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**Notes and Extracts From the Semitic Manuscripts  
In the John Rylands Library**

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**IN SAMARITAN NABLUS TWO CENTURIES AGO<sup>[1]</sup>**

BY

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**A**S the traveler journeys northward from Jerusalem on the road to Galilee he eventually leaves the long ridge which connects the steep hill country of Judaea with the more gentle slopes of Ephraim and descends into a long broad valley. This is the Vale of Machneh, a fertile tract which runs northward for some eight miles. As the traveler proceeds he will remark on the left at the point where the vale opens out in breadth two hills with round slopes separated by a valley which runs westward between them. They are hills in Bible history, the mounts of blessing and cursing, Gerizim and Ebal. Westward of the point where the hills most closely approach each other stands the town of Nablus, the ancient Shechem, set in a small paradise of orchards and luxurious vegetation which the numerous wells have created. The name Nablus is an arabicised form of Neapolis, the name given to Shechem after its reconstruction by Vespasian.

In a small corner of Nablus nestling towards Gerizim is the small group of houses which forms the Samaritan quarter. The little community which inhabits the relatively miserable dwellings, known to the western world as Samaritans but who call themselves Shomerim, i.e. 'Keepers' of the Law of Moses, is perhaps (Page 4) the most remarkable religious sect in the world to-day. It numbers all told less than two hundred souls, but its history goes back some three thousand years, during which it has carried on its worship in this place with the same rites and ceremonies. The Samaritans claim that they are direct descendants of the Israelite tribes who formed the Northern Kingdom, whilst the Jews hold them in contempt as the descendants of the peoples whom the king of Assyria brought into the land to replace the Israelites whom he had deported, and call them Kuthim, i.e. inhabitants of Kuthah. The view of their origin as a religious community commonly accepted by scholars is that in the time of Nehemiah, Manasseh, a grandson of Eliashub the Jewish High Priest. Contracted on of the mixed marriages against the Horonite. Having been 'chased' from Jerusalem, he took with him a copy of the Law, and established a rival Temple, erected for him by his father in law, on Mount Gerizim. There are difficulties in accepting this account of the origin of the Samaritan religious body but we cannot go into them here.

To the Samaritans Nablus is still Shechem, the place to which Abraham and Jacob first made their way. The Samaritan claims for the Biblical associations of Shechem are wider than most Old Testament scholars are prepared to allow, or even consider. To the Samaritans of two hundred years ago, or even later, Mount Gerizim was the highest mountain in the world, the only one not covered by the flood, and the place where the Ark rested. It was the earth's center, and on it altars were erected by Adam, Seth and Noah. In this neighbourhood was the meeting place for God's temple. There Joshua erected altar, tabernacle and temple, and there were set up the twelve stones in whose coating of plaster were engraven the words of the Law. In its neighbourhood was the well of Jacob, the tomb of Joseph, and at 'Awartah, seven miles away, were the burial places of Eleazar, Ithamar, and Phinehas. Here, surrounded by sacred memorials of its past, this unique body of worshippers lived on. The first five books of the Bible constituted their entire Scriptures, and they carried (Page 5) out the commandments, statutes, and ordinances therein set forth with a rigidity greatly in excess of that of the Jews.

It is to the Shechem of two hundred years ago that we now turn to consider the lives of the Samaritans under the spell of their religion, and to gain such insight into their thoughts and feelings as their writings, especially those on the surplus leaves of their codices in the Rylands library, may supply. In the first half of the eighteenth century the number of Samaritans dwelling in Shechem was from all accounts fewer than now, but they had colonies (although each may have consisted only of a few families) scattered abroad. They were to be found in Damascus, Cairo, Jerusalem, Jaffa, Gaza, Ascalon, and probably other places. The last of these, that at Gaza, ceased to exist just over one hundred years ago. Their small numbers were a reminder of the cruel fate suffered by this once numerous community, so persecuted by Jewish and Christian rulers that it was reduced to such small proportions. So unimportant politically had the Samaritans become that no mention seems to have been made of them in the records of Crusading times, although the Crusaders occupied Nablus. They appeared to be quietly passing out of existence, and had indeed passed out of sight and mind of the western world long before the end of the sixteenth century. But the rumour that there was a small colony of Samaritans possessing a variant edition of the Law of Moses aroused keen interest amongst scholars in the west. They were eager to possess a copy and in the year 1616 the Italian Pietro Della Valle eventually procured two copies in Damascus through the good offices of a Jew after having failed in Damascus, Gaza and Shechem, since the Samaritans in these places would not suffer a copy of their Law to pass into unclean hands. Thus in the seventeenth century the first copy of the Law in Samaritan script came to Europe.

