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## rites and beliefs of the Samaritans relating to death and mourning

From the papers of the late Dr. Moses Gaster

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(London)

### INTRODUCTION

1. Until a few years ago little was known concerning the customs and beliefs of the Samaritans relating to death and mourning. A short and summary account had appeared in MONTGOMERY's excellent work. *The Samaritans*, and the actual text of the burial service, together with its accompanying rubrics, had been published though incompletely, in COWLEY'S *Samaritan Liturgy*. Detailed information was, however, somewhat meagre, especially on such points as the administration of the last rites and the beliefs entertained concerning the future destiny of the deceased. In 1931 my father, the later Dr. MOSES GASTER decided, in pursuit of his Samaritan studies, to remedy this defect in our knowledge. He therefore drew up a questionnaire, covering all aspects of the question and addressed it to his friend, the Samaritan priest Ab-Hasda (Abu-l-Hasan), son of Jacob, at Nablus. The following treatise (Codex Gaster, No. 1952) was received by way of reply.

2. The questionnaire was drawn up in a particular methodical manner, so as to secure the maximum amount of information. It was based on the article "Death and Disposal of the Dead (Introductory)" in HASTING'S *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics*. Each of the characteristic rites and beliefs there enclosed was duly noted, and a question framed to elicit the Samaritan counterpart. In this way the entire field was covered.

3. Ab-Hasda's replies, as will be seen, are detailed, if not even discursive. They are careful to point out divergences between the strict letter of the law and the current usage of the Samaritan community (e.g. in the question of purification in the ashes of the Red Heifer), and to state the Biblical authority for each observance. In many cases, the complete text of important prayers and hymns is given, as is also that of the Confession of Faith (Question VI). Where there are two schools of thought in respect of a belief or practice, each is recorded (e.g. Question XIX: the wearing of bright clothes in mourning;

Question XXV: the fate of a child who dies before circumcision; Question XXVI: the question of future judgment). Especially noteworthy is Ab-Hasda's insistence on the distinction between Samaritan customs and beliefs and those of the surrounding Moslems and Gentiles.

4. Some of the information afforded by this treatise (viz., in the answers to question I and XXVI) was utilized by Dr. GASTER in his volume *Samaritan Eschatology* (London, Search Publishing Company, 1932), pp. 209-212, where other Samaritan works relating to the subject will be translated and interpreted, e.g. an account of the death and funeral of the celebrated writer Kabasi (d. 1538), taken from a chapter inserted by the late High Priest Jacob (father of Ab-Hasda) in his translation of the *Chronicle* of Abu-l-Fath; an extract from the *Malif* or Catechism: and a short treatise by Jacob (once again inserted into his translation of Abu-l-Fath) on the Red Heifer. Readers who desire to follow up the subject of Samaritan beliefs concerning the fate of the soul and the Last Judgment may be referred to the very full discussion of these themes in *Samaritan Eschatology*. That volume, it may be observed, was designed as the first instalment of a more comprehensive work in which the whole of Samaritan legalistic literature would be presented in translation. These translations, - my father's main lifework, - exist in manuscript among his papers, and it is proposed to publish them soon as the necessary editorial work is completed and the necessary arrangements are made.

5. It remains to say a few words concerning the present publication. The treatise itself is the joint work of MOSES GASTER and the priest Ab-Hasda, the former designing the questions and the latter framing the answers. The Samaritan manuscript was transliterated by my brother, Mr. A. E. GASTER, and the translation was made by myself. It is therefore offered as the joint work of all, and more especially as a tribute on the part of my brother and myself to the work and memory of our father. We have thought that the best tribute we could offer would be to continue his life-work by the publication of his remaining works in this field, and this we propose to do.

In drawing up the Notes which accompany this rendering, I have sought, as far as possible, to reproduce my father's own view by quoting from, or referring, his various works in which the several points are treated. Only where no such treatment of a point exists have I ventured a comment.

Finally, I should like to take this opportunity of expressing once more the debt which scholarship owes to the Samaritans themselves, especially to my father's, and now my own, friends Ab-Hasda, son of Jacob, and Abisha', son of Pinehas, the priests, who have not only copied the bulk of the Samaritan literature, but also been ready, for more than thirty years, to furnish information whenever it was sought. Indeed, those to whom the preservation of this literature is of interest could repay this debt in no better way than by mobilizing measures of relief for this destitute community before it is too late.

In the name of the Lord the Merciful!1[1]

These are the answers to the questions addressed to me by my master, MOSES GASTOR, wisest of the Jews in London. I have replied to them in order, giving such explanations as my limited knowledge permits.

Question I: What is done on the death of a man, woman or child?

Before the death of a man, woman or child (be the latter male or female), the members of the household place the dying person on a bed, facing the Chosen place, Mount Garizim Bethel.2[2] Then a priest is summoned. When he arrives, he takes his stand at the dying person's head and recites to him the final Song of Moses (Deuteronomy xxxii) from beginning to end. After that he recites to him the formal Confession of Faith, repeating it three times. This is the passage which begins with the words:3[3] "They proclaim and say, There is no God but One".4[4] Then the dying person says the following: "My belief is in Thee, O Lord, and in Moses, the son of 'Amram, Thy servant, and in the Holy Law and in Mount Garizim bethel, and in the Holy Law, which is the fairest thing on earth. There is no God but One. Moreover, I bear witness to the day of Requital and Reward.5[5] True it is for ever: there is no God but One. By Him we live, and by Him we die and by Him we shall be raised up. In Thy holy keeping are all who repent and all who love Thee, O Lord God!"

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1[1] Some such formula as this appears at the beginning of every Samaritan book. It recalls at once the Arabic *basmalah*, on the Samaritan affinities, or possible prototype, of which see M. Gaster, art. *Samaritans*, in the *Encyclopaedia of Islam* (IV, p, 125b):

"There is no verb to complete the sentence, and it is not sufficient to appeal merely to the imagination. It becomes intelligible, however, if compared with the parallel Samaritan invocation: 'In the name of God we begin and finish', or according to the variant, 'In the name of God we begin and prosper'. This form is one constantly in use among the Samaritans; it stands at the head of the *Kinosh*, which contains the collection of the most ancient prayers and hymns, it stands at the head of the ancient phylacteries [see M. Gaster, *Studies and Texts*, pp, 456 ff.], and is at every beginning. In time this formula in its entirety became abbreviated through constant use."

2[2] So in Islam the dying man is turned towards the Qibla.

3[3] On the importance of this Chapter in Samaritan doctrine, see M. Gaster, *The Samaritans* (Schweich Lectures, 1923), p. 89: "Altogether this chapter is considered by them as the revelation of the deepest mysteries of the world and of the future, and is fully interpreted in a great work called *The Day of Judgment* (Yom al-Din), and in the *Code of Laws* (Hillukh),.....It is so important in their eyes that the priest reads it at the bedside of the dying." See also *Samaritan Eschatology*, (London, 1932), pp. 77-96. where Samaritan expositions of the Chapter are assembled.

4[4] This is one of the most famous of Samaritan prayers. The text is printed in Cowley, *The Samaritan Liturgy*, I, p.4.

5[5] This answer to the Islamic *la ilaha illa*. On the connexion between the two formulae, see M. Gaster, art. Samaritans, *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, pp. 124-5: "...the well known Muhammadan proclamation of faith: la ilaha illa 'llah 'There is no God but Allah.' This corresponds as closely as religious doctrines will allow to the Samaritan formula repeated over and over again by Markah and his contemporaries 'Amram Dara and Nana [3<sup>rd</sup> or 4<sup>th</sup> cent. C.E.; v. M. Gaster, *The Samaritans*, p. 143]: let elah illa chad (or, according to their pronunciation, aad), 'There is no God but one'.

