Shechem

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She'chem (Heb. *Shekem*',. שִׁכֶם ["in pause" *She'kem,* שְׁכֶם, both as a common noun (Ps 21:13) and as a proper name (Nu 26:31; Jos 17:2; 1Ch 7:19)], *a shoulder*; Sept. Συχέμ), the name of three men and one place in the Bible.

1. The son of Hamor, prince of the country or district of Shechem in which Jacob formed his camp oa his return from Mesopotamia. B.C. 1906. This young man, having seen Jacob's daughter Dinah, was smitten, with her beauty, and deflowered her. This wrong was terribly and cruelly avenged by the damsel's uterine brothers, Simeon and Levi. *SEE DINAH*. It seems likely that the town of Shechem, even if of recent origin, must have existed before the birth of a man so young as Hamor's son appears to have been; aid we may therefore suppose it a name preserved in the family, and which both the town and the princes inherited. See No. 4 below. Shechem's name is always connected with that of his father, Hamor (Ge 33:19; Ge 34; Jos 24:32; Jg 9:28; Ac 7:16). *SEE JACOB*.

2. A son of Gilead, of the tribe of Manasseh, and head of the family of the' Shechemites (Nu 26:31). B.C. post 1856. His family are again mentioned as the Beni-Shechem (Jos 17:2).
⇒Bible concordance for SHECHEM.

3. In the lists of 1 Chronicles another Shechem is named among the Gileadites as a son of Shemidah, a younger member of the family of the foregoing (7:19). B.C. post 1856. It must have been the recollection of one of these two Gileadites which led Cyril of Alexandria into his strange fancy

(quoted by Reland, *Paloest*. p. 1007, from his *Comm*. *on Hosea*) of placing the city of Shechem on the eastern side of the Jordan.

4. An ancient and important city of Central Palestine, which still subsists, although under a later designation. In our account of it we introduce the copious illustrations by modern explorers.

I. *The Name*. — The Hebrew word, as above seen, means a "shoulder," or, more correctly, the upper part of the back, just below the neck, like the Latin *dorsum,* a ridge (Gesenius, s.v.). The origin of this name is doubtful. Some have supposed it was given to the town from its position on the watershed lying between the valley of the Jordan, on the east, and the Mediterranean, on the west. But this is not altogether correct, for the watershed is more than halfway from the city to the entrance of the valley; and, had it been otherwise, the elevation at that point is so slight that it would neither suggest nor justify this as a distinctive title. It has also been made a question whether the place was so called from Shechem, the son of Hamor, head of their tribe in the time of Jacob (Ge 33:18 sq.), or whether he received his name from the city. The import of the name favors, certainly, the latter supposition, since its evident signification as an appellative, in whatever application, would naturally originate such a name; and the name, having been thus introduced, would be likely to appear again and again in the family of the hereditary rulers of the city or region. The name, too, if first given to the city in the time of Hamor, would have been taken, according to historical analogy, from the father rather than the son. Some interpret Ge 33:18-19 as showing that Shechem in that passage may have been called also Shalem. But this opinion has no support except from that passage; and the meaning even there more

naturally is that Jacob came *in safety* to Shechem (שָׁלֵם, as an adjective, *safe*; comp. Ge 28:21); or (as recognized in the English Bible) that Shalem belonged to Shechem as a dependent tributary village. *SEE SHALEM*. The name is also given in the, A,V. in the form of SICHEM (Ge 12:6) and SYCHEM (Ac 7:16), to which, as well as SYCHAR (Joh 4:5), the reader is referred. In the Sept., above stated, it is (as in the New Test. above) usually designated by Συχέμ, but also ἡ Σίκιμα in 1Ki 12:25; and τὰ Σίκιμα, as in Jos 24:32, which is the form generally used by Josephus and Eusebius (in the *Onomast.*). But the place has also been known by very different names from these variations of the ancient Shechem. To say nothing of *Mabortha* (Μαβορθά or Μαβαθρά), which Josephus says (*War,* 4, 8, 1) it was called by the people of the country (מִעֲבְרְתָּא, *ithe thoroughfare* or *gorge*), and which also appears, with a slight variation (*Mamortha*) in Pliny (*Hist. Nat.* 5, 13), Josephus (*ibid.*) calls it *Neapolis* (Νεάπολις, "New Town"), from its having been rebuilt by Vespasian after the Roman war in Palestine; and this name is found on coins still extant (Enckel, *Doctr. Num.* 3, 433). *SEE NEAPOLIS*. This last name it has still retained in the Arab *Nablus,* and is one of the very few instances throughout the country where the comparatively modern name has supplanted the original

⇒See also the International Standard Bible Encyclopedia.

II. *Location.* — The scriptural indications of its locality are not numerous. Joshua places it in Mount Ephraim (20:7; see also 1Ki 12:25). Shiloh was "on the east side of the highway that goeth up from Bethel to Shechem" (Jg 21:19); hence Shechem must have been farther north than Shiloh. In the story of Jotham it is more precisely located under Mount Gerizim (9:7); which corresponds with the more full and exact description of Josephus, who places it between Gerizim and Ebal (*Ant.* 4,8, 44). Further, Shechem, as we learn from

Joseph's history (Ge 37:12, etc.), must have been near Dothan; and, assuming Dothan to be the place of that name a few miles northeast of Nablus, Shechem must have been among the same mountains, not far distant. So, too, as the Sychar in Joh 4:5 was probably the ancient Shechem, that town must have been near Mount Gerizim, to which the Samaritan woman pointed or glanced as she stood by the well at its foot. The collateral evidences in support of this opinion we may briefly state.

