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**The Land Of Israel;
A Journal
Travels in Palestine,
Undertaken With Special Reference
To Its Physical Character.**

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(p. 138) ARRIVAL AT NABLOUS.

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Arrived at the gate of the town, no tents were to be seen; and we found that our muleteers, in defiance of our orders, had taken our baggage to the Protestant School-house, telling the master they had directions to that effect from Mr. Zeller. We were provoked at the liberty taken, and still more at the falsehood; but our Arabs evidently thought us most ungrateful for the good turn they had done us in obtaining comfortable quarters. It was too late to make any change, for the sun had set. We submitted to our servants' arrangements with what grace we might, and found ourselves comfortably installed in the Chapel-school of the Church Missionary Society—a neat little upper-chamber, fitted up for a church on Sundays, and a school through the week. The catechist was an intelligent young native, who spoke a little English, having been educated at the Bishop's Diocesan School in Jerusalem. We explained the mistake to him; but he was eager to receive us, and assured us the room had frequently before been devoted to hospitality.

(p. 139) CHAPTER VII.

Nablous—Its Trade—Cotton—Sunday in the Mission School—Bishop Bowen—Arabic Service—A Protestant from Gilead—Shalem—Jacob's Well—Associations of the Scene—Value of Wells—Joseph's Tomb—Moisture of Shechem—Gerizim and Ebal—Fruit-trees—Joshua's Assembling of Israel—Distance to which Sound Travels—Samaritan Temple—Altar Platform—Landscapes—The Moriah of Abraham—Samaritan Synagogue—Rolls and Manuscripts—The Priest Amram—Turbulence of the People of Nablous—Commissions for Jerusalem.

NABLOUS is by far the best town we had seen since we left Beyrout, and its houses are, as a rule, superior to those of Jerusalem. The streets are cleaner, and often a little millstream of purest water ripples down the centre; for Shechem was pre-eminently " a land of brooks of water, of fountains and depths that spring out of valleys and hills." The side streets are often like low cellars, quite dark, vaulted and narrow: and so low, that the passengers can scarcely stand upright, except in the centre of them. No windows can, be seen—only the little low floors, all carefully fastened. Yet there is an incongruous but valuable importation here from the West. Among the low Oriental domes and the tall palms which here and there wave over the courtyards of Nablous, rises a large modern structure of yesterday—neither more nor less than a cotton-mill! The chimney is absent, for it is merely a great warehouse and place for cleaning the cotton for exportation; but even without that adjunct, the cotton factory in Shechem was as grotesque in appearance as in idea. The busy hum of the cotton-gins greeted us on all sides, and heaps of cotton-husks lay about the streets. Cotton has this year, in consequence of the war in America, become the staple of the place; and though we had seen everywhere the signs of a nascent cotton-trade, yet in no place was it so (p. 140) MISSION SCHOOL. developed as here. It is one of the few towns where the Moslems seem not indifferent to trade, and the only one in the country, so far as I know, where the commerce is in their sole hands. Indeed, the population of Nablous is chiefly Mussulman. Out of 9,000 souls, for it has recently much increased, there are not more than 650 Christians, not 200 Samaritans, and still fewer Jews. The Protestant congregation numbers 26 heads of families, chiefly, but not exclusively, gathered from among the Greeks, and is now an organized community, with its civil chief, or headman, recognised by the Government.

December 20th.—The desks and forms, which had been heaped on the covered terrace outside our lodging, to make way for our baggage, changed places with it soon after dawn; for we were up early, and breakfasted outside, that the room might be ready for the Morning Service, conducted by the catechist, at eight o'clock—or the second hour, as he called it. We were much interested in the prospect of witnessing for the first time a native Arabic service—held, too, without European supervision. Our interest was deepened by the recollection that Nablous was for several years the chosen field of labour of the devoted missionary, John Bowen, who consecrated his life and ample fortune to this work, until he was called upon to occupy that foremost post of honour and of danger, the Missionary Bishopric of Sierra Leone, where, too soon for the Church, he succumbed to the deadly climate. Since his departure, the post at Nablous has been relinquished as affording but small encouragement; but the Bishop of Jerusalem has been enabled to maintain there the school and native catechist, by means of his Diocesan Fund. Still, the name of John Bowen, the " priest of the black beard," lingers in the loving memory of many, both Christian and Mohammedan, about Nablous. His works do follow him, and he is mourned as a father, not only by the little flock he gathered round the cross, but by those whom his large-hearted benevolence and kindness won to revere and love even " a Christian dog." For bigotry and fanaticism are considered to be more (p. 141) ARABIC SERVICE. strongly marked in the inhabitants of this district than in any other, and many travellers have complained of the insults, and even violence, to which they have been exposed. There had also been an outbreak, and a massacre of the Christians, before the rising of 1860. Whether it be that the presence of a Turkish garrison (whose tattoo and reveille, performed by French-taught drummers, morning and evening, awake the echoes

