

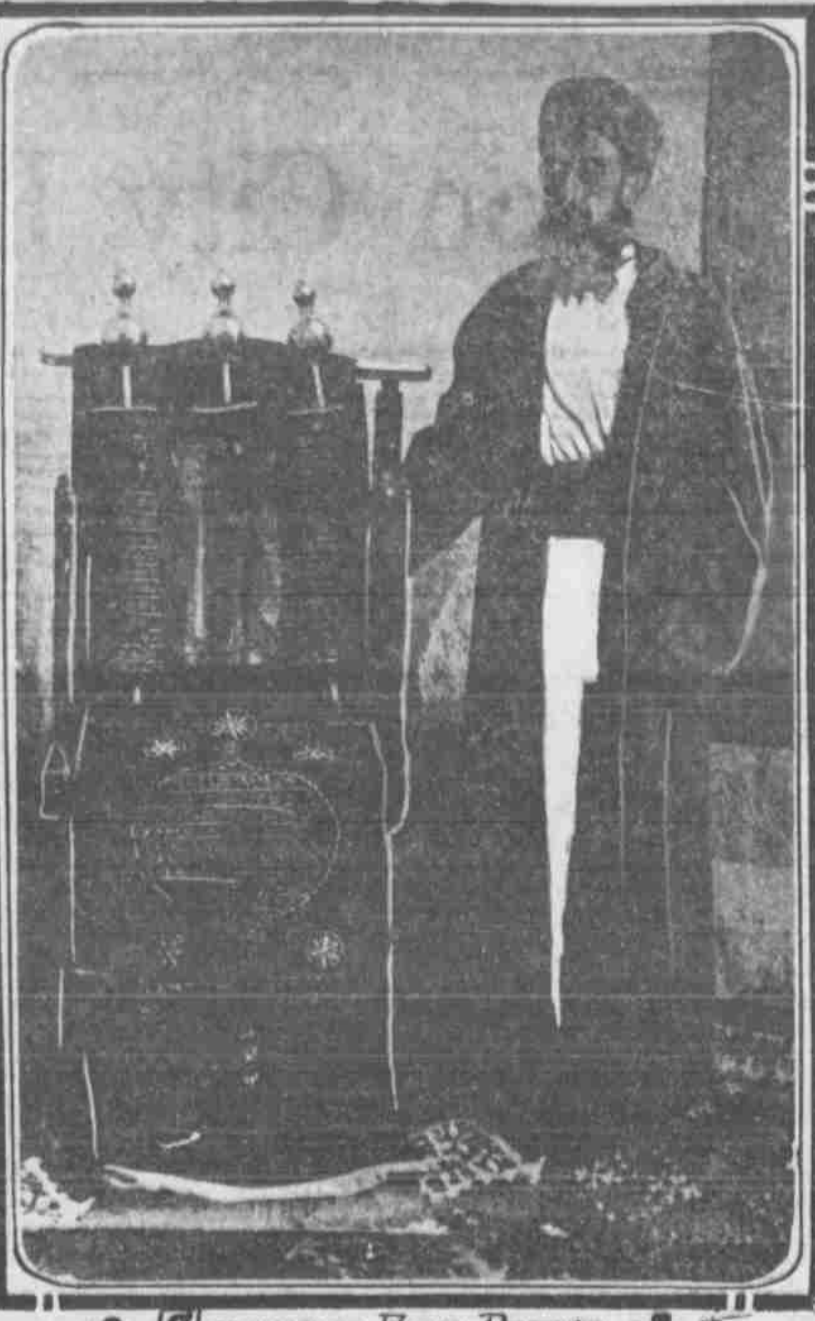
# An Interview with the High Priest of Samaritans of 1910