1. The city is not built on an elevated position, as almost all the towns of Palestine are, but at the foot of Gerizim and along the valley, indicating a date anterior to the warlike and unsettled state of the country which led the inhabitants to select a more secure and defensive site for their towns; as also the unwillingness of the people through future generations to change the site of their ancient and renowned city.

2. The advantage which it affords of a good supply of running water — a most important consideration in that climate especially. No spot in this favored locality has such an abundance as the city itself.

3. The road which has connected the valley with the summit of Mount Gerizim through all past ages is the one ascending behind the present town. It is true that there is another path leading up from the valley about halfway between the city and the east end of the valley; but this has never been more than a kind of by path, used by few except shepherds.

4. The antiquities in and around the city. These are neither numerous nor important in themselves, but as evidence on the subject in question they are of considerable value. They consist of portions of walls, cisterns, fragments of potteries, and such like, all of early date, and some evidently of Hebrew origin. These being either within the walls of the present city, or in its immediate vicinity, and none to be met with in any

other part of the valley, seem to be a pretty conclusive proof that the present site is the original one.

5. The narrative of Jotham's parable to the people of Shechem clearly indicates the same spot (Jg 9:7-21). He would have stood on one of those large projections of Gerizim that overlook the city; and in no other spot in the valley would the whole story tally so well. Josephus, in relating Jotham's exploit, confirms this beyond all dispute. His words are that Jotham went up to Mount Gerizim, which overhangs the city Shechem (*Ant*. v, 7, 2). We may remark that Josephus usually retains the old name Shechem when speaking of the city, but occasionally adopts, the new name, Neapolis (*War,* 4, 8, 1); and thus clearly identifies Shechem with Nablus. This was certainly the Jewish opinion, as we read in *Midrash Rabbah* that "Shechem in Mount Ephraim is Napulis." So, also, the early Christians Epiphanius (*Adv*. *Hoer*. 3, 1055) and Jerome (*Epit*. *Paula*). The only ancient author that makes a distinction between Shechem and Nablus is Eusebius, if indeed he means to assert the fact, which seems doubtful from his mode of expression (*Onomast*. s.v. Τερέβινθος, Συχέμ). But his contemporary, the Bordeaux Pilgrim, who visited the place in A.D. 333, not only identities the two, but also never calls the city by its new name, Neapolis, but only its ancient name, Sychem; and most likely he thus only expressed the general and probably universal opinion that then prevailed among both Jews and Christians.

The ancient town, in its most flourishing age, may have filled a wider circuit than its modern representative. It could easily have extended farther up the side of Gerizim, and eastward nearer to the opening into the valley from the plain But any great change in this respect, certainly the idea of an altogether different position, the natural conditions of the locality render doubtful. That the suburbs of the town, in the age of Christ,

approached nearer than at present to the entrance into the valley between Gerizim and Ebal may be inferred from the implied vicinity of Jacob's well to Sychar in John's narrative (4:1 sq.). The impression made there on the reader is that the people could be readily seen as they came forth from the town to repair to Jesus at the well; whereas Nablus is more than a mile distant, and not visible from that point. The present inhabitants have a belief or tradition that Shechem occupied a portion of the valley on the east beyond the limits of the modern town; and certain travelers speak of ruins there, which they regard as evidence of the same fact. The statement of Eusebius that Sychar lay east of Neapolis may be explained by the circumstance that the part of Neapolis in that quarter had fallen into such a state of ruin when he lived as to be mistaken for-the site of a separate town (see Reland, *Palest*.. p. 1004). The portion of the town on the edge of the plain was more exposed than that in the recess of the valley, and, in the natural course of things, would be destroyed first, or be left to desertion and decay. Josephus says that more than ten thousand Samaritans (inhabitants of Shechem are meant) were destroyed by the Romans on one occasion (*War,* 3, 7, 32). The population, therefore, must have been much greater than Nablus, with its present dimensions, would contain.

III. *History*. — The allusions to Shechem in the Bible are numerous, and show how important the place was in Jewish history. Abraham, on his first migration to the land of promise, pitched his tent and built an altar under the oak (or Terebinth) of Moreh at Shechem. The Canaanite was then in the land;" and it is evident that the region, if not the city, was already in possession of the aboriginal race (see Ge 12:6). Some have inferred from the expression "place of Shechem" (מקוֹם שׁכֶם) that it was not inhabited as a city in the time of Abraham. But we have the same expression used

of cities or towns in other instances (Ge 18:24; Ge 19:12; Ge 29:22); and it may have been interchanged here, without any difference of meaning, with the phrase, "city of Shechem," which occurs in Ge 33:18. A position affording such natural advantages would hardly fail to be occupied as soon as any population existed in the country.

The narrative shows incontestably that at the time of Jacob's arrival here, after his sojourn in Mesopotamia (ver. 18; ch. 34), Shechem was a Hivite city, of which Hamor, the father of Shechem, was the head man. It was at this time that the patriarch purchased from that chieftain "the parcel of the field," which he subsequently bequeathed, as a special patrimony, to his son Joseph (Ge 43:22; Jos 24:32; Joh 4:5). The field lay undoubtedly on the rich plain, of the *Mukhna,* and its value was the greater on account of the well which Jacob had dug there, so as not to be dependent on his neighbors for a supply of water. The defilement of Dinah, Jacob's daughter, and the capture of Shechem and massacre of all the male inhabitants by Simeon and Levi, are events that belong to this period (Ge 34:1 sq.). As this bloody act, which Jacob so entirely condemned (ver. 30) and reprobated with his dying breath (Ge 49:5-7), is ascribed to two persons, some urge that as evidence of the very insignificant character of the town at the time of that transaction. But the argument is by no means decisive. Those sons of Jacob were already at the head of households of their own, and may have had the support, in that achievement of their numerous slaves and retainers. We speak in like manner of a commander as taking this or that city when we mean that it was done under his leadership. The oak under which Abraham had worshipped survived to Jacob's time; and the latter, as he was about to remove to Beth-el, collected the images and amulets which some of his family had brought with them from Padan-aram and buried