The priest then recites hymns of praise to God and addresses words of comfort to the relatives, assuring them that the faithful will indeed enter the Garden of Eden on the Day of requital and Reward. His words are framed in a traditional form, of which the following is a specimen:6[6]

“Grandeur pertaineth to the Lord, the great King, for all His ways are judgment: a God of truth and without perversity.7[7] He is the Master of the Kingdom and His dominion is over all its generations. His is the mighty hand.8[8] Tremendous is He in praise, performing wonders.9[9] There is no God but One. He alone abideth and continueth for ever, and possesseth the life everlasting. Whatever existeth apart from Him at some time passeth away and is lost, but He doth not pass away and is not lost. In His hands are all things. He giveth death and He giveth life.10[10] He sustaineth all things. He smiteth and He health, and there is no escape from His hands.11[11] 12[12] Therefore it behoveth all mortal men to observe the commandments of the Lord, the ever-existent God. For so shall there be unto them a path whereby they may reach their goal,- to behold the face of their Master. And all their works shall be held in good liking, and when they die their Master shall shew favour unto them. Happy is he who dieth in the faith of Moses the prophet!”

He continues reciting such words until the breath leaves the body. And all the relatives who happen to be in the house, men and women alike, listen attentively to his words, neither speaking nor performing the slightest action until he has finished. Thereupon they lift their voices in weeping, especially the women who dishevel their hair and begin to lament loudly. At this juncture certain of the communal officials arrive and take the men into another house leaving the women with the dead person. The latter perform the ceremonial acts of mourning current in the city where they happen to be living. They also indulge in profuse weeping. If the dead person enjoyed the real esteem and affection both of his family and of the community, they justify their profuse weeping by reference to

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6[6] In the Samaritan: \*^\$\*^\$. This *terminus technicus* of Samaritan doctrine derives from the Samaritan text of Deuteronomy xxxii, 35 which reads, like the LXX, %(\*&^( instead of the Masoretic ^&\$\*\*\*&. In *The Samaritans* p. 89, my father points out that “this expression.....occurs more than once with an eschatological meaning in the writings of ...Isaiah [cf. Issiah xxxiv, 8: %^%\*(^)^ and *id.* Lxiii., 4].” He had, in fact, long been engaged in collecting Prophetic passages which supported the Samaritan text of the Pentateuch against the Masoretic, and I hope shortly to publish his notes on this subject. Meanwhile, cp. *Samaritan Eschatology*, pp.78-81.

7[7] COWLEY, *op. cit.* II, pp 890-1.

8[8] Deut. iii, 24.

9[9] Cf. Exodus xv, 12:

10[10] Deut. xxxii, 39.

11[11] Cf. Deut. xxxii, 39.

12[12] Our text reads: ^^^^%(%^&....\$&^^^, but the rhyme shews that the last word should be &&(!^\*, as in the Biblical original and as in CROWLEY. The variant is due to the fact that Ab-Hasda unconsciously lapses into the Samaritan Targum in place of the Hebrew text.

Abraham's weeping for Sarah, as it is said, "And Abraham came to mourn for Sarah, and to weep for her: (Genesis xxiii, 2). If, however, the dead person did not enjoy such esteem and affection, they do not continue weeping for him. Similarly, if he has expressly enjoined on them before his death not to weep for him, they observe his behest, and desist from further mourning and lamentation.

#### Question II: Who is present in the house?

The persons left in the house with the body are the male relatives and certain others who are expressly summoned because they are able to read the Book of the Holy Law. These stay behind and read over the dead person the whole Law from beginning to end. They are not regarded as having encountered ritual impurity, as is the man who approaches a body in the case specified in the passage: "...when a man dieth in the tent: all that come into the tent, and all that is in the tent, shall be unclean"....(Numbers xix, 14).

Formal weeping (at this juncture) is forbidden among the Samaritans. The men read the Pentateuch, and at the end of each book one of the priests recites words of praise to the Lord and of comfort to the relatives of the deceased in this visitation. Moreover, he reminds them that even the pious forefathers and the prophets did not escape death, and he bids them be of good heart, and he thanks God who suffered the deceased to die in the full faith of Moses the son of 'Amram (the peace of the Lord be upon him, and upon all the pure ancestors, Amen).

If the deceased have friends who are men of education and knowledge, capable of composing poems, each of them then composes a dirge in the Hebrew tongue, commemorating his virtues and proffering consolation to the mourners. Here is a specimen of such compositions:13[13]

Behold, I weep (how should I not), and raise my dirge before my kinsmen all.

Silently flow my tears; I muster all the armoury of grief14[14]. And when I speak, a fire is lit within me,

And in the deep depths of my heart I burn, because thy loss is grievous unto me,

O brother thou and friend; Needs must I bear great witness thereunto,

And thy death is the cause of mine anguish. Joy and gladness are departed from me.

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13[13] Ab-Hasda appended a copy of this poem to the letter which he sent me on the occasion of my father's death. It is not in COWLEY, and I take it that it is his own composition.

14[14] Samaritan: #@#^&&. This is a fanciful adaptation of the Samaritan text of Gen. xiv, 14: ^%\$#\$# (lit. "he mustered his trained men"; Targum: \*&^%\*). The Samaritan reading \*&%% (for MT. &^&) agrees with the LXX.

And mourning and grief are increased. O thou who wast so upright,

I feel the loss of thee amid the congregation and the throng, And I lay this sorrow to heart.

Now when thou art gone, I cannot speak a single word in joy. When I remember thee alive, and all thy wisdom and thy knowledge all, wherein thou stood'st apart from all the rest,

Then is thy going anguish to my heart. Silently flow my tears;

They stream from mine eyes like a sea; Therefore can I not slumber day and night.

When can I say, what can I speak concerning thy wisdom and thy knowledge so resplendent?

Now when thou art gone, I feel myself an orphan desolate, And cannot utter word.

Now when thou art gone, Who amid my people and my kin will turn the eye of kindness unto me?

Who will pay heed unto me, and answer me when I entreat?

Thy death is a bow unto me, and because of thy death am I in anguish.

Grief is come upon me because of my shameful deeds, and it hoveth over mine head,

And mine anguish is increased. Unique who wast of thy kind, and who is like unto thee?

Yea, we have none like unto thee! Thou wast as a pillar of support unto thy people,

Yet lo, this day thou sleepest in thy sleep.

Thou wast a leader 'mid the congregation, greater than can be told.

Thy wisdom had none end, and thou didst reveal all deepest mysteries.

(For a priest:)

Thou wast a perfect priest, and thy words were wise.

Now when thou art gone, the congregation is like an orphan.

Men of all the peoples heard tell of thee and came and listened to thy reading of the Law,

And they learned from thy knowledge, and vaunted themselves over them that knew thee not.

Thou wast a sea of knowledge and understanding, of learning and wisdom,

Thou couldst fathom all knowledge, and unravel the mysteries of all learning.

Thou wast unique in thine age, Yea, amid all thy generation

For thou wast one whose place no man can fill. Now when thou art gone,

What shall become of me? Nought is there but grief 'mid my friends and my foes alike.

Now when thou art gone, who will answer me when I speak?

Who will reply to my question, and give me support against foolish me?

