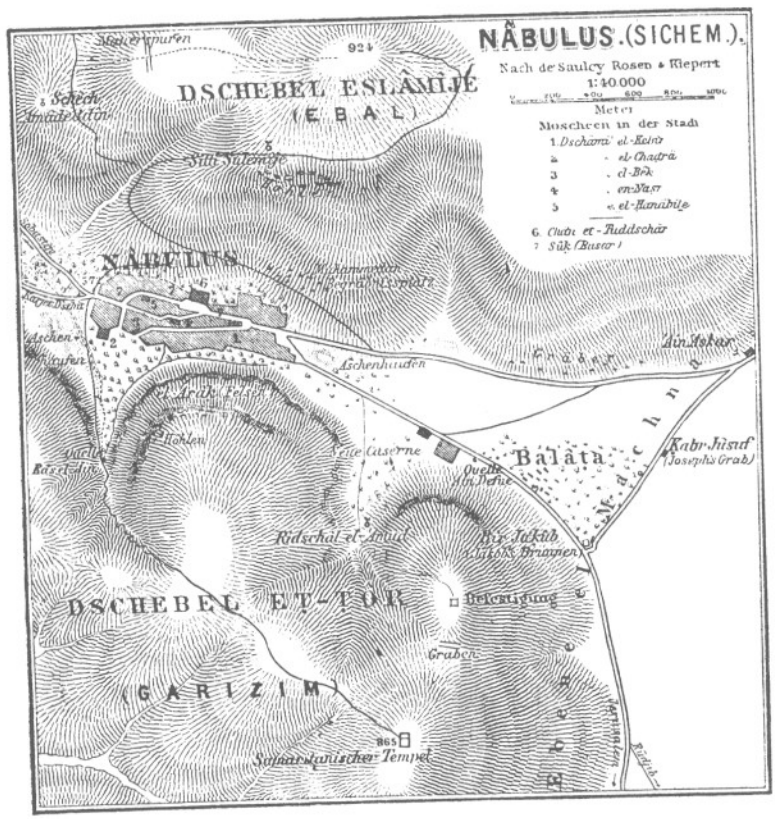

Map of Shechem-Nablus and Vicinity.

(From K. Baedeker, *Palästina und Syrien*. By permission.)

THE SAMARITANS.

CHAPTER I.

THE RE-DISCOVERY OF THE SAMARITANS.

The existence of a peculiar sect native to Samaria, the central region of Palestine, is first noticed in the Old Testament, *2 Ki.* 17, where they are called the Samaritans.[1] This record narrates that the land of the northern Kingdom of Israel, having been denuded of its population by the Assyrian conqueror after the fall of the capital, the city of Samaria, in 722 B.C., was repopulated by heathen colonies transferred thither from distant parts of the empire. The deities of the respective colonies are then named, and the narrative proceeds to relate how upon the outbreak of a plague of lions the newcomers bethought themselves, in true primitive fashion, of the claims of the neglected god of the land; in consequence of their distress they sought, with the patronage of the Assyrian King, to learn the way of the God of Israel, and added his worship to their respective cults, the result being an eclectic form of religion, abhorrent indeed to Yahwe and to all who found in him the One True God.

After a lapse of two centuries the people of Samaria appear again as the opponents of the restored Jewish state, and especially as objecting to the re-building of the temple at Jerusalem.[2] The history of the Jews as continued by the Books of *Maccabees* and the works of Josephus, abounds in references to the Samaritan sect, whose members always

[1] For the names of the Samaritans, see Additional Note B.
[2] *Ezra-Nehemia, passim.*

appear as the arch-enemies of Israel. The historians of the Pagan empire of Rome give some data bearing upon the sect, while the Byzantine chronicles and edicts of the IVth, Vth, and VIth Centuries have much to report upon the obnoxious and rebellious nature of the people.