It was, however, Robert Huntington, afterwards Bishop Huntington, who rather more than two hundred years ago brought the western world into direct contact with the Samaritans. At the close of the eighteenth century he was English chaplain in Aleppo. He visited Shechem and proved to the Samaritans to their profound surprise that he could read their strange script. (Page 6) When he spoke to them of Israelites in England (meaning all the time, as he affirms, Jews), they could not but be convinced that they of whom he spoke were their brethren, and had taught him to read their writing. Their thoughts at that time, you must remember, had turned often to their lost brethren of the ten Tribes who, according to their belief, had been carried away to distant lands beyond a river of such peculiar properties that it rolled down rocks and sand instead of water and so effectively prevented their return. At his request they gave him a copy of the Law to compare with the one they presumed their brethren in England to have. They also wrote a letter setting forth the essentials of their faith. After an interval of some decades they wrote again having received no reply from their supposed brethren. This second letter, written almost exactly two hundred years ago- 1734 to be precise- deplores the lack of response to the previous letter. It repeats the account of themselves and their faith, praying for their brethren in England that they might be gathered with the Shechem community upon the top of Gerizim and sacrifice there together. This letter is now in the British Museum Library. Its writer was a certain Mashlamah (or in its Arabic form, Muslim) bin Murjan, a member of a well-known Samaritan literary family named Danafi. Muslim was a scholar, writer and copyist of note, and we are interested in him because no fewer than five of the Samaritan manuscripts in our Rylands library have been either wholly or partially written by him. He was one of six brothers, and we have the handwriting of his brothers Abdullah and Ibrahim as well in our manuscripts. All three were fine penmen, as was also their father Murjan, whose writing we also have. All of them, in addition to many of their descendants, have contributed to the non-textual epigraphs on the surplus leaves of the manuscripts on which we are depending for much of the matter of this lecture.

The letter of Muslim proceeds to give an account of the faith of the Samaritans in Shechem, how they call themselves Shomerim ('Keepers' of the Law), and keep all the commandments, statutes and ordinances according to the truth 'neither adding to nor subtracting from them.' [This latter is direct against the Jews who, so the Samaritans maintain, (Page 7) stultify the Law by their 'Erubin.] It records that they take great pains to purify themselves, rigidly observe the Sabbath- on which day they do not go from one place to another, but only to the synagogue; that they pray twice a day on weekdays, and observe the seven festivals in their season (the Passover, Unleavened Bread, Pentecost, New Year, Day of Atonement, Tabernacles, Asereth). These are kept by everyone except sucklings. They have priests from among the sons of Levi who do not shave their head. He goes on: "Our cities are under rule of the Israelites (i.e. Moslems), to whom we pay annually a capitation grant of two gold pieces, and they do not harm us and are only kind to us. We perform our sacrifices and observe our festivals before their eyes, and there is none who hinders us. Some of our people are living in Gaza of the Kaphtorites and others at the coast of the Philistian sea."

This must serve as their introduction to the Samaritan community in Shechem two hundred years ago. They were then, as still are, a handsome race. One who studied them at close quarters about a hundred years ago thus speaks of them.

"I had seen individuals among Arabs and Jews of as noble aspect as any one of them; but as a community there is nothing in Palestine to compare with them. A straight and high forehead, full brow, large and rather almond-shaped eyes, aquiline nose, somewhat large mouth, and well-formed chin are their chief physiological characteristics; and with few exceptions they are tall and of lofty bearing. They seem to be all of one type, and bear an unmistakeable family likeness."

Their dress was simple. The men were dressed in a long open gown of calico fastened at the waist by a girdle, and over this a loose robe. They wore no stockings and only loose slippers which they could easily discard on entering a house. On their heads they had red turbans. Formerly they wore white, but after the unfortunate experience of a governor of the country in the fifteenth century the colour was changed to red. The governor, a Turk, meeting a Samaritan and not recognizing him as such, had given the Moslem greeting, to which the Samaritan gave the Moslem response. When the governor (Page 8) realised his mistake he rushed after the Samaritan and demanded back his greeting, to which the Samaritan laconically answered, "Take it." To prevent the recurrence of such a grave mishap the Samaritans were forced by decree to wear red turbans. Their houses had a central courtyard with the rooms opening on to it after the eastern fashion. The windows were merely square holes in the wall with lattice work. There were no chimneys and charcoal braziers were used to heat their dwellings. On Sabbaths and those festivals which they treated as Sabbaths, they went without fire or light. The rooms were bare of furniture, and the walls whitewashed. The only furnishing was a stand for the lamp which was fed with olive oil. The occupants squatted on their heels on the floor, there being no chairs. Before setting forth to work in the morning they prayed, going through a service of considerable length, as they did also in the evening on their return. Unlike the Jews they had no service in the synagogue on weekdays. On Sabbath they had three services there. The first was at sunset on Friday, the second on Sabbath morning, and the third in the afternoon some time before sunset.

