

94 Gerizim

Names (also known as)

Ar-garizim (Samaritan), Jabal Jarizim (Arabic)

Etymology

Strong’s H1630 - from the root word *garaz* - to cut off or a cuttings off.

Location/Description

Located north of Nablus (Shechem) and rises up over the valley of Shechem. It reaches a height of 1,202 ft. above the ground, although it’s about 200 ft. lower than Ebal.



Scriptural references

Old Testament

Deut.11:29; 27:12; Josh. 8:33; Jud.9:7

In Deuteronomy, Moses commands Joshua that when he enters the land he is to read the blessings and curses from Ebal and Gerizim. In Judges, Jotham the son of Gideon stood on Gerizim and delivered his parable of the bramble king, a prophecy concerning Abimelech.

New Testament

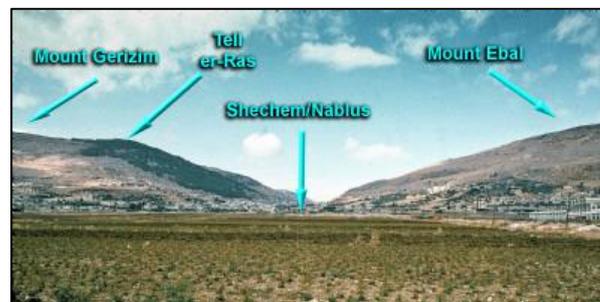
While not mentioned by name it is referred to as the mountain that the Samaritans worshipped at in John 4:20.

Famous characters

Abraham
Jacob
Joseph
Joshua
Jotham
Jesus Christ

Brief history

Mt. Gerizim and the surrounding area of Shechem and Mt. Ebal have played an important role in Biblical events since the time of Abraham. Moses commanded Joshua to go to this area upon entering the land and there set up an altar and proclaim the blessings and cursings of the Law before all Israel. He placed 6 tribes on Gerizim and 6 on Ebal and the Levites proclaimed the blessings and cursings. They then took 12 stones and wrote upon them a copy of the law. Today there is a place where people believe they can see the same 12 stones. The valley between Ebal and Gerizim provided a natural amphitheatre being ideal for this event to take place there.



It is interesting to note that the cursings were given from Ebal which means ‘bald’; it signified an unfruitful person, while the blessings were given from Gerizim meaning to cut off. Perhaps this taught that if we want to partake of the blessings we need to cut off the flesh. Later after the captivity of Israel the Assyrians introduced other nations to the land around Gerizim and they intermingled with remaining Israelites and became known as Samaritans. These Samaritans had their worship centered around Gerizim and it is there that Sanballat built a large temple for that worship. This caused tension between the Jews as seen during the time of Ezra and Nehemiah and culminated in John Hyrcanus destroying the temple located there in the 2nd century BC. The Samaritans had a number of beliefs that conflicted with Scripture, such as the idea that Gerizim and not Shiloh was the

location of the tabernacle and that the location of Isaac’s sacrifice was there and not on Moriah.

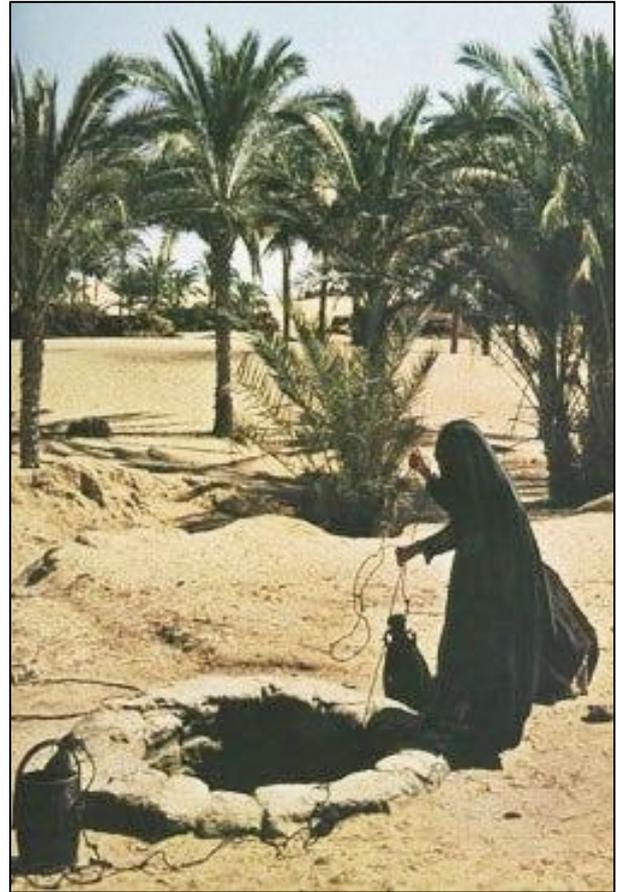
After Roman occupation the Samaritans again worshipped at the mountain but were not allowed to rebuild their temple. They reached their peak (around 1 million people) between the 2nd and 5th century AD. At this time Christian Rome set up a large church on top of Gerizim causing the Samaritans to rebel. After 100 years of warfare they were forced to convert or be exiled and the population dwindled to the 100’s. The Romans even built walls around their church to protect it from Samaritan attacks. As with Judaism, Samaritan worship was outlawed by Roman law. Today 90% of the Samaritans in the world live around the area of Gerizim and still worship there, conducting their annual Passover there. There are numerous archaeological digs and ruins around Gerizim today of places such as Sanballat’s temple, the Christian Church, a temple to Zeus built by Hadrian, an extravagant mansion and more.

As we walk around Gerizim and are reminded of the blessings given there to those who would be faithful, we also consider the polluting of the area by false religions. Let us be reminded of Christ’s words in John 4:21-24 at what is thought to be Jacob’s well:



Woman, believe me, the hour cometh, when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father. Ye worship ye know not what: we know what we worship: for salvation is of the Jews. But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to

worship him. God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.



Sources:

Smiths Bible Dictionary
Wikipedia
Biblewalks.com
Frommers guide to Israel
holylandphotos.org

(Compiler – Dan Leadbetter)