

**Judges Chapter 9 Part 1**  
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Tombs can be memorials to people: reminders of who they were and what they did. Place names which represent places can also be memorials: reminders of people and events, history that happened at those places. This is especially so in the Bible.

Shechem is one of those place names. Much history happened there. Making a list of facts is helpful, but it doesn't give us a sense of what kind of place this is, what it meant to those that lived events there. Reading the details of the history that took place at Shechem should give us a feel for the significance of that place in Biblical history. And in so doing, help us put Bible events that happened there into context.

A quick note: "Shechem" in Hebrew means "shoulder." It is located between Mount Ebal (north of Shechem) and Mount Gerizim (south of Shechem).

Our first encounter with Shechem is in Genesis 12 when Abram left Haran as the Lord had instructed him in the first verses of Genesis of this chapter. Then...

**Genesis 12:6 Abram passed through the land as far as the site of Shechem, to the oak of Moreh. Now the Canaanites were in the land at that time.**

**Genesis 12:7 And the Lord appeared to Abram and said, "To your descendants I will give this land." So he built an altar there to the Lord who had appeared to him.**

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**Site of Shechem.** “Site” comes from the Hebrew word which means place but is derived from a verb that means to stand. This place stands in history. Note it is called a place, not a city.

**Oak of Moreh.** This tree is apparently a landmark that no one dared chop down. Bruce Waltke says this is a “great tree.” He says, “This is probably an oak tree whose greater height makes it a preferred place of worship (see 13:18; 14:13; 18:1; 21:33). Pagans worshiped fertility deities under such trees. With its lofty top in the heavens, it could be considered an axis between heaven and earth and a place for revelation. Abraham’s altar at this location may indicate his hope in God’s promise of offspring and his hope that God will again speak to him. Although Abraham still worships according to the religious customs of his time, the content of his worship differs significantly. Abraham’s faithful worship, longing for a heavenly city (Heb 11:10), is dedicated to the one true God and will yet endure through long years of infertility. The seed he hopes for will be holy. He will instruct his seed in righteousness (Gen. 18; 19), and his seed will bring salvation to the nations.” Hope from Abram’s perspective is “confident expectation.”

**Moreh.** Per Waltke, “The name means “teacher,” and it probably is a pagan site for oracles. The Lord sanctifies it by appearing to Abraham (12:7).”

**The Lord (Yawheh) appeared.** The word for appeared is from the verb “to see.” This is something that Abram saw with his eyes.

**Your descendants.** Literally your seed.

**I will give.** This is our familiar word for give, natan. God is often the one to give. When God gives, it is an expression of His grace. Remember, grace is everything God can do on the basis of the cross, even if in Abram’s day that was still in the future. The Hebrew imperfect often

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expresses a future action. The complete fulfillment of this will occur in the Millennium. Per Bruce Waltke, “The holy land is a sacred gift. It is now legally Abraham’s but actual ownership must await the divinely appointed time.”

**This land.** This is the land that Abram is standing on, the future Israel which includes Shechem.

**Abram built an altar.** In response, Abram built an altar. He had made a decision to follow God. Now, he builds an altar for worship. God gave him this land in grace. This is a piece of history now part of the Word of God, Truth. By building an altar he is expressing his faith.

**Who had appeared to him.** This emphasizes that the Lord appeared to Abram in some kind of physical form. Perhaps this was a manifestation of the Angel of the Lord. Again per Bruce Waltke, “Again a key word is used at a crucial moment (see 12:1). God said that he would show Abraham the land, and now he appears, perhaps in a theophany, to confirm that he has arrived in the Promised Land.”

Let us note a few points on this passage.

1. Abram is not “Abraham” until chapter 17. He obeyed God by leaving Haran and going to the land of Canaan as far as Shechem. This is the location that we are interested in.
2. God appears to Abram and promises to give him the land he is on. It is a divine promise from the faithful God. It is true because God said it was.
3. In response, Abram builds an altar from faith as a sign of worship and acceptance of God’s plan.
4. Abram’s faith results in blessing after believing God’s true promise.

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The next encounter with Shechem was by Jacob:

**Genesis 31:3 Then the Lord said to Jacob,  
“Return to the land of your fathers and to your  
relatives, and I will be with you.”**

God had spoken to Abram directing him to the land of Canaan. Now God speaks to Jacob and tells him to return to the land of your fathers. Abram left Haran and came to Canaan. This was now his land per God’s promise.

