

## Shechem: Gateway To The Promised Land

Belief: The Bible intentionally lists the 6 cities in a specific order.

All men must begin at Kedesh where they find refuge in Jesus as their Savior.

Kedesh = to be set apart, consecrated, to sanctify, holy place

When I come to faith in and seek refuge in Jesus Christ, I am born again, new creation.

- I am justified and have eternal life.
- Adopted, holy & without blame, an heir of God, a chosen people, a royal priesthood, etc.

Progressive Sanctification: I am to grow in the grace and knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ.

- Embrace the power of the Holy Spirit
- God's will is my sanctification: become holy; set apart to Him; consecrated
- Embrace His call to be conformed to the image of Jesus Christ.  
This will produce spiritual maturity and future glory.
- God uses all circumstances, including trials & afflictions that test our faith & our fortitude to conform believers to the likeness of His Son.
- Recognize my trials serve a purpose: view them through a lens of hope
- Press on for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.

I continue my journey with excitement, a love for my Savior and a determination to be obedient. However, I come to Shechem and discover it is filled with positives and negatives.

- It will be a challenge to live life as this new creation.

Joshua 20:7 So they appointed Kedesh in Galilee, in the mountains of Naphtali,  
Shechem in the mountains of Ephraim,

Shechem, in the middle of the nation, provided the most important crossroads in central Israel. The city lay along the northern end of "The Way of the Patriarchs," also called the "Ridge Route," traveled from Shechem through Shiloh, Bethel/Ai, Ramah, Gibeah, Jerusalem, Bethlehem, and Hebron. This route appears continuously in the Biblical text.

Because of its central location and vital crossroads, Shechem saw a lot of traffic in its history.

Shechem, mentioned 60 times in the Bible, was nestled between Mount Ebal and Mount Gerizim.

- It was a theological crossroads where Divine Promises intersected with human history.
- Profound Biblical significance as a central location for:
  - Covenant Renewal, Divine Promises and Pivotal Life Decisions in Israel's history.
  - A Place of Choosing to Serve God; place of ultimate decision
  - It embodies the Transition from old ways To A Consecrated Life.

A Place of Decision and Worship: Abraham built his first altar here.

Joshua later gathered the tribes to choose between serving the Lord or idols.

- This reflects the spiritual choice between living in the Spirit or the flesh.

A Place of Human Failure [Flesh]: Jacob settled in Shechem, but his time there was marked by his family's failure to fully separate from the world, culminating in the tragedy involving his daughter Dinah.

- Represents the struggle where the "flesh" [carnal desires] often causes strife & failure.

The Conflict Between God's Promise and Human Nature: While God initiated covenant moments at Shechem, human agents often acted with deceit or vengeance there, reflecting the ongoing struggle to live according to the new nature.

Shechem: A Place of Conflict: Displayed man's sinfulness and failure to properly honor God.

- Represents a complex, often turbulent, spiritual location in the Bible, acting as a site for both divine covenant and human failing.

Yoking & Spiritual Decisions: The concept of being "unequally yoked" is explored, highlighting the importance of aligning oneself with God's purpose and the consequences of straying from it.

The Cycle of Sin, Repentance and Redemption: The narrative of Jacob and his sons illustrate the dangers of compromise with worldly influences and the necessity of returning to God for cleansing and guidance.

Believers: It is a place of decision, worship, and struggle, often highlighting the tension between following God and yielding to selfish, sinful tendencies.

Shechem is better understood as a setting that highlights the struggle of the believer's life in the world, where the temptation to compromise with the "flesh" is always present, demanding a renewed choice to follow God.

Belief: The Biblical concept of Israel's Promised Land can be compared to a believer's abundant life, often interpreted typologically as a foreshadowing of the spiritual rest, inheritance, and blessing found in Christ. The Promised Land signifies God's faithfulness and rest, while the abundant life represents a present, spiritual journey of faith.

Physical vs. Spiritual: While the Old Testament promises a literal, physical land, the New Testament shifts the focus to a spiritual, internal experience of peace, joy, and spiritual maturity, often referred to as "living in the promise".