To the man of average information the sect is mostly, if not solely, known, through the contact which Jesus several times had with the Samaritans and from his parable of the Good Samaritan. It is characteristic of the Christ's gentleness that these evangelical accounts alone, to popular knowledge, redeem the ill-fame of that sect. He himself even was given the opprobrious epithet of "Samaritan." A chapter in the *Acts of the Apostles,* and then, particularly in their comments upon Biblical passages, the Church Fathers, throw some light upon the relations of the Samaritans with Judaism and Christianity.

Many references to the sect are found in the Talmuds, Midrashim, and other Jewish literature, and there is a small tractate bound up in the Babylonian Talmud which treats of the Samaritans. But the Talmud still remains a wilderness to general Christian knowledge, and the Jews have felt, until very recent times, but little interest in digesting the information at their hand concerning "the foolish people who dwell at Shechem" (*Ecclus.* 50, 25), — which city has been from the beginning the headquarters of the sect.

Thus it came about that when the dark veil of Islam separated the East from the West, the Samaritan sect, despised and abominated by Jew and Christian alike, fell into deep oblivion so far as the western world was concerned. Those intelligent observers, the Arabic geographers, historians and philosophers, recorded valuable notices of the Samaritans;[3] the Jewish traveller, Benjamin of Tudela, brought home some exact information concerning them.[4] But mediæval

[3] See below, p. 134ff.
[4] See below, p. 136.

Europe was too sunk in barbarism to have its curiosity awakened; even the Crusaders utterly ignored the Samaritans, although the sacred city of the sect, which since the Roman period bore the name of Neapolis, was one of the gay centres of those marauders. Among the many travellers who in the spirit of adventure visited the Orient, after Islam had recovered its own again, only two before the XVIIth Century seem to have noticed the Samaritans, Wilhelm von Boldensele, of Lower Saxony, in 1333[5] and the author of the more or less romantic work ascribed to John Mandeville, composed between 1357 and 1371, and widely read in many editions and languages.[6] What the entertaining Sir John has to say about the Samaritans — how that they are a distinct sect and wear a red turban — is very accurate, but probably it was all taken as one of his "traveller's tales." The Samaritans became to Christendom as real, or as unreal, as the Lost Ten Tribes who dwell beyond the fabled river Sambation.

The dense darkness was at last penetrated by the genius and the will of "the greatest scholar of modern times," Joseph Scaliger. In 1583 was published his immortal work *De emendatione temporum,* in which he asserted the rights of the Orient to its place in universal history, and the value of all oriental chronicles for the scientific historian. It was evidently this *magnum opus* which determined the author to explore the Samaritans, for in conjunction with it he set agencies in motion which in the following year, 1584, brought him from the Samaritan colony in Cairo two cal-

[5] See his *Hodœporicon ad Terram Sanctam,* in Canisius, *Thesaurus monumentorum,* ed. Basnage, iv, 353. See *ZDMG* xvi, 710.
[6] On authorship and bibliography, see the articles on "Mandeville" in *Encyclopœdia Britannica* and *Dictionary of National Biography.* The passage is found in Halliwell's edition, *The Voyage and Travaille of Sir John Maundeville,* London, 1839, p. 108. Kootwyk (Cotovicus), who travelled in Palestine in 1598, refers to the Samaritans as a sect of the Jews; see his *Itinerarium Hierosolymitanum et Syriacum,* Antwerp, 1619, p. 342.

endars, and a copy of the Samaritan *Book of Joshua.*[7] The great scholar's appetite was now whetted for the possession of a copy of the edition of the Pentateuch, which he heard the sect possessed. His ambition was not rewarded, because the Samaritans refused the boon of their holy Law to an alien. But his search had its fruit in two epistles of the date 1590, one from a Samaritan of Gaza, the other from Egypt, and these documents were the beginning of an extensive correspondence with European scholars, which for nearly 250 years was almost the sole source of information concerning the contemporary condition of the Samaritans.[8]