of Ebal and Gerizim) has repressed their antipathies, I cannot say, but beyond the harmless muttered curses on "the dogs," a few innocuous scowls, and the boys occasionally spitting on our boots as we rode through the streets, we were never molested during three visits which we paid to Nablous. I have wandered alone, and sometimes unarmed, over the hills and through the groves, and trespassed in many a garden round Nablous, as I should not have ventured to do in some other places of better repute. As the congregation assembled, they turned into the schoolmaster's house, which occupied the opposite face of the terrace, and sat down on mats in a circle round the wall. As soon as a catechist and several natives from an outlying village had arrived, they entered the chapel; some sitting on the school forms, but the country folks evidently preferring a mat on the ground. They were twenty-six, all men; for Oriental prejudice is, as yet, far too strong among them to permit of the mingling of the sexes, even for worship, except on very rare occasions. We were told, however, that on the great festivals the women do attend, and that they would all be there on Christmas-day, when the back part of the room would be screened off for their accommodation. In rank and costume, there was as striking a variety here as in the streets without. The front seats were occupied by young men in their "Sunday best," red or purple fez, bright slashed jackets, and trousers of gaudy hue, with the patent leather shoes and white stockings *so* affected by all young Greeks and Turks of fashion. The villagers squatted in their brown abeyahs and cotton undergarments; but among them were two or three noble-looking Bedouin, tall and sinewy, with their striped abeyahs, or (p. 142) ARABIC SERVICE. cloaks,—their striped yellow kafieh bound round their heads with the agyle, or worsted rope, and hanging with a straggling fringe over their shoulders. Almost all had Prayer books, and knew how to use them. We, too, were able to follow the service, in some degree, by the aid of our English Prayer books, and felt the value of our common form, though in a strange tongue. The responses were raised with hearty and sonorous voices, although without singing or chanting, which are a characteristic and striking part of most of the Arabic services I have elsewhere attended. The catechist concluded with a short sermon, read from a printed Arabic book, interspersed with animated comments of his own; after which, I took my place within the rails, and addressed my fellow Christians in English, while the catechist of the neighbouring village, who had a good knowledge of our language, interpreted fluently, sentence by sentence. The place and the Advent season naturally suggested the text and the subject—"Messias cometh, which is called Christ: when He is come, He will tell us all things ;" and our worship was concluded with the blessing.

The service over, we were requested to follow the congregation into the schoolmaster's house, to be introduced, in due form, to our newly-found brethren. Seated on carpets which were reserved for us on the dais at the further end of the chamber, our hands were kissed, and all due compliments passed, between the whiffs of the long chibouks which all of them had resumed on leaving the chapel. Regrets were expressed that our coming had not been announced, as there were children awaiting an opportunity of baptism, and a marriage was impending. The chief of the community entrusted me with letters for the Bishop, and gave many details on the numbers, progress, welfare, and many difficulties of the congregation. Among the latter was the common one of false brethren, who had joined them for a time, out of pique with their own priest, and had soon fallen back.

I had been struck by the noble bearing of one of the Bedouin of whom I spoke, whose long gun stood against the (between the pages is an etching of Ebal and Gerizim, From Nablus Shechem, p. 143) JACOB'S WELL. door, and asked for a special introduction to him. He told me he was a native of the Hauran, and an inhabitant of Es Salt, on the other side Jordan, the ancient Ramoth Gilead. He had had few opportunities of personal intercourse with Protestants, but had been led to our Church by the purchase of an Arabic Prayer-book, during his travels on business. There had been an attempt made to establish a school at Es Salt; but the combined opposition of Turks and Greeks (of whom there are several there) was too strong, and he remarked Bishop Gobat's arm was not long enough to reach across Jordan. His family, my new acquaintance told me, were almost the only Protestants on the other side, and, excepting when at Nablous occasionally on business (he was a wool-merchant), "I must pray alone," said he; but added, after a pause, "God can hear on the other side Jordan." He told us he had never seen but one European there, and expressed a hope, that when we should carry out our intention of visiting Gilead, we would come and see him, as he could point out many ruins which, he declared, were perfectly unknown to travellers. He inscribed his name in my notebook, and I gave him my card. Months afterwards, when the circumstance of meeting him had quite escaped my memory, it was recalled by his slipping my own card into my hand in the bazaar at Es Salt.