them "under the oak which was by Shechem" (Ge 35:1-4). The "oak of the monument" (if we adopt that rendering of אֵלוֹן מֵצֵב in Jg 9:6), where the Shechemites made Abimelech king, marked, perhaps, the veneration with which the Hebrews looked back to these earliest footsteps (the *incunabula gentis*) of the patriarchs in the Holy Land. *SEE MEONENIM*. During Jacob's sojourn at Hebron his sons, in the course of their pastoral wanderings, drove their flocks to Shechem, and at Dothan, in that neighborhood, Joseph, who had been sent to look after their welfare, was seized and sold to the Ishmaelites (Ge 37:12,28). In the distribution of the land after its conquest by the Hebrews, Shechem fell to the lot of Ephraim (Jos 20:7), but was assigned to the Levites, and became a city of refuge (21:20, 21). It acquired new importance as the scene of the renewed promulgation of the law, when its blessings were heard from Gerizim and its curses from Ebal, and the people bowed their heads and acknowledged Jehovah as their king and ruler (De 27:11; Jos 9:27). It was here Joshua assembled the people, shortly before his death, and delivered to them his last counsels (Jos 24:1,25). After the death of Gideon, Abimelech, his bastard son, induced the Shechemites to revolt from, the Hebrew commonwealth and elect him as king (Judges 9). It was to denounce this act of usurpation and treason that Jotham delivered his parable of the trees to the men of Shechem from the top of Gerizim, as recorded at length in Jg 9:22 sq. The picturesque traits of the allegory, as Prof. Stanley suggests (*Sinai and Palestine,* p. 236; *Jewish Church,* p. 348), are strikingly appropriate to the diversified foliage of the region. In revenge for his expulsion, after a reign of three years, Abimelech destroyed the city, and, as an emblem of the fate to which he would consign it, sowed the ground with salt (Jg 9:34-45). It was soon restored, however, for we are told in 1 Kings 12 that all Israel assembled at

Shechem, and Rehoboam, Solomon's successor, went thither to be inaugurated as king. Its central position made it convenient for such assemblies; its history was fraught with recollections which would give the sanctions of religion as well as of patriotism to the vows of sovereign and people. The new king's obstinacy made him insensible to such influences. Here, at this same place, the ten tribes renounced the house of David and transferred their allegiance to Jeroboam (ver. 16), under whom Shechem became for a time the capital of his kingdom. We come next to the epoch of the exile.. The people of Shechem doubtless shared the fate of the other inhabitants, and were, most of them at least, carried into captivity (2Ki 17:5-6; 2Ki 18:9 sq.). But Shalmaneser, the conqueror, sent colonies from Babylonia to occupy the place of the exiles (17:24). It would seem that there was another influx of strangers, at a later period, under Esar-haddon (Ezr 4:2). The "certain men from Shechem" mentioned in Jer 41:5, who were slain on their way to Jerusalem, were possibly Cuthites, i.e. Babylonian immigrants who had become proselytes or worshippers of Jehovah (see Hitzig, *Der Proph. Jeremiah* p. 331)., These Babylonian settlers in the land, intermixed, no doubt, to some extent with the old inhabitants, were the Samaritans, who erected at length a rival temple on Gerizim (B.C. 300), and between whom and the Jews a bitter hostility existed for so many ages (Josephus, *Ant.* 12, 1, 1; 13, 3, 4). The Son of Sirach (1, 26) says that "a foolish people," i.e. the Samaritans, "dwelt at Shechem" (τὰ Σίκιμα). From its vicinity to their place of worship, it became the principal city of the Samaritans, a rank which it maintained at least till the destruction of their temple, about B.C. 129, a period of nearly two hundred years (*ibid.* 13, 9, 1; *War,* 1, 2, 6). From the time of the origin of the Samaritans the history of Shechem blends itself with that of this people and of their sacred mount,

Gerizim; and the reader will find the proper information on this part of the subject under those heads. The city was taken and the temple destroyed by John Hyrcanus, B.C. 129 (*Ant.* 13, 9, 1; *War,* 1, 2, 6).

As already intimated, Shechem reappears in the New Test. It is probably the *Sychar* of Joh 4:5, near which the Savior conversed with the Samaritan woman at Jacob's well. Συχάρ, as the place is termed there (Σιχάρ in Rec. Text is incorrect), found only in that passage, was no doubt current among the Jews in the age of Christ, and was either a term of reproach (שֶׁקֶר, "a lie") with reference to the Samaritan faith and worship, or, possibly, a provincial mispronunciation of that period (see Lucke, *Comm. ub. Johan.* 1, 577). The Savior, with his disciples, remained two days at Sychar on his journey from Judaea to Galilee. He preached the Word there, and many of the people believed on him (Joh 4:39-40). In Ac 7:16, Stephen reminds his hearers that certain of the patriarchs (meaning Joseph, as we see in Jos 24:32, and following, perhaps, some tradition as to Jacob's other sons) were buried at Sychem. Jerome, who lived so long hardly more than a day's journey from Shechem, says that the tombs of the twelve patriarchs were to be seen there in his day. The anonymous city in Ac 8:5, where Philip preached with such effect, may have been Sychem, though many would refer that narrative to Samaria, the capital of the province.

