

THE SAMARITAN MESSIAH.

FURTHER COMMENTS OF THE SAMARITAN HIGH PRIEST.

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THE treatise of the Samaritan High Priest on "The Messianic Hope of the Samaritans"¹ was submitted to the author, and it reached him at the time of the Passover on the top of Mt. Gerizim.



RUIN OF TEMPLE ON THE TOP OF MT. GERIZIM.

It was read to him and he heard it with approval, but in comment on the footnote at the bottom of page 279, he explained that the

¹ Published in the May number of *The Open Court*.

name Aelia, given to Jerusalem after its destruction, is not used by the Samaritans for the city itself, but denotes a village near the present site of Jerusalem, the spot where Eli set up his tabernacle. He adds that the place now called Shiloh, near Sinjil, which Christians suppose to have been the Shiloh of Eli and Samuel, was not the real Shiloh. The High Priest then proceeds to answer the questions asked him concerning the Messiah.

In the little treatise the Messiah was depicted as a prophet. But the Christian Messiah is spoken of as "Prophet, Priest and King." It seemed an interesting question whether the Messiah of



SAMARITAN HIGH PRIEST AND HIS FAMILY.

the Samaritans were to be more than a prophet. The High Priest answers this inquiry:

"There is nothing in prophecy to say whether he will be of the priestly line or not. Some of our learned men say he will come from the children of Aaron, and be a priest. Others say that he will be of the children of Joseph, and 'like unto his brethren.' My own private opinion is that he will be of the children of Joseph."

Of course the Samaritan hope is not colored by any of the Jewish memories of the throne of David, and the treatise gave no

hint as to any kingly rule. Asked concerning this, the High Priest answers:

“The Messiah will be a prophet, and will be acknowledged as a prophet. That will be his title, as the prophecies give it. But he will also be a king.”

The High Priest was asked concerning two or three Old Testament passages frequently quoted as Messianic. He replies:



CRYPT OF OLD CRUSADERS' CHURCH SHOWING JACOB'S WELL.

“The promise that the seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head, in Genesis iii. 15, has no Messianic significance whatever. It has a very long interpretation, but the substance is this:

“The serpent has intruded upon man, and the man who seeks revenge upon the serpent does so with much advantage yet with peril. He will have his heel bruised, but ultimately will overcome the serpent and kill it.

"Of course the serpent is only a serpent.

"While there is some difference of opinion about Gen. xlix. 55, which tells at what time the scepter shall depart from Judah, there is light to be found in the form of the name Shiloh. The Jews make it two words, but in the Samaritan Torah it is but one word, and that is the name Solomon. The characteristics which Jacob attributes to Shiloh belong very well to the character of



JACOB'S WELL SHOWING RUINS OF THE OLD CRUSADERS' CHURCH.

Solomon. For he it was who set up idolatry in Jerusalem that he might please his heathen wives; and further built there the temple for the pretended ark, as I have told in another place. Then it was that the scepter departed from Judah, and under his son Rehoboam, though he came back to the true capital, Shechem, to be anointed king, the true Israel revolted, and set up the kingdom in Shechem where it belonged, and the scepter departed from Judah."

To Christians it will be interesting to know whether the Samaritan Messiah is expected to be in any sense divine. The High Priest answers:

“The Messiah will not be in any sense a Son of God. He will be a prophet like Moses and like his brethren, as it is told in Deut. xviii. 15-22:

“‘The Lord thy God will raise up unto thee a prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me; unto him ye shall hearken; according to all that thou desiredst of the Lord thy God in Horeb in the day of the assembly, saying, Let me not hear again the



OLD OLIVE GROVE OUTSIDE NABLOUS.

voice of the Lord my God, neither let me see this great fire any more, that I die not. And the Lord said unto me, They have well said that which they have spoken. I will raise them up a prophet from among their brethren, like unto thee; and I will put my words in his mouth, and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him. And it shall come to pass, that whosoever will not hearken unto my words which he shall speak in my name, I will require it of him. But the prophet, which shall speak a word presumptuously in my name, which I have not commanded him to speak, or that shall speak in the name of other gods, that same prophet shall die. And

if thou say in thine heart, How shall we know the word which the Lord hath spoken? When a prophet speaketh in the name of the Lord, if the thing follow not, nor come to pass, that is the thing which the Lord hath not spoken: the prophet hath spoken it presumptuously, thou shalt not be afraid of him.'

"This is the passage of the Torah which tells us what the Messiah will be, and I hope you will read it with a clear eye, as you always read everything."

Another thing was asked of the High Priest, namely, what



VIEW FROM HIGH PRIEST'S HOUSE.
(The Rock of Jotham is seen on the hill above.)

would be the attitude of the Messiah toward Christians and other nations. He answers:

"The Messiah will be a prophet, as I have told you, and will no doubt work signs to prove his mission. There will be unusual signs and wonders, which I described in the little book. But he is to be a king, and rule the earth from Shechem, the ancient seat of power, and from his holy mountain, Gerizim. He will call all the world to acknowledge him, and they will do so. He will bring blessings to all nations that acknowledge him."

Still one thing more was asked the High Priest as he sat in his tent while the fires were heating the ovens for the sacrifice of the lambs for the Passover, Will the Passover continue after the Messiah comes?

He answered:

"The Passover will continue after the Messiah comes. It is a perpetual feast. It has no reference whatever to the Messiah."

