

Significant Lessons From The Seemingly Insignificant

October 24, 2018: #38 Messages From Shechem

Located between Mt. Gerizim and Mt. Ebal, Shechem is very prominent in Biblical history. It is mentioned 60x in the Old Testament. Hebrew *shechem* means "shoulder," an apt description of the town's location in the narrow valley between Mt. Gerizim and Mt. Ebal, approximately 40 miles north of Jerusalem.

- Shechem, located in the hill country of Ephraim and 7 miles south of Samaria, provided the most important crossroads in central Israel.

Historical Significance of Shechem: A. Abraham: Gen. 12

Gen. 12:6 And Abram passed through the land unto the place of Shechem, unto the plain of Moreh. And the Canaanite was then in the land.

1. Abram had forsaken all in faith.

Heb. 11:8 By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went.

- God brings each of us out of bondage of sin that He might bring us into our abundant life.

2. Immediately faced with a problem: "the Canaanite was in the land."

- Cruel, corrupt & callous people: Hostile environment
- They were strangers and pilgrims in the midst of a pagan society.

Heb. 11:13 These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth.

- Claiming our spiritual inheritance [abundant life] involves tests and temptations, challenges and battles, but the LORD fights our battles and gives us victory.

Gen. 12:7 And the LORD appeared unto Abram, and said, Unto thy seed will I give this land: and there built he an altar unto the LORD, who appeared unto him.

- Abram stood as a childless man of 75 years of age.

"Resting on the promise of God, Abraham builds his altar in the place of Shechem, in the plain of Moreh. Schechem = shoulder and Moreh = teacher: "The saint of God had come to the place where he relied on the strength of God's shoulder and was taught of God."

1st Mention Of Shechem: Abraham's 1st stop; God appeared and confirmed His promises; Abraham 1st altar built to the Lord.

Historical significance of Shechem: B. Jacob: Genesis 28-35

~200 years after Abraham: Jacob is fleeing from Esau and home.

Gen. 28:13-15 And behold, the LORD stood above it, and said, I am the LORD God of Abraham thy father, and the God of Isaac: the land whereon thou liest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed; ¹⁴ And thy seed shall be as the dust of the earth, and thou shalt spread abroad to the west, and to the east, and to the north, and to the south: and in thee and in thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed. ¹⁵ And, behold, I am with thee, and will keep thee in all places whither

thou goest, and will bring thee again into this land; for I will not leave thee, until I have done that which I have spoken to thee of.

Gen. 28:16-17 And Jacob awaked out of his sleep, and he said, Surely the LORD is in this place; and I knew it not.¹⁷ And he was afraid, and said, How dreadful is this place! this is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven.

Gen. 28:19a-22 And he called the name of that place Bethel...And Jacob vowed a vow, saying, If [Since] God will be with me, and will keep me in this way that I go, and will give me bread to eat, and raiment to put on,²¹ So that I come again to my father's house in peace; then shall the LORD be my God:²² And this stone, which I have set for a pillar, shall be God's house: and of all that thou shalt give me I will surely give the tenth unto thee.

1. ~20 years later, Jacob begins the journey back home. Why?

Gen. 31:13 I am the God of Bethel, where you anointed the pillar, and where you vowed a vow unto me: now arise, get thee out from this land, and return unto the land of thy kindred.

2. Jacob has a "wrestling match" with The angel of the Lord.

➤ During his "dark night of the soul," Jacob discovered the only way to victory is through surrender.

Tozer: "God cannot fully bless a man until He has first conquered him. God conquered Jacob by weakening him."

G. Campbell Morgan: called Jacob's experience, "the crippling that crowns."

- It is a new beginning: Jacob has a new name, Israel.
- He has a new walk: Limping and leaning on God.
- He has a new relationship with God.

3. After his meeting with Esau, "Jacob journeyed to Succoth, and built him a house, and made booths for his cattle." [Gen. 33:17]

4. God commanded Jacob to return to Bethel.

➤ Instead, Jacob [pilgrim] who was supposed to live in a tent [Heb. 11:9-16] built a house for himself and sheds for his flocks and herds. [Succoth = booths]

5. Then Jacob, "camped within sight of the city," Shechem.

Gen. 33:19-20 And he bought a parcel of a field, where he had spread his tent, at the hand of the children of Hamor, Shechem's father, for an hundred pieces of money. And he erected there an altar and called it El-elohe-Israel. = God is the God of Israel.

- This plot of land at Shechem is the first within Canaan owned by house of Abraham.
- We know Jacob dug a well here. [John 4]
- Jacob purchases property and settled in the land. Seems he is not in a hurry to obey God and return to Bethel. Tarrying will be a very costly detour!
- He erected an altar which gave public witness of his faith, but sacrifice is not a substitute for obedience.
- God is the God of Israel: Indicates he claimed his new name, but he wasn't living up to what his name implied.