### Shechem: The Gateway To The Promised Land

#### *Learning to Live A Spirit-filled Life*

Shechem first steps on the pages of Scripture as Abram enters the land of Canaan.

Gen. 12:6a Abram passed through the land to the place at Shechem, to the oak of Moreh.

1. Abram first stopped at Shechem which signifies "shoulder" - the place of strength.

The Place of "Shoulder" or Burden: The name means "shoulder" (ridge). It acts as a symbolic, place of carrying the weight of obedience and responsibility [the "burden" of the covenant].

- I cannot live this new life on my own.

Ps. 46:1 God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.

- We have strong consolation in Christ when we flee to Him for refuge.

Matt. 11:28 Come to Me, all who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.

Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and  
You Will Find Rest For Your Souls.

2. As far as the oak of Moreh which means "instruction."

The oak tree at Shechem, referred to as the Oak of Teaching, serves as a metaphor for the lessons God imparts to His people, particularly in relation to the promises made to Abraham. The tree was more than a geographical landmark—it was a site of revelation and guidance.

Only as we are taught the Word of God by the Spirit of God do we find strength to live.

Consider: How significant! It is only as we separate ourselves from the world and walk in the path marked out for us by God that we reach the place where STRENGTH is to be found.

It is only then we learn from Him in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge!

### *Life In the Land is Full Of Continual Conflict*

Gen. 12:6b At that time the Canaanites were in the land.

This verse highlights the tension of God's promise to give the land to Abram's descendants while it was currently occupied by others.

The Canaanites are depicted as inhabitants of the land that the Israelites are called to possess. They are there to challenge and contest the occupation of the Promised Land.

- Hosts of wickedness presently occupy the heavenlies to wrestle with those who are partakers of the heavenly calling.
- Manifestations of our flesh: lust, envy, jealousy, impatience, intemperance, irritability, touchiness, etc.
- These manifestations of self which make our existence a life of continual conflict.

The Canaanites were in the land: This region was not unoccupied or morally neutral.

It was embedded in idolatry and pagan practice. The mention of the Canaanites anticipates later conflicts and God's judgment upon these nations for their sin [Gen. 15:16].

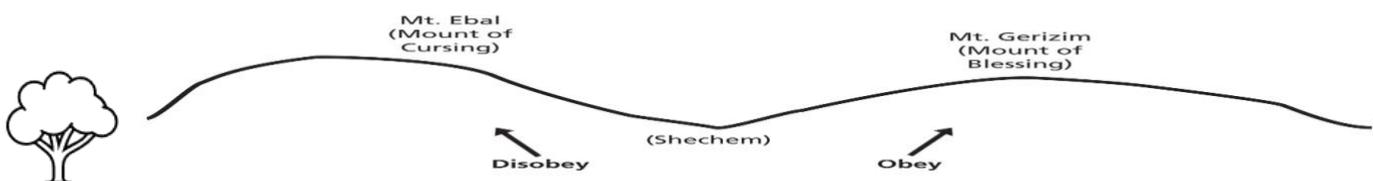
Essentially, Shechem represents the crucial intersection in a believer's life where past, present, and future covenant commitments are renewed through personal, active choice.

Reminder: I learned at Kedesh that my body is the temple of the Holy Spirit.

I have been bought with a price. I must learn to possess everything I have in Christ.

Key: I must yield to the Holy Spirit who supplies the power for victory over the enemy.

Thus Far At Shechem: Shoulder      Oak Tree      Canaanites in the Land      Conflict



The Covenant Initiation: Gen. 12:7a Then the LORD appeared to Abram and said,  
"To your descendants I will give this land."

Note: While the Canaanites worship false gods,

Jehovah appears to Abram and asserts ownership of the land.

- A statement of profound promise to give the land to him.
- This is the first recorded theophany Abram experiences in Canaan.
- The first divine encounter in the Promised Land occurs not in a neutral space but in the midst of pagan habitation.
- Shechem, a well-established Canaanite city, becomes the site of God's promise, reinforcing His absolute sovereignty over the nations and territories of the earth.
- Abram's response is immediate and reverent.

