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(p. 141) Miscellaneous Articles, Anecdotes, &c.

#### THE SAMARITANS OF NABLOUS.

There is a small community residing in Nablous (Sychar of the New Testament), who are the only remnant of the ancient people who built their temple on Mount Gerizim, as they were not allowed to assist in the rebuilding of Jerusalem, nor in the building of the second temple. On Gerizim they worshipped in the days of Christ; (John iv. 20;) and there they still perform their annual sacrifices. They are well known to Eastern travellers, who testify to their kind hospitality to strangers. A distinct people, although for centuries living in the midst of violent fanatics, they have from this cause suffered from the harsh exactions, and fierce persecutions, of the Mohammedan rulers of Nablous, so much so that their circumstances have been of late years much impoverished, and they have endured the most severe privations; to which may be added, the effects of the late famine which prevailed over the whole of Palestine. These sufferings have induced them to send one of their community, Jacob esh Shelaby, to this country with two Petitions, one to Her Majesty's Government, praying that it would interpose its authority to prevent the infringement of their civil rights; and the other to the British public, soliciting pecuniary assistance. The Government has listened to their request, and has sent out such instructions as will probably prevent a repetition of those tyrannies which have tended to diminish their numbers; and it has, in addition, made a small pecuniary grant.

This community possesses a unique copy of the Pentateuch in the Samaritan character,—unique from its great antiquity; (it is said and believed by them to have been written by the grandson of Eleazar the High Priest, who was the son of Aaron ;) and unique for its style, — being written in the ancient Samaritan character on gazelle parchment. This they preserve with religious care and jealous reverence, and even in the extreme of poverty to which they are now reduced, they will not consent to part with the precious relic which is known to all bibliopoles.

*Literal Translation of the Petition from the Samaritan Community, addressed to the English Public in the Arabic and Samaritan Languages.*

"O God! we lift up to Thee our open hands in prayers and supplications, to Thee who art incomprehensible and incomparable; we conjure Thee by him whom Thou wert pleased to create, and to whom thou revealest the mystery of Thy Godhead, to vouchsafe to behold with the eyes of assistance, to protect and everlastingly preserve the Lords and subjects of the illustrious Government of Great Britain, who by means of thy protection obtain wondrous grace. Be Thou to them, O Lord God, a Helper and Aid, a Preserver and faithful Guard. So be it, O God! Amen."

This petition to the threshold of the bountiful, the generous, showeth that your servants, the Samaritan Community residing in Nablous, were formerly an extensive people, and

respected in all lands; but those days have changed: the Government of the district inhabited by us is corrupt and unstable; the Governors have had no pity upon our state, so that sorrow has fallen upon us in the course of time and fate, these same Governors having been in the habit of making our goods their spoil, and of punishing with fines, and stripes, and death those who disobeyed their arbitrary commands. The population rose against us, and the whole people fell sorely upon us; and we have incurred heavy debts, as we were unable to flee from our home from the lack of liberty in another place; and, above all, we should be unable to carry out the commands of (p. 142) our religion elsewhere. Our affairs were very unprosperous, and clouds of darkness thickened around us, from our inability to undertake the trials of a journey from the home of our forefathers. Thus from the tyranny of bur numerous changing Governors, we have gradually fallen into our present state; and we are so far annihilated, that we have become very few in number, our males only amounting to sixty-five,<sup>1</sup> including men and boys. We therefore solicit your pity, being confident in your known mercy; therefore, do not disappoint us of that which we expect from your charity; nay, do not turn us, your petitioners, empty away. By the representations from the travellers of your nation who have visited these lands, we, your petitioners, having become convinced of your merciful nature, your full and entire sympathy, and your universal and never-failing kindness, have thought well to address this petition, and to forward it by the hands of the bearer, one of the sons of our community, Jacob esh Shelaby, our agent and faithful trustee: we hope that by him you will receive this petition, that you will look on him with the eyes of mercy, and that you will exercise your never-failing charity;<sup>2</sup> we trust that you will exert your high influence; and we pray that your eyes may be ever rejoiced in beholding us hereafter, by your assisting us, now in this time of need, to the means whereby we may be enabled to pay our debts, and become free from these incumbrances. You are the people of mercy and charity. We therefore beseech you to grant us your bountiful assistance, that you may thereby gain the grateful prayers of your servants, and the humble supplications of our children, at all times and in all seasons.

• Signed and sealed by the Chief Priest. AMRAN,  
In the name of the Samaritan Community, [L. S.]  
— *Wesleyan Mag.*

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

This reference not located in *A Bibliography of the Samaritans, Third Edition, Revised, Expanded, and Annotated*, by Alan David Crown and Reinhard Pummer, ATLA Bibliography, No. 51, **The Scarecrow Press, Inc.** Lanham, Maryland, Toronto, Oxford. 2005

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<sup>1</sup> The whole number of the congregation, male and female, amounts to about one hundred and ninety.

<sup>2</sup> The original official documents are in the hand of Jacob esh Shelaby, 10, Carlisle-street, Soho-square, who will gladly afford further information on this subject of interest.