The town of Nablus at this time was famous for its manufacture of soap and a kind of woollen coat. It may be that some of the Samaritans were employed in these industries, but rather it seems they were mostly small traders, and the educated of them found posts as secretaries to government officials, clerks in merchant houses, tax collectors, or similar occupations. A writer in the year 1711 thus describes them:

"They are the Pasha's scribes and publications at Joppa and Gaza,<sup>[2]</sup> as the Copts in Egypt and the Jews generally throughout the rest of the Ottoman empire. They go well and handsomely clothed, and make a tolerable appearance considering the mean condition they are in, and the great caution they are forced to use by reason of the jealousy of their covetous masters."

Their high priest and an assistant were the only recognized official ministrants to the congregation. In the year 1625 the (Page 9) last of the high priests of the line of Aaron died, and they were forced to turn to the house of Levi to carry on the office. Since that date their high priest is described as Priest-Levite. Their place of

worship they had in their midst- a small, dingy building with whitewashed walls lit from the roof. In one side of it was a recess pointing the direction of the summit of Gerizim towards which they prayed. Within this recess, curtained off from the main building, was a coffer containing their scrolls of the Law. Men only could attend the synagogue services, the women remained at home. They doffed their shoes at the door and put on a white surplice-like cloak, and sat on the floor during the service. They kept their headdress on and at certain parts of the service they made responses, stroked down their face and beards with their right hands, or prostrated themselves. The priest knew the whole service by heart and it was gone through with great rapidity.

Their whole life was lived in the atmosphere of religion. In fact their religion was their life. Their year was a religious year, and they lived from festival to festival. When the rigours of the winter had yielded to the more genial weather of spring and the promise of warm summer days lay ahead, they celebrated their first great festival, the Passover. The Jews combine with it that of Unleavened Bread- but the Samaritans regarded the Feast of Unleavened Bread as a separate festival and had two celebrations. On the day before the Feast of the Passover the whole community shut up their houses and ascended Gerizim to offer, not on the summit but a place of sacrifice lower down, their offering of lambs. The Passover sacrifice of the Samaritans has been so often described that we need not go into detail here. For our little community it was a great occasion often made the subject of notices in the manuscripts in our Library here, and always in language which reveals the fervour of their emotion. They gathered before the great stone on which the priest stood to conduct the service, joined in the responses and the singing, and chanted the prayers. They watched by the fire in the great trench where the water for fleecing the sacrificial lambs was boiled in a cauldron. They piled brushwood into the burning pit (where the lambs were to be roasted) in order to make the (Page 10) sides red hot. They were present at the slaying of the lambs, the preparation of the carcasses, the spitting on long poles ready to be thrust into the hot pit when the fire had died down, and eventually the sealing of the pit with turf. They came back at midnight with their lions girded with robe, staves in their hands and shoes on their feet to withdraw the carcasses from the pit. In haste as for a hurried flight they tore the blackened flesh apart with their fingers, and ate it with bitter herbs. Then, when the hastily-devoured meal was over, they gathered the remains to the last crumb and watched them burning till nothing whatsoever remained. This they did that the requirements of the Law might be fulfilled.

Within a week they returned again to the summit of Gerizim. Their ascent from Nablus involves less than an hour's easy climbing. On the seventh day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread early in the morning they gathered at the Synagogue and formed a procession which moved forward slowly on the path to the hilltop. As it proceeded on its way the priest conducted the special service for the occasion, the procession halting at recognized places till the part of the service identified with that stage was completed. With Scripture readings, hymns, responses, antiphonal singing, they journeyed slowly upward to complete, amidst their sacred memorials on the summit, their long service. A Samaritan who describes enthusiastically in one of our Rylands codices one of these festivals in which he had taken part, records with a suspicion of vainglory that the service lasted seven hours.

