salted. Then a pole is thrust through each lamb, and it is laid on the hot coals of a fire laid in a trench, and then covered with brush and earth. While the cooking is going on, the people pray, and continue to pray until sunset. Ten minutes after sunset, they begin to eat the meat, being careful not to break a bone. At the conclusion of the feast, the bones are all burned." All this is in the similitude of the great Sacrifice which was to be offered up for the redemption of man.

We read that in the days of Christ he and the twelve ate the Passover reclining, or sitting. No doubt, this was to typify that they were at the end of the journey, and not just starting out, as when they ate the Passover in Egypt.

These Samaritans possess the true Jewish instinct, for though they claim so much reverence for those ancient manuscripts, a committee of them from Nabulous have but recently offered them for sale in London. In speaking of this, the more devout claim that it was not the originals, but copies that were thus offered for so small a price. The Samaritans are desperately poor and despised by both Moslems and Jews. Their temple stood on the summit of Gerizem, where they still observe the Passover. Samaria, long the capital of Israel, once grand and (p. 202) beautiful, with exquisite colonnades, now buried in debris, and Dothan where Elijah smote his enemies with blindness, and where Joseph was sold to the Ishmaelites, have been seen and are now a part of our lives forever. Voices appear to rise from the very stones, and declare to us that these things are true; and the word of God, too, thunders forth the truth of the story of the past.

Some of the party chose to make the visit to Samaria on horseback, so left Jerusalem two or three days in advance of us, who still lingered in the Holy City, loath to leave its sacred precincts, desiring to see more of it and its inhabitants. A small, open square, surrounded by a stone wall is opposite our hotel. Here a number of poor Fellahin crouched on the ground, patiently awaiting a customer to buy their bundles of scraggly wool. I feel sure some of them waited there for days. Each bundle, at best, would only bring its owner a few piasters. Yet, for that mite they must wait day after day. These men and even children look hopeless when they lift their bundles for the purchaser, the rough knots cruelly pressing into their backs. How I pitied them, and have never forgotten the scene which moves the heart to sympathy.

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

Visit to the Samaritans close of 1911.