We have seen that not long after the times of the New Test. the place received the name of Neapolis, which it still retains in the Arabic form of Nablus, being one of the very few names imposed by the Romans in Palestine which have survived to the present day. It had probably suffered much, if it was not completely destroyed, in the war with the Romans (see Rambach, *De Urbe Sichem Sale Conspersa* [Hal. 1730]), and would seem to have been restored or rebuilt by Vespasian, and

then to have taken this new name; for the coins of the city, of which there are many, all bear the inscription *Flavia Neapolis* — the former epithet no doubt derived from Flavius Vespasian (Mionnet, *Med. Antiq*. 5, 499). The name occurs first in Josephus (*War,* 4, 8, 1), and then in Pliny; (*Hist. Nat*. 5, 14), Ptolemy (*Geog*. v, 16). As intimated above, there had already been converts to the Christian faith at this place under our Savior, and it is probable that a Church had been gathered here by the apostles (Joh 4:30-42; Ac 8:25; Ac 9:31; Ac 15:3). Justin Martyr was a native of Neapolis (*Apolog*. 2, 41). The name of Germanus, bishop of Neapolis, occurs in A.D. 314; and other, bishops continue to be mentioned down to A.D. 536, when the bishop John signed his name at the synod of Jerusalem (*Reland, Palest*. p. 1009). When the Moslems invaded Palestine, Neapolis and other small towns in the neighborhood were subdued. while the siege of Jerusalem was going on (Abulfeda, *Annal*. 1, 229). After the taking of Jerusalem by the Crusaders, Neapolis and other towns in the mountains of Samaria tendered their submission, and Tancred took possession of them without resistance (Will. Tyr. 9, 20). Neapolis was laid waste by the Saracens in A.D. 1113; but a few years after (A.D. 1120) a council was held here by king Baldwin II to consult upon the state of the country (Fulcher, p. 424; Will. Tyr. 12, 13). Neapolis was not made a Latin bishopric, but belonged probably to that of Samaria, and the property of it was assigned to the abbot and canons of the Holy Sepulchre (Jac. de Vitriacus, ch. 58). After some disasters in the unquiet times which ensued, and after some circumstances which show its remaining importance, the place was finally taken from the Christians in A.D. 1242 by Abu Ali, the colleague of sultan Bibars, and has remained in Moslem hands ever since.

IV. *Description*. —

1. The natural features of the neighborhood are the two mountains Gerizim and Ebal, standing in front of each other like two giants, with the little valley running between, and on the eastern side the noble plain of Mukhna stretching from north to south. The two mountains run in parallel ranges from east to west — Ebal on the north and Gerizim on the south — and both reach an elevation of some 2500 feet above the level of the Mediterranean, and 800 feet above the valley itself. From the town to the eastern opening of the valley, a distance of about a mile and a half, where the two mountain ranges have their starting points, and to which parts the names of Gerizim and Ebal are confined, both mountains rise immediately from the valley in steep and mostly precipitous declivities to the height stated; and both, as seen, from the valley, are equally naked and sterile. But immediately behind the city, and there only, Gerizim has the advantage, owing to a copious stream that flows through a small ravine at the west side of the town. Here are several orchards and gardens, producing abundantly. On Ebal also, opposite the town, there are several gardens and cultivated plots — some old, but the majority of late planting — and all in a comparatively thriving condition but these can never equal those on the Gerizim side on account of the deficiency of water. The valley itself stands at an elevation of some 1700 feet above the Mediterranean, running from east to west, and extending from the eastern abutments of the two mountains as far as Sebustieh (Samaria) westward. A portion of this only belongs to our present notice, namely, from its eastern opening to the town of Nablus, a distance of about a mile and a half. Its width varies. At its commencement it measures somewhat more than half a mile; but near halfway to the town it contracts to about half that width. But as we proceed towards the city the mountains again recede, and the valley widens to its former width; but

again, at the city, contracts to its narrowest dimension. It is hardly in any part a flat level, but rather a gradual slope of the two mountains, until they dovetail into each other. Just at the commencement of the valley, on either side, are Jacob's well and Joseph's tomb. (See below.) A little farther on, and near the center of the valley, stands the hamlet Balata, the remains of a town of the same name mentioned by Parchi (Kapht va-Pherach), but of no historical importance. Near halfway up the valley is the highest ground, forming the watershed between the valley of the Jordan and the Mediterranean. The valley thus far is almost without trees of any kind, but the part nearest the town is well wooded. The principal kind of tree is the olive, as it seems to have been in the days of Jotham (Jg 9:8). The town itself is surrounded by orchards and gardens, where figs, mulberries, grapes, almonds, oranges, apricots, and other fruit grow luxuriantly.

One of the great and peculiar features of this valley is the abundance of water. Dr. Kosen says that the inhabitants boast of the existence of not less than eighty springs of water within and around the city. He gives the names of twenty-seven of the principal of them. Within some two miles' radius from thirty to forty copious springs exist. But within the area now under notice they are more copious than numerous. There is not a single spring on the Ebal side till we have passed the city for some distance. On the Gerizim side, outside the city, there are three. The first, rising near the watershed, dries up in summer. The next, 'Ain Dafna (the Δάφνη of the Roman period of the city), a very large stream, issues out near the road and runs in an open channel past Jacob's well, turning a mill on its way, and emptying itself to water the plain. 'Ain Balata, named from the little village whence it flows, is the other, issuing from a subterranean chamber supported by three pillars, and sufficiently copious to supply a large

population. Within the city itself the principal supply is derived from a stream descending from a ravine on the western side of the town, which is made to flow in abundance along the channels of some of the streets. The fountains are numerous. The most remarkable, 'Ain el-Kerun, is under a vaulted dome, and is reached by a flight of steps.' The water is conveyed, hence by conduits to two of the principal mosques and some private houses, and afterwards serves to water the gardens below. The various streams run on the northern side of the town into one channel, which serves to turn a corn mill that is kept going summer and winter.