The members of the Samaritan community now returned to their daily tasks to live through the Pentecostal days, in which families often organized pilgrimages to the tombs of their saints in the neighbourhood, especially to the village of 'Awartah to the tombs of Eleazar, Ithamar, and Phinehas, waiting for the Feast of Weeks, Pentecost, the joy in the harvest. They counted their fiftieth day from the morrow of the Sabbath which falls within the Feast of Unleavened Bread. They looked upon it as a Sabbath day in so far that no work was done, but in the course of the day they ascended Gerizim to celebrate the festival with a service on the hilltop. (Page 11)

From now on to the end of September they enjoyed the summer days in their earthly paradise, looking forward to the first day of Tishri (October) when the civil year began,- the New Year, with its Feast of Trumpets. The trumpet was not blown in the Synagogue (as is the Jewish practice), but on that day they went to the synagogue for a long service lasting about six hours. And then nine days later, the 10th of Tishri, came the greatest day in their religious calendar, the Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement. Two hours before sunset the whole congregation of Israel, men and women, purified themselves by ablutions; and at least half an hour before sunset the last meal had been eaten preparatory to the great Fast. From this time until half an hour after sunset twenty-five hours later no food nor drink passed their lips. The male members of the congregation

repaired to the Synagogue to pass the night in solemn darkness, reciting parts of the Pentateuch interspersed with prayers and ancient hymns, until the dawn broke. With the morning light it was the practice of some to make a pilgrimage to the tomb of Joseph, returning at noon to the Synagogue when the service was resumed. As the afternoon slowly passed and the long service drew to a close came the great event of the day. The ceremonial presentation to the assembly of the Sacred Scroll, purporting to have been written by Abishua, great-grandson of Aaron. When it was brought forth by the priest all prostrated themselves before it and then pressed forward to kiss or handle the part unrolled, exhibiting the Aaronic blessing [Numbers vi, 24-27]. Thus, in the words of the letter of Muslim in the year 1734, "they chastised their souls from evening to evening, men as well as women and children, great and small, except the babes that sucked at their mothers' breasts." And so ended in the dark of the evening their revelry of repentance.

Five days later came the feast of tabernacles when in the courtyard of their homes they made themselves booths, as prescribed in Leviticus [xxiii, 40], and dwelt in them seven days. they ceased from work on the first of these days and on the eighth day. On the first day they made a pilgrimage to the summit as they did on the Feasts of Unleavened Bread and Pentecost, that the command might be fulfilled: "Three times (Page 12) in the year all the males shall appear before the Lord" [Exodus xxiii, 17]. Muslim's letter tells us that on each of the seven days they stood at the foot of Mount Gerizim and prayed there with joy and with a happy heart evening and morning. The eighth day, the day of solemn rest, they called 'Asereth, and regard as the seventh and last festival of the calendar. The Jews, on the other hand, have a two-days' festival. On the first they offer a prayer for rain during the *Musaf* service. The second is the *Simhath Torah*, the rejoicing of the Law, when they finish the reading in the Synagogue of the last portion of the law, and begin at genesis, and when their scrolls are produced and carried round the Synagogue seven times.

Whilst we know how the Samaritans carried out their religious ceremonies two hundred years ago we are enabled, also, to learn something of their mental outlook from the notes they have left on the surplus leaves of their manuscripts. These notes are mostly in Arabic and are of a very varied character. The Samaritans made use of all their codices for this purpose, except their Pentateuch manuscripts, regarding them as suitable places for the preservation of the records of events of family or communal interest. Very often the contents of the codex had a bearing on the character of the additions. Thus a manuscript copy of the service for the dead has a number of entries recording the deaths of members of the community, and on the surplus leaves of their great calendar are numerous entries of births and marriages. Such entries, whilst they follow generally stereotyped forms, are sufficiently varied to make them full of interest, and add much to our knowledge of the Samaritans. The form of the record of birth is after the fashion of the following, which dates from the year A.D. 1756:

“On Wednesday, the hallowed, at midday, the 18<sup>th</sup> of the month of Jumada I, 1170, Arabic era, there was gifted to the writer Ibrahim, son of the late Ya'qub, son of Murjan, the Danafite, female child, and we called her name Ispahan. May God, Most High, make her advent a cause of good both to her and to all the body of Israel, and may our Lord make clear to us through her advent that happiness and relief are at hand for the sake of his Apostle and Interlocutor, the (Page 13) beloved Prophet on whom be the finest of prayers and the most perfect of salutations for all to come. And praise be to God alone, before whom none was, nor after whom any.”

