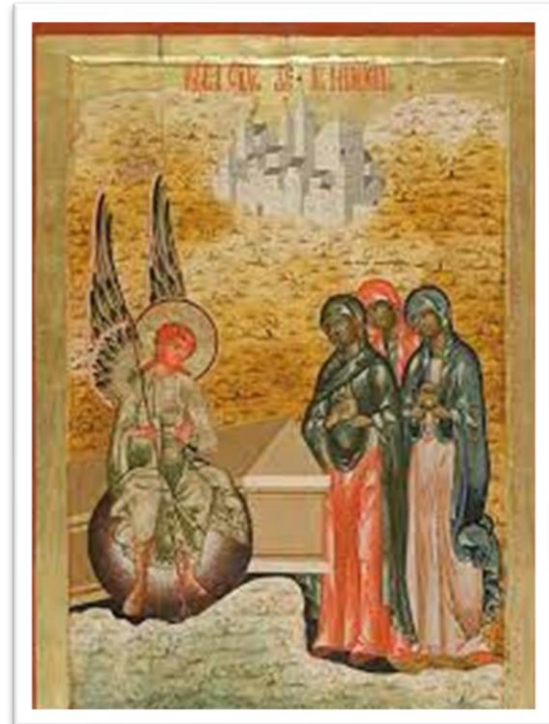


## Jesus in Ophra, Salem, and Aruma

One hour to the southwest of Korea was the city of Ophra, hidden among the mountains. Starting from Korea the traveler had first to ascend and then to descend the mountain road. An hour and a half at most westward from it, and on the north side of the desert to Bethoron toward the west, stood the mountain fortress of Alexandrium. Mount Garizim lay on the northwest, to the south and west the plain just mentioned and the mountains of the tribe of Benjamin. Mary often traversed this plain. Many lonely shepherd huts were scattered over it, and the city of Bethel was built on its confines.

Three highroads ran through Ophra. Caravans from Hebron were constantly passing this way, consequently the whole place was made up of public inns and mercantile houses. The people were somewhat rude and greedy for gain. Once during the preceding year they had received a visit from some of Jesus' disciples, and since that they had improved a little. At the moment of Jesus' arrival, the men of the place were busy gathering grapes in the vineyards that lined the road on either side, for a solemn festival was to begin that evening. The tabernacles were deserted excepting by the children, the youths, and the maidens, who with banners were going through them processionally. The priests also were engaged removing the prayer rolls and other holy things from the tabernacles to the synagogue, where they laid a prayer roll on every seat. I saw the women in their homes. They were dressed in their holiday robes, and were praying from rolls of parchment.

Jesus was espied by some men outside the gate. They went to Him and conducted Him into the city. They washed His feet and He took a little luncheon at an inn near the synagogue. After that He visited several houses, healing the sick and giving instruction. That evening the roll of the Law was carried around in the school, and everyone read a little out of it. This ceremony was followed by a grand entertainment given in the public festive hall. I saw lambs on the table, and the Esrog apples also that had been procured for the Feast of Tabernacles were eaten. These apples were prepared with some ingredients. Each was cut into five parts, and these were again tied into one by a red thread. Five persons ate of one apple. The viands



had all been prepared by Sabbath servants, that is, by pagans who appeared to be in a kind of slavery.

Next morning Jesus went from house to house, exhorting the people to turn away from their avarice and love of gain, and engaging them to attend the instruction to be given in the synagogue. He saluted all with a congratulatory word on the close of the feast. The people of Ophra were so usurious and unpolished that they were held in the same low esteem as the publicans. But they had now improved a little. That afternoon the branches of which the tabernacles had been formed were brought processionally by the boys to the square in front of the synagogue, there piled in a heap, and burned. The Jews watched with interest the rising of the flames, presaging from their various movements good or bad fortune. Jesus preached afterward in the synagogue, taking for His subjects the happiness of Adam, his Fall, the Promise, and some passages from Josue. He spoke also of too great solicitude for the things of life, of the lilies that do not spin, of the ravens that do not sow, etc., and brought forward examples in the person of Daniel and Job. They, He said, were men of piety, engrossed in occupations, but still without worldly solicitude.

Jesus was not entertained gratis in Ophra. The disciples had to pay all expenses at the inn. While He and they were still there a man from Cyprus came to see Him. He had been to see John at Machaerus, ten hours from Ophra, and had been conducted hither by a servant of Zorobabel, the Centurion of Capharnaum. He had been commissioned by an illustrious man of Cyprus to bring him some reliable news of Jesus, also of John, of whom he had heard so much.