The next European to gain undying merit for himself in investigating the Samaritans was the great traveller Pietro della Valle, who is also immortal and of special interest to present-day scholarship as the first to acquaint the western world with the Persian cuneiform inscriptions, which have at last given the key to the decipherment of the literature of Babylonia and Assyria.[9] Upon the commission of Achille Harlay de Sancy, the French ambassador at Constantinople, that he procure a copy of the Samaritan Pentateuch, della Valle made the Samaritans a special quest of his travels, and in 1616 visited their communities at Cairo, Gaza, Shechem (the modern Nablus), and Damascus, in which latter city he at last succeeded in his search. It may be worth while to repeat part of his quaint description of the visit made one summer day to the Samaritan community housed in the suburbs of Damascus. "One morning," he

[7] For Scaliger's work, which in the later editions published the calendar material — the first appearance of a Samaritan document in print — see Chap. XIV, note 80, and Bibliography.

[8] These letters, which were called out by the efforts of Scaliger's friend de Peiresc, never reached him, as he died before they arrived at their destination. A Latin translation was published by Morin in Simon, *Antiquitates ecclesiæ orientalis,* 1682, p. 119. The text, with translation and notes, was finally published by de Sacy in Eichhorn's *Repertorium,* xiii (1783), 257. For the history of Scaliger's efforts, see Juynboll, *Lib. Jos.* 1.

[9] See Rogers, *History of Babylonia and Assyria,* i, 16

writes, "I was consoled for all the discomforts brought me by that illness by being taken by Father Michael and by a Hebrew, my friend and interpreter, to see outside the city in the gardens certain small houses which were there, belonging to the Hebrew Samaritans, beside the pleasure which I had in seeing those gardens, and those houses, which within were most gay, in spite of making a very poor appearance without, all filled with pictures painted in miniature, with their Samaritan letters engraved in gold, and so also their synagogues." He then proceeds to describe his inspection of the Samaritan books, he being the first Christian scholar, so far as we know, to become acquainted with them since the Roman rule, even as he was the first modern Christian to come into intimate intercourse with the sect.[10]

Della Valle was able to purchase two copies of the Samaritan Hebrew Pentateuch, a copy of the Targum or Aramaic translation of the same, and some other books. The discovery of these literary treasures set all learned Europe agog, for they became an additional apple of discord in the wordy and voluminous strife between Catholic and Protestant theologians as to the text of the Scriptures and the Church's authority in defining her Canon and its text.[11] Once again the Samaritans played their historic part as disturbers of the peace, but now in the distant academies of Europe.

At the end of the same century three travellers visited the Samaritans, the first of whom, Huntington, gave renewed stimulus to the interest awakened in the sect. The two others wrote brief descriptions of the Samaritans at Nablus; one of them was Henry Maundrell, the predecessor of Hunt-

[10] For the editions of della Valle's *Viaggi,* see Bibliography. The above passage appears in the XIIIth Letter, "from Aleppo." I owe my translation to the kind assistance of E. H. M. For the recent discoveries of house inscriptions like those described by della Valle, see below, p. 277.

[11] For these MSS and the resulting discussion, see Chapter XIV, §§ 6, 7.

ington in the chaplaincy at Aleppo, in 1697, the other the Frenchman, A. Morison, in 1698. These seem to have been almost the last direct observations upon the Samaritans until the visits of European travellers in the XIXth Century.[12]

But the laurels in the quest after the strange sect fell to Robert Huntington, later Bishop of the diocese of Raphoe of the Church of Ireland (d. 1701). When chaplain at the English " factory " in Aleppo, he undertook a visit to Jerusalem in 1671, and on the way visited Nablus.[13] The Samaritans were astonished at his interest in them and at his acquaintance with their literature and script, and they assumed that the Israelites in England, of whom the clergyman spoke, were their brothers. By nursing their self-deception he obtained a copy of their Pentateuch, and soon afterwards, at Jerusalem, received from them an epistle addressed to their " Brethren in England." Before an answer arrived, the Samaritans addressed to him another letter written at Gaza in 1674. The first epistle came into the hands of Thomas Marshall of Oxford (rector of Lincoln College, 1672–1685), who in 1675 addressed a Hebrew epistle to the Samaritans, which informed them that the writers were of the race of Japheth; its substance was a pious attempt to proselytize the sect for the Christian Messiah. Huntington forwarded this letter, accompanied by one from himself inquiring concerning the alleged dove-cult of the Samaritans.