(For a cousin:)

Alas for the loss of thee, O cousin mine!

Alas for thee, my friend and my support!

Now do I feel myself a poor mourner alone in my house.

Mourning over thee is as a fire which burneth in my heart!

(For a brother:)

Alas for the loss of thee, O brother of mine!

Now when thou art gone, thy household is withouten friend,

And there is none among them can bring me joy nor answer me when I call.

I think of all thy deeds, O thou whose eld was so adorned with goodness,

And whose good deeds were so exceedingly were so exceedingly great!

Whither now shall I go after this anguish of spirit?

Mine household and my people alike do weep, because they miss thy wisdom,

And thy children and thy kinsmen are stricken with grief,  
For there is none left unto them upon whom they may lean.  
Therefore will I raise a voice of weeping  
For him that was the pillar of his household and his people.  
May God grant mercy unto him,  
And appoint unto him a place in the Garden of Eden!  
(For one who was of the Tribe of Joseph:)  
Now do all thy family cry out; Alas, thou offspring of Joseph!  
Mourning, at thy death, is increased unto us.  
Greater is this than loss of silver or gold, and our mourning groweth ever more deep.

(If he was also a priest:)

Now do all thy children cry out: Alas, thou offspring of Isaac!  
In thy life thou didst not keep apart from us! I too now wail over thee,  
And lose myself in grief! Never wast thou unmindful of the secrets which were between  
us.  
Therefore may Moses, our pious master, be near thee to welcome thee,  
And the Lord Himself work salvation for thee: Now when thou art gone,  
No comfort can I find, and now when thou art hence, Myself am I lost!  
And I beseech my Master that He dwell near to me  
And suffer me not to return unto this grief, but allow me to go out of this world,  
That I may come near unto thee and enter the Garden of Eden,  
That we may meet our pious ancestors and look upon them there,  
And be filled with gladness and joy! Mine eyes still seeth thee, O brother mine,



And in my dreams I dream of thee, and thine image departeth not from me,  
Even though thou be gathered to thy people. May the Lord, my God and my Master,  
Grant forgiveness to thee, O thou who didst know all hidden things and revealed;  
And may His favour rest upon thy spirit, for the sake of our master Moses, the Hebrew;  
And may He grant thee atonement for thy sins and transgressions,  
And suffer thy journeying forth to end in the Garden of Eden,  
And may Moses be there to meet thee and uphold thee  
And greet thee, saying: "blessed is thy coming!"  
Now is my sorrow grievous indeed, for diverse are my memories.  
My God and my Master knoweth what is hidden within me,  
And every man of understanding will know the secret import of my words.

(For recital at the graveside:)

And may God preserve my household which are here ranged about me,  
Which stand by this grave and read the Holy book.  
Happy is he who dieth in the full faith of the matchless Prophet,  
And of the peerless Law. Alas for this servant of God,  
Yet He suffered him to die in this attestation of his faith  
And his life has ended in bliss,  
And he shall yet meet the priests, his fathers!

Everyone who joins in the mourning repeats the verses.

All these rites take place, among the Samaritans, in the actual house of the deceased. They are forbidden to go to the synagogue, because the synagogue ranks to-day as the equivalent of the temple. There is no difference between them.

Question III: Does a man have to say any special words or prayers before his death?

Yes. Every man and woman is obliged, before his or her death, to command his or her children and other relatives concerning all things which may be hidden in his or her heart. If the dying person be wealthy, he must also leave instructions to his descendants concerning the apportionment of his estate, staying clearly what is to be given as *haram*<sup>15[15]</sup> to the Lord, and what is to be given both to the priests and to the needy. Above all, he must command his children to follow the precepts of the faith and to observe the statutes and commandments of the Lord. This obligation derives from the precedent of our master Abraham (upon whom be peace!), of whom it is said<sup>16[16]</sup> that he commanded his sons and his household after him to observe the way of the Lord, to do righteousness and justice. The dying person must also recite certain prayers before his decease. The principal of these is the forementioned Confession of faith in the five<sup>17[17]</sup> essential beliefs of our religion, viz. in the Lord, in Moses, in the Law, in Mount Gerizim Bethel, and in the Day of Requital and Reward.

Moreover, every educated man is obliged to write a will with his own hand and to preserve it against the day of his death, when he must read it out to his household. Further, every man or woman who is able to read the Book of the law must do so constantly whenever they fall ill, so that they may derive comfort in their sickness. And, maybe, the Lord will then bless them with His blessing and cure them of their illness, and forgive them all their former sins and transgressions and deliver them from His vengeance in the day of Requital and Reward and cause them to enter his garden of Paradise. (May the Lord grant us peace and relief both in this world and hereafter, Amen).

Question IV: Is anyone left to watch the body after dissolution, and are lights kindled?

As soon as the breath leaves the body, certain members of the household, or of the community, are left to watch over it. If the death has taken place at night, lights are kindled in order to enable the watchers to read over it the Book of the Holy Law.

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<sup>15[15]</sup> I.e. "consecrated portion"; cf. Numbers xviii, 14.

<sup>16[16]</sup> Genesis xviii, 19.

<sup>17[17]</sup> Similarly, in Islamic doctrine, the deceased must give *five* assurances to the examining angel on the "night of desolation" (*lailat al-wahsha*), viz: (1) his god is Allah; (2) his prophet is Muhammad; (3) his faith is Islam; (4) his Bible is the Qur'an, and (5) his *qibla* is the Ka'aba.

The door may not be closed, lest the spirit be imprisoned in the house, and the latter become like the grave, rendering unclean all who are in it<sup>18</sup>[18].

Moreover, no member of the Samaritan community may touch a body when it lies in the house. Any who do so are at once accounted unclean. Similarly, those members of the community upon whom devolves the task of washing the body, clothing it and carrying it to the grave are regarded as ritually unclean through contact with a corpse.

If the deceased be a man of standing, or one of the notabilities of the community, lights are lit all around him from the moment of death until his departure from the house.<sup>19</sup>[19] It is not believed, however, that these lights effect any sort of atonement for his sins.<sup>20</sup>[20]

It is also the custom to burn incense of fine spices in the presence of a corpse, the idea being that this will effect the removal of the blight and plague from the rest of his people. The custom derives from the action of our master Moses on the day the plague broke out among the people of Israel. We are told that the people complained to Moses and Aaron in the wilderness, and that Moses thereupon said to Aaron: Take a censer and put fire therein from off the altar, and put on incense for them: for there is a blight gone out from the Lord; the plague is begun (Numbers xvii, ii; Ex. xvi, 46). The usage survives among us to this day.

Question V: Is the body washed and clothed with garments or merely with a shroud?

The Samaritans derive the custom of washing the body from the precedent of our master Jacob (upon whom be peace!), of whom it is said that after his death the physicians in Egypt embalmed him.<sup>21</sup>[21]

The body is washed in water, and clothed in new linen garments. The garments consist of a shirt, trousers and a general outer garment, all of linen. Men are dressed in the same kind of linen garment as they are wont to wear when at prayer on Sabbaths and holy days. The head is covered with a linen cap, and the whole body is wrapped in a praying-shaw (*talith*) reaching from head to foot. The garments must be of linen throughout. There must be no admixture of wool, nor must anything red, blue or purple be introduced.<sup>22</sup>[22] Clothing the dead in purple is forbidden among the Samaritans, and

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<sup>18</sup>[18] On this fairly universal practice, v. *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics*, IV, p. 415 b.