On the eastern side of the valley, as already mentioned, lies the extensive plain of the Mukhna, stretching for many miles from north to south, and hemmed in on both sides by mountain chains, the slopes of which support several villages and hamlets. In Scripture it is called *Sadeh* (שָׂדֶה), a smooth or level cultivated open land (Ge 33:19), to which our Savior pointed when he said, "Say ye not, There are yet four months, and then cometh harvest?" etc. (Joh 4:35).

The situation of the town is one of surpassing beauty. "The land of Syria," said Mohammed, "is beloved by Allah beyond all lands, and the part of Syria which he loveth most is the district of Jerusalem, and the place which he loveth most in the district of Jerusalem is the mountain of Nablus" (*Fundgr. des Orients,* 2, 139). Its appearance has called forth the admiration of all travelers who have any sensibility to the charms of nature. It lies in a sheltered valley, protected by Gerizim on the south and Ebal on the north. The feet of these mountains, where they rise from the town, are not more than five hundred yards apart. The bottom of the valley is about 1800 feet above the level of the sea, and the top of Gerizim 800 feet higher still. Those who have been to Heidelberg will assent to Von Richter's remark that the scenery, as viewed

from the foot of the hills, is not unlike that of the beautiful German town. The site of the present city, which we believe to have been also that of the Hebrew city, occurs exactly On the water summit; and streams issuing from the numerous springs there flow down the opposite slopes of the valley, spreading verdure and fertility in every direction. Travelers vie with each other in the language which they employ to describe the scene that bursts here so suddenly upon them on arriving in spring or early summer at this paradise of the Holy Land. The somewhat sterile aspect of the adjacent mountains becomes itself a foil, as it were, to set off the effect of the verdant fields and orchards which fill up the valley. "There is nothing finer in all Palestine," says Dr. Clarke, "than a view of Nablus from the heights around it. As the traveler descends towards it from. the hills, it appears luxuriantly embosomed in the most delightful and fragrant bowers, half concealed by rich gardens and by stately trees collected into groves, all around the bold and beautiful valley in which it stands." "The whole valley," says Dr. Robinson, "was filled with gardens of vegetables and orchards of all kinds of fruits, watered by fountains which burst forth in various parts and flow westward in refreshing streams. It came upon us suddenly, like a scene of fairy enchantment. We saw nothing to compare with it in all Palestine. Here, beneath the shadow of an immense mulberry tree, by the side of a purling rill, we pitched our tent, for the remainder of the day and the night.... We rose early, awakened by the songs of nightingales and other birds, of which the gardens around us were full." "There is no wilderness here," says Van de Velde (1, 386), "there are no wild thickets, yet there is always verdure, always shade, not of the oak, the terebinth, and the caroub tree, but of the olive grove, so soft in color, so picturesque in form, that, for its sake, we can willingly dispense with all other wood. There is a

singularity about the vale of Shechem, and that is the peculiar coloring which objects assume in it. You know that wherever there is water the air becomes charged with watery particles, and that distant objects beheld through that medium seem to be enveloped inl a pale blue or gray mist, such as contributes not a little to give a charm to the landscape. But it is precisely those atmospheric tints that, we miss so much in Palestine. Fiery tints are to be seen both in the morning and the evening, and glittering violet or purple-colored hues where the light falls next to the long, deep shadows; but there is an absence of coloring, and of that charming dusky hue in which objects assume such softly blended forms, and in which also the transition in color from the foreground to the farthest distance loses the hardness of outline peculiar to the perfect tansparency of an Eastern sky. It is otherwise in the vale of Shechem, at least in the morning and the evening. Here the exhalations remain hovering among the branches and leaves of the olive trees, and hence that lovely bluish haze. The valley is far from broad, not exceeding in some places a few hundred feet. This you find generally enclosed on all sides; here, likewise, the vapors are condensed. And so you advance under the shade of the foliage, along the living waters, and charmed by the melody of a host of singing birds — for they, too, know where to find their best quarters — while the perspective fades away and is lost in the damp, vapory atmosphere." Apart entirely from the historic interest of the place, such are the natural attractions of this favorite resort of the patriarchs of old, such the beauty of the scenery, and the indescribable air of tranquillity and repose which hangs over the scene, that the traveler, anxious as he may be to hasten forward in his journey, feels that he would gladly linger, and could pass here days and weeks without impatience.

2. The modern city, as already observed, is situated in the

valley, about a mile and a half from its eastern opening. It stands at the foot of Gerizim, and stretches from east to west in an irregular form. Just where the city stands there is scarcely any flat ground, the gradual slopes of the two mountains dovetailing into each other. The roads leading to the town from all parts are in a most primitive and wretched condition, and the town itself is surrounded by all kinds of filth. The city is encompassed by a wall of very common structure, and in a most dilapidated condition. The two principal gates — one in the eastern and the other in the western end of the town — are in keeping with the walls, and would not give so much trouble to a conqueror as in the time of Abimelech. Notwithstanding, they are of no small importance in the economy of the town. Here we still find a faint emblem of what gates were in ancient times — the great emporiums where all the public affairs of the city were transacted. The gates of Nablus retain their importance in part. At the western gate the revenue department is still located, and all who pass through with any commodities to sell, and purchasers, are charged a certain toll according to the value of the articles. The main street, following the line of the valley from east to west, runs almost in a straight line the whole length of the town, connecting the two gates. Most of the other streets cross this quite irregularly, and are, almost without exception, narrow and dirty. Nearly all of them have a channel along the center, in which runs a stream of water. In the winter season these streams are full, but diminish during the summer months, and several are dried up. This arrangement of the water causes the town to be very damp during the winter; and, however pleasant it may be in summer, it certainly forms anything but a good element in the sanitary condition of the place. This state of the streets, together with the fact of some of them being arched, makes

the town uncommonly sombre and dull. But when we speak of streets, our readers must not imagine them to be similar to European streets, formed by the front of lines of houses, private or public; but the streets of Nablus, like those of other Oriental towns, are only passages between dead walls, except where the bazaars break the monotony. These are the Eastern shops or marketplaces — a kind of recesses in the walls — and are comparatively numerous in Nablus. They are grouped according to the merchandise they contain, and are situated principally in the main street.

