

*baghdādī*, and, in the Mountains of Hebron, a red and yellow turban is used. The yellow of the famous standard at the battle of Yarmuk, although the original colour of Islam, is nowhere seen. It is the colour of the *'erfāī*, but is always mixed with black.

The villagers of *Shiūkh* and *Dēr esh-Shēkh*, in the Hebron Mountains, who claim descent from the Fatimids, all wear the green turban and enjoy the title of *sharif*. Many modern writers, evidently copying each other, have repeated the fable that the green turban is a sign of the pilgrimage to Mecca. The pilgrimage only bestows the title of *haj*, but no outward sign.

(To be continued.)

## OCCASIONAL PAPERS ON THE MODERN INHABITANTS OF PALESTINE.

By Dr. E. W. G. MASTERMAN and Prof. R. A. S. MACALISTER.

### TALES OF WELYS AND DERVISHES.

#### I.—Introduction.

THERE is nothing more difficult, in studying the religious beliefs of the more primitive inhabitants of Palestine, than to find out their own ideas about the local saints and their shrines. The notes given below are from materials collected by an intelligent native Christian—not educated in Western ways of thought—who went about in the villages conversing with the people in order to obtain this information. They are given, largely, in his own words—literally translated from the Arabic—and his statements are recorded here without any considerable attempt at verification or amplification. The word *wely*, meaning “protector,” is used primarily for the saint himself, but comes to be applied to his supposed tomb, although the more correct term for the shrine is *makām* (lit. “a place”). Such sacred tombs, or “welys,” are found all over Palestine, crowning a lofty hill or sheltered by a group of “sacred” trees; but a *makām*, dedicated to a deceased worthy of less sanctity than a *wely*, is found in almost every village. A shrine used as a place of regular pilgrimage is called a *mazār*.

Under the protection of a wely's grave, sowers put their seed to be kept from robbery, and fellahin coming from a distance leave their ploughs near the makām when not using them. No one dare rob anything so placed. The man who places it there says: "I am trusting God and you, O Sheikh, and these things are put under your name," i.e., care. The wely will protect it, and if a man dares to rob, he will be visited by all kinds of misfortune. The trees around a makām, and even fallen branches, are also under the protection of the wely, and cannot be touched with impunity.

## II.—Some well-known Shrines in South-west Palestine.

The welys were pious God-fearing men, whom the people of Syria believe, in many cases, chose their own burial-places. When their friends would carry their bodies to the cemetery, they fly away with shroud and bier and go where they like. Hence, many of the welys of the land belong to strangers who flew away like birds and perched where they liked. Even now, when one of the dervishes dies, he offers opposition to those carrying him to the cemetery, and this is proof that he has taken power from some wely that he should fly like him.<sup>1</sup>

One of the most important and holy of the welys of Palestine, in whose name all swear, is Saïd Ahmed el-Falūji, who is also honoured with the name Ahmed Muheddin (lit., who causes the religion to live). His makām is in the village of Falūji, in the Gaza district. Tradition states that people knew he was a wely before his birth, in this way. The people of the village were anxious to know the time of the new moon of Ramadān, and they went to a learned sheikh at Esdūd (Ashdod) to ask when the month of Ramadān began. The Sheikh answered: "Return to your village. A boy may be born there to-day; make inquiries about him, and if he has not yet suckled from his mother, Ramadān has begun, but if he has already suckled, it has not begun." So the villagers returned and gave notice to all the pregnant women that they must each send word when she was delivered. On the second day a child was born, and in the presence of leading people of the village, the baby was put to the breast. But he would not suckle, and remained fasting until evening,<sup>2</sup> after which he cried out to be nursed. This baby

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Q.S., 1905, p. 268.

<sup>2</sup> The point is, the baby was supposed to have known that the month of fasting—when food is not taken between sunrise and sunset—had begun, and his piety was such that, even at birth, he kept the fast.

was *Ahmed el-Falūji*. To his *makām* pilgrims from all parts of the land resort, and in his name they swear the most binding oaths. Thus, once one of the workmen of the P.E.F. was asked: "Are you fasting?" and he said "Yes." His reply being doubted, he was asked to swear in God's name, and he still confirmed his statement. He was then asked to swear by the *Sheikh* of Falūji, and he confessed the truth that he was not fasting, rather than perjure himself in the name of so powerful a wely. Those who have taken the "oath of purgation" at this shrine receive a certificate from the attendant sealed by the village *mukhtār*. The possession of such a document is considered as evidence of innocence.