Jacob's Costly Detour:

1. Jacob spends 10 years in Shechem. He is only 30 miles from Bethel.
 - God's name is NOT used in Genesis 34.
 - Although his name is now Israel, Gen. 34 refers to him as Jacob.
2. Shechem was inhabited by the Hivites who were descended from Canaan, the fourth son of Ham. Canaan was cursed by Noah, and this curse passed onto his sons.
 - Hivites: Enemy in the land who promise you the Good Life.
 - Hivite Spirit will bombard your mind with life-styles that falsely promise meaning and purpose in life outside of God's chosen ways.

Gen. 34:1-2 And Dinah the daughter of Leah, which she bare unto Jacob, went out to see the daughters of the land. And when Shechem the son of Hamor the Hivite, prince of the country, saw her, he took her, and lay with her, and defiled her.

1. Hamor, the ruler of the town, was prince Shechem's father.
2. Levi & Simeon made a deceptive pact with the males of the city and slaughtered them all in the revenge of Dinah. [Gen. 34]

Gen. 31:13 I am the God of Bethel, where you anointed the pillar, and where you vowed a vow unto me: now arise, get thee out from this land, and return unto the land of thy kindred.

Consider: Jacob Drifted From God's Path & Instructions:

1. He settled & became comfortable in a place, Shechem, where he didn't belong.
2. He had not fulfilled his vow to God at Bethel.
3. His family was becoming like the inhabitants of the land.
4. He allowed idolatry into his household. [Rachel had brought the idols from home.]
5. Dinah associated with the local women. She was eventually raped by Shechem.
6. Jacob became passive.

Gen. 35:1 And God said unto Jacob, Arise, go up to Bethel, and dwell there: and make there an altar unto God, that appeared unto thee when you fled from the face of Esau thy brother.

Gen. 35:2-5 Then Jacob said unto his household, and to all that were with him, Put away the strange gods that are among you, and be clean, and change your garments: ³ And let us arise, and go up to Bethel; and I will make there an altar unto God, who answered me in the day of my distress, and was with me in the way which I went. ⁴ And they gave unto Jacob all the strange gods which were in their hand, and all their earrings which were in their ears; and Jacob hid them under the oak which was by Shechem. [purified his house of strange gods] And they journeyed: and the terror of God was upon the cities that were round about them, and they did not pursue after the sons of Jacob.

Historical significance of Shechem: C. Joseph: Genesis 37

Gen. 37:12-14 And his brethren went to feed their father's [Jacob's] flock in Shechem.

¹³ And Israel said unto Joseph, Do not thy brethren feed the flock in Shechem? come, and I will send thee unto them. And he said to him, Here am I. ¹⁴ And he said to him, Go, I pray thee,

see whether it be well with thy brethren, and well with the flocks; and bring me word again. So he sent him out of the vale of Hebron, and he came to Shechem.

- Hebron = Fellowship; Communion
- Vale = Peace; quiet; peaceful
- Place of fellowship with his father; place he was known, loved & understood
- Sent to a place characterized by bloodshed, strife; those who hated & envied him
- Came to Shechem = shoulder; Speaks Of Burden-Bearing, Service, Subjection

Historical significance of Shechem: D. Children of Israel: Deut. 27

1. Moses brought the nation of Israel out of Egypt. Near the end of their sojourn, Moses said that once they entered the land God had promised them, they were to erect an altar on Mt. Ebal [Deut. 27:4] and read portions of the Law while the people were assembled before Mounts Ebal and Gerizim [Deut. 11:26-30; 27:12, 13].
 - Here they would pronounce the blessings and the curses of the Mosaic Covenant on the nation. [Deut. 27:4]
 - They would offer burnt and peace offerings to God.
2. Joshua obeyed this command.
 - On Mt. Ebal, Joshua built an altar to God, and on a pillar of stones he wrote a copy of the law. [Josh. 8:30-35]
 - He divided the nation with half of them standing in front of Mt. Gerizim and half in front of Mt. Ebal. [Josh. 8:33]
 - From Mt. Ebal, they shouted the curses if they disobeyed the law.
 - From Mt. Gerizim, they shouted the blessings if they obeyed.
3. It was here that Joshua assembled Israel with his farewell speech and uttered the famous words, "As for me and my house we will serve the Lord" (Josh. 24:15).

At the very spot where childless Abram stood when God made the land promise, now were 701,730 men of war, plus women and children, there to stake their claim on the land!

4. Joshua designated Shechem as a city of refuge. [Josh. 20:7; 21:21]

Historical significance of Shechem: E. Joseph's Final Request:

Gen. 50:24-25 And Joseph said unto his brethren, I die: and God will surely visit you, and bring you out of this land unto the land which He swore to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob.

²⁵ And Joseph took an oath of the children of Israel, saying, God will surely visit you, and ye shall carry up my bones from hence. [Indication of Joseph's faith: Take Me] So Joseph died, being an hundred and ten years old: and they embalmed him, and he was put in a coffin in Egypt.

Heb. 11:22 BY FAITH Joseph, when he was dying, made mention of the departing of the children of Israel; and gave commandment concerning his bones.

Key Point: Faith Remembers The Unbreakable Promises Of God

- Faith isn't a shallow emotion that we work up or an optimistic "hope-so" attitude.
- Faith is grounded on the infallible Word of God. He said it; I believe it; I act on it!