<sup>19</sup>[19] Similarly, in the Sephardic rite among the Jews, candles are lit in the case of a rabbi or Elder of the community, and are carried before the bier at the funeral.

<sup>20</sup>[20] A reference to candles lit for the dead in catholic churches.

<sup>21</sup>[21] Genesis L, 2.

<sup>22</sup>[22] Cp. Lane, *The Modern Egyptians*, Chap. xxxiii (Minerva library ed., p. 476) on Islamic custom: "The colours most approved for the grave-clothes are white and green; but any colour is used, *excepting blue, or what approaches to blue*".

wool must not be used because it might have come from an unclean animal, or a dead lamb or a beast slain after the Gentile fashion.

The next thing done is to sprinkle the corpse with scents derived from flowing myrrh.

According to the strict letter of the law, those who wash the body, or come into contact with it, are required to be purged on the third and seventh day following in the dust of the Red Heifer,<sup>23[23]</sup> but since this dust is no longer conserved, having disappeared some three and a half centuries ago, owing to paucity of numbers, general poverty and external oppression, it is now no longer possible to observe this precept. Moreover, all who have come into contact with the body are strictly required to isolate themselves for seven days and then to cleanse themselves by means of ritual ablutions. Since however, the observance of this requirement would, in practice, entail great hardship, it is nowadays the custom to employ the services of gentiles residing in Nablus (Mount Garizim) for purposes of washing and clothing the dead. Members of the community stand at a distance to give them instructions and to recite the Biblical verses traditional in this ceremony. These are as follows:- (i) Leviticus xv, 31: "Thus shall ye guard the children of Israel from their uncleanness, that they die not"... (The Lord it was who commanded thus, and every mouth possessed of speech shall proclaim praises unto thee, O Lord, with heart and soul!); (ii) Genesis ii, 7: "And he breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living soul" etc. until the end of the section;<sup>24[24]</sup> (iii) Exodus xv, 26: "If thou wilt do that which is right in His sight etc." until the end of the section; (iv) Exodus xl, 31: "And Moses washed therefrom" etc., until the end of the section.

If, however, the deceased was a person of standing among his brethren, or a man of means, or if he has expressly commanded before his death that Gentile hands shall not touch his body, it is customary to recruit the paid services of poor and needy members of the community and to charge them with the task of washing and burying the corpse. These men are then considered to be unclean for seven days, in accordance with the law mentioned above. At the end of this is not confined to the consideration that once upon a time the Divine Sanctuary existed in our midst. There is also a present-day reason, and that is that the paschal lamb is still slaughtered, and this requires the removal of all uncleanness so that the congregation may be in a state of perpetual purity before the Lord.

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<sup>23[23]</sup> In accordance with the Biblical commandment in Numbers xix, 11-12. On the Red Heifer among the Samaritans, cp. M. Gaster, *Samaritan Eschatology*, pp. 195-197.

<sup>24[24]</sup> Among the Samaritans, the Pentateuch is divided into *qissin* or 'sections', the equivalent of our paragraphs. In his monographs *The Biblical lessons: A Chapter in Biblical Archaeology* (reprinted in *Studies and Texts*, pp. 503 ff.) my father suggests that these *qissin* are related closely to the *petshot* and *setumot* of the Masoretic text, and to the paragraphs of the LXX.

The *qissah* in which occurs Ex. xv, 26 ends with the close of that verse; similarly that of gen. ii, 7. That of Lev. xv, 31 ends at xv, 33 and that of Ex. xl, 31 at xl.32.

Question VI: How many days after death does burial take place? Who goes to the funeral? Only relatives, or men and women of the community?

In our own community it is the custom to bury the dead as soon as the digging of the grave is finished. Objection is taken to the practise of burning two persons at the same time, for this is thought to involve the very thing specified as a curse in the words of the Biblical text (Leviticus xxvi, 30): “I will cast your carcasses upon carcasses of your idols”. Burial is never postponed beyond a single day of 24 hours, and even this postponement is made only in order to allow time both for relatives to arrive from a distance and for the washing and clothing of the body to take place. The latter operations are performed with as great expedition is possible, lest the corpse grow rank and emit an objectionable odour.

As soon as the necessary tasks have been completed, the body is removed to the place of burial. The whole community, men and women alike, accompany it. People come both from far and near, and even friendly Gentiles are not excluded. In front of the cortege, at some distance, goes one of the priests, holding a censer in his hand and scattering incense of spices. The said priest begins reciting the final Song of Moses (Deut. xxxii), beginning at the words: “And Moses spake in the ears of all the congregation of Israel the words of this song, until they were ended” (Deut. xxxi, 30). The congregation thereupon responds with the actual words of the Song, viz. “Give ear, O ye heavens, and I will speak” (Deut. xxxii, I ff.), timing the recital in such a way that they reach the graveside upon the words: “See now that I, even I, am He” (Deut. xxxii, 39). At the graveside, priest and congregation stand together and lower the body, the priest thereupon continuing the recital: “See now that I, even I, am He,” until the end of the Law (Deut. xxxiv, 12). Then the gravediggers place slabs of stone in position and heap on earth, after which is recited the verse: “The law which Moses bequeathed us is an heirloom, O Congregation of Jacob” (Deut. xxxiii, 4), and the prayer beginning,<sup>25[25]</sup> “We will bless Him, and there is none like Him” etc. The priest next recites a prayer fro the repose<sup>26[26]</sup> of the dead. This runs as follows:<sup>27[27]</sup>

“O Lord, God, I beseech thee by Thy mercy and by Thy being and by Thy glory, and by our masters, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Joseph, and by our master Moses and by Aaron, Eleazer, Ithamar and Phineas, and by Joshua and Caleb, and by the holy kings and the Seventy Elders,<sup>28[28]</sup> and by the sanctity of Mount Garizim bethel, that Thou

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<sup>25[25]</sup> COWLEY, *op. cit.*

<sup>26[26]</sup> Samaritan <sup>^%\$&</sup>, lit. “offering”. My rendering is loose, and I do not intend to suggest that I am reading the word as <sup>&^%</sup>

<sup>27[27]</sup> COWLEY, *op. cit.* II, p. 855.

<sup>28[28]</sup> These are the 70 elders to whom Moses entrusted the Law in the wilderness (cf. Numbers xi, 16-22). The Samaritans claim that the true text of the law (i.e. *their* text) was traditionally handed down by these men. In *The Samaritans*, pp. 119 ff., my father suggests that herein lies the real origin of the *Septuagint* story, and the explanation of the words used in *Mishna Aboth*, I, I: “Moses received the Law from Sinai and transmitted it to Joshua, and Joshua to the

account this recital on our part as an acceptable offering unto Thee, to the end that Thy mercy and Thy grace may shelter the spirit of Thy poor servant N. son of N., of the family of N. O Lord God, in Thy mercy upon him and cause his spirit to dwell in the Garden of Eden, and forgive Thou him and all the congregation of Israel who venerate Mount Garizim Bethel, Amen. Amen. Amen. By the virtue of Moses, the faithful, Amen.”

The forgoing is recited by all in unison. Then the priest alone says the following:<sup>29</sup>[29]

Good is He who created the world, and who calleth unto being all who enter it.

These too did he create who now repose in bliss, who laboured and have gotten their reward.

May His greatness be proclaimed Who calleth men to being when they come,

And may His justice being when they come, and may His greatness be proclaimed

Who calleth men to being when they come, and may His justice be proclaimed,

Who beareth them away when they depart. Saints and Prophets alike have died,

And who is there hath length of life but He?