Often it is much shorter. In the case of the birth of a boy it is often petitioned that he may be numbered amongst the receivers of the Law. Occasionally, but infrequently, the birth of twins is recorded, an event which to a community continually praying to God to increase their numbers must have been particularly welcome. On one occasion (about the year 1738, although no exact date is given) there is the entry of the birth of triplets, a boy and two girls. Whether they survived or not we do not know, as their names are not given, which may perhaps be ominous, but equally there is no mention of their death. Infant mortality was high amongst the Samaritans. How often do we find added to a notice of birth a supplementary notice recording the death of the child, after only a few days or weeks, ending with the petition: “We ask God to grant another in its place.” The cause of death is not usually given, except in a few instances where small-pox is specially mentioned.

Marriages were entered upon at a very early age, in the case of a boy as early as from twelve to fifteen years of age, and in that of a girl ten years or earlier. The marriage was arranged by the parents. The ceremony was simpler than with the Jews, and the celebrations generally lasted for a week and sometimes longer. There was nothing to prevent the Samaritan marrying a second wife, but it had to be with the consent of the first. They

had their lucky and unlucky days of the week and Thursday was the day for marriages. The marriage entries in their codices are generally in the form we now give.

“On the day of Thursday, the hallowed, the 13<sup>th</sup> of the month Dhu ‘1-Qa’dah of the year 1170 [A.D. July, 1757]

was celebrated the marriage of the most beloved and noble brother, the soul of my heart, Isaac Shelaby, to the young and immature girl Latifah, daughter of the late Isaac, brother of the deceased father of the writer, Jacob the Danafite, the mercy of God be upon them all. The marriage, praise be to God Most High, was remarkable for all manner of songs and music, and the (Page 14) festivities lasted for fifteen days. May the favour of God Most High shield him and link him with the prophets. Amen, Amen, Amen, O God, Amen, for the sake of our Master Moses, the faithful one. The writer is the wretched Ibrahim al-‘Ayah, who hopes  
for the mercy of his Lord and for the granting of the prayer of him who reads this and invokes mercy upon me.”

At the marriage ceremony the priest officiated. Appropriate portions of the Law were read, prayers offered and blessings pronounced.

Death and burial followed each other closely in our little community. Hardly had the breath left the body when it was prepared for burial. The reciting of the whole Law was part of the funeral service and it was begun forthwith. When the end of chapter xxix of Deuteronomy was reached the body was raised and borne to the grave, the mourners walking in front reciting the succeeding two chapters. When they had finished them they ceased to recite and left the rest of the book till they were ready to lower the body into the grave. For three days afterwards at dawn, until the Sabbath intervened, they said special prayers, called by them ‘ablutions,’ for the deceased. The office of ‘ablution’ was also said at the evening prayer.

The length of obituary notices found in the codices depended on the importance of the deceased. The following is one of moderate length and may be taken as a fair example of such notices.

“And when it was Wednesday, a day unhallowed, there came to us from the town of Jenin news black as charcoal, of the translation by death to the mercy of our Lord who liveth for ever, of him who was the chief stay of the congregation of Israel, president of its assemblies, pillar of the faith, support of the Israelite family, leader in and promoter of good works and public charities, mainstay of the Mosaic belief, eminent writer, joy of hearts, benefactor, true adherent and doer of the holy Law, solicitous father. Alas for his place in Synagogue services. Alas for widow and orphans bereaved. Alas for his exhortations. Alas for his guidance on the eve of the Day of (Page 15) Atonement and on all feast days, the beloved of my heart and my consoler at the death of my father, and my more than father, my teacher in all good things, Joseph, son of the late Sarur al-Sabahi, may the peace of God be upon him. The writer of this is the despised and poor slave the Priest-Levite, Salamah, who prays God that he may avert his anger from his servants, the people of Israel, and multiply them and redeem them for the sake of him who communed with God. Amen.”

The literature of the Samaritans was, as might be expected, mainly religious. History, exposition of Scripture, liturgical compositions, religious chants formed its substance although astronomy and astrology also had their exponents. About two hundred years ago the Danafi family, represented by the six brothers of whom we have already spoken, was active. There was evidently a strong literary strain in the family for they were authors of a number of pieces, liturgic, expository, poetic, which have been preserved in the codices. Several of their compositions have been written in rhymed prose, or *saj'*, - a form of rhetorical prose to which the Arabs were much attracted. Thus they could tell in impassioned language of the thrill of the service on Mt. Gerizim, of days such as had never been before, of pilgrimages to the tombs of Eleazar, Ithmar, and Phinehas at ‘Awartah, of wonderful hours spent there in the ‘love and light’ of the saints, days which they prayed God Most High to renew upon the people of Israel.

