

Shechem: Talking Bones

Historical Significance of Shechem: 2nd City of Refuge; 60x in Bible

Gen. 37:12-14 Soon after this, Joseph's brothers went to pasture their father's flocks at Shechem.¹³ When they had been gone for some time, Jacob said to Joseph,

"Your brothers are pasturing the sheep at Shechem. Get ready, and I will send you to them."

"I'm ready to go," Joseph replied.

¹⁴ "Go and see how your brothers and the flocks are getting along," Jacob said.

"Then come back and bring me a report." So Jacob sent him on his way, and

Joseph traveled to Shechem from their home in the valley of Hebron.

So he sent him out of the vale of Hebron, and he came to Shechem. [~50 miles]

- 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

When Joseph learned his brothers had moved to Dothan about 12 miles away, he went to find them. When Joseph found his brothers, they mistreated him terribly and sold him into slavery.

This action set off a chain of events that would lead to the Egyptian exile.

Type: Pictures the fellowship of Jesus, the Son, with the Father in heaven's eternal calm and peace previous to His entrance into a world of sin, toil and sorrow.

Jesus left His Home and descended to a hostile realm where He is hated without a cause.

This action will lead to His death, burial and resurrection which will bring salvation to man.

Joseph was 17 when he was sold as a slave and taken to Egypt where he lived for 93 years until he died in Egypt at 110. He had no contact with his family for ~37 years.

Joseph was a man of great character who lived an extraordinarily faithful life during times of extraordinary duress. After a long period of suffering unjustly, yet never questioning, God vindicated him and raised him to an exalted position as Prime Minister of Egypt.

➤ Suffering Before Exaltation Also, King David

Even when in prison, the text notes that "the LORD was with Joseph," ensuring the fulfillment of God's overarching purpose.

Because of Joseph, many lives were saved during the famine, including the lives of his family. Therefore, the future of the people of Israel was guaranteed. In the end, Joseph had it all: incredible wealth, fame and power. His entire family joined him in Egypt and shared the best it had to offer. It would have been quite easy and natural for him and his extended family to feel very comfortable in that land, to not give the land from which they came another thought.

➤ Who needs Canaan when you have the best of Egypt at your command?

Things change when a new Pharaoh arose who did not know Joseph. Severe persecution

Thought: Israel will feel a sense of "false peace" and safety at the beginning of the seven-year tribulation period, specifically through a covenant or treaty with the Antichrist/"beast", which allows them to rebuild the temple. This period, described as a time of deceptive peace, is quickly followed by sudden destruction and devastation.

- This deceptive peace is expected to last for the first 3 1/2 years, after which the Antichrist breaks the covenant and causes the sacrifices to cease.
- Mid-Tribulation Turn: Following the broken treaty, Israel faces severe persecution during the second half of the 7-year period, referred to as the "Time of Jacob's Trouble".

When Joseph was very near to the end of his life, he gave critically important instructions that would chart the course of his family for hundreds, even thousands, of years.

Over a hundred years before the great Exodus, Joseph made the Children of Israel swear that they would take him along when they would eventually leave Egypt.

As Prime Minister of Egypt, Joseph could not hope to be buried in Israel when he died.

The Egyptians would never tolerate their political leader being buried in a foreign land.

Joseph's Final Request: By faith, Joseph passes on a vision of the future.

Gen. 50:24-25 And Joseph said unto his brethren, I am about to 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.

Prophecy of Deliverance: Joseph assures his family that despite their comfortable life in Egypt, they are not there to stay. He prophesies that God will lead them back to Canaan.

Oath Concerning His Bones: Joseph expresses such strong faith in this future promise that he makes the sons of Israel swear to take his bones with them when they leave Egypt.

This serves as a reminder to the Israelites to hold onto the promise of the land.

Faith in God's Promise: This final act demonstrates Joseph's faith in the covenant

God made with his forefathers and his assurance that the trials in Egypt are temporary.

In a Bold Act of Faith, Joseph did something even greater than anything he had done during his entire life. Many actions of integrity could be cited as examples of his solid faith in God. Yet of all the events in his life, this sole action of his faith is what the Holy Spirit chose to record regarding the great faith of Joseph who was very concerned about his bones.

The Bones of Belief: Heb. 11:22 By faith Joseph, when he was dying, referred to the promise of God for the exodus of the sons of Israel from Egypt, and gave instructions concerning the burial of his bones in the land of the promise.

Key Point: A. Faith Remembers The Unbreakable Promises Of God

Rom. 10:17 Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God.

- The transformed and renewed mind is the mind saturated with and controlled by The Word 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!
- Joseph said: You are surely coming out! His faith is rooted in the Word of God and resting in the Unbreakable Promises of God. True faith always leads to obedient actions.

Dwight L Moody: The Bible was not given to increase our knowledge. It was given to change our lives. He took 2 continents and shook them for God. Moody said he prayed and prayed for faith. Then he found Romans 10:17. He stopped praying for faith and began to saturate himself in the Word of God. The Faith Came!

Rogers: Your faith will not exceed your love, knowledge and understanding of the Word of God.

Recall: 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. 13:18-19 So God led the people around by way of the wilderness of the Red Sea. And the children of Israel went up in battle formation out of the land of Egypt. 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!

