



MUSEUM REVIEW

The Samaritan Museum

Courtesy of the Palestinian Museum



The priest Husni Al Samiri stands underneath a Sukka (tabernacle) which Samaritans have to build as beautiful as they see it to celebrate their Sukkot (the harvest festival)

The Samaritan Museum is located at the highest point of Mount Gerizim in Nablus, sitting in the heart of the Samaritan neighborhood.

The 3,652-year-old Samaritan sect is considered to be the smallest in the world, with 775 persons (as of January 2015).

The museum was established by the priest Husni Al Samiri in a small room in his own house and later expanded and moved to a bigger building that showcases a modest yet precious collection of antiques that belong to the Samaritans. The museum also houses historical and rare manuscripts of prayers that are unique to the sect.

Regardless of its small size, the museum has managed to attract the attention of specialized authorities

and was renovated by the Palestinian Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities with the support of UNESCO.

The museum collection represents the periods through which Samaritans have survived over the past three millennia. Most of the items have been donated by the family of the priest Husni Al Samiri or by other Samaritans.

The museum contains one of the most important and precious holy pieces: a 3,638-year-old hand-scripted Torah that is considered to be the oldest in the world. The Samaritans have declined all the many generous offers by renowned museums around the world to buy or keep that copy. The priest Husni believes that it should remain with the Samaritans and be preserved and passed down from generation to

generation. As one of the most vital components of the existence of the Samaritans, this Torah is kept in an iron cupboard, which is opened only to bestow blessings on the Samaritans during holy feasts.

A few years ago, an unidentified person stole two of the oldest Torahs kept by the Samaritans; one was 600 years old and the other 700 years old. The many attempts to recover them have ended in failure.

The relatively small Samaritan museum has successfully contributed to introducing and raising awareness of this small sect whose members live in either Nablus in the West Bank or Holon, close to Tel Aviv.

Article photos courtesy of Ahed Izhiman.



Al Falak Al Samiri book (Samaritan Astronomy) in Arabic, 450 years old.



Upper left: the priest Husni Al Samiri stands next to a 150-year-old copy of the Torah. Below left: Part of stone gate to a cemetery, dated to the Roman Period.

Right: The painting narrates the story of Prophet Noah as he asks his people to go with him into the ark in order to survive. The painting includes drawings of plants and animals.