At *Beit Jibrīn* there are many *makāms* for the welys. At the entrance to the village is that of *Sheikh el-'Ajameh*. It is situated there by choice of the wely, who wished to hinder the jinns from entering *Beit Jibrīn*. This town is a great centre for dervishes, and where there are many dervishes there are many jinns. *Beit Jibrīn* should indeed be a place of worship only—all places whose names begin with *Beit* should be places of worship—and this name means the House of the Angel Gabriel. Recently a *makām* has been built there named *Nebi Jibrīn*—the Prophet *Jibrīn*—and the reason for the building of this *makām* is this: Once, soldiers of the government were collecting the land-taxes (*amwal amāriyeh*), and they slept in the *maḍāfieh* (guest-house) of the village. During the night the Angel Gabriel appeared to the chief officer (*kaid*) and said "Build my *makām*." And the *kaid* awoke, greatly troubled, and made enquiries about the *makām* of *Nebi Jebrīn*, and he found it was a ruin. So he rebuilt it and made it beautiful.

There is in *Beit Jibrīn*, a tribe (*hamūleh*) called *Dar el-Muhdeh*, and they are the hereditary dervishes of the city. They are the descendants of *Esh-Sheikh Mahmud*, a pious man, who, before his death, called his children around him and said: "I will throw my *māhjah*<sup>1</sup> (مأجج), and where it falls there dig. You will come upon a cave, bury me in it." And the rod which the dervish threw perched upon the mountain opposite to *Beit Jibrīn*. And there to-day is his grave, and to it pilgrimages are made. And his descendants are held in honour, and the people dread lest they

<sup>1</sup> The *māhjah* is the dervishes' hooked almond stick—traditionally made like Moses' rod.

should bring evil upon themselves by any transgression against them. For example, once one of these dervishes was praying, and saw a man smoking a cigarette at the door of the *makām*. So the dervish seized the cigarette and threw it on the fire, whereupon the owner protested, and said: "You trouble the people with your 'dervishing.'" Immediately the dervish became very angry and threw himself upon the ground. The man went home, but that night, while he slept, he saw in his dream the dervish whom he had insulted come to him and attempt to strangle him. He awakened trembling, and hastily begged one of his relatives to go to the dervish's home and beg him for pardon, and he sent with the messenger a peace-offering of a sheep and a jar of *samn* (cooked butter). Such a procedure is called "smoothing the mind." Of this same dervish it is related that once, when he was in an assembly with other dervishes who were beating each other with swords and spears, one of the party was badly wounded with great loss of blood, and this dervish drew near and touched the wounded man with his hand, and at once the bleeding ceased, and even the mark of the wound disappeared.

In the *madafieh* of Zakariyeh, the writer once witnessed a strange scene which shows the honour in which dervishes are held. It was a rainy day in winter and the guest-room was crowded, when a dervish, naked from the waist up, came to the door of the guest-house. The host called out: "Enter, O Sheik̄h Ḥasan, and shelter yourself from the rain," and the man came in and began to 'dervish,'<sup>1</sup> and to neigh (like a horse). Then he tore off his headdress and, throwing it on one side, he rushed out and ran through the streets of the village. After a little he returned trembling with cold on account of the rain and his half-naked condition. After standing a little while before the fire he began to 'dervish' again and beat the fire with his foot. One of those sitting by told him to be quiet, whereupon the dervish became very angry, and filling both his hands with hot charcoal from the fire, he pursued the speaker to throw it over him. The man fled outside. Then the dervish said: "The fire is also a dervish: through the permission of God I will sit in it." Then he began to turn from side to side, opposite the fire exclaiming: "Allah! Allah! take firm hold," and none of those sitting by dared say anything but "God will be a helper." Then

<sup>1</sup> Bow himself backwards and forwards.

the dervish turned towards the writer and said: "The Mohammedans are mad, oh Khawajah," and he began to laugh. Then he stopped and began going from one part of the room to another, exclaiming "La illāhah illa Allah, ya Khalil Allah—ya Şultān 'Abd el-Kāder, help me!" Then, after a time, he became still, and the people sitting by said that the Sheikh was blessed and had close communion with God, and that, in this state, he sometimes sat for four days at a time without food or drink. After a time the man who had insulted him came back and kissed his hands and asked his pardon, and would not leave until the dervish said "God will forgive you."