**Genesis 33:18 Now Jacob came safely to the  
city of Shechem, which is in the land of  
Canaan, when he came from Paddan-aram,  
and camped before the city.**

**Safely.** Per Bruce Waltke, “The word is ambiguous. It means either he arrived “safe and sound” back in the land (12:7) and/or he entered the city of Shechem peacefully (34:21). Both are true.”

**City of Shechem.** It is now a “city” or “town.”

**Genesis 33:19 He bought the plot of land  
where he had pitched his tent from the hand of  
the sons of Hamor, Shechem’s father, for a  
hundred pieces of money.**

**He bought the plot of land.** Jacob buys the land. Previously God gave this land to Abram in grace. This would acknowledge that the sons of Hamor lived their in the city of Shechem.

**Genesis 33:20 Then he erected there an altar  
and called it El-Elohe-Israel.**

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**He erected there an altar.** Like Abram, Jacob is acknowledging what God has done. He delivered Jacob from his brother Esau. Instead of having to fight Esau, Jacob finds that his brother is well disposed towards him. Jacob is amazed. So he acknowledges his thanks, his trust in God by building an altar. Jacob made a decision to trust God and prayed a specific prayer. When it was answered, Jacob responded. A decision was made and Truth prevailed.

**El-Elohe-Israel.** Waltke again, “This literally means “God, the God of Israel.” Jacob identifies his new self with the living God and claims the land in his name. This “flag” distinguishes Israel from the Canaanites whose language they speak (31:47).”

Some points on this passage:

1. God spoke a promise to Jacob like He did to Abram.
2. Jacob obeyed in faith, like Abram.
3. Jacob responded by building an altar like Abram.
4. Jacob bought the land whereas Abram was given the land. However, Israel will not fully, permanently possess all of the land until the Millennium.

Now we come to Genesis chapter 34, the very next chapter. God is not mentioned even once. The chapter is full of deceit. We should read the entire chapter. All this action took place in and around the city of Shechem.

**Genesis 34:13 But Jacob’s sons answered Shechem and his father Hamor with deceit, because he had defiled their sister Dinah.**

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**Shechem.** It is both the name of the city and the name of one of Hamor's sons. There is debate on whether the city was named after the son or the son was named after the city.

**Deceit.** The Hebrew word means deceit or treachery.

Decisions were made and actions taken. Shechem took Dinah and raped her. Some commentators think it was not exactly rape, but it was obviously outside the bounds of what should have been done. As the story progresses, it is evident that once the act had been done, Dinah was held captive by Shechem.

God is not mentioned. This is all human viewpoint thinking. And it is based upon deceit, not truth.

Some points:

1. God is absent from this chapter. Everyone is doing "what is right in his own eyes," the same as what happened in the whole book of Judges. The result is disaster.
2. Shechem, the man whose name is the same as the city, makes a big mistake by raping Dinah. He is an unbeliever, operating as a Canaanite.
3. The sons of Jacob are believers but they are operating on the strength of their sin natures.
4. As a result, they answered Shechem in deceit, not truth.
5. As a result of their deceit, they killed "every male." Deceit led to death.
6. A decision was made in deceit, apart from God resulting in death and looting of the city.

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In Genesis chapter 33, Jacob bought the land with money. In Genesis chapter 34, Jacob's son's took the land and everything on it. In Genesis chapter 48, Jacob says he took the land:

**Genesis 48:21 Then Israel said to Joseph, “Behold, I am about to die, but God will be with you, and bring you back to the land of your fathers.**

**Genesis 48:22 And I give you one portion more than your brothers, which I took from the hand of the Amorite with my sword and my bow.”**

