
THE SAMARITANS.

- A. Their Origin and Brief History. Samaria was the capital of the northern kingdom of Israel captured by the Assyrians in 722 BC (2 Kings 17:3-6; 18:9-11). Many of the Israelites were taken away by Assyria and put in Halan, and on the Habor, the river Gozan, and in the cities of the Medes. 1. Foreigners from Babylon, Cuthah, Avva, Hamath and Sepharvaim were brought by Assyria and placed in the cities of Samaria. These people intermarried with the remaining Israelites and became known as the Samaritans (2 Kings 17:24, 29). Kelso suggests that more likely the Samaritans 'were the descendants of the Israelites left in the land, for Samaritan theology shows no sign of the influence of paganism among the colonists sent by the Assyrians. If there was intermarriage, the children became true Israelites" (245).
2. When the Jews returned from captivity (536 BC) the Samaritans offered to help rebuild the temple in Jerusalem. Their offer was refused by Zerubbabel and Joshua (Ezra 4:3, 10, 17; 520—516 BC).
 3. "In Maccabean times Jewish tradition represents the Samaritans as joining with the Seleucid oppressors" (MacRae 244).
 4. John Hyrcanus destroyed the Samaritan temple on Mount Gerizim in 128 BC. Josephus claims the temple was erected in the days of Alexander (c. 333 BC; Ant. 11.7.2; 11.8.2), but others question the accuracy of this date (245; Prideaux 1:324). According to Josephus, the temple was an exact replica of the temple in Jerusalem.
 - a. Note the statement of the Samaritan woman, "Our fathers worshipped [past tense] in this mountain" (Jn. 4:20). Archaeologists think the ruins of this temple were visible from Jacob's Well (Bull).
 - b. Yitzhak Magen, chief Israeli archaeologist for Judea and Samaria, announced in 1995 the discovery of the Samaritan temple on Mount Gerizim (The Jerusalem Post International Edition, April 29, 1995).
 5. By New Testament times the Jews and the Samaritans had no dealings with one another (Jn- 4:9).
- B. The Samaritan Religion.
- i. The Samaritans accepted only the Pentateuch. Manuscripts of the "Samaritan Pentateuch" differ from the Masoretic Hebrew text in several places. Preference is given to Mt. Gerizim rather than Jerusalem.
 2. A small group of Samaritans still live in the city of Nablus (near ancient Shechem in the valley between Mount Gerizim and Mount Ebal). The Samaritans still observe the passover annually on Mount Gerizim.
- C. The Samaria Papyri. A collection of about 20 fragmentary Aramaic documents were discovered by the Ta'amireh Bedouin at Wadi Daliyeh (9 miles north of Jericho) in 1962—1964. About 300 skeletons were found in the same cave. The papyri have added considerable information about the inter-testamental period.
1. The papyri, mostly administrative, is dated between 375 and 335 BC. 2. Reference is made to Artaxerxes II (404—359 BC) and Darius III (335—330 BC). This places the documents immediately prior to Alexander's invasion in 332 BC.
 3. There is also reference to 'Sanballat, governor of Samaria. " This is thought to be Sanballat III, and not Sanballat I of the book of Nehemiah (2:10, 19; 3:33; 4:1•, et al.).
 4. Frank Moore Cross, who was the first to read the Samaria Papyri, suggests the historical setting: "Although the people of the city of Samaria initially ingratiated themselves with their foreign ruler Alexander the Great, they later burned alive Andromachus, Alexander's prefect in Syria. The act was not only a heinous it was the first sign of revolt in Syria-Palestine. Alexander returned in all haste to Samaria and took vengeance on the murderers who were 'delivered up to him, ' according to the ancient historian Curtius Rufus.... Alexander destroyed the city of Samaria. Archaeologists have uncovered the late fourth century towers at Samaria which were built in Greek design rather than Palestinian. This suggests that Samaria was resettled by Greek Macedonians after its destruction, excavations at Shechem reveal that the city was rebuilt in the late fourth century after a long abandonment. This is probably to be explained by the fact that the Samaritans who fled

Samaria rebuilt Shechem as their new capital" (25; More information can be found in Discoveries in the Wadi Ed-Daliyeh, ed. by Paul and Nancy Lapp). Cross thinks that some Samaritans went to Wadi Daliyeh where they found temporary refuge in the cave. Alexander's men found them in the cave, lit a fire at the mouth of the cave and waited for the occupants to suffocate.

D. Miscellaneous Information.

1. Herod the Great built Samaria as one of his magnificent cities. He dedicated a temple to the Emperor Augustus. "One of his wives was a Samaritan, who was the mother of Herod Antipas" (Kelso 246).
2. Archelaus proved a poor ruler, so Samaria fell under the control of the Roman procurators. Josephus states that Pilate's handling of a fanatical assembly on Mt. Gerizim led to his removal as procurator in AD 36 (Antiquities XV111-iv).
3. Travel in first century Palestine was affected by the Samaritan—Jew conflict (cf. Lk. 9:52-56). Many Jews of Galilee traveled along the Jordan Valley or through Perea on their way to Jerusalem.

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