But two hundred years ago a strain of the occult was also manifesting itself. In view of the religious atmosphere in which the Samaritans lived this is perhaps not surprising. It took the form of ‘dreams and visions of the night’ which are vividly described. One at least of these appeared to have had a practical outcome, for the writer, who does not give his name but appears to have been a nephew of Muslim (Mashlamah bin Murjan), relates that it was through the effect of a dream that he came to restore the tomb of Eleazar at

'Awartah which had fallen into ruin.

The writer narrates how he fell asleep on the eve of the holy Sabbath and dreamed that he made the journey to 'Awartah with its meadows, gardens, trees, grain-crops, and drew near to the (Page 16) courtyard of the tomb of Eleazar. He was filled with the fearsome awe of the unseen and was not able to approach the tomb itself. But after a time summoning up all his courage, he advanced to the steps leading to it with terror in his heart. There came forth to meet him a man of venerable aspect clad in white raiment suffused with light and with a white turban on his head. He was of middle stature, red in face, with long white hair and beard. When the visitor saw him thus he was seized with great trembling and could not utter a word. The Saint addressed him, and inquired of him if he was prepared to carry out the restoration of the place and reap the reward. After the Saint had withdrawn his visitor resolved to do what was asked, and at once he saw the shrine lit up and the courtyard returned to its former state. He woke up bathed in perspiration and when dawn came he repaired to the Synagogue with his brain in a whirl and disclosed the matter to his brethren. As soon as the Sabbath was over he proceeded to organise an expedition. He called into his aid a master builder, two foremen and six workers and assembled all the equipment necessary. He took along his mother and aunt to cook for the expedition. When they arrived at the place and had asked, as the custom was, the Saint to grant permission, they came upon a peasant working on the spot, who told them of a strange happening. On the day before he had lain down to rest after his midday meal and had fallen asleep. In his sleep an old man had appeared to him and had told him that no attempt must be made to arrest the work of restoration. The whole party now threw themselves into the work they had planned, which is described in detail, and when dusk fell and the moon rose they drank coffee and spent the night singing to the accompaniment of the lute praises to God until the day broke. And what a dawn- glorious, shining, adorable, splendid! Eventually towards the end of the week the work was finished, and when all were resting in happiness and contentment there stole over the company, whence they knew not, a perfume as of spices and myrrh, stronger than aloes wood, and with it a deep sense of awe, convincing them that the Saint accepted their labours.

(Page 17) A dream of similar character befell Sadaqah b. Sarur, which Ibrahim b. Ya'qub, nephew of Muslim records. Sadaqah was sleeping on the eve of Friday when he dreamed that he was making his way to the village of 'Awartah, and when he arrived at the tomb of Phinhas he found a service in progress. In the company of worshippers he recognised only Sheikh Muslim (Mashlamah b. Murjan) the brother of the writer's father, and two others, the priest Levi and the priest Joseph. Stationed between them was the Saint himself. As the service proceeded those present pressed forward to kiss the hands of the Saint. Sadaqah drew near and asked Muslim's permission to do likewise, but he was told, "That is not for you. He is not of our sphere." Sadaqah noticed that Muslim was wearing a green turban, so he asked him: "O my uncle, whence have you the turban?" He answered: "It is a mark of favour from our Master, 'Abisha', the composer. He put it upon me, and there is none other in this state of existence privileged to wear it." The he added: "O Sadaqah, you will take a message to my nephew Ibrahim and will say to him: 'Thy uncle sends you greeting and enjoins on you [to recite] the "chapters of the place" on the eve of Kippur (the Day of Atonement).'" And as Sadaqah was withdrawing from the place with the service still proceeding, he awoke.