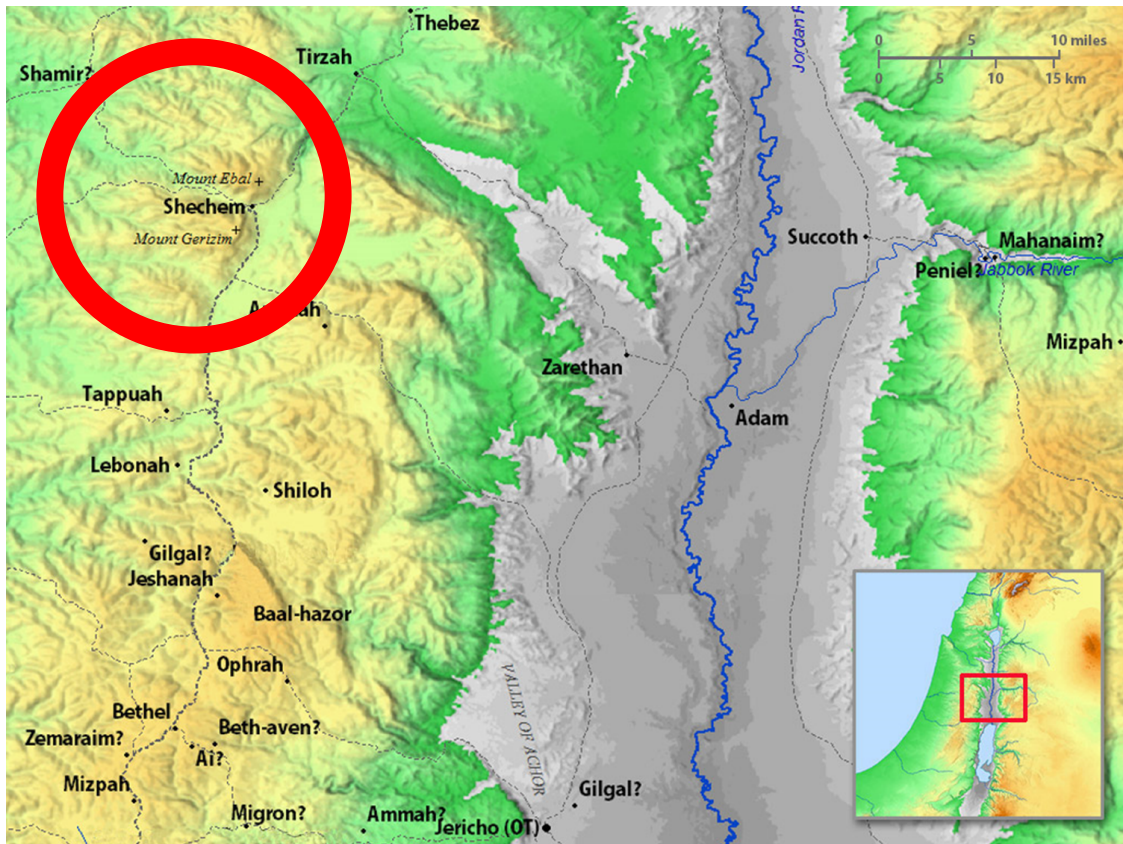
**I give you one portion more than your brothers.** This is a kind of postscript to chapter 34. There is some ambiguity here. Bruce Waltke provides some insight, “The Hebrew is ambiguous, literally reading, “I give to you Shechem/shoulder over your brother(s).” This may mean: (1) he gives Shechem including its well, to Joseph, who is above his brother(s) (see Gen. 33:18-19; 37:12, 14; Josh. 22:4:32; John 4:5); (2) he gives Joseph a ridge—interpreting “shoulder” as a ridge of land; (3) he gives Joseph one more portion—interpreting “shoulder” to be a metonymy for portion—than this brother(s). The first is the best option because the other meanings of š<sup>c</sup>kem are unattested and unnecessary.”

Now we move to the book of Deuteronomy. Here Moses is giving some instructions based upon his understanding of Truth given to him by God. These instructions look forward to when Israel enters the land. This also gives us some insight and perhaps prophetic hints of things to come.

Before going to the Scripture, let us look at a map of the area to locate Mount Gerizim, Mount Ebal and Schechem.

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**Deuteronomy 11:29** “And it shall come about, when the Lord your God brings you into the land where you are entering to possess it, that you shall place the blessing on Mount Gerizim and the curse on Mount Ebal.



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**Deuteronomy 11:30 Are they not across the Jordan, west of the road toward the sunset, in the land of the Canaanites who live in the Arabah, opposite Gilgal, beside the oaks of Moreh?**

**Deuteronomy 11:31 For you are about to cross the Jordan to go in to take possession of the land which the Lord your God is giving you, and you shall possess it and live in it,**

**Deuteronomy 11:32 and you shall be careful to do all the statutes and the judgments which I am placing before you today.**

**Mount Gerizim/Mount Ebal.** Shechem was located between the two mountains. The blessing, truth, is on Mount Gerizim. The curse, deceit, is on Mount Ebal. A decision must be made. Which way will you go? To truth and blessing or deceit and cursing?

We saw that Abram and Jacob both chose to trust God and build an altar for worship to Him. But, Jacob and his sons did not solve the problem of Dinah's rape from God's perspective, but from man's perspective and killed many men. They chose poorly.

Moses reiterates Deuteronomy chapter 11 in chapter 27.

