certain Shemer (whose name is said to be the origin of that of the city), and transferred thither his capital from Tirzah. But the city, as a superficial inspection of the site shows, must have existed as a settlement long before Omri, as potsherds of earlier date lie scattered on the surface. The city was occupied by Ahab, who here built a temple to “ Baal ” (1 Kings xvi. 32) and a palace of ivory (I Kings xxii. 39). It sustained frequent sieges during the troubled history of the Israelite kingdom. Ben-Hadad II. of Syria assaulted it in the reign of Ahab, but was repulsed and obliged to allow the Israelite traders to establish a quarter in Damascus, as his predecessor Ben-Hadad I. had done in Samaria (I Kings xx. 34). Ben-Hadad II. in the time of Jehoahaz again besieged Samaria, and caused a famine in the city; but some panic led them to raise the siege (2 Kings vi., vii.). The history of the city for the following 120 years is that of Israel (see Jews).

In 727 died Tiglath-Pileser, to whom the small kingdoms of W. Asia had been in vassalage; in the case of Israel at least since Menahem (2 Kings xv. 19). He was succeeded by Shal­maneser IV., and the king of Israel, with the rest, attempted to revolt. Shalmaneser accordingly invaded Syria, and in 724 began a three-years’ siege of Samaria (2 Kings xvii. 5). He died before it was completed, but it was finished by Sargon, who reduced the city, deported its inhabitants, and established within it a mixed multitude of settlers (who were the ancestors of the modern Samaritans). These people themselves seem to have joined a revolt against the Assyrians, which was soon quelled. The next event we hear of in the history of the city is its conquest by Alexander the Great (331 b.c.), and later by Ptolemy Lagi and Demetrius Poliorcetes. It quickly recovered from these injuries: when John Hyrcanus besieged it in 120 b.c. it was “ a very strong city ” which offered a vigorous resistance (Jos. *Ant.* xiii. x. 2). It was rebuilt by Pompey, and restored by Aulus Gabinius: but it was to Herod that it owed much of its later glory. He built a great temple, a hippodrome and a street of columns surrounding the city, the remains of which still arrest the attention. It was renamed by him *Sebaste,* in honour of Augustus: this name still survives in the modern name *Sebusteh.@@*1Philip here preached the gospel (Acts viii. 5). The rise of Neapolis (Shechem) in the neighbourhood caused the decay of Sebaste. It was quite small by the time of Eusebius. The crusaders did some- thing to develop it by establishing a bishopric with a large church, which still exists (as a mosque) ; here were shown the tombs of Elisha, Obadiah and St John the Baptist. From this time onward the village dwindled to the poor dirty place it is to-day.

The site of Samaria is an enormous mound of accumulation, one of the largest in Palestine. In some places it is estimated the débris is at least 40 ft. deep. The crusaders’ church remains almost intact, and numerous fragments of carved stone are built into the village houses, beneath which in some places are some interesting tombs. The hippodrome remains in the valley below, and the columns of the street of columns are in very good order. The walls can be traced almost all round the town: at the end of the mound opposite the modern village are the dilapidated ruins of a large gate. The site stands in the very centre of Palestine, and, built on a steep and almost isolated hill, with a long and spacious plateau for its summit, is naturally a position of much strength, commanding two of the most important roads—the great N. and S. road which passes immediately under the E. wall, and the road from Shechem to the maritime plain which runs a little to the W. of the city. The hill of Samaria is separated from the surrounding mountains (Amos iii. 9) by a rich and well-watered plain, from which it rises in successive terraces of fertile soil to a height of 400 or 500 ft. Only on the E. a narrow saddle, some 200 ft. beneath the plateau, runs across the plain towards the mountains; it is at this point that the traveller coming from Shechem now ascends the hill to the village of Sebusteh, which occupies only the extreme E. of a terrace beneath the hill-top,behind the crusaders’ church, which is the first thing that attracts the eye as one approaches the town. The hill-top, the longer axis of which runs W. from the village, rises 1450 ft. above the sea, and commands a superb view towards the Mediterranean, the mountains of Shechem and Mount Hermon. Excavations under the auspices of Harvard University began here in 1908. (R. A. S. M.)