Gen. 12:7b So he built there an altar to Jehovah, who had appeared to him.

- 1<sup>st</sup> altar in promised land: They were built in response to divine appearances and promises.
- They were public affirmations of faith and remembrance.
- Abram declares his allegiance to Jehovah in a land dominated by idolatry.
- Building the altar is a mark of Abram's obedience and trust.
- Shechem becomes a place of true worship.

Abram's decision to build an altar here was no coincidence. His act reclaimed a site most certainly tied to Canaanite worship and reoriented it toward Yahweh, marking it as a place where God appeared and made His covenantal promises known.

This act of worship and devotion marks the beginning of the Israelites' ties to the land of Canaan and sets the stage for the religious significance that the land would hold for the Israelites in the future.

John 10:10 The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy.

I have come that they may have life, and that they may have *it* more abundantly.

Gal. 2:20 I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the *life* which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.

Eph. 4:27 Neither give place to the devil.

James 4:7 Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.

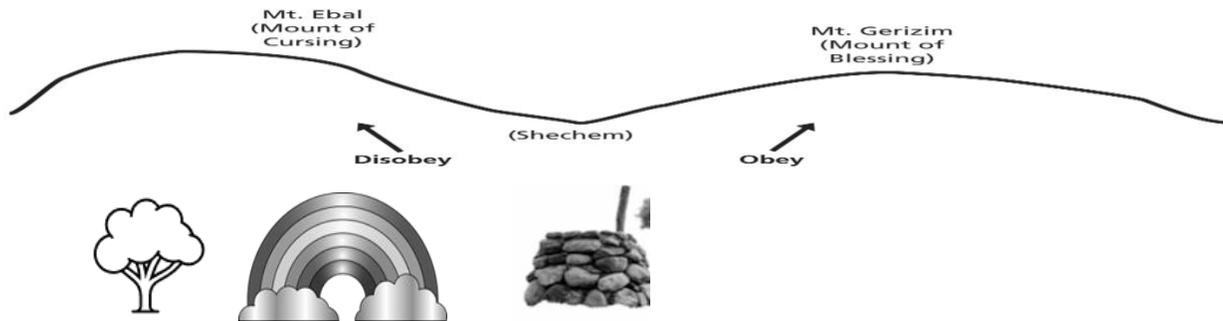
Life In The Land Requires Continual Cleansing.

- An altar is first a place of cleansing, which provides the basis for worship.
- The reason for a daily altar is the urgent need for cleansing in the pilgrim life.

I John 1:9 If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us *our* sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

Thus Far At Shechem: Shoulder Oak Tree Canaanites in the Land Conflict  
Promise Altar

Reminder: I am living His Life in the Land. Progressive Sanctification



### *Significance of Shechem For Jacob: Partial Obedience & Conflict*

Gen. 31:13 While Jacob was still with Laban, the angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, "I am the God who appeared to you at Bethel, the place where you anointed the pillar of stone and made your vow to me.

Now get ready and leave this country and return to the land of your birth."

➤ God remembers the vows we make.

Gen. 28:20-22 Then Jacob made a vow, saying, "If God will be with me, and keep me in this way that I am going, and give me bread to eat and clothing to put on, <sup>21</sup> so that I come back to my father's house in peace, then the Lord shall be my God. And this stone which I have set as a pillar shall be God's house, and of all that You give me I will surely give a tenth to You."

➤ Jacob realizes the presence and power of God in his life.

➤ He responds with a vow and an act of worship.

➤ Bethel, the house of God, was the one spot on earth where Jacob could dwell in the very presence of Jehovah,

Context: After serving 20 years with Laban in Haran, Jacob begins the journey to return to the Promised Land. Jacob's encounter with the angel at Peniel happened the night before he met his brother Esau. [Gen. 32] As a result of the wrestling, Jacob was renamed Israel, received a blessing and a permanent limp. The encounter broke his pride and strengthened his faith, prompting him to rely on God rather than his own cunning before the meeting.