Let us then humble ourselves and say: God is just, but we ourselves at fault!

May God who hath mercy upon you, and turneth your lives to righteousness,

And exerciseth grace unto you, and pardoneth all transgression,

Grant forgiveness unto this one and unto all the teachers and priests who have died,<sup>30</sup>[30]

And unto all the dead of this congregation, who died in faith,

Men and women, old and young alike, and may God suffer no vexation to vex thee.

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*elders*, and the elders to the prophets”. A similar association of Joshua, Caleb etc. with the 70 Elders recurs in the Samaritan phylactery published in *Studies and Texts*, pp. 426 ff.

<sup>29</sup>[29] COWLEY, II, p.853.

<sup>30</sup>[30] Cp. The Jewish prayer for the repose of the dead (*hashkabah*), according to the Sephardic rite (ed. M. GASTER, vol. I, p. 208): “may peace accompany him, and may peace be upon his repose.... He and all they of his people Israel who now slumber, with fullness of mercy and forgiveness”.

Neither grief to grieve thee. And may He watch over all of you in his mercy and with His spirit,

For He is a merciful God and gracious, Who doeth whatsoever He desireth,

With none to say Him nay, The Lord exerciseth justice and is no respecter of persons,

The God of faithfulness is His name, and all His judgements are justice.

(O Lord,) forgive Thy people Israel, who venerate Mount Garizim Bethel!

Yea, may the Lord forgive this one, together with all that be dead among us,

And together with all the dead of all our congregations, Amen.

Then he says to the family of the deceased: “May God remove from you all reproach”,<sup>31[31]</sup> and they answer him and say, “Amen, and from thee also”.

The recital of these prayers takes place only in the case of adults. In that of young children, no prayers are recited and there is no formal lamentation. They merely washed and buried in new garments. Only men go to the Funeral of a child, viz., its father, its brothers, and its relatives.

Question VII: Is the body buried in a coffin?

All corpses, whether male or female, are placed in coffins. The usage is derived from the precedent of Joseph, concerning whom it is said in the Holy Law<sup>32[32]</sup> that he was placed in a coffin in Egypt. It is also observed in order to pay due respect to the dead by conserving his body in the grave. On the day of a man’s death it may happen to be raining and in that case, were it not for the coffin, his grave-clothes would become sodden and soon moulder, thus affording added cause of grief to the mourners. The coffin however, must not be embellished with any drawing or portrait.<sup>33[33]</sup>

Question VIII: What prayers are recited over the grave, and by whom?

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**31[31]** Cp. The quotation from Isaiah xxv, 8 which occurs at the end of the Jewish hashkubah (ed. M. GASTER, *op. cit.* p.201): “He will destroy death for ever; and the Lord God will wipe away the tear from off all faces, and *the reproach of his people will He remove...etc.*”

**32[32]** Genesis L. 26.

**33[33]** Such portraits are a common feature of Oriental funerals.

These are duly set forth in their entirety in the Book of Mourning.<sup>34</sup>[34] They consist of a selection of Biblical passages, some of which tell of the deaths of the prophets, patriarch and priests, while others contain admonitions concerning the fear of the Lord, and yet others prayers and supplications originally recited by our master Moses, the son of 'Amram, chief of the prophets (upon whom be peace of the Lord!). To these is added the Final Song of Moses (Deut. xxxii), the beginning of which (v. 2) contains a reference to the distilling dew, the meddle to the fire which will be kindled at the last (v. 22), and the end to the forgiveness which will be granted by God (v.43). This song also contains an assurance of resurrection and of grace which will yet be shewn to the dead. Extracts of the final Blessing (Deut. xxxiii), in which the death of our master Moses is narrated, are also recited, except in the case of women, when extracts narrating the death of Sara Leah, Rachel and Deborah, the nurse of Rebeccah,<sup>35</sup>[35] are substituted.

These prayer are recited over the grave, morning and evening, throughout the week of mourning. They are led by one of the priests who, at the conclusion of them, intones the song the text of which I shall give presently. The song is recited in tones of a monotonous mourning dirge current among the Samaritans from remoter antiquity. According to tradition, it was composed by the holy angels themselves.<sup>36</sup>[36] The story goes that when Aaron died, Moses and Eleazar took him out for burial. When they returned from this duty, the people noticed that Aaron was not with them, and began to suspect Moses and Eleazar of having murdered him. God, however, took note of their suspicion, and sent angels to carry the body of Aaron through the midst of the camp, the while they chanted this song. That is why it is expressly said in the Law: "And all the congregation saw that Aaron was dead" (Numbers xx. 29). Seeing his body, they were convinced of his death, and the entire House of Israel wept for him for thirty days. Here, then, is the song which the angels chanted:-<sup>37</sup>[37]

There is none abides for ever, Save only God in His greatness.

All that be of human kind pass away in human wise;

God alone abideth, God of the past and of the future.

There is none etc. All life is vanity and all who dwell on earth are borne away;

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**34**[34] This is the work called in Arabic \*%&^% and printed by COWLEY in his *Samaritan Liturgy* II, 852-866, from the Crawford MS. 15 now in the John Rylands Library at Manchester, and from the British Museum MS. add. 19,652. Codex Gaster 856 gives another excellent text.

**35**[35] Cf. Gen. xxxv, 8. COWLEY's texts do not specify these extracts, but they are duly set forth in Cod. GASTER, 856, ff. 56-58, according to my father's MS. note on the margin of his copy of COWLEY.

**36**[36] The legend also occurs in Jewish sources, e.g. *The Chronicles of Jerahmeel* (ed. M. Gaster), chapter XLIX. Parallels are there quoted (p. xci) from *Numbers Rabbah* XIX, II; *Yalqut Shime'oni* I, f. 238q, 763 (from the lost *Midrash Eshaqa*) and it is stated that Shahrastani mentions an identical Arabic legend.

**37**[37] COWLEY, II, pp.852-3.



God alone abideth, the greatest of the great, there is non etc.

Alike the old, alike the young, do lay them in the dust;

God alone abideth, unfading and unique, there is non etc.

Alike the great, alike the small, are borne away in death like this;

God alone abideth, great above all the great, there is none etc.

Alike the rich, alike the poor, depart in death like this;

God alone abideth, King above all kings, there is none etc.

Man and woman all alike are buried in the earth;

God alone abideth, Sovran o'er all sovranity, there is non etc.

Nor man is there nor woman, but needs must suffer death;

God alone abideth, O'er future and o'er past. There is none etc.

Lo, all that is created must yet return to dust;

God alone abideth, giving pardon, giving hope, there is none etc.

All that lives must die throughout the vast creation.

God alone abideth, Lord of spirits. There is none etc.

The living all must die, the high must be brought low;

God alone abideth, full of lovingkindness and of truth. There is none etc.

(If the deceased belonged to the Priestly House):

No prophet e'en nor priest can turn his back on death;

God alone abideth, the faithful God. There is none etc.

(If he was himself a priest or scribe):

All His works are wisdom, and all His ways are justice;

Yea, God alone abideth, Who judgeth righteously,

Who hath given judgment concerning this death, and hath done so in wisdom.

God alone abideth. There is none abides fro ever, Save only God in His greatness,

Who maketh all generations to pass away, Himself living for ever.