I am sure that these answers will be interesting to very many readers of the little treatise already printed.



SAMARITAN SYNAGOGUE WITH ANCIENT PENTATEUCH ON THE CHAIR.

The priest wishes also that a word might be inserted cautioning Americans and Englishmen who buy manuscripts in the Samaritan tongue that it is not safe to buy them except at the Samaritan synagogues; as the demand for them has led unauthorized persons to make incorrect copies, some of which have come to him to be authenticated; and he finds them imperfect, and some of them fraudulent. The synagogues are very glad to sell copies of the Pentateuch and of their other books. The copies which they have for sale are of course modern copies made by the priests and authenticated. It is to be hoped that the oldest manuscript will not pass from the possession of the Samaritan community. This, their greatest treas-

ure, held in most holy veneration, should not depart from its historic home in the bare little synagogue at the base of Mount Gerizim so long as the Samaritan community exists.

The oldest of the Samaritan manuscripts, and that from which all the others are derived, is believed by many scholars to be as old as the Christian era, and is generally conceded to be the oldest manuscript of the Bible in the world. Strange as it may seem, our Old Testament manuscripts are much less ancient than those of the New. There are three New Testament manuscripts which date from 300 to 450 A. D.,—the Alexandrian, known as Codex A, in the British Museum; the Vatican, known as Codex B, which is in the Vatican at Rome; and the Sinaitic, known as Codex Aleph, which is treasured at St. Petersburg. One of these is in possession of the Greek Church, another of the Roman, and the other of the Protestants, which illustrates the dependence of all sects in Christendom on the same things and on each other. But of Old Testament manuscripts we have none in Hebrew going back of the tenth century. The Samaritans have one nearly a millennium older!

Five years ago I saw this oldest manuscript. The High Priest stood guard over it, and one of his sons exhibited the next oldest roll which on all ordinary occasions is shown in place of the oldest one. The ancient one is supposed to be shown to the Samaritans once a year only, on the day of Atonement, and never to outsiders. Most travelers who suppose themselves to have seen it have seen only the substitute. The original is written on a yellow parchment, not brown or white, without ruled lines, and the writing is smaller and less regular than in the substitute. The ordinary ink of the Samaritans is dense black and glossy, but this is purple. It has been re-inked in many places. At least a third of it has cracked away, for it is very brittle, the back is reinforced by other parchment, and the missing portions have been supplied. It is many years since it has been unrolled, and the High Priest writes that to unroll it would be to injure if not destroy it. He is willing to consider the question of photographing such pages as can be exposed without endangering the parchment, but not the entire work. The old book is kept under lock and key, and covered with rich green cloth.

I have what may possibly be a fragment of that old codex. I obtained it from a son of the High Priest as a premium with a larger purchase. No Samaritan, I hope, has yet reached a depth of depravity which would lead him to mutilate that book for money, but in many places bits have been worn out of it, and this is such

a scrap, five and one half by three and one half inches from the lowest margin of the manuscript, and containing Genesis xxvi, 20-22.



VIEW NEAR NABLOUS.

The letters are small and irregular; it has been re-inked at least twice in places; the lines are not ruled; the parchment is yellow

and brittle and wrinkled; and above all, the ink, which is so faded and over-written that it would be difficult to tell from the front of the leather what was the original color, has stained the back of the parchment a distinct purple. If it is true as Deutsch affirms, that "the ink is black in all cases except the scroll at Nablous," then I



HIGH PRIEST WITH ANCIENT PENTATEUCH MANUSCRIPT.

may not be counted over-credulous in thinking the relic I obtained from the young priest Abalhassan as being of distinct interest among literary treasures.

Pictures of the Samaritan Pentateuch are not rare, though in almost every case it is the substitute roll that has been photographed.

They give a good general idea of the appearance of the Holy Scroll. The case is of silver, as large as a stove-pipe, cut lengthwise into three sections, and with two sets of hinges at the back, so that it will open and show a column of text, or close and protect all from the light. At the top are three large knobs, the middle one a dummy and the two end ones rollers by which the parchment is rolled forward or back. The case inside is about eighteen inches high; but the knobs above and the legs below make the entire height about thirty inches. The five books of Moses, which are all the Bible which the Samaritans receive, are written on the hair side of skins of lambs offered in sacrifice. The entire roll is probable sixty or more feet in length. I presume no one knows how long it is, though Condor was told that it contains twenty-four skins. As a Hebrew Pentateuch which I bought in Jerusalem has fifty-two skins, and another on exhibition at the St. Louis Fair (which I also bought) has more, I think Condor's estimate too low.

The Samaritan colony now is very small and poor. There were 152 of them in 1901, 97 males and only 55 females. While this is a greater number than that of the passengers of the Mayflower, and their descendants now are legion, there is little prospect that the Samaritans will leave such a posterity. They expect to be brought practically to extinction, but to be restored when their Messiah comes.

So far as the treatise indicates, the Samaritans do not look for any vicarious sacrifice on the part of their Messiah. His career, when he comes, would appear to be one of victory and tranquil rule, primarily religious, but with some political significance. The sacrifices are declared not to be prophetic of his mission. The passages quoted by Christians from the Pentateuch as Messianic are held not to refer to him. Practically the whole content of Samaritan Messianic prophecy appears to be derived from Deut. xviii. 15-22, in which the Messiah is a prophet like unto Moses, raised up from among the people, and one of their own brethren.