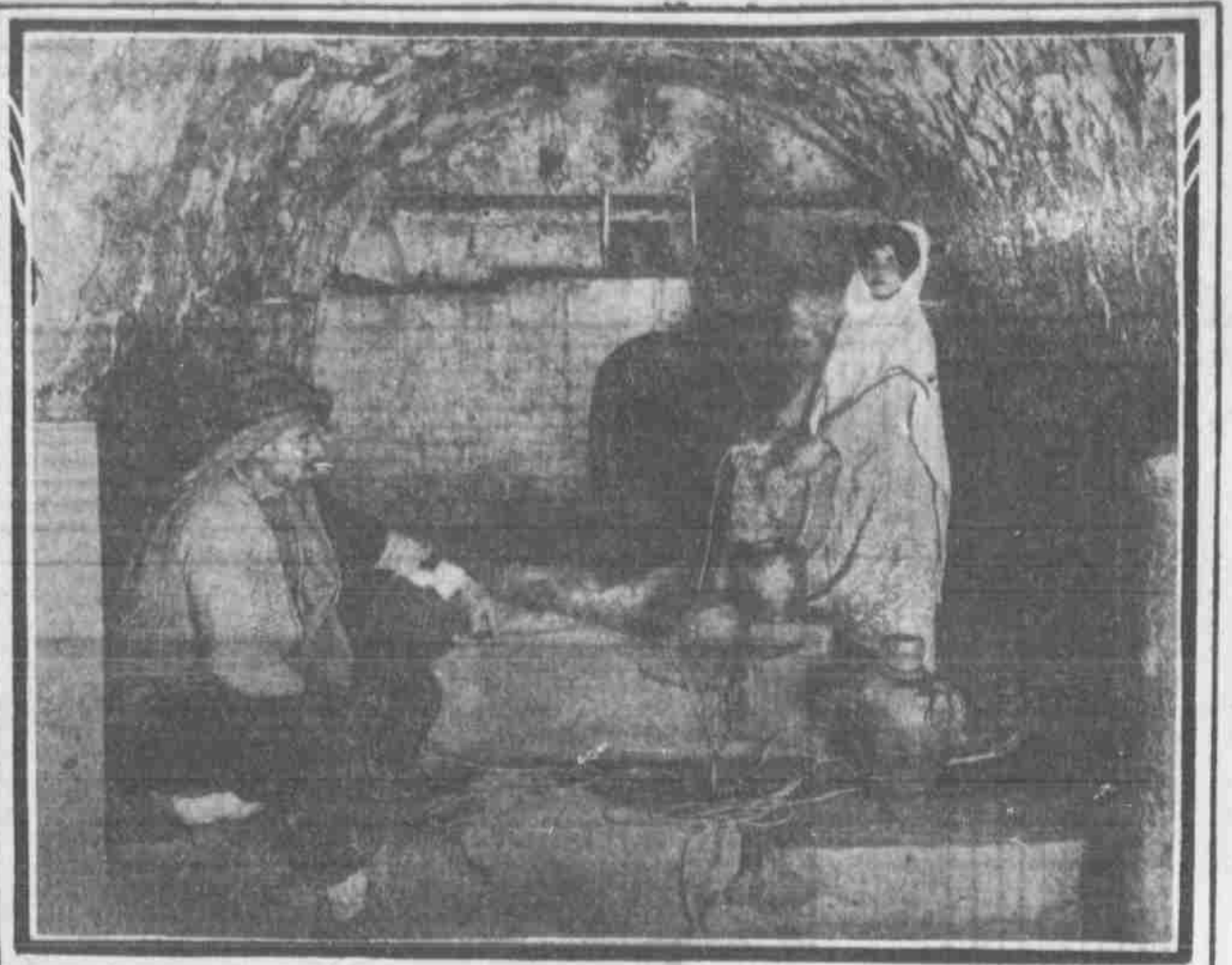
**ACROSS THE HOLY LAND BY CARRIAGE**  
THREE HORSE TEAM AND AMERICAN DAYTON

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**N**ABLIOUS, Palestine—I have just had an interview with a lineal descendant of Aaron, the brother of Moses. I refer to Jacob, the high priest of the Samaritans. He belongs to the tribe of Levi, who in ancient times were at the head of the priesthood, and claims to have a genealogical tree which reaches from then until now. His family has lived here for more than 3,000 years, and high priest has succeeded high priest until this man took the position at the age of 15, his childless uncle, the high priest, having died. That was sixty-two years ago, and Jacob has been high priest ever since. He is now almost 80, and he looks, I imagine, as Aaron or Moses may have looked in the latter part of their lives. Over six feet in height, he has the face and form of a prophet. His long beard falls down upon his chest and his scholarly face is refined and spiritual-looking.