Then they of the congregation, or of the bystanders answer.<sup>38</sup>[38]

“Blessed be our God for ever, and blessed be His name for ever! May God who hath mercy upon you, and who turneth your lives to righteousness, and who exerciseth grace toward you, and forgiveth all who trespass, grant pardon unto this one, and unto all our teachers and priests and to all the faithful dead of the congregation of Israel, men and women, old and young. May He suffer no more vexation to vex them neither grief to grieve them, and may He watch over them in His mercy and with His spirit” etc., as above, [in the answers to question VI].

Then all who are present at the graveside recite the *Fith* over the dead. This consists of the words “For I call on the name”,<sup>39</sup>[39] “Hear O Israel”,<sup>40</sup>[40] “And the Lord hath commanded us to do”, etc.<sup>41</sup>[41]

Then the priest says the prayer “O Lord, I beseech thee, in Thy mercy”, the text of which has been given above in the answer to Question VI. And at the conclusion of the whole ceremony, members of the congregation say to the mourners: “may the Lord remove from you all affliction and all reproach”. And they answer: “Amen, and likewise from you”.

Question IX: What has a mourner to do?

Among the Samaritans, a mourner has to sit at home and do nothing. He may not follow his employment, but must spend his whole time, day and night, reading the Holy Book, until he draw comfort from it. He must remain quietly at home, and must not talk about mundane matters nor indulge in any form of mirth for seven days. He may not go out, except for a short distance, nor change his clothes for thirty days, unless he has incurred pollution.<sup>42</sup>[42] He must continue uninterruptedly at prayer morning and evening, and after the regular devotions must recite a special offertory for the dead,

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<sup>38</sup>[38] COWLEY, II, p. 583.

<sup>39</sup>[39] Deut. xxxii, 3 (where the Samaritan text has \*#Y\$& for MT \*^%). On the use of this formula, cp, M. GASTER, art. Samaritans, *Enc. Of Islam*, p. 125b: "...this phrase occurs over and over again during prayer and in fact precedes every other portion [i.e. takes precedence over all other portions of the service], even the *Ensira*. Markah has devoted a special portion of his Commentary to it, and Kabasi has written a special treatise [on it]."

<sup>40</sup>[40] Deut. vi, 4-9 (the 'Shema').

<sup>41</sup>[41] Deut. vi, 24-25.

<sup>42</sup>[42] By contact with unclean things, by seminal discharge etc., as set forth in the several laws of the book of Leviticus.

consisting in the Confession of Faith<sup>43[43]</sup> coupled with an appeal to God to forgive him all his sins.

If the deceased be a man of standing, certain of the elders of the community come on the eve of the Sabbath and summon the mourner to the synagogue. They go with him, but he himself does not wear his usual Sabbath garb, nor does he join in the prayers. On festival, he must refrain from listening to festive songs, nor must he go to any place of entertainment for a full thirty days. He must not listen to any singing, either at synagogue or in a private house.

On the seventh day of mourning, he must send for one of the priests to read the Book of the Law to him. This book is then deposited in the graveyard, beside the grave, and the mourner then prays to God on behalf of the deceased to have mercy upon him, to shelter him with the clouds of His favour, and to appoint his spirit to be one of those which dwell in His garden of Paradise. He also prays that the present mourning may be the last affliction to befall the family, and that no similar mourning may visit them. Having finished these prayers and supplications, he rises up, if he be a man of substance, and pays the priest according to his means. Everybody then leaves the graveside and goes home.

The next day, the mourner resumes his employment, and henceforth the mourning is a purely personal matter.

If the deceased was a man of substance, the principal mourner usually gives a banquet on the last day of the official mourning. He invites to it the entire priestly household, together with the various scholars of the community and anyone who happens to be poor and needy. They read the Holy Law, eat and drink, and reserve a portion of the fare as a present to the spirit of the deceased, imploring the Lord to grant him favour, mercy and forgiveness. This is as much as I can tell you on the point.

Question X: For how many days must the mourner keep to his house?

The mourner must keep to his house for seven days, as stated above. He must not consort with anyone, save with those who come to him to proffer condolence, or with Gentiles. He is not allowed to do anything. He may merely rise to greet them when they arrive, and as soon as they depart, he must resume his reading of the Holy Law, and seek to draw comfort from the various dirges and lamentations to be found in the Book of Mourning.

Question XI: What things are expressly forbidden to mourners?

Mourners may not listen to any form of merriment, nor frequent places of entertainment. They may not wear new clothes nor go out into the city to enjoy a stroll or take the air. They may not eat sweets or honey, nor wash in the wash-house, nor drink wine or intoxicating liquor, nor indulge in sexual intercourse, nor shave their heads. On Sabbath, they may not join in the traditional chanting of the Law. This is not expressly enjoined in the Book of the Law, but obtains nevertheless as a traditional usage.

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<sup>43[43]</sup> In the original, \*&\*, which immediately suggests the Arabic *Fatiha*. My father's view, expressed in art.

Samaritans, *Encycl. Of Islam*, p. 126a, was, however, that the Arabic term had *in origin* no reference to the *beginning of the Qur'an*, but was a pre-Mohammedan term connected with the words #\$\$\$#@\$\$%, "I stand before thee at the gate of Thy mercy", which stand at the head of the Samaritan *Ensira*, or confession of faith.

Question XII: Are mourners allowed to go to synagogue?

Yes. Every Samaritan is obliged to observe the prescribed seasons of prayer without intermission. To this end, the eve of the first Sabbath after a death, members of community go to the house of the mourners to summon and accompany them to synagogue. If, however, the deceased was one of the priestly, notabilities, the synagogue is not opened on that Sabbath, since the whole priestly family would then be mourners, and it is not fitting for a priest to officiate in such a state. The same principle obtains also in the case of scholars and elders.

It is customary on festivals to commemorate the deceased by a public recitation of his virtues,<sup>44[44]</sup> each contributing what he knows from his own experience. Prayers are at the same time offered to God to grant forgiveness of all sins.

During the year following a death, it is customary to refrain as far as possible from using in prayer the prescribed forms and hymns to be found in the prayer-book. This is done out of respect to the departed and to his relatives, the idea being that any recital of the same prayers once recited by him might inflict upon them pain and grief.<sup>45[45]</sup>

Mourners may on no account absent themselves from the synagogue. This injunction is derived from the fact that our master (upon whom be peace!) is said to have waxed wrath against his brother Aaron when the latter omitted to eat of the sin-offering on the occasion of the death of his sons, Nadab and Abihu, (cf. Lev. X, 17: Wherefore have ye not eaten the sin-offering in the holy place, seeing it is most holy?).

Question XIII: Are there any special prayers which a mourner must introduce into his morning or evening devotions?

There are no special prayers for the dead to be introduced into morning or evening devotions. At the conclusion of the same, however, the mourner must recite the Confession of Faith recorded above (*supra*, In. I.), together with the special supplication beginning "O Lord I beseech thee, in Thy mercy" etc. (*supra* Qu. VI). In addition thereto, if he be able to read, he must read a portion of the Law.

Question XIV: How long does mourning last?

Mourning lasts among the Samaritans for seven days. This is derived from the precedent of Joseph who is said to have mourned for his father for seven days (Gen. i, 10♦). This mourning, however, is not observed for every man or woman who dies, but only for notabilities, for any priest, elder or official in a man's family.

Question XV: Is shaving of the head or beard permissible during mourning?

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<sup>44[44]</sup> This custom, so Ab-hasda writes to me, was observed by the Samaritan community on hearing the news of my father's death, - a touching tribute to the affection in which he was held by these distant friends.