With regard to the buildings, we may remark that all the houses are built of stone, and are heavy and sombre. They are entered from the street through a ponderous strong door, barred on the inside (2Sa 13:18); a large iron knocker is attached, and two or three blows with this will suffice to bring one of the inmates to ask, "Who is there?" (Ac 12:13). From the inside it will be found that each house stands detached from its neighbor, and consists of detached vaulted rooms, all built of stone, and all. opening into the court, which is uncovered, but screened from the observation of all but the inmates by the high walls of the house on all sides. Every house has one dome or more; but the roof is flat, with, battlements surrounding it, to prevent any one falling into the street or court (De 22:8). In the better sort of houses a kind of family saloon is built on a portion of the roof of the house, much more spacious and airy than the other rooms, and preserved principally for the entertainment of guests who are to be treated with marked respect. This is the *aliyah,* עֲלִיָּה, of the Old Test. (1Ki 17:19), and the "larger upper room" (ἀνώγαιον μέγα) of the New (Mr 14:15). The windows of the houses are sometimes only square holes in the wall (Ac 20:9); but generally finished with lattice work as of old (Jg 5:28; Song 2:9).

There are no public buildings worth mentioning. The *Keniseh,* or synagogue of the Samaritans, is a small edifice, in the interior of which there is nothing remarkable, unless it be an alcove, screened by a curtain, in which their sacred writings are kept. The structure may be three or four centuries old. A description and sketch plan of it are given in Mr. Grove's paper *On the Modern Samaritans*, in *Vacation Tourists* for 1861. Nablus has five mosques, two of which, according to a tradition in which Mohammedans, Christians, and Samaritans agree, were originally churches. One of them, it is said, was dedicated to John the Baptist; its eastern portal, still well preserved, shows the European taste of its founders. The domes of the houses and the minarets, as they show themselves above the sea of luxuriant vegetation which surrounds them, present a striking view to the traveler approaching from the east or the west.

There are a few small portions of the town remaining, in all probability, from ancient times. The arched passage in the Samaritan quarter seems to be partly of this class, comprising levelled stones of Jewish style. Similar ones are in other parts of the town. The marble troughs used at the principal streams are probably Israelitish remains. These are five in number, dug up in the plain on the eastern side of Gerizim, and originally the sarcophagi of the dead. Rosen, during his stay at Nablus, examined anew the Samaritan inscriptions found there, supposed to be among the oldest written monuments in Palestine. He has furnished, as Prof. Rodiger admits, the best copy of them that has been taken (see a facsimile in *Zeitschr. der deutschen morgenl. Gesellschaft,* 1860, p. 621). The inscriptions, on stone tablets, distinguished in his account as No. 1 and No. 2, belonged originally to a Samaritan synagogue which stood just out of the city, near the Samaritan quarter, of which synagogue a few remains only are now left.. They are

thought to be as old at least as the age of Justinian, who (A.D. 529) destroyed so many of the Samaritan places of worship. Some, with less reason, think they may have been saved from the Temple on Gerizim, having been transferred afterwards to a later synagogue. One of the tablets is now inserted in the wall of a minaret; the other was discovered not long ago in a heap of rubbish not far from it. The inscriptions consist of brief extracts from the Samaritan Pentateuch, probably valuable as paleographic documents. Similar slabs are to be found built into the walls of several of the sanctuaries in the neighborhood of Nablus; as at the tombs of Eleazar, Phinehas, and Ithamar at Awertah.

3. To complete our survey of Shechem and its neighborhood, we must take a brief glance at the traditional monuments that exist there. The most interesting by far are the Well of Jacob and the Tomb of Joseph. These stand at the eastern opening of the valley, the former near the foot of Gerizim, and the latter near the foot of Ebal, as if keeping guard over the parcel of field bought by the patriarch of the children of Hamor.

(1.) With regard to the first of these, we may observe that the language in the original is remarkably descriptive of the spot. Had Jacob bought a portion of the valley, we should have had *emek,* עֵמֶק. but here it is a part of *the sadeh,* הַשָּׂדֶה, the level cultivated land, the plain of Mukhna already described; and to no other part of the country could this term be applied. This, in connection with the unbroken tradition of the spot, renders its genuineness beyond all doubt. The well is not an *'ain,* עַיִן, a fountain of living water; but a *beer,* בְּאֵר, a cistern to hold rainwater. Hence our Savior's contrast, with the Samaritan woman, between the *cistern* (φρέαρ) which Jacob gave them and the *fountain* (πηγή) which he should give them (Joh 4:12,14). Faithful to the language of Scripture, the natives never call it *'Ain, Yakub,* but always *Bir Yakub,* Jacob's Well.

The native Christians of Nablus frequently call it *Bir Samariyeh,* the Samaritan Well; but the Samaritans themselves only call it *Bir Yakub*.