**SAMARITAN HIGH PRIEST**



**JACOBS WELL**



**CAMPING ON ABRAHAM'S FARM**

## The Oldest of Bible Manuscripts.

I met Jacob here at Nablious, on the site of old Shechem, within a stone's throw of the well where Christ talked with the Samaritan woman. It is not far from a farm which Abraham owned, and about on the spot where Joshua gathered the tribes of Israel together and read them the law of Moses.

Our conversation took place in the heart of the city in the synagogue of the Samaritans. I had to go through vaulted passageways and cavelike streets to reach it. I had an interpreter with me, and as we talked together the high priest showed me the original parchments of the five books of Moses as they were written by Ahoi, the son of Ben Hassan, the son of Eleazar, who, you remember, was one of the two sons of Aaron by Elisheba, his wife. The high priest tells me that these five manuscripts were written only twelve years after the Israelites came into the Holy Land, and that they are now 3,575 years old. They are the oldest Bible manuscripts in existence. They are written in the Hebrew of the times of Moses, upon long sheets of parchment about two feet in width. The scrolls are rolled upon three rods, each tipped with a silver knob as big as a teacup, and they are so arranged that they can be rolled and unrolled as they are read. The ink is still plain and the letters distinct, although the parchment is yellow with age. The manuscript is treasured by the Samaritans, being kept in a brass case inlaid with gold. It is said to have been dug up about 300 years ago, and it has formed a subject of controversy among oriental scholars. The Samaritans believe that it was written by the grandson of Aaron, as the high priest here claims, but the Jews reject it as false, denouncing the Samaritans as pagan outcasts from the children of Israel.

## The Samaritans of 1910.

I was surprised to find that there were any Samaritans living. I supposed that they had been swallowed up by the Mohammedans and other Syrians who have absorbed everything in Palestine excepting the Jews. I find, however, that there are about 300 in Nablious, and that they practice the same religion as they had when Christ came. They annually celebrate the feasts of the Passover and Pentecost on Mount Gerizim. These feasts are different from those of the latter-day Jews. At the time of Christ the Feast of the Passover was eaten reclining and as though at the end of a journey rather than at the beginning.

The Samaritans eat their Passover with their shoes bound upon their feet and staves in their hands as though ready to start out on their wanderings in the wilderness. They do this on the top of the mountain, camping in tents. They smear the blood of the sacrifice upon the tents to commemorate the passage of the angel of death over the houses of Israel. They dress in white garments and they kill the animals which are burnt according to the methods which were in use when Aaron lived. The sacrifice consists of buck lambs, each of which is carefully examined that it may be without wound or blemish. At a given signal the throats of the lambs are cut, and at the same time some of the blood is caught in a tin cup and smeared over the tent. As the blood flows the people about out the words, "There is but one God," and they shout this sentence again and again. At the same time there is a service, beginning with a hymn praising Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and followed by a prayer of thanksgiving.

The meat for the sacrifice is cooked over a fire in the earth. As soon as the animals are killed they are scalded and the wool is pulled off. The entrails are removed and salted; then a pole is thrust through each lamb and it is laid on the hot coals of a fire made in a trench. The meat is then covered with brush and earth. The people continue to pray as it cooks and keep on praying until the sunset approaches. At ten minutes after sunset they begin to eat the meat, throwing the bones into the fire without breaking them.

## At Jacob's Well.

In my talk with the high priest he contended that the Samaritans were the only true Israelites, and spoke of the prophet Samuel as sorcerer. He paid his respects to the Jews in no measured tones. He gave me a little book he had written concerning the religion of the Samaritans, and at the close was by no means averse to a present of silver, for which he thanked me in a dignified way. After I returned to my camp, which is on the outside of Nablious, some of his followers brought me his photograph and a model of the five books of Moses, which they offered to sell for a song. The Samaritans are exceedingly poor and are despised by both Moslems and Jews.