<sup>45[45]</sup> The anthropologist may see in this an extension of the custom whereby anything which might evoke the dead by association (e.g. his clothes) rests under a taboo, even his name being avoided. See on this, FRAZER, *Golden Bough*, one vol. Ed., pp. 251-6; CRAWLEY-BESTERMAN, *The Mystic Rose*, I. Pp. 129-132.

♦ I am unable to verify the verse to Joseph.

This question has already been answered (*supra*, Qu. XI). Strictly speaking, the head may not be shaved for an entire year, but the custom has fallen into desuetude, and nowadays one merely refrains from shaving head or beard for seven days, and that only in the case of near relatives.

Question XVI: Is there a prescribed period in which a mourner may not speak to anybody?

There is no such period. Mourners may speak with everyone, though naturally, they are as a rule too depressed and full of grief to indulge in conversation.

Question XVII: Do mourners rend their garments or go barefoot?

Mourners do not rend their garments nor go barefoot. The Samaritans derive their authority for not doing so from the fact that when Nadab and Abihu died, Moses expressly commanded Aaron and his sons, saying: Uncover not your heads, neither rend your clothes, lest ye die” (Lev. x,6). Moreover, they do not consider it right to follow heathen custom in this matter,<sup>46[46]</sup> in accordance with the precepts: “Thou shalt not do as they do” (Ex. xxiii, 24), and: “Thou shalt not do according to the abominations of those peoples” (Deut. xviii, 9).

Question XVIII: Do mourners wear veils over their faces?

This custom is expressly forbidden to men and women alike. No one goes especially wrapped<sup>47[47]</sup> nor do they wear veils nor do they make baldness<sup>48[48]</sup> between the eyes for the dead. Moreover, they do not wear arm-bands, as do the neighbouring peoples, since they are not an holy people to the Lord, especially chosen by Him to be distant from all nations on the face of the earth.

Nowadays, however, some of the near female relatives observe the custom of disheveling their hair and wearing a black veil from the moment of the decease until the burial, after which they remove it. They also wear black clothes for the dead, and refrain from dressing in red or yellow garments or in linen. But such observances are really forbidden, and are practiced only by a small minority of the people. The majority hold them in disfavour.

Question XIX: Is it the custom to pour away standing water in a house where there is a corpse?

Yes. All standing water is poured away in a place where there is a corpse.<sup>49[49]</sup> Such water may not be drunk.

It is also the custom to sprinkle water on the spot where a body has been laying. This is done after its removal for burial, and effects a purification in the sense that the said spot is not regarded as being ritually unclean for seven days, as the vessels in the house.

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<sup>46[46]</sup> The same principle (against adopting &^%%) operates also in Jewish doctrine.

<sup>47[47]</sup> In reference to the oriental custom whereby women go swathed in shawls at a funeral.

<sup>48[48]</sup> Cf. Deut. xiv, 1.

<sup>49[49]</sup> This custom is followed at present also by Moslem peasants in Palestine.

Question XX: Is a banquet served in the house after the return from a funeral?

No banquet is served in the actual house of mourning, nor do we know of any such thing as the “funeral meats”<sup>50[50]</sup> customarily served by the Gentiles in such cases. What happens is that a member of the congregation invites the mourners to a meal in his own house, or that friends take it in turns to send meals in to them throughout the seven days of mourning. Moreover, anyone who is serving a meal for his own household sends a portion of it to the mourners who are confined to their house, or alternatively, all club together, each according to his means, to provide a single repast which is sent in to the mourners. This is done especially if the latter be poor. The practice is observed daily throughout the seven days, and authority for it is derived from the Biblical commandment: “Thou shalt lend him sufficient for his need, in that which he wanteth” (Deut. xv, 4). It is adopted both with enthusiasm and with pride, since the eating of meals in common affords a great measure of comfort to people who are, on such occasions, not unnaturally depressed in spirit and also unable to attend to things for themselves.

Question XXI: Are there any special times when people visit graves to pray for the departed? If so, what hymns are recited?

Yes. The Samaritans visit the grave to pray for the departed on each of the seven days of mourning, both in the morning and in the evening. They also pay such visit every Friday<sup>51[51]</sup> and before all festivals.<sup>52[52]</sup>

They recite a portion of the Holy Law, or the Confession of faith mentioned above (*supra* Qu. I). As for hymns, the one in general use in the Final Song of Moses (Deut. xxxii) since, according to the traditional interpretation, it contains at its beginning a reference to the dews which shall distil upon the dead, and at its end a promise of forgiveness and an assurance of resurrection and Divine favour.

On certain occasions also they recite traditional songs in honour of departed teachers. These are duly set forth in the standard Book of Mourning. It is believed that by reciting these songs and hymns, the spirit of the dead comes to the grave and listens and thereby obtains comfort and consolation.<sup>53[53]</sup> It is also held that these recitals lessen the torment and the fire on the day of Judgment, and that they induce the Lord to forgive to the deceased all his sins and transgressions and failings and omissions.

Question XXII: Is there any difference in the form of mourning observed for parents and for near relatives?

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<sup>50[50]</sup> Samaritan: & \*^%\$

<sup>51[51]</sup> Similarly in Islamic custom, tombs are visited on the three Fridays following a burial, and on the Friday following the conclusion of the prescribed 40 days of mourning.

<sup>52[52]</sup> This is also the custom among Jews. In many parts of the world festivals of the dead are associated with seasonal rituals. The point has been discussed, and examples adduced, in my study *The Story of Aqhat* in *Studi e Materiali di Storia della religioni* 1937, pp. 128-130.

<sup>53[53]</sup> A widespread and common belief.

Yes, there is a difference. Parents are nearer to a man than other relatives, for it is they who reared him from infancy and who supported him in tribulation throughout their lives. They are the very cause of his being and it is they who always exerted themselves to be of service to him. Therefore it is meet that a man should honour his parents throughout their lives and mourn them after their death more than all other relatives.

It is, however, one thing to die in youth, and another to die in old age. Accordingly if parents are already old and well advanced in years, so that their sight has begun to fail and they are unable to move with ease, though the mourning of them must be observed with due respect, nevertheless it is permissible to glory in the fact that they have left living issue and such as hold them in affection. In such cases, it is not customary to overdo lamentation. Rather must one give thanks to God who has suffered them to pass away in the full faith of our master Moses, the son of 'Amram. Our sages have expressed this sentiment excellently in the adage: Death in old age is not like death in youth.<sup>54</sup>[54] Death in old age is full of mercy and grace, but death in youth is full of affliction and reproach. The Law itself also gives expression to this feeling when it says of our master Abraham: "And Abraham died in a goodly old age, aged and full of days" (Gen. xxv, 8). For this reason, the aged are not mourned for more than a week, in accordance with the Biblical precedents adduced above.

In general, it may be said that among the Samaritans the degree of mourning is determined by the age and status of the deceased, and by whether he was a parent or merely a relative.

Question XXIII: Is a mourner allowed to eat of the Paschal sacrifice?

A mourner may not refrain from eating of the Paschal sacrifice, since omission to do so on the part of any man entails excommunication. The only exceptions allowed are those of men who are ritually unclean by reason of contact with menstruation, or by reason of flux, or by reason of being on a distant journey, or by reason of being in prison under the law of a foreign power. Authority for this is derived from the Biblical commandment which runs: "The man that is clean, and is not on a journey, and yet doth not keep the Passover unto the Lord, the same soul shall be cut off from among his people; because he brought not the offering of the Lord in its appointed season, that man shall bear his sin" (Numbers, ix, 13). Any statute or commandment expressly enunciated in the Book of the Law is incumbent also upon a mourner. Any omission on his part entails the penalty prescribed in that same book: "Because he hath despised the word of the Lord, and hath broken his commandment, that soul shall be utterly cut off; his iniquity shall be upon him" (Numbers xv, 31). In view of this, none who profess the faith may venture any change in any one of the Divine commandments.