The latter immediately replied, in 1675, with a curt response to Huntington, expressing their surprise at his inquiries and their amazement at the lack of information concerning the Brethren in England. The earlier correspondence had been couched in Hebrew, the mother-tongue of the sect, and written in the peculiar Samaritan script; this letter was in Arabic, the vernacular in Palestine. The reply was accompanied by two epistles, addressed to the Brethren in England, the one in Arabic, the other in Hebrew. Another Arabic epistle for the English Brethren was addressed to Huntington in 1688.[14] Huntington's deceit was an unfortunate one, for it established in the Samaritan mind a well-founded suspicion against the Europeans.

In the same decade with the epistles last mentioned falls the correspondence between Job Ludolf, the Amsterdam scholar, and the Samaritans. He availed himself of the services of an itinerant Jew, who was acquainted with the Samaritans, to forward them a Hebrew letter. In the following year, 1685, the Samaritans replied with two epistles, containing largely duplicate matter. Ludolf again replied, and in 1691 received a third letter, of date 1689.[15] A lull

[12] Maundrell, *Journey from Aleppo to Jerusalem at Easter* 1697. Oxford, 1703, etc.; the reference is under date of March 24. A. Morison, *Relation historique d'un voyage au Mont Sinai et à Jerusalem,* Toulouse, 1704, p. 234.

[13] See T. Smith, *R. Huntingtoni Epistolæ,* 1704.

[14] For the correspondence since Huntington's time, the fullest authority is de Sacy, who has also edited most of the Samaritan epistles. See his invaluable *Correspondance des Samaritains de Naplouse,* in *Notices et Extraits des Manuscrits de la Bibliothèque du Roi,* xii (1831), p. 1. The preface gives an account of the Samaritans and the correspondence; the body of the article, almost all the epistles, along with translations, except those to Scaliger and Ludolf. All the Huntington correspondence, with the exception of Huntington's letter concerning the dove-cult, is found in Nos. xvii–xxiii. Of the Epistle of 1672 the English scholar, Edward Bernard, gave a translation in Ludolf, *Epistolæ Samaritanæ Sichemitarum ad J. Ludolf.,* Zeiz, 1688, p. 26; in *N. et E.* it is No. xvii. The Epistle of 1674 appeared in German translation by Schnurrer in Eichhorn's *Repertorium,* ix, 8, and with text and translation in *N. et E.* xviii; the Epistle from Marshall, in like forms, in *Repert,* ix, 11, and *N. et E.,* No. xix; the Arabic Epistle of 1675 in *Repert.* ix, 16, and *N. et E.* xx; the Arabic Epistle to the Samaritans in England of the same date, and the fragment which has alone been preserved of the fellow Hebrew Epistle, in *Repert.* ix, 22, 55, and *N. et E.* xxi, xxii; that of 1688, in *Repert.* ix, 36, and *N. et E.* xxiii.

[15] The first two of these Epistles appeared in Ludolf, *Epistolæ Samaritanæ Sichemitarum ad J. Ludolf,* 1688 (bound up with Cellarius, *Collectanea historiæ Samaritanæ,* of same date). The third Epistle was not published in full until the appearance of Bruns, *Epistola Sam. Sichemit. tertia ad J. Ludolf,* 1781, which work was republished in *Repert.* xiii, 277. Cellarius had published some extracts from it in his *Historia gentis et religionis Samaritanæ,* 1699.

then fell upon this learned intercourse, until it was taken up by the French savants of the XIXth Century.[16] But the new information had the effect of stimulating some of the encyclopædic scholars of the XVIIth Century, the great lexicographer Castellus, that prince of archæologists Reland, Cellarius, and others, to the accumulation of all the material concerning the strange sect; but we must pass over the labors of many indefatigable scholars and travellers of this earlier period of research. One note recorded by Kennicott[17] is worthy of citation because of its reference to an attempt to acquire the sacred Nablus codex. Kennicott relates that word had been received from Mr. John Usgate in 1734; that "he had been at Naplose, the preceding February; that several families of the Samaritans then resided there; that they had still their old MS. of the Pentateuch, some passages of which were so effaced as to be scarce legible; and that he had made proposals and hoped soon to agree with them for the purchase of it; of which he would send Mr. Swinton notice. But no such notice has been since received; the purchase being probably prevented by the unfortunate death of Mr. Usgate, who was afterwards cut to pieces by a party of Persians."