It was at Jacob's well, not far from Nablious, that Christ met the Samaritan woman and told her of the

water of which, if one drinketh, he shall never thirst, but there "shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life." You will find the story in the fourth chapter of St. John. This well is one of the holy sites of Palestine, about which there can be no doubt. The village of Sychar corresponds to the village of Askar, which stands on Mount Ebal, perhaps a thousand feet away from the well where the Samaritan woman lived. The well itself lies just below the new carriage road from Jerusalem. I went through an olive orchard to reach it. It is surrounded by a wall and is in the heart of a garden now owned by the Greek church, which has made it a resting place for pilgrims. They have built a stone chapel over the well and services are held there several hours every day.

Some of the priests went with us down the steps to the well. It lies right in the floor of the chapel. It is about three feet in diameter, built up with stones which are laid in the shape of a tube, being smoothly cut. One of the monks brought a pan which was tied to a rope in such a way that it remained level. Upon this he placed a lighted candle and then slowly lowered it down into the well. It descended perhaps sixty feet before it came to the water. The sill of the well is of marble and shows the marks of the ropes which for ages have been lowered into it. The sill is some distance above the floor and it may have been the original stone upon which Christ sat at that weary hour of noon.

Jacob's well has been known and visited by pilgrims for many years. It was probably once even with the surface of the earth, but the debris and earth washings from the mountains near by have filled up the valley, and it is now considerably below the country about. Within the last year excavations have been made in the garden and the remains of a church which was built over the well some 1,500 years ago have been discovered. I found immense granite columns and also many pieces of the stone walls of the church. I persuaded the Greek priest who lowered the pie pan with the candle upon it into the well to come into the sun and be photographed.

## The Unsatisfied American.

While I was at the well a party of travelers, conducted by one of the great tourist agencies, arrived. They were Americans, doing the Holy Land at so much per day, and they were bound to get the worth of their money. One I shall never forget. His gigantic frame was such that I shall call him Goliath. When the party went down to the well the services in the chapel had just begun, and after pointing out the hole in the floor the guide brought them out. As they came into the churchyard I heard Goliath remark: "I ain't satisfied." "About what?" said the guide. "I ain't satisfied about that well. How do I know there's a well there?" "You saw it," said the guide. "Naw, I saw only a hole in the floor. How do I know there's a well? How do I know it has water? I tell you I ain't satisfied. Here I've come 6,000 miles to see Jacob's well, and how can I prove that I've saw it?"

In short, the man so protested that the guide took him back, stopped the service and had them let down the candle. Further than that, he brought up some of the water, which Goliath drank at a gulp. This huge doubting Thomas would not believe in the spot where our Lord was baptized in the Jordan, saying that the banks were too steep, and that if he couldn't crawl down them no one, not even John the Baptist, could do so.

## Over the Hills From Jerusalem.

It took me just one day to come from Jerusalem to Shechem. My outfit was a three-horse team, to which an American dayton wagon was harnessed. The horses were good, and we drove up hill and down on the trot. We started at Jaffa gate, past the place of the Skull, where General Gordon thought the Saviour was crucified, and then crossed the valley of Kedron. We climbed Mount Scopus, which joins Olivet, and rode under the hill on whose top was Mizpah, where Samuel was buried and Saul anointed King of the Jews. There is a mosque on that spot and the place is holy to Jews, Christians and Moslems alike, all of whom worship at Samuel's tomb. Mizpah lies on a peak about 3,000 feet above the Mediterranean, and on one of the highest of the Judean mountains. It is where an army of crusaders stood under Richard the Lion-Hearted and got their first sight of Jerusalem. As they looked King Richard knelt down and thus prayed:

"O Lord God, I pray Thee that I never may again see Thy Holy City if I may not recover it from the hands of Thy enemies."