Question XXIV: Do funerals take place on Sabbaths or festivals?

The Samaritans do not bury their dead on Sabbaths or on festivals. The body remains in the house until the evening. The reason for this is that it is forbidden to go out into the city on such occasions. This is expressly stated in the Law: "Abide ye every man whery

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<sup>54</sup>[54] Samaritan: ^%\$\$%&\*&^^&^%&\*&^^&

he is; let no man go out from his place on the Sabbath day”<sup>55[55]</sup> (Exodus xvi, 29). Moreover, they are forbidden to do any manual work, in accordance with the precept: “Whosoever doeth work therein shall be put to death” (Exod. Xxxv, 2). Again, they are forbidden to indulge in lamentation on Sabbaths or festivals, since God gave the Sabbath to Israel for rest and joy, whereas lamentation would only entail weeping, and this would not be acceptable to the Lord. Therefore, any man in whose house a body remains over the Sabbath must eat and drink and not afflict his soul. He is obliged to recite all the usual prayers for the Sabbath, and must not continue weeping for the departed. Rather must he thank God for His works.

Question XXV: What is done in the case of a male child who dies uncircumcised?

There is no special provision in such a case. The child is buried as if he had been still born. He is not regarded as excommunicated, as is an adult in similar circumstances. Nor is he considered a heathen, because he has not *transgresses* against the commandment of the Lord. Nor again is he held to be outside the company of the sanctified Hebrews. He has to be buried in exactly the same manner as any little child, without adding or subtracting anything from the normal ritual. It is believed that he is indeed of the community of Israel and of those who dwell in the Garden of Eden. The Biblical precept which ordains excommunication for the uncircumcised (Gen. xvii, 14) does not apply to him.

The Samaritans do not follow the Muslim custom of *post mortem* circumcision in such cases.

Some members of our congregation hold the opinion that a child who has not been circumcised will not rise up in the Last Day, but God alone knoweth all hidden things and revealed. Blessed be His name!

Question XXVI: What is the practice in the case of suicides?

According to the Samaritans, a suicide is an infidel and a violator of the commandments.<sup>56[56]</sup> Therefore nothing is done in his case which would be done in that of anyone else. The members of his family take him out and bury him. It is held that the Divine judgment is executed upon him from the very moment of his death. Such judgment may be incurred either by suicide or by violation of the Divine precepts. It is to this that God was referring when he said to our master Noah: “And surely your blood of your lives will I require.... At the hand of all who live will I require it” (Gen. ix. 4). The allusion is to the day of rewards and punishments, wherein the dead will return to life. On that day God will require from him his blood and will requite him for his sin in committing suicide. We are likewise assured of this in the Biblical utterance: “Whose sheddeth man’s blood, by man shall his blood be shed” (Genesis ix, 6) This refers to the suicide who casts away his soul by that very act.

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<sup>55[55]</sup>The Biblical Text has \*^%, “on the *seventh* day”. Ab-Hasda unconsciously quotes the Samaritan Targum instead of the Hebrew original (*supra*, n. 12).

<sup>56[56]</sup> So too among the Jews.



Question XXVII: Do you profess knowledge of the time in which sinners remain in the Place of Burning? Do they remain there until the Day of Judgment, or are they purified before they go to Eden?

We say that there will be no judgment until the (final) Day of Judgment. This is known to us from the Biblical verse, uttered in respect of the Golden Calf: "In the Day when I visit I will visit their sin upon them", as again from that verse in the final Song of Moses which reads: "Is not this.... Sealed up in My treasures, against the Day of vengeance and Requitall"? (Deut. xxxii, 34-5), and from the passage concerning the men who conspired against the Lord in the wilderness: "I the Lord have said, I will surely act against all this evil congregation who have conspired against me in this wilderness; they shall be consumed, and there they shall die" (Numbers xiv, 35).<sup>57</sup>[57] In the last mentioned passage, the word there refers to the Day of Judgment. There are several other passages in the Law which speak to the same effect, but they are too numerous to be adduced here.

We believe furthermore that when the spirit leaves the body, it is gathered up to its own people from the place where it may be, and continues in its respective station (for there are higher and lower stations)<sup>58</sup>[58] until the Day of Judgment. On that day, God will render vengeance on His foemen and requite His enemies.

The Samaritans do not believe in an Inquisition in the Grave, as do the Gentiles. Opinion is divided, however, as to what exactly happens. Some say that if a man die in sin, that sin lies in wait over his grave until the Day of Judgment, deriving their authority for this view from the words of God: "Sin lieth at the door" (Gen. iv, 7).<sup>59</sup>[59] Others say that the dead suffer anguish in the grave until the Day of Requitall, and that then God will enquire into each man's evil deeds and requite him, visiting upon each his wickedness, and that a man's recompence will be according to the measure of his deeds, for good or for evil.

Howbeit, we live in the faith and hope that the Lord will requite the sins of the children of Israel here in this world, in accordance with the assurance which our master Moses, chief of the prophets, gave to his father-in-law: "Come thou with us, and we will do good with thee: for the Lord hath spoken good concerning Israel" (Numbers x, 29). Similarly, in the final Song of Moses it is expressly stated: "He will render vengeance on His adversaries, but will shrive the land of his people" (Deuteronomy xxxii, 43).

O God, annul not Thy covenant with us, and deliver us from all the evils of our actions, through the prayers of our master Moses, our prophet, before whom Thou didst cause Thy goodness to pass, whereat he cried out: "The Lord (is) a God merciful and gracious, longsuffering and abundant in goodness and truth!" (Exod. xxxiv. 6).

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<sup>57</sup>[57] According to the accents of the Masoretic text, the words "they shall be consumed", but the Samaritans group the phrases differently. According to them, the words "in the wilderness" go with "this evil congregation who have conspired against me". This construction, however, leaves the following "there" hanging in the air. It is accordingly interpreted in an eschatological sense as referring to the distant "Yonder" of the Day of Judgment.

<sup>58</sup>[58] So too in Jewish folklore there are several "stations" (שטחים) in heaven; see M.GASTER, *Hebrew visions of Hell and Paradise*, reprinted in *Studies and Texts*, pp. 124ff.

<sup>59</sup>[59] Literally, "Sin lieth in wait at the opening (שפת פתח)." Not impossibly, the Samaritans interpreted this as a reference to the future *opening of the grave*.

This is as far as my limited knowledge extends.

The above answers were completed on the morning of Sunday, the eight day of the Counting of the Weeks, which is the 26<sup>th</sup> day of the first month in the year 3570 of the dwelling of the children of Israel in the land of Canaan,60[60] by the hand of Ab Hasda, son of Jacob, son of Aaron, the preist. May God grant him forgiveness, Amen!

This work was written at the request of his dear and honoured master, MOSES GASTER, in the city of London, who addressed questions to his servant on these matters. I have answered every question according to my scant knowledge, and I pray God that they may prove acceptable to my master. May God preserve him from all evil, through the virtue of our master Moses, the son of 'Amram, AMEN.

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60[60] i.e. Sunday, 4<sup>th</sup> April, 1937.