The messenger did not tarry long at Ophra. He left as soon as he had executed his commission, for a ship was in waiting to carry him home. He was a pagan, but of a most amiable and humble disposition. The Centurion's servant had, at his request, conducted him from Capharnaum to John, at Machaerus, and from the latter to Jesus, at Ophra. Jesus conversed with him a long time, and the disciples put in writing before his departure all that he desired to know. One of the ancestors of his master had been King of Cyprus. He had received many Jews fleeing from persecution and had even entertained them at his own table. This work of mercy bore its fruit in one of his descendants, obtaining for him the grace to believe in Jesus Christ. In this vision I had a glimpse of Jesus retiring after the coming Pasch to Tyre and Sidon, and thence sailing over to the island of Cyprus to announce His doctrine.

From Ophra Jesus journeyed through the valley between Alexandria and Lebona to Salem. He descended through the forest of Hareth into the plain of

Salem. Gardens and beautiful walks lay around the outskirts of the city, which was most delightfully situated. It was not very large, but cleaner and more regular than many others in this region, laid out in the form of a star, the points radiating from a fountain in the center. All the streets ran toward the fountain, and were broken up by beautiful walks. The city at this period, however, had something in its appearance that bespoke decline. The fountain was regarded as sacred. It was once tainted like that near Jericho, but Eliseus had, like the one alluded to, purified it by casting into it salt and water in which the Holy Mystery had been immersed. The little edifice erected over it was very beautiful. In the center of the city and not far from the fountain arose a lofty castle, then in ruins, the large window casements destitute of windows. Nearby stood a high, round tower. On its flat top, which was surrounded by a gallery, a flag was waving. At about two-thirds of the height of the tower projected four beams toward the four quarters of the world, upon which hung large polished globes that glittered in the sun. They faced four different cities, and were a sort of memorial of David's time. He had once sojourned here with Michol and, when obliged to flee into the land of Galaad, he had by means of these globes received information from Jonathan concerning Saul and his movements against himself. The globes, by previous agreement, were hung sometimes this way, sometimes that, thus indicating by signs what was transpiring in those parts.

Jesus was very well received. People whom He met near the harvest ricks accompanied Him to the city, from which others were coming to meet Him. They conducted Him and the disciples to a house, in which they washed their feet and provided them with sandals and garments until their own were dusted and cleaned. Travelers were often presented with the dress thus provided, but Jesus never accepted it as a gift. He generally had a change with Him, of which one of the disciples took charge. The Salemites then took Jesus to their beautiful fountain and tendered to Him the customary refreshments. There were gathered around the fountain numbers of sick of all kinds, so numerous that even the streets were lined with them. Jesus at once began to cure, passing quietly from one to another until nearly four o'clock, when He assisted at a dinner given at an inn, and thence proceeded to the synagogue to preach. During the discourse He spoke of Melchisedech, also of Malachias who had once sojourned here and who had prophesied the Sacrifice according to the order of Melchisedech. Jesus told them that the time for that Sacrifice was drawing near, and that those ancient Prophets would have been happy to have seen and heard what they now saw and heard.

The people of Salem were of the middle class, neither poor nor rich, but well

inclined and charitable toward one another. The Doctors of the synagogue likewise were well-intentioned, but they were often visited by Pharisees from the neighborhood—to their own great annoyance and that of the citizens. Salem enjoyed certain privileges. It had under its jurisdiction the district in its immediate vicinity and other neighboring places. Jesus was especially kind to these people and confirmed them in their good sentiments. On the morning of the next day Jesus went about an hour southeast of Salem to a nook between the Jordan and the little river that flows into it from Akrabis. There was a pleasure garden in this hilly region, also three fish ponds, one above another, each fed by the waters of the little river. There were also baths that could be warmed. Jesus was followed thither by many from the city. From this garden Ennon could be distinctly seen across the Jordan, whose opposite bank was full of promenaders. Toward noon all returned to the city and found assembled some of the Pharisees from Aruma. This city was situated on a mountain two hours west of Salem and about one hour northwest of the newly built city of Phasaël, which lay almost hidden in a corner of the mountains. It was there the devout Jairus dwelt, whose daughter Jesus had not long ago raised to life. Among those Pharisees was a brother of Simon the Leper, of Bethania. He was one of the most distinguished Pharisees of Aruma. There were also some Sadducees present. They had all come as guests, for it was customary for the Doctors of the Law to visit one another during the days immediately following the Feast of Tabernacles. Some from other places besides Aruma were present also. A banquet was given in one of the public houses of Salem, at which Jesus and all the Doctors assisted. The latter feared that Jesus was going to preach in Salem on the coming Sabbath. They did not relish the idea, since the inhabitants were already unfavorably disposed toward themselves; therefore Simon's brother invited Jesus to go to Aruma for the Sabbath, and Jesus accepted the invitation.