One Sunday afternoon was devoted to visiting the most hallowed spot near Shechem, the place in which our Lord sat and rested on His journey—Jacob's Well. The distance is nearly half an hour from the modern city, but it is evident that the ancient town lay more to the east, among the rough rocks and stone that strew the unenclosed and scattered oliveyards for a mile and a half. As we passed through these, Ebal's green sides sloped away more gently to the north, and the bold face of Gerizim stood out more steeply, pierced with caves and moistened by springs, on our left. The narrow valley almost suddenly opens on the rich plain of Shechem. A wretched hamlet of a few hovels surrounded by low-walled gardens fills the mouth of the valley. To the north a road (p. 144) ASSOCIATIONS OF THE SCENE. through the open bean-fields leads to the village of Askar, or Azmut, about 500 yards distant, with a few old trees just at the eastern foot of Mount Ebal; then turning east it proceeds to Salim, an open village in the plain, identified by Dr. Robinson with the Shalem, in front of which Jacob encamped after his passage of the Jabbok and his meeting with his brother Esau. From the Jabbok he crossed the fords of the Jordan, not surely at the northern ford by the Wady Yabis, where Dr. Robinson has placed Succoth, but much lower down, opposite that valley which we can see opening out just in front of us across the plain, and down which the little stream from Shechem drains into the Jordan. Up that wady he leisurely drove his flocks when he had left his "booths" in the scorched Ghor, and so he may naturally have been led to halt and pitch in front of the village on the plain, which still retains the name of Salim. Conversing as we walked, on the precious associations which crowd into that narrow space between Ebal and Gerizim, we wandered on, regardless of the distance, and had reached the village of Salim before we thought of looking for Jacob's Well. A few flowers had anticipated spring, and beguiled the way—our first scarlet anemones, the lilies of the field, were gathered to-day on the plain of Shechem. The village seemed modern and insignificant; we took a hasty glance at it, did not even search for its springs or fountains, and not observing any vestiges of antiquity, remarked, "This is Salim," and

turned back. We discovered, when too late to atone for our negligence, that the village is unexplored, and that much doubt has been cast upon its identification, which a careful search might have assisted in clearing up. But at the moment Jacob's Well was uppermost in our thoughts. To it we returned. Two hundred yards in front of the village at the mouth of the valley, is a low mound formed of ruins, surrounded by a broken wall, which encloses the remains of buildings and several prostrate columns. As first seen in winter, there is an aspect of dreary desolation about the spot. We clambered over the stones, and towards the eastern end of the ruined enclosure came upon (p. 145) JACOB'S WELL. the remains of a square vaulted chamber, a portion of the roof of which has fallen in, and which had been erected in later times over the mouth of the well for convenience and protection. On descending into the chamber we found an irregular pile of stones over the mouth of the well, leaving only a narrow aperture, but sufficiently wide to enable us to look down into the shaft. We lighted twists of paper, and sent them down in succession, so that for several minutes we could observe the sides and bottom of the well. The width of the bore is about nine feet, the upper portion built in with neatly-dressed and squared stones like the masonry of the wells of Beersheba, the lower portion hewn, to all appearance, out of the solid rock. The well was still deep, about seventy five feet, though evidently choked with many feet of rubbish. At the bottom there was no water, but broken stones and some wet mud, showing that it had recently contained water, which indeed we found there afterwards in the month of March.

We mounted to the edge of the old vault, and read together John iv. the first unfolding of a spiritual religion for the whole world. Just there had our Lord sat, probably looking as we did, towards Mount Gerizim, with that long, dusty road which He had wearily travelled (the Wady Mokhna) full in view, while doubtless some trees, palm, olive, or terebinth then overshadowed the mouth of the well, and sheltered the weary wayfarer. When He sat there, the rich plain of Ephraim was not, as now, bare and wintry, but carpeted with a rich expanse of green corn, for it was "yet but four months and then cometh harvest." John iv. 35. The noble temple of Gerizim, even then a ruin, every glance at which would shoot a bitter pang into the Samaritan heart, stood just on the brow at the corner of the mount, commanding from on high the entrance to the narrow valley up which the disciples had gone to purchase provisions, while He entered not the semi-Gentile city. That chapter of St. John, read by Jacob's Well, brings vividly home the accuracy of the narrator. The woman coming down to the venerated well for water, her (p.146) VALUE OF WELLS. bitter prejudice against the Jew who asked her to give Him drink even under the shadow of that temple which His people had destroyed,— "Our fathers worshipped in this mountain ;" the green corn suggesting to His mind in prophetic reverie the coming harvest of the Gentile world; the disciples returning down the glen, and in mute astonishment not daring to interrupt His conversation with the woman: every incident of the story comes home as we read and meditate. Among the wrangling disputes which have perplexed the antiquarian and the geographer, and have cast doubt on so many sacred localities, it is indeed a satisfaction to know that here at least we are on a spot on the identity of which there has never arisen any serious question. Dean Stanley speaks of it as "absolutely undisputed." Jews and Samaritans, Christians and Mohammedans, unite in attesting it. Eusebius and Jerome mention it, and the latter refers to the Christian church built over it, whose ruins and granite columns now encumber its mouth, while no other spot could so perfectly harmonize all the incidents of the inspired

narrative. The very ruins are in keeping with the scene, and we could not but hope that the Latins may long defer the restoration of the church, for which it is said they have obtained a firman, but against the execution of which the Greeks have put in a counter claim.