Note: Divine Providence and the Protecting Hand Of God had brought them to Egypt.

Question: How Did Joseph KNOW God would bring them out? Promise ~300 yrs. earlier

Gen. 15:13-14 And he said unto Abram, Know of a surety that thy seed shall be a stranger in a land that is not theirs, and shall serve them; and they shall afflict them four hundred years; And also that nation, whom they shall serve, will I judge: and afterward shall they come out with great substance. [Joseph's Instructions: Take Me With You! Joseph's FAITH]

- Gives assurance: You Will Leave Egypt

Ex. 13:19 And Moses took the bones of Joseph with him: for he had straitly sworn the children of Israel, saying, God will surely visit you; and ye shall carry up my bones away hence with you.

- Believe God's Promises Regarding Your Inheritance!

Josh. 24:32 And the bones of Joseph, which the children of Israel brought up out of Egypt, buried they in Shechem, in a parcel of ground which Jacob bought of the sons of Hamor the father of Shechem for a hundred pieces of silver and it became the inheritance of the children of Joseph.

Significance of Joseph's Tomb at Shechem

1. Today it is called "Joseph's tomb." Stephen provides additional detail from Acts 7:15-16 to tell us that Joseph and his brothers are buried in Shechem. [Sons of Israel]
2. Joseph's tomb in Shechem where his bones still rest is a silent reminder of God's abiding promise to Israel; an irrefutable witness to God's irrevocable covenant with Abraham.

Joseph's Bones Are Still A Hot News Item Today!

1. Since the Jews have once again returned to the land, the bones are under assault. Why? They verify and shout from the grave: This land belongs to the descendants of Abraham.
2. This tract of land was legally purchased by Jacob.
Joseph's bones = signature of God on the title deed of the entire land grant to Israel.
3. Nablus [=Biblical Shechem in Samaria] is a "cauldron of anti-Israel hatred and Joseph-haters. It continues to be violently challenged by a large population of Allah-crazed bloodthirsty hostiles."
4. Certain acts of contempt strike at the very heart of God's purposes. Nothing less than the integrity of God's word is being assailed by those attacking Joseph's tomb.
5. October, 2000 = Violent Palestinian uprising began. Read current headlines at:
[<https://www.breakingisraelnews.com/tag/josephs-tomb/>]
 - a. Nablus became one of the flash points of Arab rioting.
 - b. The site of Joseph's tomb in Shechem had long been protected by the IDF [Israel Defense Forces] but was now targeted by the Palestinians.
 - c. In an attempt to placate Arafat, the IDF naively came to an agreement with the Palestinian Authority that the IDF would withdraw from Joseph's tomb in exchange for an agreement that the Palestinian police would ensure its safekeeping.
 - d. The very next day, mobs of crazed Palestinians attacked the structure housing Joseph's tomb, wreaking great destruction.

e. Another assault followed during the same fall Jewish holiday period in October, 2003.

f. Jews attacked at Joseph's Tomb in Nablus. Palestinian police beat group of worshippers during unauthorized visit to Nablus shrine. It was torched overnight Thursday, Oct. 2015.

6. The Palestinians do not realize who they are taunting, deriding and defying. What they are doing is "tantamount to spitting on the throne of God; challenging Him to a duel."

Joseph could have built a monument in Egypt, had himself embalmed, surrounded by pomp, for his remembrance. You don't find Joseph in the great museums. Joseph wanted to be a part of what God was doing. He knew that success, wealth, power and everything the world offers is so temporary.

Joseph is buried in an obscure grave in Canaan. He didn't want a monument to pride;

he wanted a monument of faith that he believed God and was identifying with God's promise.

Dan. 12:2 And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt.

John 5:28-29 Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which ALL that are in the graves shall hear his voice and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation. All will be raised from the dead.

A resurrection is coming! We will have an exodus.

Phil. 3:20-21 For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself.

I Cor. 15:54-58 So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory.

O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding

in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.

Consider: Joseph's bones rest resolutely in the face of the hostility as a "clarion call of faith that resounds over those hills." They are a perpetual testimony to the faithfulness of God's promises to Israel.

1. His coffin in Egypt was a constant reminder to the Jewish people to have faith in God.

2. When their situation changed in Egypt and the Jews found themselves slaves instead of resident aliens, they could look at this "box of bones" and be encouraged.

3. During their wilderness wanderings, as they carried this "box of bones" from place to place, Joseph ministered to them and urged them to trust God and never give up.

4. Joseph's witness lived on: Stand On The Unbreakable Promises Of God

Believe In The Unshakeable Power Of God

Long Delays Do Not Erode The Promises Of God

This Faith Results In The Unmistakable Peace Of God

John Wesley: God buries His workman, but His work goes on.

I John 2:17 He who does the will of God abides forever.

G. Campbell Morgan: Commit your life to God and be engaged in His work. Die knowing that you have started delicate influences, dynamic forces which will proceed through succeeding generations until they gather up the harvest of glorious result about the throne of God.

The man of God has not finished his work in the world when they put him in a coffin.

What will be the message from my bones?