Jacob reconciles with Esau, returns to the land of his inheritance and appears ready to take his rightful place as the head of the covenant family and heir of the promises God had made to Abraham. It seems Jacob has at last turned a spiritual corner. But he stumbles by his own unfaithfulness and places the spiritual welfare of his family in jeopardy.

Gen. 33:18-20 Then Jacob came safely to the city of Shechem, which is in the land of Canaan, when he came from Padan Aram; and he pitched his tent before the city.

<sup>19</sup> And he bought the parcel of land, where he had pitched his tent

<sup>20</sup> Then he erected an altar there and called it El Elohe Israel, the God of Israel.

Problems: 1. God had told Jacob to return to Bethel, not Shechem.

2. Jacob bought land in the Promised Land. God had said: I Have Given.

Was it wrong to purchase some land in Shechem?

God's primary promise to Jacob was given in a dream at Bethel [Gen. 28:10-22]. While fleeing to Haran, Jacob dreamed of a ladder to heaven, where God reaffirmed the Abrahamic Covenant, promising to give him the land, numerous descendants, His blessing, and His presence and protection, promising to bring him back.

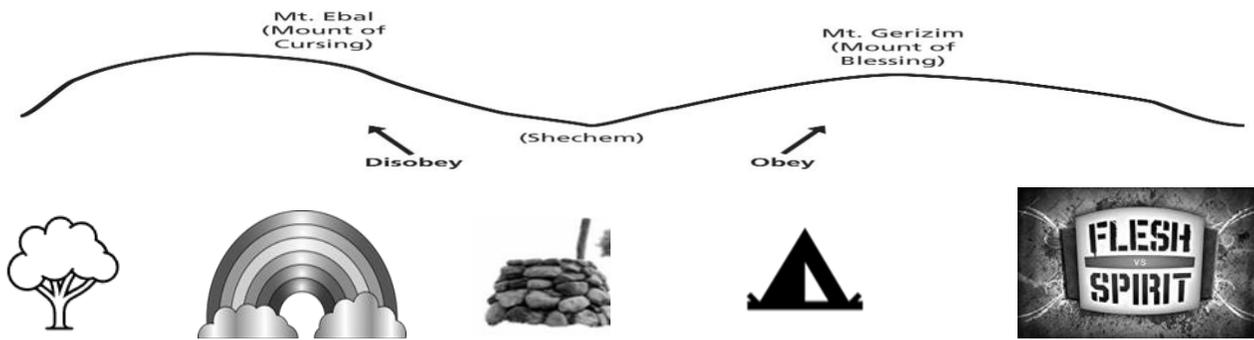
Disobedience to the Call: God told Jacob to settle in Bethel, but he stopped early, in Shechem, putting himself in a dangerous, immoral environment.

Partial Compliance: Jacob stopped in Shechem, roughly 20 miles from Bethel, allowing him to feel he was obeying partially while actually staying in a place of his own choosing rather than God's.

Failed Commitment: He tried to justify the wrong location by building an altar there, but this did not rectify his failure to go where he was instructed.

Consider: Has God promised to give me an abundant life with victory over sin in my life and the trials and tribulations in my life?

Yet, how often do I try to get ahead of Him? How often do I make excuses for my behavior?



Gen. 34 Dinah failed to keep a proper separation between herself & the pagan people of the land.

- Seems to be Jacob's fault for neither seeing to her needs nor managing his home.
- The impression is left that Dinah was looking for happiness because her father was paying no attention to her needs.

Key: This is the behavior we observe of Jacob throughout.

Gen. 34:5 And Jacob heard that Shechem had defiled Dinah his daughter.

Now his sons were with his livestock in the field; so Jacob held his peace until they came.

He didn't seem outraged by what had been done to his daughter. [from Leah]

- His passivity allowed sin to flourish in his family. [Complacent about sin!]

Gen. 34:7 And the sons of Jacob came in from the field when they heard it; and the men were grieved and very angry, because he had done a disgraceful thing in Israel by lying with Jacob's daughter, a thing which ought not to be done.

Deception and Retaliation: Jacob's sons insisted the men of the city be circumcised.