That prayer was uttered seven centuries ago Jerusalem was then owned by the Mohammedans, and it is held by them still.

## On the Road to Galilee.

The road which we took to Samaria was the one over which the boy Christ and the Holy Family came when they traveled up to Jerusalem to celebrate the Passover. It is one of the highways of the Holy Land and is still traveled by thousands. About ten miles beyond Mount Scopus we stopped at Beeroth, a stone village surrounded by green orchards of figs and pomegranates. This is one day's journey from Jerusalem, and tradition says it is where Joseph and Mary, as they were returning to Nazareth, discovered their 12-year-old boy was not with them and they went back and found Him teaching the wise men in the temple.

A little farther on we came to Bethel, where the Benjaminites lived, where Abraham reared an altar and called on the name of the Lord, and where Jacob took stones for his pillows and dreamed that he saw the ladder extending to heaven and the angels ascending and descending thereon. The name Bethel, which means the House of God, has now been changed to Beitlin. It is a poor stone village of about 500 people, with a ruined tower and a church.

Shiloh, which lies just off the road a little farther on toward Samaria, is now called Seilun, and, as Jeremiah prophesied, it is nothing but ruins. Where it stood is a mound covered with debris, broken columns and rubbish, so that the prophecy, "I will make this city a curse to all the nations of the earth," has come true.

Nevertheless Shiloh is one of the most interesting

## The Perverse Pictures

Mrs. Burton called to her husband shrilly. "Abner," she said, "come and look at the pictures." "Well," said he, with an inquiring glance about the walls, "what's the matter with them?" "They're crooked," "I suppose," suggested Abner, "that you want me to straighten them." "Well, since you are here you may as well. But that wasn't what I called you for. I wanted you to see if you could tell what makes them get out of gear every day. They've been acting so ever since we moved into this flat. Every day, just as regularly as the morning comes, it goes through the house and tilt them back to the proper angle, but just that surely do I find them crooked again the next morning. And the funny part of it is they always lean in the same direction. I think it is very strange. They didn't do that in the old flat."

"M-m-m-m-," said Abner, thoughtfully. Mrs. Burton colored her voice with dramatic intonation. "I never liked to say anything about it before," she said, "but I have thought it all along.

It is my belief that the house is haunted." "Oh, good Lord!" ejaculated Burton incredulously. "Well, if it isn't ghosts, what is it?" she asked triumphantly. "I'll give it up," said Burton. "My wife believes," he said, with true Adamite generosity, "that the place is haunted." "Nonsense," said the landlady. "Anybody who knows anything about houses and pictures knows there are some places where the pictures could not be hired to hang straight and that when they have the tipping habit they invariably tip in the same direction. Everybody knows that, but I for one don't know the cause. Possibly the house dips a little to one side." "That can't be," said Burton, "because the folk upstairs are bothered with tipping pictures, too, only theirs lean to the north and west." "Then I can't explain it," sighed the landlady, "but I do know that pictures are like a flock of sheep—when one tips all the rest are likely to follow."—Boston Herald.

## Knowledge in Small Doses

There are nearly 3,000,000 acres of peat bog in Ireland. Philadelphia has the oldest textile school in the United States. It costs London more than \$3,500,000 a year to keep its streets clean. Twenty pounds of cloves a year are produced by an average 10-year-old tree. Radium gives a violet tinge to glass and porcelain and turns white paper yellow. A deposit of almost pure tantalum ore has been discovered in the Ural mountains. New York forbids electric signs projecting more than six feet from the building line. More than 2,000,000 acres of grazing land in Australia are irrigated by artesian wells. Wrought iron electro-magnets can be made to carry 150 pounds to the square inch of core surface exposed. A re-enforced concrete building that rises 295 feet above the street level has been erected in Liverpool.

