

returned. Dr. Schick was asked to watch for a favourable opportunity for the examination of the sewer, but apparently never found one. Dr. Merrill has been fortunate enough to make a most interesting discovery, and one that may have some bearing on the topography of Ophel. May not this sewer be the passage by which the people of Silwân introduced some Egyptian soldiers when Ismail Pasha took Jerusalem?—C. W. W.]

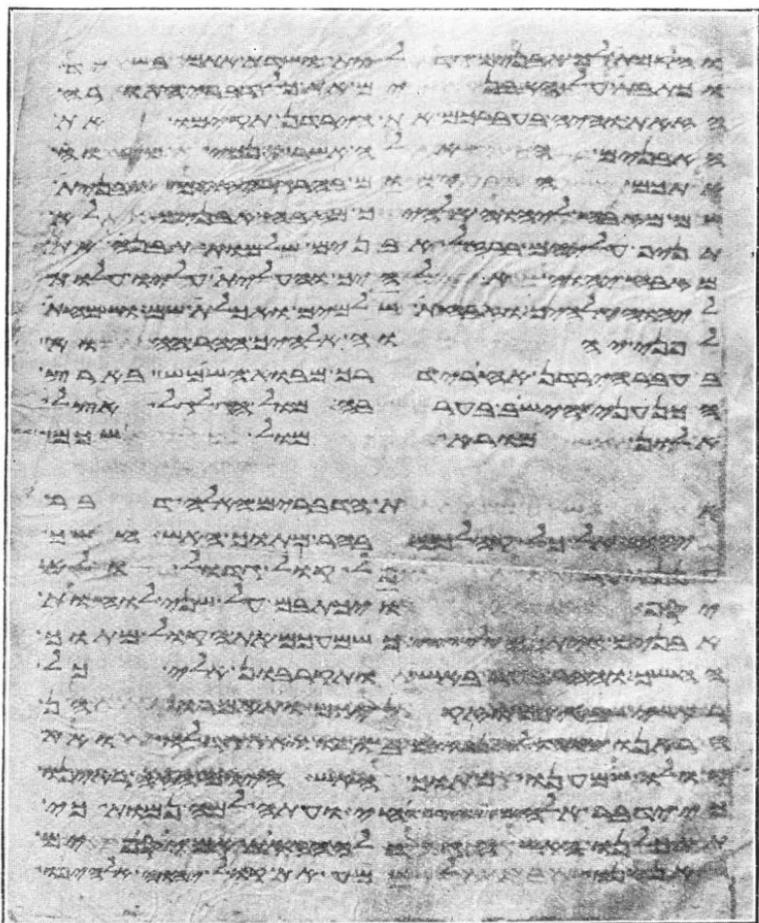
A SUPPOSED EARLY COPY OF THE SAMARITAN PENTATEUCH.

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SOME time ago a statement appeared in the daily papers announcing the discovery of a Samaritan Pentateuch dated in the year 116 of the Hejra, *i.e.*, 734 A.D. As this was brought to my notice at the Bodleian Library, and as I was fortunate enough to obtain photographs of it, which enabled me to judge of the facts, I wrote a note on the subject in the *Jewish Quarterly Review*, vol. xvi, p. 483. Since then a friend has sent me a cutting from one of the daily papers, and the Secretary of the Fund has received an account of the MS. from Dr. Baroody, editor of *Aṭ-ṭabīb* in Beyrout, so that it may be of interest to readers of the *Quarterly Statement* to know something about the volume. Of course an eighth century copy of the Pentateuch would be of great interest. Of the Masoretic text we have nothing *dated* earlier than the St. Petersburg codex of 916 A.D., though Dr. Ginsburg in his introduction assigns an undated MS. to an earlier period. No Samaritan copy, as far as I know, is nearly as old as this. The earliest (*dated*) is probably the fragment mentioned by Harkavy, which was written in 599 A.H. = 1202 (3) A.D., and is now in St. Petersburg. There is, of course, the famous copy at Nâblus, said to have been written by Abisha, the great-grandson of Aaron, 13 years after the settlement of the Israelites in Canaan, but as no scholar has ever had an opportunity of really examining it, we are justified in leaving it out of consideration. Fragments also exist in which an early date has been forged for commercial purposes.

The present copy, therefore, although it would probably not add much to our knowledge of the text, would be our earliest evidence for either recension of the Pentateuch if its age were really as stated. Such, however, is unfortunately not the case. The accompanying plate shows the manner in which the date is given. In the early chapters of Deuteronomy the scribe begins to divide the text into two columns. When he comes to a letter required for what would usually be the

colophon, he moves it slightly to the left of its natural position in the text, and writes it in the vacant space between the columns, thus forming a sort of acrostic down the middle of the page. In the present copy the date appears on a subsequent page, of which I have a photograph, thus—[שמעאל] שנת אונק למלכות יש, written, of



SPECIMEN PAGE OF THE SAMARITAN MANUSCRIPT (A.D. 1495-6).

course, perpendicularly. It is evident that, on the system described, it cannot be forged, because the letters composing it belong to the text and must fit into the adjacent words. The only question is, how are we to interpret it? If it were read in the Hebrew manner (though

even in Hebrew the letters would not be in this order, except for special reasons), no doubt it would mean 115 or 116 (according as the dots mean that the **ס** is to be deleted or not) of the Hejra, *i.e.*, 733 (4) A.D. But it is not the Samaritan custom to express dates in this way. The scribe speaks Arabic, and naturally thinks of the number in the most usual Arabic order, which is the precise reverse of our own. For example, in a Pentateuch at Cambridge (MS. Add. 1846), in a colophon written in the ordinary way, and not acrostically as here, the date is **ל מ מ ל נ ו ת י ש מ ע א ל מ ו א נ : ו ה : ר מ : ד : ו מ : ו ה**, *i.e.*, 544 A.H. = 1149 A.D. If the scribe had chosen to write **ק** for **מ ו א נ** = מאות (as he would have done in the acrostic form, to save trouble), **ד ו מ ו ה ק** would be an exact parallel to **א ו ט ק**. Similarly in another Cambridge Pentateuch (MS. Add. 714), using the words instead of the numeral letters, in the same order **ש נ ת ש ב ע ו ש ל ש י מ ו ש ב ע מ א ו ת** = 737, and again, **ש נ ת ש ל ש ה ו ש ש י מ ו ש ב ע מ א ו ת** = 763. A different order is sometimes used, but this is the most common. We must, therefore, read the **א ו ט ק** (the dots are of no significance) as **א ח ד ו ת ש ע מ א ו ת**, *i.e.*, 901 A.H. = 1495 (6) A.D., a date which is not sensational, but which agrees with the character of the writing.

Dr. Baroody informs us that the scribe's name, as given in the acrostic, is Jacob ben Joseph ben Meshalmah (!). Without further detail it is impossible to identify him with certainty, but he may possibly be the same Jacob b. Joseph who in 874 A.H. = 1469 A.D., bought the British Museum Pentateuch described by Mr. G. Margolionth in the *Jewish Quarterly Review*, vol. xv, p. 637. If so, he lived at Damascus, and probably made the present copy from the British Museum MS. for the High Priest, Eleazar, who died in 914 A.H. = 1508 A.D.

The variants said to occur in the text are simply those found in all Samaritan copies. Hence the volume unfortunately turns out to be nothing but an ordinary, though well written, MS. of the end of the fifteenth century, of no special importance.