On the third day, while the men were incapacitated, Simeon and Levi attacked, killing all males, including Hamor and Shechem.

Note: Jacob's sons use this sacred and God-given sign for their own treacherous scheme.

Plundering the City: The brothers looted the city, taking flocks, wealth, and taking women and children, for which Jacob severely rebuked them.

The Incident with Dinah: Dinah was abducted and raped by Shechem, the son of the Canaanite leader, leading to a proposal of marriage.

He was proposing that Jacob's family thoroughly integrate itself with the Canaanites.

➤ Integration and compromise is spiritual danger.

Yoking & Spiritual Decisions: The concept of being "unequally yoked" highlights the importance of aligning oneself with God's purpose and the consequences of straying from it.

Jacob's response to the entire episode seems selfish and small-minded.

At the end of the chapter the only concern Jacob could muster was for himself, that the actions of his sons might bring trouble down upon his own head. He's only interested in the problems that his sons may have caused for himself. His sons scolded him for his lack of moral indignation. Jacob is presented to us here as an uncaring, irresponsible father and, sad to say,

➤ This Is Jacob Fresh From His Encounter With God At Peniel!!!

Departure: Due to fear of the local Canaanites, Jacob departed to Bethel.

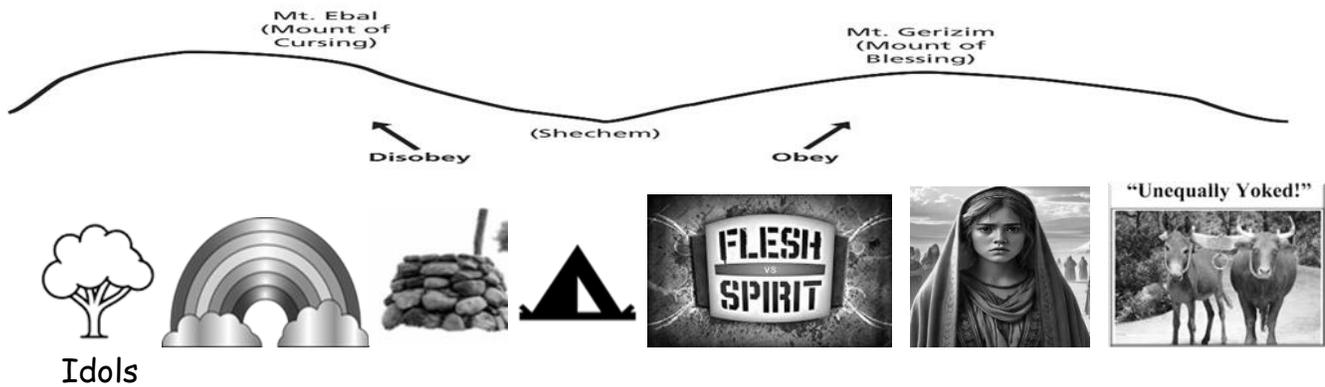
At Shechem, Jacob learned that compromising with the world—by settling there instead of moving directly to Bethel as instructed—leads to danger, specifically the compromising of his family's safety, religious purity, and integrity following the defilement of Dinah.

God allowed his servant to pass through his trials and testing that we might learn from His ways with him. There are sorrows that come in our lives when we come short of the purpose of God for us as His saints.

Having allowed Jacob to learn the lessons of Shechem,

Gen. 35:1-4 Then God said to Jacob, "Arise, go up to Bethel and  dwell there; and make an altar there to God, who appeared to you when you fled from the face of Esau your brother."

And Jacob said to his household and to all who *were* with him, "Put away the foreign gods that are among you, purify yourselves, and change your garments." <sup>3</sup> Then let us arise and go up to Bethel; and I will make an altar there to God, who answered me in the day of my distress and has been with me in the way which I have gone." <sup>4</sup> So they gave Jacob all the foreign gods which *were* in their hands, and the earrings which *were* in their ears; and Jacob hid them under the terebinth tree which was by Shechem.