The population of Manila has decreased about 20 per cent since the American occupation of the Philippines. The yearly consumption of sugar per American family has increased by about 140 pounds in the last thirty-five years. Gold and aluminum have been combined in a new alloy of beautiful color adaptable for many uses in the jewelry trade. In some Argentine brickyards horses are used to mix the clay by treading it instead of employing more expensive machinery. India ink stains may be removed from carpet by repeated applications of milk, the carpet being wiped dry between applications. The fishing fleet of Venice includes about 1600 vessels, which visit different portions of the Adriatic according to the seasons. The Sydney Technical college, an Australian government institution, has opened a department for special instruction in the wool industry.

spots of the country. It was there Eli dwelt and there Hannah came every year with a new coat for her little son Samuel, whom she had given up to the Lord. It was there that Joshua divided the land, and there the Philistines stole the Ark of the Covenant.

## Travel in the Holy Land.

I am surprised at the caravans which are continually crossing these Palestine mountains. There seems to be a great trade north and south, and the roads are full of strange characters. On my way here I saw crowds of men and women on donkeys coming up to Jerusalem. Some were from Galilee, others from Damascus and not a few from the mountains of Lebanon. One crowd told us that its people were Mohammedans, and that they were making a pilgrimage to Jerusalem and the tomb of Moses. There were many women among them. They sat astride upon donkeys, some carrying babes in their arms.

We passed many camels. Some were laden with white building stones slung in a network of rope on each side their humps. They were taking them to Jerusalem. Others were ridden by women and men. I saw one which had two veiled women clad all in black on its back, with two boxes below them, each box holding a baby. Another party was composed of Samaritan women on their way to a moslem festival. They were red-haired and as straight as royal palm trees. They carried their baggage in bundles on top of their heads and walked single file. Behind them were women from Lebanon walking barefooted and singing in Arabic. They were tattooed on lips, chin and cheeks and their heads were frowsy and dusty; they wore nothing on the head and their bodies were clad in long cotton gowns embroidered with red. Only a few were good-looking and all seemed prematurely old.

## In Old Shechem.

I am now living in my tents outside this old town of Shechem, my camp facing Mount Ebal and above me Gerizim, the holy hill of the Samaritans. It is very near the spot where the laws of Moses were read by Joshua to the assembled children of Israel, the country being the shape of a great amphitheater, of which the hills form the walls. These hills are, it is said, a natural sounding board, so that one can talk on one mountain and be heard on the other, and for this reason the place was chosen for reading the laws.

The town is one of the oldest in history. It was founded long before Jerusalem and before Jacob's time; it is within about six miles of the city of Samaria, where Ahab had his ivory palace and where Herod the Great owned a royal mansion and entertained, so it is said, his lords at his birthday party, while his step-daughter, Salome, came in and danced. You remember the story. Her dancing, which I doubt not was that of the nautch girl, so delighted King Herod that he told her she should have whatever she asked, even to half of his kingdom. She thereupon, as her mother suggested, demanded the head of John the Baptist, who was lying in prison near by, and this bloody gift was brought in on a great plate or charger.

The old town of Samaria has long since fallen to ruin. Its site is a mound with some broken pillars and other debris lying near it, and an olive orchard not far away in which more of the columns are still to be seen.

As to Shechem, or Nablious, it thrives, and is one of the liveliest towns in the Holy Land. It is the chief commercial center between Damascus and Jerusalem and is populated almost altogether by Mohammedans. There are some Jewish merchants, but neither Jews nor Christians are welcomed. I have been told to watch out as I go through the streets and to take care not to provoke anyone. Several times the boys have thrown stones at our party and men spit as we pass them. People yell out "Nazarenes" at us and my guide refuses to let me photograph them, saying it will surely get us in trouble. The city is so fanatical that even the Christian women go about with veils over their faces. The English nurse, who is working here in the Charity hospital, is veiled like a Mohammedan when she goes out on the street, otherwise she would create comment and her reputation and work might be ruined.

Nablious has about 30,000 people and it is the center of a considerable trade. It is made up of stone houses and stone bazaars, roofed with galvanized iron. Many of the houses are built over the streets, and going through the town is like going through cat-combs. Some of the streets are so narrow that you can stand in the middle and reach both walls with your hands; others are wide, but all are dirty and filthy.

FRANK G. CARPENTER.