"A low spur projects from the base of Gerizim in a northeastern direction, between the plain and the opening of the valley. On the point of this spur is a little mound of shapeless ruins, with several fragments of granite columns. Beside these is the well. Formerly there was a square hole opening into a carefully built vaulted chamber, about ten feet square, in the floor of which was the true mouth of the well. Now a portion of the vault has fallen in and completely covered up the mouth, so that nothing can be seen above but a shallow pit half filled with stones and rubbish. The well is deep — seventy-five feet when last measured, and there was probably a considerable accumulation of rubbish at the bottom. Sometimes it contains a few feet of water; but at others it is quite dry. It is entirely excavated in the solid rock, perfectly round, nine feet in diameter, with the sides hewn smooth and regular" (Porter, *Handbook,* p. 340). The well is fast filling up with the stones thrown in by travelers and others. At Maundrell's visit (1697) it was 105 feet deep, and the same measurement is given by Dr. Robinson as having been taken in May, 1838. But, five years later, when Dr. Wilson recovered Mr. A. Bonar's Bible from it, the depth had decreased to "exactly seventy-five" (Wilson, *Lands,* 2, 57). Maundrell (March 24) found fifteen feet of water standing in the well. It appears now to be always dry.

"It has every claim to be considered the original well, sunk deep into the rocky ground by 'our father Jacob.'" This, at least, was the tradition of the place in the last days of the Jewish people (Joh 4:6,12). Its position adds probability to the conclusion, indicating, as has been well observed, that it was there dug by one who could not trust to the springs so near in

the adjacent vale — the springs of Ain Balata and 'Ain Dafna — which still belonged to the Canaanites. Of all the special localities of our Lord's life, this is almost the only one absolutely undisputed. "The tradition, in which, by a singular coincidence, Jews and Samaritans, Christians and Mohammedans, all agree, goes back," says Dr. Robinson (*Bib. Res.* 2, 284), "at least to the time of Eusebius, in the early part of the 4th century. That writer indeed speaks only of the sepulchre; but the Bordeaux Pilgrim, in A.D. 333, mentions also the well; and neither of these writers has any allusion to a church. But Jerome, in *Epitaphium Pauloe,* which is referred to A.D. 404, makes her visit the church erected at the side of Mount Gerizim around the Well of Jacob, where our Lord met the Samaritan woman. The church would seem, therefore, to have been built during the 4th century; though not by Helena, as is reported in modern times. It was visited and is mentioned, as around the well, by Antoninus Martyr near the close of the 6th century; by Arculfus a century later, who describes it as built in the form of a cross; and again by St. Willibald in the 8th century. Yet Saewulf, about A.D. 1103, and Phocas in 1185, who speak of the well, make no mention of the church; whence we may conclude that the latter had been destroyed before the period of the Crusades. Brocardus speaks of ruins around the well, blocks of marble and columns, which he held to be the ruins of a town, the ancient Thebez; they were probably those of the church, to which he makes no allusion. Other travelers, both of that age and later, speak of the church only as destroyed, and the well as already deserted. Before the days of Eusebius there seems to be no historical testimony to show the identity of this well with that which our Savior visited; and the proof must therefore rest, so far as it can be made out at all, on circumstantial evidence. I am not aware of anything, in the nature of the case, that goes

to contradict the common tradition; but, on the other hand, I see much in the circumstances tending to confirm the supposition that this is actually the spot where our Lord held his conversation with the Samaritan woman. Jesus was journeying from Jerusalem to Galilee, and rested at the well, while his disciples were gone away into the city to buy meat. The well, therefore, lay apparently before the city, and at some distance from it. In passing along the eastern plain, Jesus had halted at the well, and sent his disciples to the city situated in the narrow valley, intending, on their return, to proceed along the plain on his way to Galilee, without himself visiting the city. All this corresponds exactly to the present character of the ground. The well, too, was Jacob's Well, of high antiquity, a known and venerated spot, which, after having already lived for so many ages in tradition, would not be likely to be forgotten in the two and a half centuries intervening between John and Eusebius." It is understood that the well, and the site around it, have lately been purchased by the Russian Church, not, it is to be hoped, with the intention of erecting a Church over it, and thus forever destroying the reality and the sentiment of the place. A special fund has recently been raised in England for the purpose of surveying the premises and cleaning out the well. *SEE JACOBS WELL*.

(2.) The second of the spots alluded to is the Tomb of Joseph. It lies about a quarter of a mile north of the well, exactly in the center, of the opening of the valley between Gerizim and Ebal. It is a small square enclosure of high whitewashed walls, surrounding a tomb of the ordinary kind, but with the peculiarity that it is placed diagonally to the walls, instead of parallel, as usual. A rough pillar used as an altar, and black with the traces of fire, is at the head, and another at the foot of the tomb. In the left-hand corner as you enter is a vine, whose branches "run over the wall," recalling exactly the metaphor of

Jacob's blessing (Ge 49:22). In the walls are two slabs with Hebrew inscriptions. One of these is given by Dr. Wilson (*Lands,* etc. 2, 61), and the interior is almost covered with the names of pilgrims in Hebrew, Arabic, and Samaritan. Beyond this there is nothing to remark in the structure itself. It purports to cover the tomb of Joseph, buried there in the "parcel of ground" which his father bequeathed especially to him his favorite son, and in which his bones were deposited after the conquest of the country was completed (Jos 24:32). The local tradition of the tomb, like that of the well, is as old as the beginning of the 4th century. Both Eusebius (*Onomast.* Συχέμ) and the Bordeaux Pilgrim mention its existence. So do Benjamin of Tudela (1160- 79) and Maundeville (1322), and so — to pass over intermediate travelers- does Maundrell (1697). All that is wanting in these accounts is to fix the tomb which they mention to the present spot. But this is difficult. Maundrell describes it as on his right hand, in leaving Nablus for Jerusalem; "just without the city" — a small mosque, "built over the sepulchre of Joseph" (March 25). Some time after passing it he arrives at the well. This description is quite inapplicable to the tomb just described, but perfectly suits the Wely at the northeast foot of Gerizim, which also bears (among the Moslems) the name of Joseph. When the expressions of the two oldest authorities cited above are examined, it will be seen that they are quite as suitable, if not more so, to this latter spot as to the tomb on the open plain. On the other hand, the Jewish travelers, from hap-Parchi (cir. 1320) downwards, specify the tomb as in the immediate neighborhood of the village el-Balata. See the itineraries entitled *Jichus hat-Tsadikim* (A.D. 1561) and *Jichus ha-Aboth* (1537), in Carmoly, *Itineraires de la Terre- Sainte*. Stanley states, after Buckingham, that it is said by the Samaritans to be thus called after a rabbi Joseph of Nablus (*Sin. and Pal.* p.