**Deuteronomy 27:11 Moses also commanded the people on that day, saying,**

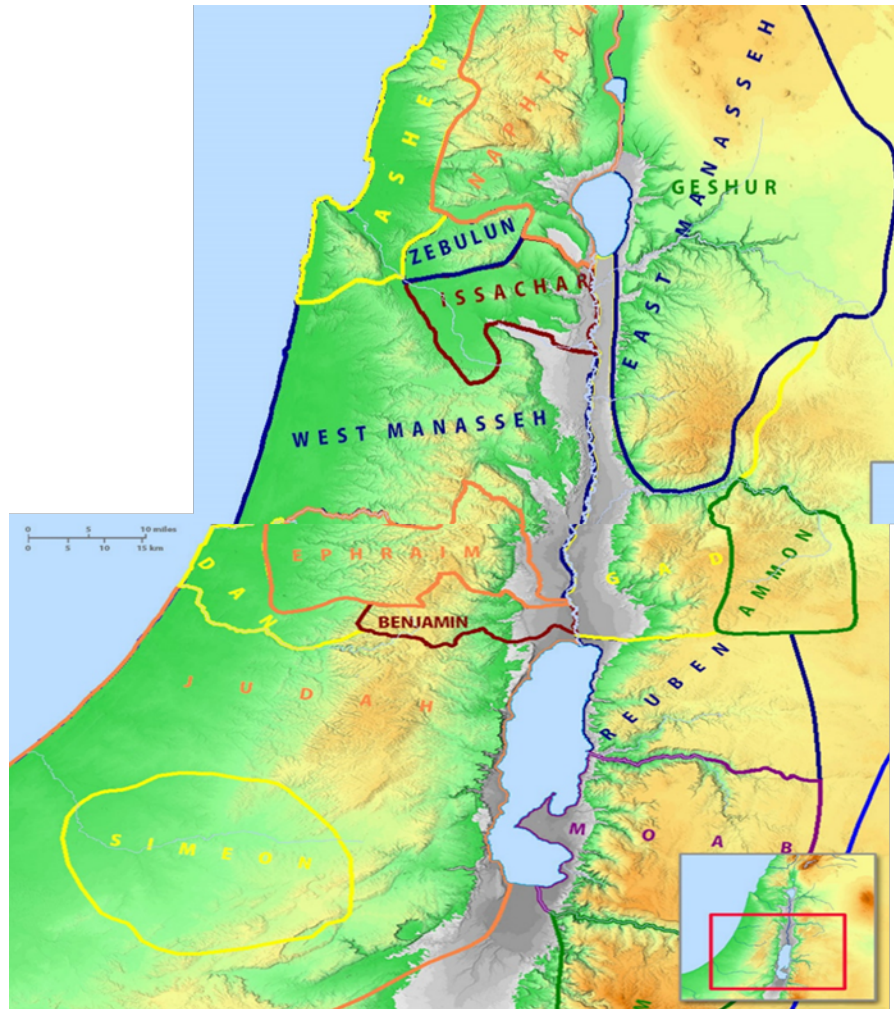
**Deuteronomy 27:12 "When you cross the Jordan, these tribes shall stand on Mount**

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**Gerizim to bless the people: Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar, Joseph, and Benjamin.**

**Deuteronomy 27:13 For the curse, these tribes shall stand on Mount Ebal: Reuben, Gad, Asher, Zebulun, Dan, and Naphtali.**

**Deuteronomy 27:14 The Levites shall then respond and say to all the people of Israel with a loud voice,...**



The cursing is on Mount Ebal, north of Shechem. The blessing is on Mount Gerizim, south of Shechem. Historically, Israel will split into a

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northern kingdom and a southern kingdom. The kings that ruled the northern kingdom were never good. The kings that ruled the southern kingdom were sometimes evil and sometimes good. The northern kingdom was the first to be exiled.

**Joshua 8:30 Then Joshua built an altar to the Lord, the God of Israel, on Mount Ebal,**

**Joshua 8:31 just as Moses the servant of the Lord had commanded the sons of Israel, as it is written in the Book of the Law of Moses, an altar of uncut stones on which no one had wielded an iron tool; and they offered burnt offerings on it to the Lord, and sacrificed peace offerings.**

**Joshua 8:32 And he wrote there on the stones a copy of the Law of Moses, which he had written, in the presence of the sons of Israel.**

**Joshua 8:33 And all Israel with their elders, officers, and their judges were standing on both sides of the ark before the Levitical priests who carried the ark of the covenant of the Lord, the stranger as well as the native. Half of them stood in front of Mount Gerizim, and half of them in front of Mount Ebal, just as Moses the servant of the Lord had commanded at first to bless the people of Israel.**

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**Joshua 8:34** Then afterward he read all the words of the Law, the blessing and the curse, according to everything that is written in the **Book of the Law.**

And later in the book of Joshua this is repeated.