It is narrated of a dervish, called Muhammad, of this same village (Zakariyeh) that, while he was feeding goats, some robbers rushed upon him to seize his flock, and when he had no strength left for further opposition, he called for help upon the head of his sect, Sultān 'Abd el-Kāder. Immediately he and his goats and his dog were transported to a place very far off, where he was safe from the robbers. In consequence of this, the people of the land continue to honour him and his family, and to make oaths in his name and in that of his son Hasan. To the latter, too, happened a somewhat similar incident while he was shepherding his goats. A very old wolf suddenly rushed upon him, and he asked the intercession of his father, and at once the wolf became tame and quietly accompanied the goats home.

Near Deir en-Nakhkhās there is a makām for a wely called Sheikh 'Abd Allah A'shīsh (اعشيس). It is said of this man that, when he was being carried to the cemetery for burial, he compelled the bearers to ascend the valley slope above the city, and there he was buried. Over his grave is a great dome, which is a place of pilgrimage and the making of vows. On feast days the dervishes, carrying their banners, are compelled supernaturally to carry them to this tomb.

At 'Arāk el-Manshiyeh there are many welys, the most honoured being that of the Sheikh Ahmed abu Sell. This name was given to the wely because he used to carry a basket (sell) full of water without the water running out. In his name a prayer is made, known as the "prayer of the basket" (sell) for those touched with the evil eye (*lit.*, "empty eye").

Of a wely at Tell es-Safi it is narrated that once he was in the madāfiḥ (guest-room) of the village with several people when a

stranger entered and saluted him, saying: "Good health and peace to you, oh Hajj" (pilgrim). The Sheikh asked him: "How do you know that I am a Hajj?" The stranger replied: "When you were praying at Jabal 'Arafāt, I was close beside you." The people of the village knew that the Sheikh was not really a pilgrim, but they remembered that, on the day mentioned, he had been absent. They were, therefore, certain that on this day he had been carried to Jabal 'Arafāt (at Mecca), and, therefore, they esteemed him a holy man. When he died and was being taken to burial, he (*i.e.*, the corpse) led all the funeral procession of relations and friends to a piece of ground near the wely of el-Khudr in Tell es-Safi, where they had to bury him. This place they later walled in and made into a makām.

It may sometimes happen, though rarely, that a wely is a woman, in which case she is honoured and has a makām like a man; but the visitors to her shrine must be women only. There is such a makām in the village of Zakariyeh to Fatmeh, the daughter of Barri. The women burn oil lamps there; no man dare come near the place or touch the branches of the trees or the herbs which grow there. If a man ventures to enter into the cave of the makām, he will be taken with fever and also lose his understanding. A stranger approaching the place in ignorance will be warned away by the villagers. When a woman fulfils a vow there she has to leave the place without turning her back. It is said that the family of this pious woman was from Persia; and if a dervish passes the vicinity of this makām and is afterwards affected with pain, he believes it is a plague from the land of Persia. They also believe that there is a company of Persians inside a heap of stones lying in front of a tree near the makām. A company of dervishes passing on a pilgrimage with their drums (*tūbbūl*) and tambourines and cymbals, had all their instruments broken to pieces as they passed the cave; the pole of the banner they were carrying was also broken. This was ascribed to the Persians.