The sinking of a well in the East is a greater work than the erection of a castle or fortress, and, whether the wells be those of Abraham at Beersheba, or of Jacob at Shechem, they hand down the name of their constructor from generation to generation, as the benefactor of posterity. It is the supply of water and the well that decide the site of the Eastern city, and while the walls and even the whole position of the place, as at Nazareth, may be changed, the fountain and the well can never move.

How truly in keeping with Jacob's peace-loving character as has been observed, was this act of sinking a well in the plain at such enormous cost, so near the city and its abundant springs and rills; fearing lest his sons should be brought into (p. 147) JOSEPH'S TOMB. collision with the men of Shechem concerning that water which was far more precious than land. The land might be roamed over by his flocks, for the inhabitants were few; but the springs were not to be drunk up by the herds of the stranger. Therefore, following the examples of his father and his grandfather, Jacob determined to sink a well, but profiting by the remembrance of their experience at Beersheba, with characteristic caution he first purchased the piece of land of the lord of the country—of Hamor the father of Shechem. Gen. xxxiii. 18.

When we rose from the side of Jacob's Well, a few paces brought us, doubtless still treading on that very parcel of a field which Jacob had bought for 100 pieces of money, to the reputed site of Joseph's tomb. It lies between the well and the little village of Askar, where there is a copious spring, and where, if the nomenclature would only permit, one would feel disposed to place the ancient Shalem, so exactly would it satisfy all the requirements of the text. It stands just where the south-eastern corner of the range of Ebal begins to rise from the plain. There is nothing remarkable in the appearance of this little whited sepulchre, yet there seems little reason to question the identity of the spot. There is another tomb under Mount Gerizim to which also the Mohammedans give the name of Joseph, but this is stated by the Samaritans to be that of a famous Rabbi Joseph. A low wall incloses an open wely or chapel some twelve feet square, and inside—not exactly in the middle, but placed diagonally across from north-west to south-east—is a simple raised tomb about three feet high, under which are said to rest the bones of Joseph. It has been preserved from molestation from age to age by the common reverence in which the patriarch is held by Jew, Samaritan, Christian, and Moslem alike, while the fact of his name being the common property of all, has prevented any one of them from appropriating and disfiguring by a temple the primitive simplicity of his resting-place. Thus, too, if report says truth, the fear of the indignation of the population of Nablous recently prevented (p. 148) GERIZIM AND EBAL. an effort to search the tomb in the hope of depositing the mummy of Joseph on a shelf in the Louvre. The walls have many modern Hebrew inscriptions written or scratched, but the building has no marks of antiquity, and is simply whitewashed from time to time. "And the bones of Joseph, which the children of Israel brought up out of Egypt, buried they in Shechem, in a parcel of ground which Jacob bought of the sons of Hamor the father of Shechem." (Josh, xxiv. 32.)

Night was coming on before we could draw ourselves away from these hallowed spots, when a half hour's walk under the olive trees transported us back from the patriarchs to the bustling cotton-market of Nablous. Our host joined us at our English evening service, and at its conclusion we found the Samaritan guide Yacoob-esh-Shelaby, well known to every English visitor, waiting with a compliment of three bottles of wine, an invitation to his house, and an offer to be our guide over Gerizim. The examination of the sacred mountain and of the Samaritan synagogue were well worth another day, and we did not grudge it.

December 21st.—We enjoyed a view of the fine sunrise from the roof of the school, though we were by this time familiar with the really beautiful landscape, which is I think the richest in Palestine, and which, according to Van de Velde, owes the variety of its tints to the exceptional moisture of the valley. It is, like Damascus, one of those sites destined by nature to be a city, and where man, whenever he exists there at all, is sure to congregate. It is the very centre point of Palestine, the artery through which all must pass between north and south. Our stand-point presented the city in a somewhat different aspect from that which is gained from other positions. We were on the southern edge of the town on the rise of Gerizim, and the city seemed spread out in line along the valley, pleasingly broken by the groups of dark orange-trees and occasional palm-trees, rather than in the compact form which it assumes when viewed from either of the enclosing hills. Nablous leans on Gerizim and avoids (p. 149) JOSHUA ASSEMBLING ISRAEL. Ebal, at the foot of which, in front of us, was a small level space covered with ancient olive-trees, and rich green turf below them, more English than Syrian in its elasticity and fineness. Its sides are clad for some way up with the smooth variety of the prickly pear, cultivated for the sake of rearing the cochineal insect, so valuable for its crimson dye. Gerizim facing north seemed more bare and scarped; caves and springs diversified its face. Up the little wadys or nullahs which furrowed its side rich fruit orchards of orange, almond, pomegranate, peach, and fig-trees climbed till the rocks were too bare to support them; while on the highest brow we could just see the wely or Mohammedan chapel which marks the site of the ancient Samaritan temple.