SAMARITANS. This term, which primarily means “ inhabitants of Samaritis, or the region of Samaria,” is specially used, in the New Testament and by Josephus, as the name of a peculiar religious community which had its headquarters in the Samaritan country, and is still represented by a few families at Nablus, the ancient Shechem. By the Jews they are called Shomronim, a gentilic form from Shomron = Samaria; among themselves they sometimes use the name Shemêrem ( = Heb. Shornerim) which is explained to mean “ Keepers,” sc. of the Law, but they usually style themselves “ Israel ” or “ Children of Israel.” They claim to be descendants of the ten tribes, and to possess the orthodox religion of Moses, accepting the Pentateuch and transmitting it in a Hebrew text which for the most part has only slight variations from that of the Jews. But they regard the Jewish temple and priesthood as schis­matical, and declare that the true sanctuary chosen by God is not Zion but Mount Gerizim,over against Shechem (St John iv. 20). The sanctity of this site they prove from the Pentateuch, reading Gerizim for Ebal in Deut. xxvii. 4. With this change the chapter is interpreted as a command to select Gerizim as the legitimate sanctuary (cf. verse 7). Moreover, in Exod. xx. 17 and Deut. v. 21 a commandment (taken from Deut. xxvii.) is found in the Samaritan text, at the close of the decalogue, giving directions to build an altar and do sacrifice on Gerizim, from which of course it follows that not only the temple of Zion but the earlier shrine at Shiloh and the priesthood of Eli were schismatical. Such at least is the express statement of the later Samaritans: in earlier times, as they had no sacred books except the Pentateuch, they probably ignored the whole history between Joshua and the captivity, thus escaping many difficulties.

According to modem views the books of Moses were not reduced to their present form till after the exile, when their regulations were clearly intended to apply to the rebuilt temple **of** Zion. The Samaritans must in that case have derived their Pentateuch from the Jews after Ezra’s reforms of 444 b.c. Before that time Samaritanism cannot have existed in the form in which we know it, but there must have been a community ready to accept the Pentateuch. The city of Samaria had been taken by Assyria (2 Kings xvii. 6 sqq. and xviii. 9-11) in 722 b.c., and the inhabitants deported, but in point of fact the district of Mount Ephraim was not entirely stripped of its old Hebrew population by this means. In the Annals of Sargon the number of the exiles is put at 27,290, representing no doubt the more prominent of the inhabitants, for this number cannot include the whole of N. Israel. The poorer sort must have remained on the land, and among them the worship of Jehovah went on as before at the old shrines of N. Israel, but probably corrupted by the religious rites of the new settlers. The account of the country given in 2 Kings xvii. 25 seq. dwells only on the partial adoption of Jehovah-worship by the foreigners settled in the land, and by no means implies that these constituted the whole population. Josiah extended his reforms to Bethel and other Samaritan cities (2 Kings xxiii. 19), and the narrative shows that at that date things were going on at the N. sanctuaries much as they had done in the time of Amos and Hosea. To a considerable extent his efforts to make Jerusalem the sanctuary of Samaria as well as of Judah must have been successful, for in Jer. xli. 5 we find fourscore men from Shechem, Shiloh and Samaria making a pilgrimage to "the house of Jehovah,” after the catastrophe of Zedekiah. It is therefore not surprising that the people of this district came to Zerubbabel and Jeshua after the restoration, claiming to be of the same religion with the Jews and asking to be associated in the rebuilding of the Temple. They were re­jected by the leaders of the new theocracy, who feared the result of admitting men of possibly mixed blood and of certainly questionable orthodoxy; and so the Jehovah-worshippers of Samaria were driven to the ranks of “ the adversaries of Judah and Benjamin ” (Ezra iv.). Nevertheless, down to the time oì Nehemiah, the breach was not absolute; but the expulsion from Jerusalem in 432 B.C. of a man of high-priestly family (Neh. xiii. 28), who had married a daughter of Sanballat, made it so. It can hardly be doubted that this priest is the Manasseb of Josephus

@@@1 Accentuated on the second syllable. Guide- and travel-books generally spell the name *Sebastiyeh,* which is not a correct rendering of the local pronunciation.