Not only were the bones of Joseph taken out of Egypt, but they were carefully guarded during the wilderness journey for forty years, the transition from Moses to Joshua, the crossing of the Jordan and the turbulent conquest of Canaan.

B. Faith Relies On The Unshakeable Power Of God

Gen. 50:24 I am about to die: and God will surely take care of you.

He will bring you up from this land to The Promised Land.

1. His faith displayed is contrary to the evidence.

- When Joseph said this, there was no reason they should leave.
- In Egypt, they are in a place of favor and in comfortable circumstances.

2. His faith was not shaken because of fickle emotions.

- Don't base our faith on how we feel about the situation.

Consider: It is remarkable that Joseph had any faith at all.

1. He had lived apart from his family for many years.
2. A powerful false religion in Egypt surrounded him.
3. There was no one in Egypt we know of who could encourage his faith.
4. If Joseph had resorted to excuses people use today for rejecting God's promises, he would have ended up a pagan.
5. His "believing" brothers had treated him cruelly.
6. God had allowed him to experience severe trials.
7. The people he helped forgot him in his hour of need

C. Joseph's Faith Was Not Eroded by Long Delay.

- It had been ~300 years since God made that promise.

Hab. 2:3 This vision is for a future time. It describes the end, and it will be fulfilled.

If it seems slow in coming, wait patiently, for it will surely take place. It will not be delayed.

Some are asking: Is Jesus really coming again? Bible predicts people will have this attitude.

II Pet. 3:3-4, 8 Know this first of all, that in the last days mockers will come with their mocking, following after their own lusts, And saying, Where is the promise of His coming?

From before the times of our ancestors, everything has remained the same since the world was first created. But, beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.

Time cannot erode God's Promises: Don't let circumstances, emotions or delay
keep you from believing the Word of God.

Heb. 11:1 Now faith is being sure of what we Hope for and certain of what we do not see!

➤ Hope = glorious assurance based on the Word of God.

The Coming of Jesus For His Church = Blessed Hope

John 14:3 And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, *there* you may be also.

I Thess. 4:13-18 But I do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning those who have fallen asleep, lest you sorrow as others who have no hope. ¹⁴ For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who sleep in Jesus.

¹⁵ For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive *and* remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who are asleep. ¹⁶ For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. ¹⁷ Then we who are alive *and* remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air.

And thus we shall always be with the Lord. ¹⁸ Therefore comfort one another with these words.

I Thess. 1:9-10 For they themselves declare concerning us what manner of entry we had to you, and how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God, ¹⁰ and to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, *even* Jesus who delivers us from the wrath to come.

I Thess. 5:9-11 For God did not appoint us to wrath, but to obtain salvation [deliverance] through our Lord Jesus Christ,

¹⁰ who died for us, that whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with Him.

¹¹ Therefore comfort each other and edify one another, just as you also are doing.

Eschatological Hope: The Catching Up of the Saints

I Thess. 4:17 stands at the center of Christian hope: "After that, we who are alive and remain will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air."

Caught up = 726 harpazó: Term supplies the Biblical basis for the doctrine called "the Rapture." Paul presents the event as:

- Sudden and irresistible believers are "caught up," not merely invited.
- Corporate "together with them," uniting resurrected and living saints.
- Upward "in the clouds... in the air," indicating literal, physical relocation.
- Christ-centered "to meet the Lord," emphasizing personal encounter.

Titus 2:13 looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ,

Heb. 6:19 Our Hope is like an Anchor - Hope is the Anchor of the soul.

D. Faith Results In The Unmistakable Peace Of God: Joseph has his children and grandchildren with him. No hint of panic! Stepping into glory in perfect peace!

As the Book of Joshua closes, after the Land was conquered, and the territory of Israel was parceled out to the tribes, Joseph's bones were ultimately buried in their final resting place by his descendants in the town of Shechem.

Joshua 24:32 The bones of Joseph, which the Israelites had brought along with them when they left Egypt, were buried at Shechem, in the plot of land Jacob had bought from the sons of Hamor for 100 pieces of silver. This land was located in the territory allotted to the descendants of Joseph. [It became the inheritance of the children of Joseph.]

Acts 7:15-16 Stephen tells us Joseph and his brothers are buried in Shechem. [Sons of Israel]

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.

Joseph's Tomb in Nablus is a major flashpoint for Israeli-Palestinian conflict, experiencing frequent, violent clashes, arson attacks, and unauthorized visits. Located in Palestinian-controlled Area A, it is often vandalized by rioters and requires Israeli military coordination for pilgrimages, with significant incidents in 2000, 2015, 2022, and 2026.

5. October 2000 = Violent Palestinian uprising began.

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 worshipers 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.

By choosing to be buried at Shechem, Joseph anchored himself in this legacy, affirming his faith in God's covenant and expressing confidence in Israel's ultimate inheritance of the land. Joseph's burial demonstrates his forward-looking hope, tying his personal story to the broader redemptive narrative of the Israelites' eventual possession of Canaan.

His bones rest as a silent reminder and a perpetual testimony to the faithfulness of God's abiding promise to Israel. The living testimony of God's presence was an Egyptian made coffin with the bones of Joseph inside.

Joseph's Bones Speak From The Grave

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.

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.

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

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 to those around me and to the next generation?