As we afterwards ascended Gerizim with Shelaby we noticed the many caves or hollows, from one of which Jotham must have issued forth to utter in the ears of the men of Shechem the first parable on record. There he looked upon the olive and fig-trees below, and to the bramble clinging to the rocks by his side for his illustration. The acoustic properties of this valley are interesting, the more so that several times they are incidentally brought to our notice in Holy Writ, as on this occasion, when we are told that Jotham "went and stood in the top of Mount Gerizim, and lifted up his voice, and cried and said unto them, Hearken unto me, ye men of Shechem" (Judg. ix. 7), and also in Josh. viii. 33, when, at a far more eventful period, we read that all Israel were gathered together there, "half of them over against Mount Gerizim and half of them over against Mount Ebal" when Joshua "read all the words of the law, the blessings and cursings, according to all that is written in the book of the law before all the congregation of Israel, with the women and the little ones and the strangers that were conversant among them." This very statement has been made the ground for a recent objection against the veracity of the narrative. Yet it is impossible to conceive a spot more admirably adapted for the purpose than this one, in the very centre of the newly acquired land (p. 150) SAMARITAN TEMPLE. nor one which could more exactly fulfil all the required conditions. Let us

imagine the chiefs and the priests gathered in the centre of the valley, the tribes stretching out as they stood in compact masses, the men of war and the heads of families, half on the north and half on the south, crowding the slopes on either side, the mixed multitude, the women and the children extending along in front till they spread into the plain beyond, but still in sight: and there is no difficulty, much less impossibility, in the problem. A single voice might be heard by many thousands, shut in and conveyed up and down by the enclosing hills. In the early morning we could not only see from Gerizim a man driving his ass down a path on Mount Ebal, but could hear every word he uttered as he urged it on; and in order to test the matter more certainly, on a subsequent occasion two of our party stationed themselves on opposite sides of the valley, and with perfect ease recited the commandments antiphonally.

When half way up Gerizim we turned round and mounted the shoulder of the hill till we came to a little plateau perhaps 150 feet below the summit. Here the place of the Samaritan sacrifice was pointed out, the holes in which the lambs are roasted, and the pit into which the bones and offal are cast to be burnt. We then climbed to the top, once crowned by the ancient temple destroyed by Hyrcanus, which was afterwards restored, then changed to a Christian church, and now shrunk into a miserable Mohammedan wely, rudely constructed in the centre of the ruins. It is to be noted that the site by no means overhangs the city of Shechem, but rather the eastern plain, the well of Jacob and the tomb of Joseph. It is at the north-eastern brow of the range, inside the remains of a massive wall, probably erected by Justinian as a sort of fortress round the Christian church. The stones are of great size, of the same limestone of which the hill is composed, neatly bevelled round the edges, but undressed on the face, in fact the third and latest type of the bevel. The number of ancient deep wells both within and without the enclosure is remarkable; all of them, so far as we could (p. 151) LANDSCAPE. see, were now dry. About 200 yards to the southward, and apparently in the rear of the ancient Christian church, were a row of twelve stones in the ground, pointed out to us as the stones of the *ten tribes*, brought up by Joshua from the Jordan, and a few paces further on was the spot esteemed most holy by our guide. This is a large bare rock sloping towards the west, and having a deep cave or well in its rear, apparently used, if this were the stone of sacrifice, for the drainage of the blood and offal. The correspondence between this and the pierced rock in the centre of the Mosque of Omar, the presumed site of the great altar of burnt sacrifice, strikes the observer at once. It is not improbable that the Samaritan temple was in its type accommodated to that of Solomon, so far as difference of position admitted; and that on this principle the hollow behind the great altar was excavated.

We climbed by a broken staircase to the roof of the wely, without offending an old devotee who was there, and thence enjoyed a prospect unique in the Holy Land. That from the summit of Nebo surpasses it in extent, that from Mount Gilead perhaps in grandeur of effect, but for distinctness and variety of detail Gerizim has no superior. We thought we had bid adieu to Hermon, but once more it rose before us in spotless purity far beyond and above Tabor, Gilboa, and the lesser hills of Galilee. On our right we could trace the trans Jordanic range from the Sea of Galilee, Bashan, Ajlun, Gilead, down to Moab. On the left, the Mediterranean formed the horizon from Carmel perhaps to Gaza, while Joppa and Caesarea could be distinctly recognised. The southern view was more limited, being shut in by the hills of Benjamin. At our feet to the right was spread the long plain of Mokhna, into which the vale of Shechem debouches, where Jacob pastured

his flocks, and where there was ample space for the tents of Israel when gathered thither by Joshua. All Central Palestine could be taken in at a glance, and the lesson of geography could not easily be forgotten. We looked straight down upon the parcel of ground, Jacob's first possession, marked by the tomb of his son and the well which his fear of the (p. 152) THE MORIAH OF ABRHAAM. men of Shechem impelled him to sink.' Above our heads no less than six imperial and golden eagles kept circling almost within shot, as wondering at our intrusion.