The Ibrahim who wrote the account we have just given had himself a dream, which took him to the cave of macphelah at hebron, where the Patriarchs are buried. This dream because of its character, he was convinced, presaged his entry hereafter into the blissful Garden through the blessing of those at whose place of sepulture he found himself present. In his dream he saw himself approaching Hebron after a long journey as a weary traveller. On reaching the town he was directed by a stranger to the 'abodes' of the Patriarchs. He describes the majesty of the place, begging all description, its vastness, its pillars, its carpets, its embroidered hangings. He entered tomb after tomb all branching off from the main cave. Three beautiful maidens, whom he took to be inhabitants of Paradise, guided his steps, (Page 18) but would not suffer him to approach near to them. They directed him to a chamber of surpassing beauty where they lay the Patriarchs in raiment-like shrouds of dazzling whiteness. There he stood quaking all over. He remarked that there were seven in all, four above and three below. The four were Adam, Seth, Noah and Lamech; the three were Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Tears coursed from his eyes. "With my head bowed to the earth I remained silent and downcast, and I prayed my Lord to inspire me to recite what he should choose and be pleased therewith, and that he might enable me to express the feelings of all living. And all the while I was weeping." He then enumerates the passages of

Scripture and parts of the liturgy which he recited. During it he remained with senses numbed, bathed in perspiration and swimming in a sea of fear. He uncovered his head and fell at the feet of these saints with an earnest prayer for help. Whilst so engaged, some one spoke to him, saying, "O follow, those outside await you," and lo! and behold it was his cousin, 'Abd al-Fattah, who urged him to hasten. And so he made his way from the tomb, and as he reached the outer world again he awoke.

So much for the dream literature. The pieces summarized above all come from the same period, the middle of the eighteenth century. There are no more such pieces in the codices we have in the Library here. In them we see the first steps towards imaginative writing, and birth of a new literature amongst the Samaritans. But unless other examples exist elsewhere the babe was still born.

When Ibrahim spoke of his dream presaging him Paradise he was giving expression to a thought and a desire continually in the minds of the Samaritans. In the petition with which they closed every piece of writing they invariably at this time asked God to grant the freedom of 'The Garden.' The Samaritan conception of Paradise is indicated in a few lines of poetry attached to the end of a poem in one of the codices. They are independent of the poem to which they are appended both in theme and metre, and it is not clear why they have been placed there at all. Although brief, they are none the less interesting. I give them in translation. (Page 19)

"O traveller to the Garden fair

Pray tell me what you found in place so rare?  
Why there you'll see where'er you look around  
A glistening pearl and sapphire-studded ground.  
It there for you the manna will display,  
And there the quails pursue their cumbrous way.  
And in the midst of all a shining dome,  
All gleaming white, where Moses sits at home,  
His great green mantle fluttering abroad,  
Its borders brodered with the name of God.  
And in his hand, clear sparkling in the light,  
A pen of sliver wherewithal to write.  
For he it is who faithful doth record  
What deeds are done by servants of the Lord."

The curse of the book borrower is not confined to any age or place. The Samaritans suffered from the forgetful borrower, as witness the following lines found at the end of a codex:-

"Beware my friend, when you a book would lend,  
For in this world on man you can't depend.  
His word you cannot take- if lend you must,  
Then take a pledge and keep it safe in trust.  
Prompt to deny and ready with excuse  
The man with turban big but conscience loose,  
Of such beware, his fate is very plain,  
To Hell he'll go and there he will remain."

Before leaving the subject of their literature, we may draw attention to rhymes which Samaritan scribes, when they had finished transcribing a manuscript, often added at the end. It was their way of asking the reader to forgive any mistakes in the transcription.

"My writing in this book will now remain,  
The hand that writes the grave will soon contain.

By God I aks you, reader of this book,  
To pray that He my faults may overlook.  
Perchance the Lord will me with mercy crown,  
Through Moses who to honour books came down."

The foregoing is the one most commonly found, but sometimes another is added:

"And if you find a fault, and it excuse,

His eye of favour God will not refuse.  
O blame not him in whom is fault, but say  
How great is God who faultless is always! "

(Page 20) But the notices on the surplus leaves of the manuscript are generally more of personal and communal interest than literacy. There are notes on the weather when the inhabitants were kept indoors for days by heavy rain, and for sheer joy when it ceased they went round to each other's houses to congratulate each other. They tell of occasions when snow fell long and steadily and reached in depth to the stature of a man; when earth-quakes shook houses during the night and they all rushed out of doors to spend the remaining hours till daylight in the open. They tell of times when drought made things scarce and dear and locusts destroyed when little remained. It is recorded how on one occasion a Governor of Syria with a great army encamped at Nablus, and requisitioned all the lambs in the neighbourhood to feed his troops so that they were not able to offer their Passover sacrifice that year on Gerizim. The personal entries are numerous- family records of births, marriages and deaths in particular. Sometimes they are so numerous that we can read and follow the life-history of a writer. We will take the case of Salamah b. Ya'qub, a nephew of the Muslim (Mashlamah bin Murjan) of whom we have already spoken, and follow out the entries.

