

**Palestine Exploration Fund**

Quarterly Statement For 1903

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(p. 90)

THE SAMARITAN PASSOVER.

By the Rev. ROLAND G. STAFFORD.

THE following account of the Samaritan Passover<sup>1</sup> and the diagram were obtained from the present High Priest, Yakub, in the course of a journey through Palestine during the winter of 1900. It was written at his dictation by his son, and having no knowledge of Arabic, I was dependent upon my dragoman for the translation, and cannot therefore answer for it:—

"On the eve of New Year's Day the whole sect assemble and appoint an elder ('a man who knows'). They collect a sum of 3,800 piastres to give to him to spend on the offering ('Corban') in order that he may prepare all things necessary 20 days before mounting Gerizim, when all things needful must be quite ready.

"After 20 days the ascent of Gerizim is made seven days before the 'Corban Festival,' though this early (beforehand) ascent is optional. There are some who mount 10 days before the appointed time, and some who mount seven days beforehand, and some who mount one day beforehand; but those who mount one day beforehand will be those who are in mourning (owing to death). No one of this sect is allowed to be late in mounting at the appointed time of the 'Corban,' not even if he had the greatest of hindrances—*e.g.*, even if he is very ill—he is obliged to perform his duty and ascend the mountain: such a one they put on a mule and take him up to eat the Passover Corban. One day before this Passover they make thin unleavened bread like that of the Jews, which they call Massah, and they eat up this during the seven days of this Unleavened-bread Feast.

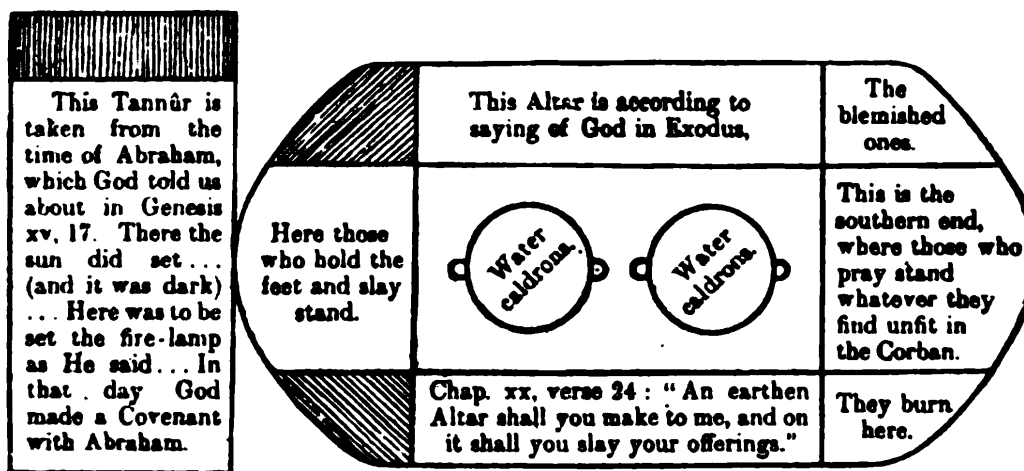
"The day which is the 3rd of Nisan (April 15th), or the 29th of Adar (April 10th), or the 7th of Nisan (April 19th), or the 24th of Nisan (May 6th)—these are the appointed dates in their reckoning. They bring with them seven sheep which are unblemished, that is to say, (p. 91) which are not one-eyed, nor broken limbed, nor having one ear jagged, nor bald-headed, nor one horn broken. They stand on a spot well known to them, Jebel et-Tor (Mount of Light), a point on Mount Gerizim, which is one of their many possessions according to their title deeds drawn out in their names for many centuries. Seven men slay the 'Corban' together. Each of these men who know the method of slaying stand to slay, and they all slay at once and at the same moment. Whilst this is going on the High Priest will be reading an appropriate passage, which is a thanksgiving to God for His Covenant with them.

"Even to this day do they still perform this 'Corban.'

"This 'Corban' dates from the time they left Egypt against the will of their enemies; they were happy at their safe and successful departure, whilst the natives of Egypt were in great distress at the cries of their first-born. And God instituted this 'Corban' as a memorial of the exodus from Egypt.

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. Quarterly Statement, 1901, pp. 82-92. [Another interesting description of the Samaritan Passover from an eye-witness is given by Professor Curtis in his recently published Primitive Semitic Religion To-day (Appendix F).]



"This is the diagram of the 'Tannur' (place of Sacrifice, *lit.* 'furnace,') on which they roast their unblemished sheep, out of which they take nothing except the entrails, otherwise they are intact.

"This is the fashion of the altar on which they burn the entrails, and where they burn all that remains after they have finished eating. All must be burnt.

"They never allow any stranger to eat of this 'Corban,' nor do they give him a chance of touching it.

"And this 'Corban' they slay on the night of the 24th of Nisan (&c.) at sunset, and whilst they are doing this they continue praying to the One God. And the 'Corban' is ready at six o'clock of that night.

"They eat in happiness and joy.

"Every man stands with his staff in his hand and his loins girded, and eats and then retires. Now this is an account of the 'Corban.'

"And when the 'Corban' is finished they remain on this mountain for seven days and no longer, so as not to run the risk of touching, seeing, and eating any leavened bread as we have said before.

"This is the diagram of the caldron in which they boil the water to (p. 92) scald the 'Corban,' and the form of the altar, and the 'Tannur' on which they roast it after this fashion.

"And on this altar, under which are placed logs of wood, they burn the fat, as we have said before.

"In the centre are the two pans of boiling water for skinning and fleecing the 'Corban.' From under the altar (as in the diagram) they remove the ashes on which they have burnt the entrails.

"Half an hour before the 'Corban' is removed from the Tannur a crier cries, and the sect appears to you so happy, as if they had won a great sum of money or a victory, to which there is nothing in comparison.

"This is the full and complete end."

**Comments on this section from the Editor of theSamaritanUpdate.com**

This reference is # 4572 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