Phasaël was a new place at which Herod stopped when in that part of the country. The city was surrounded by palm trees, and a little stream took its rise in the neighborhood, thence flowing into the Jordan almost opposite Socoth. The inhabitants appeared to be colonists. The city was built by Herod.

On Jesus' arrival at Aruma, He was not received by the Pharisees outside the city gate. Consequently, with His seven disciples, all like Himself with girded garments, He passed through into the city.

There He was received according to the custom of the place by some of the well-disposed citizens, and as was always done to travelers that entered the gate with their garments girded. The fact of their entering in that style

indicated that they had not yet received hospitality. Jesus and the disciples were taken to a house where their feet were washed, their clothes dusted, and refreshments offered them. After that Jesus went to the priests' house near the synagogue, where was Simon's brother together with several other Pharisees and Sadducees who had come hither from Thebez and other places. Providing themselves with rolls of the Scriptures, they went with Jesus to the public baths outside the city. There they deliberated upon the passages of Holy Writ that occurred in the lesson of the present Sabbath. It was like a preparation for a sermon. They were very courteous, very polished in their manner toward Jesus, whom they pressed to preach that evening, begging Him at the same time not to say anything that could make the people mutinous. They did not say this in plain terms, but they made themselves understood thus. Jesus replied sternly and unhesitatingly that He would teach what was in the Scripture, namely, the truth, and He went on to speak of wolves in sheep's clothing.

In the synagogue Jesus taught of Abraham's vocation and his journey to Egypt, of the Hebrew tongue, of Noe, Heber, Phaleg, and Job. The lessons were from 12 and . Jesus said that already in Heber's time God had separated the Israelites from the rest of mankind, for He had given Heber a new language, the Hebrew, which had nothing in common with other tongues then existing. This was done in order the more effectually to separate his race from all others. Before that, Heber, like Adam, Seth and Noe, had spoken that first mother tongue. But at the building of the Tower of Babel this had been confused and broken up into numerous dialects. In order to separate Heber entirely from the rest of men, God had given him a language of his own, the holy, ancient Hebrew, without which he and his descendants would never have been able to keep themselves pure and a distinct race.

While at Aruma, Jesus received hospitality at the house of Simon the Leper's brother. Simon himself, though now living in Bethania, was originally from Aruma. He was a person of little importance, though with aspirations to the contrary, but his brother of Aruma was well versed in the lore of the day. All things were perfectly regulated in this Pharisee's house. If Jesus was not received with the reverence that faith inspires, still He was treated conformably to the best laws of hospitality. He was given a separate oratory, the toilet linen and vessels were beautiful, and the master of the house himself paid the customary honors to his guest. The wife and children did not make their appearance.

Jairus of Phasaël, whose daughter Jesus had raised from the dead, was also here for the Sabbath and had an interview with Jesus. He then went to see the disciples and took them around through the city. His daughter was not in

Phasaël, but at the girls' school up at Abelmahula. On this day many young girls came here in a body, as I had previously seen the men visiting different places in parties. Abelmahula may have been something over six hours from Phasaël.

Outside of Aruma and to the east stood an immense old building occupied by aged men and widows. They were not Essenians, though they were habited in long, white robes and lived according to a certain rule. Jesus taught among them. When invited to a dinner or an entertainment, Jesus usually went from table to table and gave instructions.

The Feast of the Dedication of Solomon's Temple was being celebrated in Aruma. The synagogue was brilliantly illuminated. In the middle of it stood a pyramid of lights. The feast proper was already past. I think it was immediately after the Feast of Tabernacles. The present nocturnal celebration was a continuation of it. Jesus preached on the Dedication. He told of God's appearing to Solomon and saying to him that He would preserve the Israelites and the Temple as long as they remained faithful to Him, and that He would even dwell among them in the sacred edifice; but that He would destroy it if they fell away from Him. Jesus used severe language when alluding to this. He applied it to the present, to His own day, in which evil had reached its height. If, He said, they were not converted, the Temple would be destroyed. Then the Pharisees began to dispute with Him. They declared that God had not made use of such threats, that it was all a fable, an imagination of Solomon. The discussion became very lively, and I saw Jesus speaking with great animation. There was something in His appearance that affected them strongly and they could scarcely rest their eyes upon Him. He spoke to them upon the passages met today in the Sabbath lessons, of distorting and corrupting the eternal truths, of the history and chronology of ancient heathen nations, the Egyptians, for instance. He demanded of the Pharisees how they could venture to reproach these pagans, they themselves being even then in so miserable a condition, since what had been handed over to them as something so peculiarly theirs, something so sacred, the Word of the Almighty upon which His covenant with their holy Temple was founded, they could whimsically and capriciously reject as imaginations and fables. He affirmed and repeated God's promises to Solomon, and told them that in consequence of their false interpretations and sinful explanations, Jehovah's menaces were about to be fulfilled, for when faith in His most holy promises was wavering, the foundation of His Temple also began to totter. He said: "Yes, the Temple will be overturned and destroyed, because ye do not believe in the promises, because ye do not know that which is holy, because ye treat it as a thing profane! You