The next stage in these epistolary relations, and the one yielding the most scientific results, was under the auspices of the First Empire; the initiative was taken by the distinguished Henri Grégoire, Bishop of Blois, revolutionary, senator of the Empire, and author of the *Histoire des sectes réligieuses,* with the aid of de Sacy, the illustrious Arabist,

[16] However, Samaritan Epistles seem to have found their way to Europe in the interim. Heidenheim has published in his *DVJ* 1, 78, the *Schreiben Meshalmah ben Ab Sechuah's an die Samaritaner,* apparently addressed to coreligionists in Europe. It is subsequent to the failure of the highpriesthood in 1623. In 1790 the Samaritans addressed a letter to the Brethren in France, which, found again in Holland, was published by Hamaker, in *Aanmerkingen over de Samaritanen,* 1834. This Epistle I have not seen.

[17] *State of the Printed Hebrew Text, Diss.* II, 541.

who was the writer of most of the French documents, and became the editor of all the correspondence. After some futile applications to French consuls in Syria, Consul-general Corancez at Aleppo addressed a letter containing categorical questions to the Samaritans, and this drew from them, in 1808, a full and direct reply. But the answer only provoked further questions, and these were drawn up by Grégoire and de Sacy in a memoir containing sixteen questions. Direct answers thereto were received in a long Hebrew letter, accompanied by a short one in Arabic, of date 1810. Ten years later, in 1820, there reached de Sacy an Arabic letter, accompanied with a table of contemporary astronomical observations, and also a Hebrew epistle addressed to the Brethren in Europe. Finally in 1826 there arrived a Hebrew epistle addressed to the Samaritans in Paris.[18]

These Samaritan epistles, dating from Scaliger to de Sacy, are most valuable in the information they give upon the theology and the contemporary condition of the Samaritans. The latter answered the questions addressed to them with great intelligence and frankness, while the sincerity of the information is the more evident because many of the letters were addressed to the assumed Brethren in Europe. Further, in the scholarly study of the sect it was these epistles which constituted, alongside of the Pentateuchal codices, almost the sole knowledge scholars pos-

[18] For all this correspondence of the French savants, see *N. et E.;* the letters are given under Nos. iv–xvi; xxiv–xxv. There is also to be noted an epistle obtained by Kautzsch, of date 1884, from the Samaritan highpriest, published in *ZDPV* viii, 149. It contains answers to questions concerning the numbers of the community, their inner legal relations, and the Taeb or Messiah, giving an interesting definition of the latter term; see below, p. 246. A Samaritan letter addressed to the author appears in Rosenberg, *Lehrbuch d. sam. Sprache,* 1901. There exists a petition addressed to the government of Louis Philippe, in 1842; see below, p. 141. A letter of the Samaritans to the English government of date 1875 is in the British Museum, catalogued as *Or.* 1381. Almkvist has published a congratulatory Epistle to King Oscar (see Bibliography).

sessed on the subject, until the opening up of more extensive and immediate information in later years of the XIXth Century.