**Joshua 24:1** Then Joshua gathered all the tribes of Israel at Shechem, and called for the elders of Israel, their heads, their judges, and their officers; and they presented themselves before God.

**Joshua 24:14** “Now, therefore, fear the Lord and serve Him in sincerity and truth; and do away with the gods which your fathers served beyond the Euphrates River and in Egypt, and serve the Lord.

**Joshua 24:15** But if it is disagreeable in your sight to serve the Lord, choose for yourselves today whom you will serve: whether the gods which your fathers served, which were beyond the Euphrates River, or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you are living; but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.”

**Choose.** Following the TDOT, this is a careful conscious choice. The issue in their lives, the issue in our lives is “choice.” Will we choose to serve the Lord or to serve our own sin natures?

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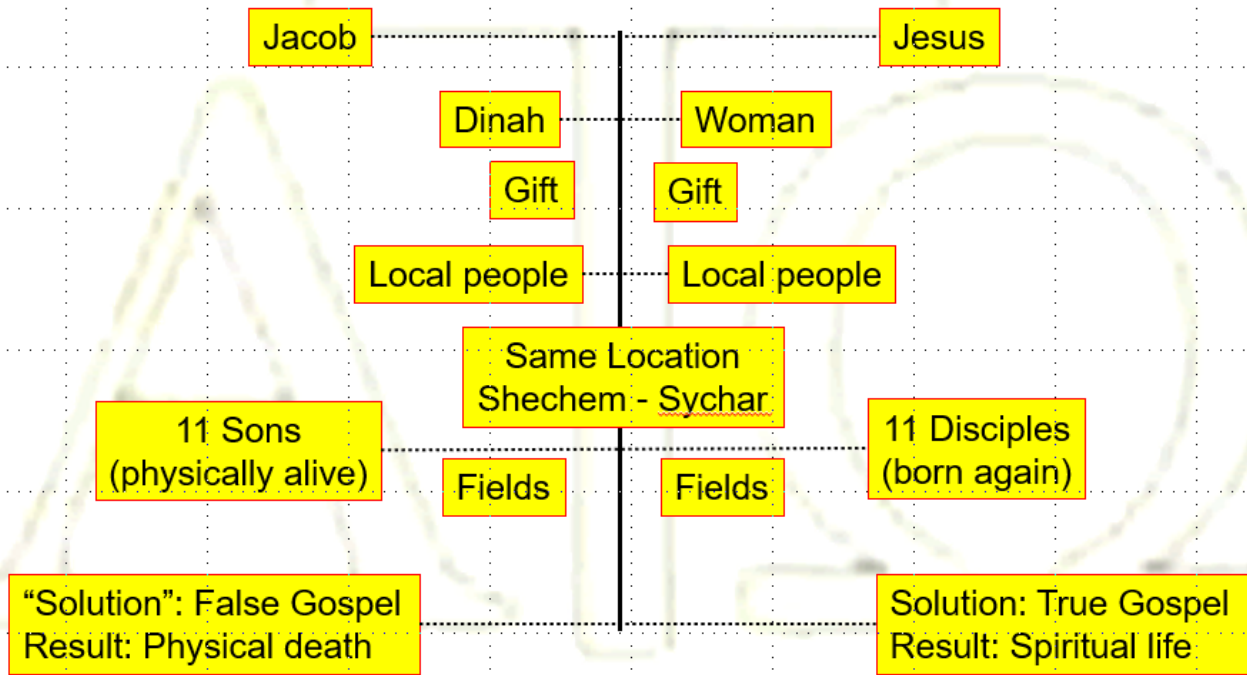
Read John chapter 4. This narrative took place at Shechem. It is a contest between deceit and truth. The truth wins and many are saved. Jesus did this. He was a descendant of Abram and Jacob.



# Correspondence

**Genesis 34**

**John 4**



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# Action Correspondence

<b>Genesis 34 - Physical</b>	<b>John 4 - Spiritual</b>
Dinah goes to local people	Woman goes from local people
Jacob is passive (silent)	Jesus takes initiative (talks)
Sons take initiative	Disciples follow <u>Jesus</u> direction
Sons stop work and come in from the field	Jesus sends the disciples into the fields
Sons give false gospel	Jesus gives true gospel
<u>Shechemites</u> "believe" false gospel	Samaritans believe true gospel
Result is physical death	Result is spiritual life
Jacob bought the land/ obtained by sword and arrow	Jesus paid for salvation on the cross – "Savior of the World"
Note: Because of one man's sin (Shechem), all died (men of Shechem)	Note: Because of one man's death (Jesus), all live (believers)