There are many writers who feel disposed to add to the associations of Gerizim one more sacred still—believing it to be the spot on which Abraham offered up Isaac. The origin of this theory is primarily the Samaritan tradition. But this surely is of little weight, for the Samaritans have very naturally taken care to appropriate to themselves and their holy places as many of the patriarchal sites as possible, and the bitter rivalry between the claims of Jerusalem and Gerizim would induce them eagerly to seize any ground for honouring Joseph above Judah. Some of the arguments for Gerizim have a strong *prima facie* plausibility as contrasted with the site of Solomon's Temple, as, for instance, Abraham lifting up his eyes and seeing the place "afar off," which, strictly true of Gerizim from all points of the compass, is not applicable to the Temple site. But the words "afar off" as a measure of distance are most vague and indefinite, and "the place" might be taken in a wider sense than the exact rock on which he was to devote his son. Not indefinite, however, is the statement that it was on the third day that he reached the neighbourhood, and though "afar off," it was not so far but that he could calculate upon arriving at the spot, though delayed by the burden of the wood, performing the sacrifice, and returning to his young men before sunset, else he would have taken provision with him. Now, travelling at the ordinary rate of the country, Jerusalem would just be reached on the third day from Beersheba—to reach Nablous in the same time *is impossible*¹ at the pace of fellahin with their asses. Nor will it remove the difficulty to suppose Abraham to have travelled by the plain of Sharon. The time occupied would be as long, and the fatigue to the ass, if not to the pedestrian, greater. I have traversed and timed these routes repeatedly (p. 153) SAMARITAN SYNAGOGUE. in a greater or less portion of their course, and feel satisfied that so long as the sacred text remains as it is, "on the third day," the claims of Gerizim are untenable. There is certainly also a peculiar fitness in the offering of the type having taken place on the same spot as the offering of the Antitype, the Great Oblation for the sins of the whole world.

We descended the mountain at this north-eastern corner, instead of winding by the side valleys, and passed through the long street by the fine facade of a ruinous mosque over a Crusaders' church, but which no Christian can enter. The hum of the cotton-bow murmured on every side, and the walls were dripping with the juices of cochineal and indigo, as the webs of silk or cotton were hung out to dry. In a fountain at the east end of the town, about the first which drains towards the Jordan (for Nablous is just on the watershed of the eastern and western slopes), we noticed a number of tiny fish, and, using our pocket-handkerchiefs for nets, with the assistance of a good-natured negro, who had just finished his devotional ablutions, secured several specimens of the minnow-like *Cyprinodon cypris*, Heckel—a species quite different from those we obtained near the

¹ Well-mounted Europeans frequently ride in one day from Nablous to Jerusalem; but their muleteers and baggage occupy two days. The traders or carriers usually camp at Beitin, or Beeroth.

Dead Sea and in the Jabbok. Several fossils were also collected, ammonites and others of the lower chalk.

We afterwards went to visit the Samaritan synagogue, the only place of Samaritan worship in the world, unique in its form, in its creed, and its language. The building and its surroundings are in keeping with the position of the oppressed and obscure race to which it belongs. It is a venerable but humble edifice, strangely concealed from observation amongst a labyrinth of buildings, vaulted archways, and dark passages, through which we groped till we entered a little garden and a small clean courtyard, where we left our shoes, and entered the gloomy synagogue, scantily lighted from above, and consisting of a square nave, with a small transept at the end facing the door, and on the left, or east end, a chancel, or square recess, in which the sacred rolls are kept behind a curtain. There was some difficulty about obtaining (p. 154) THE PRIEST AMRAM. a sight of the rolls, which was speedily surmounted by the payment of a liberal backshish, though before the curtain was drawn, and the precious treasure produced, Amram, the high priest, took care, by some pretext or other, to dismiss all the loungers of his co-religionists who had accompanied us. When all save the junior priest and Shelaby had been put out, with much deference and trembling hands Amram brought forward the roll which was shown to the Prince of Wales, and which is well known by Mr. Bedford's photograph of its cylinder. The old man's frame convulsively quivered as he produced it, and he seemed to be in momentary dread of the fate of Uzzah, or at least of Uzziah, for his profanity in exposing the holy relics to the eyes of unbelieving strangers. We could not but fancy that the rolls are to these Samaritans the objects of intrinsic worship, their very gods. The graven image, the sculptured figure, the picture, even, is shunned, but the *material* of the written word has taken their place as the object of visible adoration.