But there was a more direct way of learning about the modern Samaritans than by their literature and epistles, namely through the close study of the sect in its home by trained orientalists. The few earlier travellers had noted only things which lay upon the surface. Edward Robinson, who visited Shechem in 1838 and 1852, left scholarly accounts of his brief sojourns there.[19] But Heinrich Petermann, the distinguished orientalist, was the first to take the pains to devote considerable time to a visit to the Samaritans. In 1853 he spent two months among the people, making there, despite many difficulties, a systematic study of all that he could learn.[20] He had already in the spring attended the Samaritan Passover, his party, which included the English consul Finn, and the German scholar and consul Rosen, being the first modern Europeans to witness that ancient rite, which in the Jewish Church had ceased for 1800 years.[21] In the same year with Petermann the French abbé Bargès visited the Samaritans,[22] and since that time the ancient sect has been an objective both of curious tourists and of well-trained scholars. Among the latter may be named Rosen, John Mills, Hammond, Dean Stanley, Firkovitch, Warren, Conder, and the Americans Trumbull and Huxley.[23] We may record here the visit of a fugitive Samaritan to the west; in 1855 Jacob esh-Shelaby went to London, having with difficulty escaped assassination by the Muslims at home, and interested many philanthropic Eng-

[19] *BR* iii, 96; *LBR*, 128.
[20] Petermann, *Reisen im Orient*, i, chap. vii.
[21] *Ibid.*, 233.
[22] See his *Samaritains de Naplouse*, 1855.
[23] See the Bibliography. I have not attempted there to record the visits of all travellers to Nablus, but only, as a rule, the accounts of those who have attended the Samaritan Passover.

lishmen — among them Lord Shaftesbury — in his people's cause, for which he made some extensive collections.[24]

Further, in consequence of the renewed interest of the western world in the sect at Nablus, and through the opening up of the treasures of the Orient in the last century, scholarship has become enriched with a great quantity and variety of Samaritan manuscripts, which have manifolded our means of studying the history and the genius of the sect. Partly by infiltration from unknown sources, partly by direct purchase, this literary material has been slowly flowing into European libraries, and it proves the Samaritans to have been by no means ignorant of letters. Beside many texts of the Hebrew Pentateuch and its Targum, we have extensive theological treatises and Midrashim, commentaries which show some exegetical skill, chronicles whose defect is their chronology, grammatical and scientific works, and, most important of all for studying the spirit of the Samaritan religion, tomes of their liturgy. The chief collection of this material is found in the British Museum,[25] which is now rivalled, in quantity at least, by the Royal Library at St. Petersburg, containing the treasures found by the great Karaite scholar Abraham Firkovitch.[26] Alongside of these should be named the Bodleian Library at Oxford,[27] and then the libraries in Cambridge,[28] at Leyden,[29] Paris,[30] Rome, Berlin, and Gotha. Pieces of the literature are to be found in many other collections, private

[24] See Consul Rogers, *Notices of the Modern Samaritans*, etc., 1855. Shelaby's coreligionists charged that he kept the money for himself, and when he returned, he had to retire to Jerusalem.
[25] Margoliouth, *Descriptive List*, 1893, and *Catalogue*, 1899. (For these catalogues, see Bibliography.)
[26] Harkavy, *Catalog.* Cf. the digest of the collection given by Harkavy in Nutt, *Samaritan Targum*, Appendix i.
[27] See the Catalogues of Nicoll and Pusey, 1835, and Neubauer, 1866.
[28] Wright and Schiller-Szinnessy's Appendix to the Trinity College Catalogue.
[29] De Jong, *Catalogus Codicum Orientalium bibliothecæ academiæ regiæ Lugdun.-Batav.*, 1862.
[30] Zotenberg, *Catalogues*, 1866; Steinschneider, *Supplément*, 1903.

as well as public. This extensive material has by no means as yet been worked out, although it has engaged the interest of many Semitists, some of them the peers of the scholars of the XVIIth Century, such as Gesenius, Juynboll, Kuenen, Nöldeke, Geiger, Kohn, Neubauer, Heidenheim, Clermont-Ganneau, Cowley, and many others, the long list of whom shows that Samaritana evoke the attention of specialists in many different lines. It may be said that we now possess enough material to recover the history and depict the character of the Samaritans so far as literature can give the means, until the archæologist's spade shall turn up in Palestinian soil ancient monuments which can make revelations concerning the darkest age of Samaritan history, that of its beginnings.