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BIB 381 Land of the Bible (NA)

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SITE RESEARCH - SHECHEM

Shechem, spelled (Shekhem), Hebrew word, which means, "shoulder or back". It was situated in Ancient Palestine, near Nablus, in an east - west pass, between Mount Gerizim on the left and Mount Ebal on the right. One of the few such routes in Palestine's hill country. The hill rises approximately 98.4 feet above its surroundings, at the center of four (4) large valleys, The valley of Neapolis/Shechem, in the immediate vicinity, Sahel Mahneh/Horon to the south, large and fertile Sahel - Beit Dejan to the east and small valley Sahel Askar to the north.

It was a very important city, in the second and early first millennium, because of its location and position. It had the major North - South route through the hills and major East -West route from Jordon Valley to the Coastal Plain, running right pass Shechem. This location made Shechem very important. When Northern Hills flourished, so did Shechem.

The average temperature in winter is 10° C and in summer 23° - 40° The rocks on the Mountains Gerizim and Ebal consisted of limestone and chalk. There were large numbers of springs in the valley of Shechem. The combination of good climate, fertile soil and large springs made it one of the most fertile regions in the area, which made it a leader in the most productive area. This account was mentioned in (Deuteronomy 33: 13 - 16) and (Genesis 49: 25). This encouraged great summer and Autumn migration to the area. All this prosperity was not for long. Shechem lacked strong defense, so it was known for its many walls for the purpose of fortification. The city was divided into two (2) districts. Smaller districts were divided for the rest of the city with stone walls. Shechem was

destroyed at the end of the ninth century B.C.E. but was quickly rebuilt. It became the capital of Jerusalem and was shortly replaced by Samaria.

It was very important in biblical periods also. Evidence of the ruin of Tall - al - Balatah, east of Nablulus shows Middle Bornze 11 oeriod (c. 1900 - c. 1750 BCE), associated with the time of the biblical patriarch, mentioned first in (Genesis 12: 6). Abram passed through to the Oak of Moreh, there God promised him the land. He built an altar there. It was occupied by the Canaanites at the time. In later years when his grandson Jacob returned from Paddam Aram he came and brought a plot of land there (Genesis 33: 18 - 20) He also built an altar there. His daughter Dana was raped their and two of his sons took revenge, causing him to flee the city. Joshua made a covenant there and built an altar (Joshua 24: 25) Joseph's bones were brought up out of Egypt and buried at Shechem. (Joshua 24: 32). Abimelech was rejected at Shechem when he gathered the people and attempted to lead all Israel. David lamented the fall of this great city (Psalm 60: 6-8) and (Psalm 108: 7 -9). Shechem briefly became the capital of the Northern Kingdom, after the exile. (2 Chronicles 10: 1 - 17). The city was first mentioned in (Genesis 12: 6 - 8)

It is said that the location was uncertain until Josephus writing AD90 placed it between the 2 cities. (Antiquites 4, 8, 44). The execrations Text called it (s-k-e-m-a-m-l (E6 which can be traced to Egypt 12 Dynasty (19 century B.C.E.). It was also mentioned at a tomb of an Egyptian Offer, named Hu - Sabak (Sesostris 111, r. 1878 - 1843 B.C.E.). The article says, the first excavation was done by an Austro - German team, (Herman Thiersch) between 1913 - 1984. He discovered "a piece of cyclopean wall" In 1926 - 1936 Ernst Sellen and in 1926 to 1936. Sellen discovered all the wall and fortifications

evidence. The artifacts they found were unfortunately destroyed by the bombing of Berlin in 1943. During the excavation the building found, concluded that they were maybe royal dwellings. Gates were found which were a part of the fortification system, which were also destroyed by the bombing. In 1956 American archaeologist George E. Wright and Bernhard Anderson excavations revealed layers from the eighth and second centuries B.C.E, they uncovered glacis (earthen embankments) which led up to city's wall dated to the 17th century B. C. E. Joshua did not mention the conquest of Shechem, which led some scholars to believe that Shechem remained a Canaanite stronghold.

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