yourselves are laboring at its downfall. No part of it shall escape destruction. It will go to pieces on account of your sins!" In this wise spoke Jesus, and with such significance that He appeared to allude to Himself under the name of the Temple, as before His Passion He said still more plainly: "I will build it up again in three days." His words on this occasion were not so significant, though sufficiently so to fill His hearers with fury not unmixed with dread, and make them feel that there was something extraordinary and mysterious in His speech. They expressed their indignation in loud mutterings. Jesus paid no attention to them. He coolly continued His discourse in language they could not gainsay, for though against their will, they were interiorly convinced of the truth of His words. As He left the synagogue, the Pharisees offered Him their hand, as if desirous of apologizing for their violence. They wished to maintain an appearance of friendliness. Jesus gently addressed to them some earnest words, and left the synagogue, which was then closed.

I had a vision of Solomon. He was standing upon a column in the court of the Temple and near the altar of incense, addressing the people and praying aloud to God. The column was high enough for him to be distinctly seen. There was an interior ascent to the top upon which was a broad platform with a chair. It was movable and could be transported from place to place. I afterward saw Solomon in the fortress of Sion, for he did not yet occupy his new palace. It was there also that at an earlier period I saw God communicating with David, especially at the time of Nathan's embassy. There was also a terrace sheltered by a tent, upon which David slept. I saw Solomon praying on that terrace. A supernatural light of intense brilliancy shone around him, and from the light a voice proceeded.

Solomon was a handsome man. He was tall and his limbs were rounded, not spare and angular like those of most people of that place. His hair was brown and straight, his beard short and well trimmed, his brown eyes full of penetration, his face round and full with rather prominent cheekbones. He had not at that time devoted himself to his seraglio of pagan women. To avoid scandalizing His enemies, Jesus did not publicly cure in Aruma. The people were besides intimidated by the Pharisees, and dared not make their appearance by day. It was an exceedingly touching sight to see Jesus, as I did, going on two successive nights through the moonlit streets and seeking admittance at some of the poorest gates where people were humbly awaiting Him. With the two disciples that accompanied Him, He entered the courtyards and cured many sick. They were pious souls who believed in Him and had implored His help through the intervention of the disciples. All this could be easily done without observation, since the streets in that quarter were very quiet. They were lined by the walls of the forecourt in

which were little entrance gates; the windows of the houses were in the back, opening into the courtyards and little gardens. The people were patiently waiting for Jesus. I remember seeing a woman afflicted with an issue of blood. She was closely enveloped in a long veil, and was led by two young girls into the court. Jesus did not remain long by the sick when He cured at night. To arouse their faith, He usually put to them the question: "Dost thou believe that God can cure thee, and that He has given that power to One on earth?" These were the words, or something to the same effect, for I cannot clearly recall them. Then He presented His girdle to the sick woman to kiss and spoke some words that sounded like the following: "I heal thee through the Mystery" (or it may have been: I heal thee in the intention) "in which this girdle had been worn from the beginning and will be worn till the end." In curing others Jesus laid the ends of the girdle on their heads. It was a long, wide strip like a towel. It was worn sometimes unfolded, sometimes folded into a narrow band, and again with long, hanging ends ornamented with fringe.

The valley to the east of Aruma, which extended from east to west in the direction of Sichar and northward to the mountain northeast of Sichem, was woody. To the east of this mountain, which rose in the midst of the plain of Sichar, was the little wood known as the Grove of Mambre. It was there that Abraham had first pitched his tent, there also that God appeared to him and made to him the promise of a numerous posterity. A large tree stood nearby. Its bark was not so rough as that of the oak and it bore flowers and fruit at the same time. The latter were used for the knobs of pilgrim staffs. It was near this tree that the Lord appeared.

The highroad ran from Sichar to the left of the wood and around Mount Garizim. In the plain to the north of the forest was a city that recalled Abraham's sojourn in those parts. Some vestiges of it must still exist. It was three hours north of Aruma and two northwest of Phasaël. It was called Thanath-Silo.