The gracious God kept covenant with an unworthy and sinful man who, in defiance of the immense blessings God had showered upon him, found ever new ways to betray his calling. Jacob exposed himself and his family to danger, as does any Christian, by not promptly and whole-heartedly pursuing the life of faith and obedience before God.

Shechem acts as a spiritual landmark in the Bible that repeatedly asks believers:

- to return to the basics of their covenant with God and choose obedience.

Shechem teaches that walking with God requires intentional, daily choices to purify your heart, discard "household gods," and commit to worshipping Him in spirit and truth, rather than relying on routine. It is a place of covenant renewal, where God calls you to move past sinful habits and embrace His promise, even after stumbling.

Needing Crisis to Return & Surrender to God: It was not until tragedy (the rape of Dinah and the massacre by his sons) hit his family that Jacob realized the extent of his compromise and finally returned to Bethel. Similarly, Christians may wait for a massive crisis to break their complacency and drive them back to a state of full repentance and repentance-driven commitment.

- Israel cannot either *leave* the land or *kill* all the Canaanites.
- Israel must find a way to stay in the land with the Canaanites and yet practice faithfulness.

Ps. 37:3 Trust in the LORD, and do good; Dwell in the land, and feed on His faithfulness.

### The Path Back to God

- Purify Households: After the crisis, Jacob commanded his household to "put away the foreign gods" and purify themselves. This is the call to repentance: Abandon worldly pursuits and idolatry. Return to a life of separated devotion to God.
- Return to Bethel: Jacob left Shechem to return to Bethel (the "House of God") to build an altar. This signifies moving from worldly compromises to a lifestyle of personal, direct communion with God and worshipping in spirit and truth

With this pronouncement, Jacob finally makes a commitment to God alone.

John Walton: God's patient work in his life resulted in a transformation of character that may have seemed beyond reach in the earlier chapters.

The Christian life is and must be a life of warfare with sin.

M. Luther: To fight against sin is to fight against the devil, the world and oneself.

The fight against oneself is the worst fight of all.

John Owen: Be killing sin or it will be killing you.

But the effort must be made over the entire field. You cannot leave the sins you love alone while devoting yourselves to the mortification of sins you don't mind all that much giving up!

William Gurnall in his *The Christian in Complete Armor*. "Sins of commission are usual punishments for sins of omission. He that leaves a duty may soon be left to commit a crime."

Abundant life in John 10:10 refers to a spiritually rich existence filled with eternal purpose, peace, and joy that begins immediately upon knowing God, rather than a promise of material prosperity. It is a secure, inner life, centered on a relationship with Jesus, which endures despite trials.

Relationship Over Riches: It focuses on knowing God,  
which provides deep inner peace regardless of external circumstances.

Spiritual Fullness: It is defined by experiencing the fruit of the Spirit—  
love, joy, peace, and strength for the soul.

Kimball: The fruit of the Spirit wasn't intended to be a list of goals for us to produce.  
It is the Holy Spirit through us who produces fruit.

Purpose and Security:

➤ Living without fear, confident in God's protection, and having a meaningful, purposeful life.

Relational Reality: It is characterized by abiding in Christ and  
being connected to Him as the source of life. [John 15:4]

The Bible promises that through Jesus Christ, believers can have victory over sin, breaking its dominion in their lives. This victory is not about self-effort, but rather a gift of grace through the Holy Spirit, allowing followers to live righteously and be more than conquerors.

Freedom from Sin's Dominion:

Rom. 6:12, 14 Therefore, do not let sin reign in your body.

Sin shall not have dominion over you because you are under grace.

Empowerment through the Spirit:

➤ The Holy Spirit empowers believers to overcome, providing a new nature.

Victory through Faith: I Cor. 15:57 But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory  
through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Overcoming Temptation:

I Cor. 10:13 No temptation has overtaken you except *something* common to mankind; and God is faithful, so He will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will provide the way of escape also, so that you will be able to endure it.

- Escape: depicts a divinely supplied exit-route from testing, underscoring both the reality of trials and the sufficiency of God's grace.

A "New" Way of Living:

Gal. 5:16 I say then: Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh.