

## THE SECRET OF SHECHEM

In Deuteronomy 27 and 28 we see the command Yahweh gave that an altar be made of living stones and placed on Mount Ebal. This mountain tells us the precise location of this event takes place, as Mount Ebal and Mount Gerizim are the primary landmarks for the city of Shechem. Out of every city in the ancient world, Shechem could quite possibly take the top spot as the most important city outside Jerusalem. As we take the time to understand what this city actually was and the significant events that happened there, I believe we will discover something deep within the text that will truly inspire us all.



The story and significance of Shechem starts with the very call that Yahweh had on Abraham's life.

### **Genesis 12:1-7** **The Call of Abram**

*Now the Lord said to Abram, "Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you. And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great so that you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you, all the families of the earth shall be blessed." So Abram went, as the Lord had told him, and Lot went with him.*

*Abram was seventy-five years old when he departed from Haran. And Abram took Sarai his wife, and Lot his brother's son, and all their possessions that they had gathered, and the people that they had acquired in Haran, and they set out to go to the land of Canaan. When they came to the land of Canaan, Abram passed through the land to the place at Shechem, to the oak of Moreh. At that time the Canaanites were in the land. Then the Lord appeared to Abram and said, "To your offspring, I will give this land." So he built there an altar to the Lord, who had appeared to him.*

Right here we see that Shechem is the gateway to the Promised Land. It's like the Eastern gate into the tabernacle of Moses, the place where the covenant between Yahweh and Abraham is made on behalf of the inheritance of the land. This is the very place where the first altar in the Holy Land was built and, as we shall see, will be **the** place where the Messiah is first foreshadowed within the landscape itself.

As we move forward in time, we see that Jacob ends up at Shechem after he reunites with Esau. It is here that he purchases a parcel of land from the king for a hundred pieces of money and it is in this very spot that his grandfather Abraham built his altar. It will be Jacob who rebuilds it and calls it "Elohim of Israel," the Supreme Judge of Israel.

**Genesis 37:12-13** *"Then his brothers went to feed their father's flock in Shechem. And Israel said to Joseph, 'Are not your brothers feeding the flock in Shechem? Come, I will send you there.'"*

**QUESTION:** Why were Joseph's brothers feeding the flock in Shechem?

The reason why Joseph's brothers were in Shechem was that their father Jacob purchased land there back in Genesis 33! And it would be from Shechem that all of Joseph's problems would seemingly begin. So now we have Abraham, Jacob, and Joseph tied to this spot. As a matter of fact, Jacob ended up giving this land to the sons of Joseph and this is where the bones of Joseph were buried (Joshua 24:32). Not only that, but Rehoboam, the son of Solomon, was anointed king in this spot, as well. There's something about this place that is being highlighted in an unmistakable way.

The city of Shechem is planted between the shoulders of Mount Ebal and Mount Gerizim. The word Shechem literally means "The neck between the shoulders." This is the spot where Moses was told to divide the children of Israel into six tribes while standing on Mount Gerizim and six while standing on Mt. Ebal. This event would eventually take place under Joshua's leadership (Joshua 24). It is this event, the "re-marriage ceremony" of sorts, in which the vows of the ketubah (marriage contract) were pronounced and the people agreed to follow them. It was first done through Abraham, then through Jacob, and now through Joshua. Three altars, three men, one covenant. Abraham was the first one called and was told that the Promise would come through him. Then Jacob was called to declare that the Promise was "The Elohim of Israel." But it was Joshua who would be chosen to fully initiate that Promise.

**QUESTION:** What is Joshua's name in Hebrew?

Yehoshua, the short version of which is Yeshua! That's why it had to be Joshua to lead the people of Jacob into their inheritance and why it had to be Joshua who facilitated the sealing of the covenant of the chosen people when they entered the land. It couldn't be Moses because Joshua was foreshadowing Messiah Yeshua. Yeshua would also be the One to lead His people, the One they would swear allegiance to as they entered the true Promised Land!

So Joshua is commissioned to set up the people so that there are representatives on both mountains. The blessings and the curses are read and the people are required to respond. In order for you to get a good picture of what this looked like, it's important to know that Mt. Ebal was a mountain of nothing but rock, bald and naked with no life. Mt. Gerizim, on the other hand, was full of plant life, vineyards, and the like. So when Joshua is reading off the blessings and the curses, the people have a strong visual of what each looks like.

Take a moment and read the blessings and curses contained in Deuteronomy 27 and 28.

Now let's turn to Joshua 24 and read the actual account of this event to see what we can find.

### **Joshua 24:14-28** **Choose Whom You Will Serve**

*“Now, therefore, fear the Lord and serve him in sincerity and in faithfulness. Put away the gods that your fathers served beyond the River and in Egypt, and serve the Lord. And if it is evil in your eyes to serve the Lord, choose this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your fathers served in the region beyond the River or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you dwell. But as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.” Then the people answered, “Far be it from us that we should forsake the Lord to serve other gods, for it is the Lord our God who brought us and our fathers up from the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery, and who did those great signs in our sight and preserved us in all the way that we went, and among all the peoples through whom we passed. And the Lord drove out before us all the peoples, the Amorites who lived in the land. Therefore we also will serve the Lord, for he is our God.” But Joshua said to the people, “You are not able to serve the Lord, for he is a holy God. He is a jealous God; he will not forgive your transgressions or your sins. If you forsake the Lord and serve foreign gods, then he will turn and do you harm and consume you, after having done you good.” And the people said to Joshua, “No, but we will serve the Lord.” Then Joshua said to the people, “You are witnesses against yourselves that you have chosen the Lord, to serve him.” And they said, “We are witnesses.” He said, “Then put away the foreign gods that are among you, and incline your heart to the Lord, the God of Israel.” And the people said to Joshua, “The Lord our God we will serve, and his voice we will obey.” So Joshua made a covenant with the people that day and put in place statutes and rules for them at Shechem. And Joshua wrote these words in the Book of the Law of God. And he took a large stone and set it up there under the terebinth that was by the sanctuary of the Lord. And Joshua said to all the people, “Behold, this stone shall be a witness against us, for it has heard all the words of the Lord that he spoke to us. Therefore it shall be a witness against you, lest you deal falsely with your God.” So Joshua sent the people away, every man to his inheritance.*

There's the part in every wedding ceremony where the couple says "I do." In this ceremony, it is found in verse 21 where the people said to Joshua, "No, but we will serve Yahweh!" Then there's the moment where the preacher always tells the people in attendance that they are the witnesses of these declarations and the covenant that is being made. This happens in verse 22 when Joshua said to the people, "You are witnesses against yourselves that you have chosen Yahweh for yourselves, to serve Him."



Joshua tells them to put away all foreign gods in the same way a minister would tell the couple that they must put away any other affections toward anyone else and must dedicate themselves only toward each other. The "Marriage Covenant" was signed as Joshua wrote down what happened in the Book of the Law of God.

Once the marriage vows had been said, Joshua took a large stone and put it underneath the **VERY SAME** Terebinth tree where Yahweh had made His covenant with Abraham! And it is here Jacob declared to be the altar of the Elohim of Israel, and where all of Israel has now promised to follow Yahweh, their Bridegroom.

It was not enough that the people would be witnesses against themselves. Joshua was inspired to set up a "stone" (eben in Hebrew), a "Chief Corner Stone" that would be a witness against them. It would be **THIS** stone that would initiate the Covenant between Yahweh and His people. No one could enter the Promised Land without first making a covenant with Yahweh under the witness of this "Stone." And if you read the article "The Master's Sand," you know that the word "son" and the word "stone" in Hebrew both come from the same root word: "banah" or "builder!" So in a spiritual sense, Joshua is setting up the Son in the shade of His Father, the Great and mighty Oak tree that lives beyond the generations of men, the Master Builder of the Covenant!

## **THE POWER OF THE NAME "SHECHEM"**

It's amazing to me that we have so much happening here in this little city called Shechem. What I want to do now is really put the icing on this cake by explaining what the name Shechem means. As I noted earlier, its literal meaning is the "neck between the shoulders." Instead of two mountains and a city, the entire place is personified as the head and shoulders of a man.

**Shechem** is spelled shin, kof, mem. In ancient Paleo Hebrew, where each letter was a picture that carried its own meaning, the Shin was like a fire or teeth and meant, "consume or devour." The letter shin (pronounced sheen) has always represented El Shaddai, the All-Consuming Fire of God. This was the same shin that looks like a split tongue of fire, the one that came over the heads of the disciples on the day of Shavuot/Pentecost. It represents the original fire of Yahweh that hovered over the original tabernacle in the Wilderness and that now hovered over the new Temple of the Holy Spirit. The kof was an open hand that was slightly bent as if a person was

placing his hand on the back of someone's head to anoint them. It carried the meaning of "anointing or anoint." And finally, the letter mem meant "strong cleansing water" or "breakthrough" as in a child being born from the waters of the womb, breaking forth into new life. Mem is connected to the strong cleansing water of the Word.

When you put all three of these letters in a picture format, you have the **fire of God** on one side, represented by the letter shin and Mt. Ebal, and you have the **water of the Word** on the other, represented by the Mem and the lush Mt. Gerizim. And what's left in the middle? None other than the anointed head from the hand of God. In John 5:24 the scriptures say that the Father is looking for those who will worship Him in Spirit and in Truth. This, my friends, is that picture. *With the fire of the Spirit and the water of the Truth, you will always have an anointing on your head.* What's even more amazing is within the word Shechem we see the word "name" (shin + mem = shem). One of the names of God is "Hashem: The Name." So dead center within "The Name" is the hand of anointing! Now let's turn over to the book of Judges.

**Judges 9:7-15** *"When it was told to Jotham, he went and stood on top of Mount Gerizim and cried aloud and said to them, 'Listen to me, you leaders of Shechem, that God may listen to you. The trees once went out to anoint a king over them, and they said to the olive tree, 'Reign over us.' But the olive tree said to them, 'Shall I leave my abundance, by which gods and men are honored, and go hold sway over the trees?' And the trees said to the fig tree, 'You come and reign over us.' But the fig tree said to them, 'Shall I leave my sweetness and my good fruit and go hold sway over the trees?' And the trees said to the vine, 'You come and reign over us.' But the vine said to them, 'Shall I leave my wine that cheers God and men and go hold sway over the trees?' Then all the trees said to the bramble, 'You come and reign over us.' And the bramble said to the trees, 'If in good faith you are anointing me king over you, then come and take refuge in my shade, but if not, let fire come out of the bramble and devour the cedars of Lebanon.'"*

Did you catch all that? It was here in Shechem that Jotham, the only son Gideon had left, proclaimed the parable of the trees from Mt. Gerizim! And then all the **trees** (people) of Shechem voted for the Bramble tree to reign over them. Did you know that it was the *thorns of the Bramble tree* that were used for Yeshua's crown at His crucifixion? The significance of saying "come and take shelter in my shade" is incredible as this tree is more like an oversized bush. The branches come down almost to the ground and the only way to get inside of its shade is to get on your hands and knees and prostrate yourself under its leaves! And as if that's not enough, this tree was highly flammable and was used for kindling, not to mention that its leaves turn a fiery red in the fall. **Yeshua IS the Bramble tree!** In order for a person to be in His shade, they must humble themselves before Him and get on bended knee to find the shade He provides! And He would be THE kindling that would light His people on fire with the power of His Holy Spirit! Can someone say "Amen"?! Do you think the King of Shechem's proclamation on the blessed Mt. Gerizim is a coincidence? I don't think so!

Lastly, Moses tells Joshua that when he does this ceremony, he is to have six tribes on one "shoulder" and six on the other.

**Exodus 28:9-12** *"You shall take two onyx stones, and engrave on them the names of the sons of Israel, six of their names on the one stone, and the names of the remaining six on the other stone, in the order of their birth. As a jeweler engraves signets, so shall you engrave the two stones with the names of the sons of Israel. You shall enclose them in settings of gold filigree. And you shall set the two stones on the shoulder pieces of the ephod, as stones of remembrance for the sons of Israel. And Aaron shall bear their names before the Lord on his two shoulders for remembrance."*

Can you see the connection? The high priest is to take two stones and put one on each SHOULDER of the high priest's garment. And each stone has the names of six of the tribes! So what is happening here in this wedding ceremony? Six tribes are standing on one shoulder (Mt. Ebal) and six on the other shoulder (Mt. Gerizim) making this entire area the body of **THE HIGH PRIEST!**

**Isaiah 9:6** *"For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given and the government will be upon His shoulders..."*

*This prophecy is of the coming Messiah and it says that the government of Israel will be upon His shoulders? This is nothing short of a reference to the High Priestly garment that goes back to the mountains of Shechem!*

**Luke 15:4** *"What man of you, having a hundred sheep, if he loses one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the wilderness, and go after the one which is lost until he finds it? And when he has found it, he lays it on his shoulder, rejoicing!"*

When one of us goes astray, the Good Shepherd goes and finds us and brings us back on His shoulders, the shoulders of Spirit and Truth!

When all is said and done, the city of Shechem is a beautiful picture of the entire covenant of Yeshua, our King and Messiah. The mountains are His shoulders. He is the anointed head between them. And we are the neck and the body that is to be intimately connected to Him. He carries us on His shoulders as long as we stay in covenant with Him. There is a powerful anointing for all those who seek to worship Him in the perfect balance of Spirit and Truth.

***May we all give praise and honor to the One who reveals the power of His Son through every page He wrote!***

Shalom,  
Jim Staley