Amram is a fine old man, of noble countenance, with his long grey beard and meek eyes, as becomes the descendant of Levi,—truthful too, and with a strong sense of pecuniary morality, which is not conspicuous in his co-religionists. I much regretted that our want of a common language compelled us to dilute our conversation through the medium of an interpreter, in whom even my slight knowledge of Arabic enabled me to detect inaccuracies, all tending to the exaggeration of things Samaritan. We were shown several other books of the law in the Samaritan, or, more strictly speaking, in the old Mosaic character, for here the Jews are the innovators, and, as Amram observed, Moses himself could not read his own law, as written by the "Yehudi." These books, though bearing the evidences of great antiquity, and seeming more venerable than the roll itself, were not rolls, but leaves of parchment, stitched together like a modern book, and wrapped in innumerable folds of silk handkerchiefs, which were severally and slowly opened out, so that darkness was upon us before we left the synagogue. Knowing, however, (p. 155) SAMARITAN PENTATEUCH. that there was an older roll by far, which had not been shown to us, we lingered and waited still, by no means discomfited by Amram's repeated declaration that we had seen all, and that even the Prince saw no more. A peculiar look and sign from the younger priest induced us to give up our quest, and to retire. He was a man of very different type from Amram: cunning and meanness were in his eye; he has not the learning nor the strong faith of his senior, whom he will one day succeed, and whenever he does, I suspect that Nablous will be robbed of its most precious gems, and that the Samaritan Pentateuch will have to be sought for in the West.

We went afterwards to tea with Yacoob esh Shelaby, who, having been six years in England, prided himself on understanding how to preside at the tea-table. Many of his brethren were coming and going, all of them fine-looking and intelligent men, and many, but not all, with the strongly-marked Jewish cast of countenance which we might expect from their Israelitish descent. All wore the red turban, the peculiar badge of the sect, while white is appropriated to the Moslems, green being the exclusive colour of the shireefs or descendants of the prophet, and black or purple left to the Jews and Christians. The crimson turban of the Samaritans was noted by Sir John Maundeville five and a half centuries ago, and doubtless dates, like their other usages, from still higher antiquity. The house was spotlessly clean, and furnished more elaborately than is the habit of the Mussulmans,—an upper gallery, frequented by the ladies of the house, forming part of the reception-room in which we were entertained. From time to time the subject of the ancient rolls was introduced, and though Shelaby himself was voluble and communicative, he seemed unwilling or unable to give the information we sought. The younger priest mentioned above was evidently on most intimate terms with our host, and remained after the other guests had departed. He then, with an air of the most solemn mystery, informed us that for a liberal backshish he could show us all we wished to see, but that it could only be managed under a promise of secrecy. First of all he produced several fragments of old rolls, and some ancient manuscript books—the former, portions of the law; the latter, service-books—which he offered for sale. After some hesitation, but feeling that our only chance of examining the synagogue rolls at our leisure must be by previously propitiating the priest, a bargain was concluded as to one of the rolls, more in his interest than our own, but only on condition of our having full opportunity of inspecting the treasures of the community. At length, in the darkness of the night, I was conducted alone to the synagogue. A light was struck at the door, and the priest, with an affectation of terror, as though he had been committing an act of sacrilege, admitted me, locked the door behind us, and silently -held the light with trembling hand as the curtain was drawn and the rolls and their cylinders examined. The second roll we had seen before, but the oldest was now produced, wrapped in many folds of tarnished brocade and rich but faded satins. The case and appearance of this roll have been fully described by Mr. Grove in "Vacation Tourists," 1861. There is nothing about the old gilt cylinders to corroborate the assertion of their immense antiquity. Mr. Grove assigns to them a date of 450 years back. The roll itself is doubtless much earlier, though the Samaritans would have us believe it is in the handwriting of Abisha, the son of Phinehas, and the priest, with grave face, declared that Dean Stanley, when with the Prince, had concurred in this tradition. When I told him what the Dean had written on the subject, he laughed, and said that at any rate it was the work of Manasseh, the high priest in the time of Ezra. But if we take 1,000 or 1,500 years from this, it still remains a venerable relic. Dr. Deutsch considers that none of the Samaritan MSS. which have reached Europe are older than the 10th century A.D., but he would probably assign a much higher antiquity to this, the parent roll. We unfolded it to its commencement. The earlier portion, having been less exposed than the centre, which is annually kissed by the community, retained a freshness in the appearance of the parchment which to our (p. 157) TURBULENCE OF THE PEOPLE OF NABLOUS. unlearned eyes militated against its great antiquity. The writing appeared not of ordinary ink, but of some gilt or bronzed composition. The priest pointed out, not far from the middle of the roll, letters projecting

from the ends of the lines at irregular intervals, and continued through several columns. This, he said, was the inscription stating the name of the transcriber and its date. Our ignorance of the Samaritan characters, of course, prevented our deciphering this quaintly-placed colophon.

It was nearly midnight when we quietly stole from the synagogue, mourning our ignorance of Samaritan, puzzled about the conflicting claims of antiquity, but quite convinced of one thing, that whenever the junior priest succeeds Amram, the fate of the old roll is sealed, and that the cylinders will enclose a modern copy so soon as a sufficient price has been offered for the original.

December 22.—The morning was fine and clear. We breakfasted in the chapel, by candlelight; and before seven o'clock all our baggage was loaded in the street, and the long procession started from Nablous, on its way to Beitin (Bethel). The noise of the crowd was deafening, their gesticulations frantic, as every possible and impossible claim for backshish was thrust with a yell into our faces. Two days' provisions were to be laid in, and the vendors of musty eggs, attenuated chickens, and rancid butter, all demanded a substantial acknowledgment for having generously, on our behoof, parted with their wares to our dragoman at double the market price. One man had held a horse, another had attempted to catch a mule, and a boy would have carried the boxes down had he been allowed. The demeanour of the crowd grew threatening when all were sternly refused, till, not wishing to provoke a row in the fanatic city, we at length drew forth some small coins, and pacified the foremost. The Moslems of Sychar have, certainly, no objections to dealings with the infidel, if they can make money; and a thievish, extortionate set we found them. But let us except the Samaritans proper, whose pecuniary transactions are far more subtle and decorous; and (p. 158) COMMISSIONS FOR JERUSALEM. the Protestants, with their worthy catechist, who treated us as brethren, and entrusted to us a quantity of jewellery and gold for their friends at Jerusalem,—for whom some of them work as goldsmiths.

(p. 175)....

Our search after Hebrew and Samaritan manuscripts and natural history specimens led us more than once into the Protestant part of the Jewish quarter on Mount Zion.....

(p. 504) SAMARITAN SYNAGOGUE SERVICE.....

The next day we revisited Sebustiyeh, going over the ruins of Samaria more carefully than before, and reached Nablous in time to visit the Samaritan synagogue. It was the preparation for the Passover, and we had the good fortune to be present at the service,—very interesting, as doubtless more like the ancient Jewish worship than any other now in use. It was attended only by the men and boys, and every one, on entering, vested himself in a sleeved white surplice, which reached to the feet. These surplices were placed in rows near the door. "Bring forth vestments for all the worshippers of Baal." (2 Kings x. 22.) Among the congregation was the Chief Rabbi of the Russian Karaite Jews (the sect who reject the traditions of the Talnmd), who had come here to study the Samaritan Pentateuch. He also wore a linen ephod, but with a broad red velvet phylactery, on which were embroidered in gold, verses in the modern Hebrew character. (p. 505)
RAMALLAH.

The two priests alone stood on the dais in front of the satin embroidered curtain, which veils the recess in which the holy books are deposited. Each Samaritan, as soon as he had vested himself, knelt with his face towards this, till his forehead nearly touched the ground. For half an hour the congregation, with their crimson turbans (the badge of their sect), continued to drop in, in the most irreverent manner, chatting as they robed themselves, though the service was proceeding. This consisted of alternate prayers by the priest, with loud amens and hallelujah responses chanted, and chapters of the Pentateuch chanted by all the congregation, in a minor key, with inconceivable rapidity, but far more musical and harmonious than the Moslem chants. We could fancy these were the old Temple strains, when all the people praised the Lord with a loud voice. Ten chapters of Exodus were recited at this service.²

April 8th.—I gladly embraced the opportunity of again ascending Mount Gerizim in the company of my friends, and feasting my eyes once more on the grand panorama. Curiously enough, we found among the ruins the body of a large badger, of the same species as our European, but of a paler colour. It was too much decomposed to permit of our preserving it, though we made a brave attempt at the expense of our olfactory nerves. We were completely discomfited, and afforded E. W. a subject for a laughable sketch. The beautiful rock thrush (*Petrocincla saxatilis*) was spread in small flocks over the hills; and the habits of these brilliant birds, as they hopped from rock to rock, showing their bright red tails, gave them the appearance of gigantic redstarts. We never found them again till we ascended the hills of Galilee.

(p. 530) STABLES AND HALLS IN THE CLIFF.....

Passing from this interesting record of Jewish history, we went half a mile northwards, up to the rock-dwellings and stables of Hyrcanus. The ancient road to these is marked by a double row of square stones, three feet apart, and each perforated, as if for a running bar or rail. "When we had reached the cliff, on the basement, among many other once inhabited caves, we examined one, which had been a noble (p. 531) ROCK DWELLINGS. square hall, with roof artificially hollowed out, and a plain cornice running round it. By the side of the square doorway, outside, was a mutilated Hebrew inscription, in the old or Samaritan character, which we copied.

A zigzag slope, above this, leads to a long range of caves. On the first floor, if I may so term it, is a great cave, with stabling for a hundred horses, the mangers running round it, all cut out of the solid rock.

This book is referenced # 4884 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. (It must be noted that the Biblio reference #4884 refers to a 4th ed. 1882)

H. B. Tristram is the Reverend **Henry Baker Tristram** FRS (1822 – 1906) was an English clergyman, Biblical scholar, traveller and ornithologist.

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Henry_Baker_Tristram

M. de Saulcy and Dr. Rosen are mentioned in this book.

² For a full and most graphic account of the Samaritan service on the Day of Atonement, see the interesting paper of Mr. Grove in *Vacation Tourists*, 1861, "Nablous and the Samaritans."