Salamah was born in December, 1716, and in the year 1738 he records in the Great Calendar that he studied it. In the same year he was married to Shelhah, a mature girl. There must have been a marriage before this of which we have no record for his first marriage would take place when he was about fourteen years old. In April of the year 1740 his wife died and in December of the same year he married again, his wife's name was Sadiqah. In February, 1746, his wife presented him with a daughter whom they named Sarah. When Sarah was but seven months old she died. Six months later, in March 1747, his wife Sadiqah also died. In February, 1748, eleven months later he married again, this time his wife's name was Salihah. Ten months later a daughter was born they called Ispahan, after the name of his mother. When Ispahan was three years old she died of small-pox, and the parents were consoled when, three months later (in May, 1752), another daughter arrived whom they also called Ispahan. Four months later she too, followed her sister to the grave. In September, 1752, he had married Safah, (Page 21) a cousin of his, so that he had, unless there is some slip in the dates of the entries, two wives living at this time. That was, of course, permitted by the Samaritans under certain circumstances. In June of 1753 a daughter was born to Safah whom they named Safah, and in December of the same year his other wife Salihah died.

There is now a gap in the entries, and the next we find tells us that in July, 1764, he married Hadiyah, so presumably Safah had died in the interval. And then in July of the following year (1765) there was great excitement and rejoicing, for a son was born. Attention was drawn in the entry to the fact that Salamah had now reached his fiftieth year and had not had a son born to him, all his previous children having been daughters. They called the boy's name Ibrahim. Knowing the anxiety of the Samaritans for male issue and that probably Salamah's bigamies were intended to secure that, we could all hope that it would be spared. But alas, there is a short supplementary note that the boy died when twenty-one days old. The note goes on to say that the very day a son was born to another member of the Danafite family and they called its name Ibrahim. This child also died when it was twenty-two days old. In May of the following year (1766) a daughter was born, whom they named Ispahan, and to whom they gave the pet name Mahbubah (darling). In May, 1768, he records the birth of another daughter, whom they named Bihan but she died after a month. Then in July, 1770, Salamah's dearest wish was again gratified. A son was born and this time they called the child Jacob. But alas, this child, too, died when only three months old. Then the last entry records the death of his wife Hadiyah in July, 1773, and mentions that she was the seventh wife to die, adding "May God cause us to be patient in our afflictions." Then, curiously enough, he quotes a well-known utterance based at least on the Quran although his spelling is defective: "There is no power nor might save with God the high and mighty." No entry gives the date of Salamah's death. It may have been on one of the surplus leaves of the codex which have been lost.

Has tragedy much more to offer? Surely Salamah's life was one long pilgrimage through a vale of tears. Yet it is not unique (Page 22) in these records. Other lives there were almost as heavily shadowed as Salamah's. But we must be content with the examples we have given. We have no time to go into all the entries. We can but hope that modern progress has made a difference to the surroundings of the Samaritans and that the mortality rate is not so high. This appears to be so since their numbers have recently shown a slight increase.

The march of time has made a difference to them in other respects. A motor road now leads to the summit of Gerizim. The tents which they used to pitch on the summit have now given way to semi-permanent wooden structures lit by electricity. The sacrifice of the Passover is carried out under the glare of arc lamps and visitors who have come by bus from Jerusalem are accommodated with forms and chairs to enable them to witness the ceremony in comfort. Gone is the relatively simple life and the rigid seclusion of two hundred years ago. We can only hope that none of the deep religious spirit has gone also.

It is our hope also that these notes, imperfect and disjointed as they are and necessarily must be, will at least arouse in your mind's eye a picture of Samaritan Shechem two hundred years ago. There is something in this little congregation which holds the attention- the *naivete*' of its conception of the outside world, the keenness of its religious education, the fervour of its religious spirit, the sternness of its religious discipline, and the grimness of its struggle for existence. The Samaritans would rather perish than marry outside their own community. They are a monumental example of the power of religion to control life and to sustain it.

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[1] The substance of a lecture delivered in the John Rylands Library on the 8<sup>th</sup> of December, 1937.

[2] That they were employed as bureau officials in such towns may account for the Samaritan colonies there.