241, note). But this identification seems to be a mistake, probably a Mohammedan legend, and imposed upon inquisitive travelers by unscrupulous guides.
The present Samaritans know of no Joseph's tomb but the generally accepted one; and to it does the Jewish as well as the Samaritan tradition bear testimony. Hap-Parchi, who spent some years exploring Palestine, fixes Joseph's Tomb fifty yards north of Balata (*Kapht. va-Pherach*).
In this conflict of testimony, and in the absence of any information on the date and nature of the Moslem tomb, it is impossible to come to a definite conclusion. There is some force, and that in favor of the received site, in the remarks of a learned and intelligent Jewish traveler (Lowe, in the *Allg. Zeitung des Judenthums* [Leipsig, 1839], No. 50) on the peculiar form and nature of the ground surrounding the tomb near the well, the more so because they are suggested by the natural features of the spot, as reflected in the curiously minute, the almost technical, language of the ancient record, and not based on any mere traditional or artificial considerations. "The thought," says he, "forced itself upon me, how impossible it is to understand the details of the Bible without examining them on the spot. This place is called in the Scripture neither *emek* ('valley') nor *shephelah* ('plain'), but by the individual name of *Chelkath has-Sadeh*; and in the whole of Palestine there is not such another plot to be found — a dead level, without the least hollow or swelling in a circuit of two hours. In addition to this, it is the loveliest and most fertile spot I have ever seen." *SEE JOSEPHS TOMB*.
(3.) About halfway between Jacob's Well and the city, and nestling in a bend of Mount Gerizim, is the mosque *Sheik el-'Amud* (the Saint of the Pillar), so called from a Mussulman saint. This saint, however, is only a modern invention of the Mohammedans. By the Samaritans the place is simply called

El-'Amud, the Pillar, their tradition identifying it with the pillar of stone set up by Joshua, as noticed above. They also believe that the celebrated oak of Moreh stood on the same spot. The Mohammedans come here occasionally to pray, but no great honor is paid to the place if we may judge from its present dilapidated state.

(4.) About one third of the way up the side of Mount Ebal, in front of the town, is a bold perpendicular rock, some sixty feet high, called, after a Mohammedan female saint, *Sit es-Salamiyeh*. In front of the rock stands a small building, consisting of two chambers and a *wely* for prayer, but all in a dilapidated state. This part of the mountain is called by the saint's name.

(5.) A little farther westward, and about midway to the summit, stands the only edifice now remaining on Mount Ebal. This is called '*Imad ed-Din* —
the Column of Religion. According to the current tradition, this building was erected over the tomb of a Mohammedan saint, honored by the above name (and the building, of course, receiving its name from the saint), who flourished some five hundred years ago. The building is used as a mosque, but the native Christians say that originally it was a Christian church. It consists of two apartments, the floor of the first still partly paved with fragments of very beautiful mosaic work, wrought in marble of red, blue, and white. On the middle of the inner room stands a large wooden lamp stand in imitation of a tree, with a goodly number of branches, on which a number of oil lamps are hanging, together with a formidable array of filthy rags placed there by pilgrims in honor of the saint, whose tomb, they say, is in the northern wall, indicated by a marble slab placed against it. This part of the mount is frequently called by the natives after the saint, 'Imad ed- Din.

4. The present inhabitants of Nablus, with very few

exceptions, are Arabs. It is difficult to say with exactness what is the number of its population, inasmuch as no census is taken. About 10,000 is near the mark. Of these there are about 100 Jews, 150 Samaritans, from 500 to 600 native Christians; the remaining 9400 are Mohammedans — the most bigoted and unruly, perhaps, in Palestine. The enmity between the Samaritans and Jews is as inveterate still as it was in the days of Christ.

Being, as it is, the gateway of the trade between Jaffa and Beirut on the one side, and the transjordanic districts on the other, and the center also of a province so rich in wool, grain, and oil, Nablus becomes, necessarily, the seat of an active commerce, and of a comparative luxury to be found in very few of the inland Oriental cities. It produces, in its own manufactories, many of the coarser woollen fabrics, delicate silk goods, cloth of camel's hair, and especially soap, of which last commodity large quantities, after supplying the immediate country, are sent to Egypt and other parts of the East. The ashes and other sediments thrown out of the city, as the result of the soap manufacture, have grown to the size of hills, and give to the environs of the town a peculiar aspect. The olive, as in the days when Jotham delivered his famous parable, is still the principal tree. Figs, almonds, walnuts, mulberries, grapes, oranges, apricots, pomegranates, are abundant. The valley of the Nile itself hardly surpasses Nablus in the production of vegetables of every sort.

See Robinson, *Palestine,* 2, 94-136; Olin, *Travels,* 2, 339-365; *Narrative of the Scottish Deputation,* p. 208-218; Schubert, *Morgenland,* 3, 136- 154; Lord Nugent, *Lands Classical and Sacred,* 2, 172-180; Hackett, *Illustrations of Scripture,* p. 193 sq.; Thomson, *Land and Book,* 2, 203; Conder, *Tent Work in Palestine,* 1, 61 sq. Dr. Rosen, in the *Zeitschr. der deutschen morgenland. Gesellschaeft* for 1860 (p. 622-639), has given a

careful plan of Nablus and the environs, with various accompanying remarks. *SEE SAMARITANS, MODERN*.