### III.—*Two Famous Annual Pilgrimages in South Palestine.*

The most celebrated pilgrim shrines in Palestine are Nebi Mūsa and Nebi Sāliḥ. Nebi Mūsa, reputed among the Muslims as the tomb of Moses, is situated on the western side of the Jordan Valley, a little to the north-west of the Dead Sea. It is stated that the leaders

of the Muslims arranged this Nebi Mūsa pilgrimage for the orthodox Greek "Good Friday," when a great number of Christians are gathered together in Jerusalem, because they feared lest trouble should happen between the Muslims and Christians during the Easter celebrations. The people—both men and women—begin to assemble from the beginning of the week from all parts of the land—from Gaza, Jaffa, Nāblūs, and Hebron and their districts, and also from more distant parts. There are often not less than 7,000 pilgrims, besides the people of Jerusalem. On the Friday, when all are assembled, the Mutesarrif (Governor) of Jerusalem and all his suite and the officers of the army go to pray, amid great rejoicing, in the Haram, at the midday prayer. After the prayers the Mutesarrif drives in a carriage with military escort and often some camel riders, to a place called Rās el-'Amūd, on the Jericho road, where a great tent has been erected at the parting of the two roads to Nebi Mūsa. There he awaits the procession. Meanwhile, all the crowd which has gathered in the Ḥaram come out shouting "Allah, Allah," and carry the banner of Nebi Mūsa to the house of the Mufti, who is the agent for the *wakf* of Nebi Mūsa. There the crowd receive cooling drinks and coffee. When the procession starts, the Mufti himself carries the green banner of Nebi Mūsa, on which is embroidered "*La illahah illa Allah Mūsa Kalīm Allah*" (there is no God but Allah, Moses is the interlocutor of Allah). And each sect of the dervishes carries its banner, and there are two banners for Nebi Daūd (*i.e.*, David) carried on horseback by attendants from the maḳām of Nebi Daūd. Two attendants of the Ḥaram, also riding, carry the green banner of the Ḥaram. There is a special great banner of many colours carried by the young men (*shabāb*) and this is known as *barah* (? *birak*) *esh-Shabāb*. The procession proceeds as follows: In front come soldiers of the government, all armed and in uniform, some walking, some riding horses, and some on camels, and in their midst is the military band. Then come dervishes from all parts of the land, each sect with its special banner, and their drums decorated with calico of the same colours as their banners. Each man has a sword suspended from his neck, and a spear in his hand. They also carry tambourines and cymbals, and they shout "Allahū akbar!" (God is most great) and flourish their swords. Behind these are the *shabāb* (young men) of Jerusalem with their banner in their midst, carried by one chosen by themselves and styled the *Sheikh* *esh-Shabāb*. And they, too, make play with swords and

knives and revolvers, which they fire into the air. As they go they dance, some springing on to the shoulders of their companions, and shouting :—

“ O eye ! be patient with him who was taken by thy sailors.  
 In the middle of the ship were we put,  
 And they covered us with the sails,  
 And the anchor-hook was put into us.  
 O Mūsa ! we beg you,  
 Thou as the son of ‘Imrām,  
 O ‘Aisa ! we beg you,  
 Thou as the son of Mary,  
 O Muḥammad ! we beg you,  
 Thou as the prophet of God.  
 O eye ! entreat the prophet.  
 O eye ! entreat the handsome one.  
 O eye ! pray to the prophet.  
 And the rose, for the sake of the prophet, is open.  
 Do not fear, O ‘Ali !  
 The people around you are men.  
 They (*i.e.*, the enemies) are the goats, O ‘Ali !  
 And we are their slaughterers, O father !  
 O Abd’ul Hamid ! do not notice them,  
 Thy sword is always dripping with blood.”

At the end of the procession come more young men accompanying the Mufti, and assisting him to carry the banner of Nebi Mūsa.

When the procession leaves the city by the Bab Sittna Mariam (the St. Stephen’s Gate of the tourist) cannons are fired in salute within the city, and continue at intervals until the troops reach the large tent mentioned before, placed at Rās el-‘Amūd where the Mutesarrif awaits their coming. Here one of the sheikhs makes a speech in honour of Nebi Mūsa and of the sultān, and all respond “Amen” to his words. Then the banner of Nebi Mūsa is folded up and is so carried by the pilgrims to the shrine, while the Mutesarrif and the soldiers, and all those who are not going on pilgrimage, return to the city with the other banners.

When the pilgrims reach the makām there is always a rivalry between the parties from the districts of Nāblūs, Hebron, Gaza, and

<sup>1</sup> This belongs to the time of the late sultān.

Jerusalem as to which is to have the right to enter first with the banner.

The parties at length settle down in and around the *makām* and remain there till the next Thursday, eating at the expense of the *Nebi Mūsa* endowments. Strict purity is enjoined, as it is believed that any act of indecent conduct would be visited by an awful whirlwind. If rain occurs before the feast is over, it is believed that God has sent the rain to purify the place from the dirt of their footprints, and they call this "the rain of *Nebi Mūsa*."

On the Thursday they return to the city as they came: the *Mutesarrif* and soldiers meet them as before at the tent, and the procession returns in the same order as it left the city on the previous Friday. As they pass the crowded city streets, the onlookers attempt to touch the banner for a blessing. When they reach the *Haram* they spend that night in the Court of the Mosque, and midday the next day—Friday—all the crowds stand opposite a large olive tree planted by the gate of the *Haram*, and there offer their prayers. They carry away as mementoes some branches of the olive, whose leaves, they believe, tremble from the energy of their prayers. After this the crowds break up and every one returns to his own town or village.

The pilgrimage to *Nebi Sālih*, at *Ramleh*, occurs on the Friday of the week next after that of *Nebi Mūsa*. The people are called to assemble by shouts, the beating of drums, and the blowing of pipes from the morning of the previous Wednesday. Dervishes come from all parts of the land—most of whom have just attended *Nebi Mūsa*—and also great crowds of *fellahin*, men and women. The people collect in a procession and go to the house of the *Bey*, a noble of *Ramleh*, who manages the *wakf*, and under whose care is the cloak and banner of the *Nebi*. Having received the banner they march with great rejoicing and shouting to the Great Mosque. The dervishes are each in sects, with their special banners, and do just as in the *Nebi Mūsa* procession.

They all leave the Mosque after joining in the midday prayers, and go in procession to *Nebi Sālih*, which is outside the town at *Jamia' el-Abiad*. On arriving, one of the *'ulema* recites prayers and they all say "Amen." Then they exclaim: "*Es-salām 'alayk yā karīm Allah! Es-salah wa 's-salām 'alayk yā 'Aisa rūh Allah! Es-salah wa 's-salām 'alayk yā Sālih ya habīb Allah! Es-salah wa 's-salām 'alayk yā awwal khalk Allah, wa khatamat rusul Allah*"—

“Salutation to thee, generous one of Allah, ‘Aisa spirit of Allah, Sāliḥ beloved of Allah, first creation of Allah and seal of the prophets of Allah.” And they pray and recite the *fātiḥah*. Then they enter the *makām* and cover the tomb with a piece of green calico, and the people enter in small parties and take a blessing by kissing the piece of calico, which they call the *tōb* (robe), and they repeatedly wipe their faces with it. And many people make lamentation upon the graves of their relatives buried in the vicinity of the *makām*. Some of the crowd sing together, others swing themselves from the trees, others watch the women promenading, while yet others use the opportunity to buy and sell at small stalls scattered around. So they occupy the time till the evening, when they return to the town (Ramleh) in the same order as they came—often not less than 5,000 people—with the soldiers accompanying them. The dervishes walk in front with the banner of Nebi Sāliḥ, showing great excitement and shouting out, until they reach the Great Mosque, where prayers are quietly said, and everybody goes home.

*(To be continued.)*

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## MEASURES OF DISTANCE IN PALESTINE.

By COLONEL SIR CHARLES WATSON, K.C.M.G., C.B.

THERE is a matter in connection with the study of the geography of the Holy Land, which sometimes causes difficulty to those who are interested in the subject, and who wish to follow on a map the accounts of the topography of the country and of the relative positions of places referred to in the Bible, the Books of the Jewish historian Josephus, and the descriptions of other ancient writers. To an Englishman the word “mile” conveys the idea of an English mile, and the word “furlong” of an English furlong, and it is overlooked that, eighteen centuries ago, the mile and furlong were not the same length as in England at the present day. Then again, while the maps published by the Palestine Exploration Fund are