

הר גרזים והר עיבל

אבנר רמו



Ruins on Mount Gerizim c1880

In the Book of Deuteronomy we read:

ראה אנכי נתן לפניכם-היום: ברכה, וקללה.
את-הברכה-אשר תשמעו אל-מצות יהוה אלהיכם אשר אנכי מצוה אתכם היום.
והקללה, אם-לא תשמעו אל-מצות יהוה אלהיכם, וסרתם מן-הדרך אשר אנכי מצוה אתכם
היום: ללכת אחרי אלהים אחרים-אשר לא-ידעתם.
והיה כי יביאך יהוה אלהיך אל-הארץ אשר-אתה בא-שמה לרשתה-ונתתה את-הברכה על-
הר גרזים, ואת-הקללה על-הר עיבל.

“Behold, I set before you this day a blessing and a curse:

The blessing, if you shall hearken to the commandments of *YHWH* your God, which I command you this day;

And the curse, if you shall not hearken to the commandments of *YHWH* your God, but turn aside out of the way which I command you this day, to go after other gods, which you have not known.

And it shall come to pass, when *YHWH* your God shall bring you into the land whither you go to possess it, that you shall set the blessing upon mount Gerizim, and the curse upon mount Ebal” (Deu 11:26-29).

ויצו משה וזקני ישראל את-העם לאמר: שמר את-כל-המצוה אשר אנכי מצוה אתכם היום.
והיה ביום אשר תעברו את-הירדן, אל-הארץ, אשר-יהוה אלהיך נתן לך-והקמת לך אבנים
גדולות ושדת אתם בשיד.
וכתבת עליהן את-כל-דברי התורה הזאת-בעברך: למען אשר תבא אל-הארץ אשר-יהוה
אלהיך נתן לך, ארץ זבת חלב ודבש, כאשר דבר יהוה אלהי-אבתיך לך.
והיה בעברכם את-הירדן, תקימו את-האבנים האלה אשר אנכי מצוה אתכם היום בהר עיבל;
ושדת אותם בשיד.
ובנית שם מזבח ליהוה אלהיך: מזבח אבנים, לא-תניף עליהם ברזל.
אבנים שלמות תבנה את-מזבח יהוה אלהיך; והעלית עליו עולת ליהוה אלהיך.
וזבחת שלמים ואכלת שם; ושמחת לפני יהוה אלהיך.
וכתבת על-האבנים את-כל-דברי התורה הזאת-באר היטב.

“And Moses and the elders of Israel commanded the people, saying: Keep all the commandment which I command you this day.

And it shall be on the day when you shall pass over the Jordan to the land which *YHWH* your God gives you, that you shall set you up great stones, and plaster them with plaster. And you shall write upon them all the words of this law, when you are passed over; that you may go in to the land which *YHWH* your God gives you, a land flowing with milk and honey, as *YHWH*, the God of your fathers, had promised you.

And it shall be when you are passed over the Jordan, that you shall set up these stones, which I command you this day, in mount Ebal, and you shall plaster them with plaster. And there shall you build an altar to *YHWH* your God, an altar of stones; you shall lift up no iron tool upon them.

You shall build the altar of *YHWH* your God of unhewn stones; and you shall offer burnt-offerings thereon to *YHWH* your God.

And you shall sacrifice peace-offerings, and shall eat there; and you shall rejoice before *YHWH* your God.

And you shall write upon the stones all the words of this law very plainly” (Deu 27:1-8).

וידבר משה והכהנים הלויים אל כל-ישראל לאמר: הסכת ושמע ישראל, היום הזה נהיית לעם ליהוה אלהיך.

ושמעת בקול יהוה אלהיך; ועשית את-מצותו ואת-חקיו אשר אנכי מצוך היום. ויצו משה את-העם ביום ההוא לאמר.

אלה יעמדו לברך את-העם על-הר גרזים, בעברכם את-הירדן: שמעון ולוי ויהודה, ויששכר ויוסף ובנימן.

ואלה יעמדו על-הקללה, בהר עיבל: ראובן גד ואשר, וזבולן דן ונפתלי.

“And Moses and the priests the Levites spoke to all Israel, saying: Keep silence, and hear, O Israel; this day you are become a people to *YHWH* your God.

You shall therefore hearken to the voice of *YHWH* your God, and do His commandments and His statutes, which I command you this day.

And Moses charged the people the same day, saying:

These shall stand upon mount Gerizim to bless the people, when you are passed over the Jordan: Simeon, and Levi, and Judah, and Issachar, and Joseph, and Benjamin;

And these shall stand upon mount Ebal on the curse: Reuben, Gad, and Asher, and Zebulun, Dan, and Naphtali” (Deu 27:9-13).

We may wonder why the Israelites were instructed to build an altar to God, and inscribe the Law on stones that would be placed on Mount Ebal, on which there is the curse, and not on the blessed mount Gerizim. Is it possible that mount Gerizim was already then occupied by some other divine monument?

We may also question why the tribes that grew out from the sons that Jacob begot from the handmaids of his wives, and from the oldest and youngest sons of Leah, were selected to stand on the cursed mountain, and not participate in the blessing of the people.

We should also notice that the town of Shechem is not mentioned here. In fact it is never mentioned in the Book of Deuteronomy.

In the Book of Joshua we read that after the conquest and destruction of the town of Ai:

אז יבנה יהושע מזבח ליהוה אלהי ישראל בהר עיבל.

כאשר צוה משה עבד-יהוה את-בני ישראל, ככתוב בספר תורת משה-מזבח אבנים שלמות, אשר לא-הניף עליהן ברזל; ויעלו עליו עלות ליהוה, ויזבחו שלמים. ויכתב-שם על-האבנים-את משנה תורת משה, אשר כתב לפני בני ישראל. וכל-ישראל וזקניו ושטרים ושפטיו עמדים מזה ומזה לארון נגד הכהנים הלויים נשאי ארון ברית-יהוה, כגר כאזרח-חציו אל-מול הר-גרזים, והחציו אל-מול הר-עיבל: כאשר צוה משה עבד-יהוה, לברך את-העם ישראל-בראשנה. ואחרי-כן קרא את-כל-דברי התורה, הברכה והקללה-ככל-הכתוב בספר התורה. לא-היה דבר מכל אשר-צוה משה-אשר לא-קרא יהושע, נגד כל-קהל ישראל והנשים והטף והגר ההלך בקרבם.

“Then Joshua built an altar to *YHWH*, the God of Israel, in mount Ebal;
As Moses the servant of *YHWH* commanded the children of Israel, as it is written in the book of the Law of Moses, an altar of unhewn stones, upon which [no man] had lifted up any iron; And they offered thereon burnt-offerings to *YHWH*, and sacrificed peace-offerings.
And he wrote there upon the stones a copy of the law of Moses, which he wrote before the children of Israel.
And all Israel, and their elders and officers, and their judges, stood on this side the ark and on that side before the priests the Levites, that bore the ark of the covenant of *YHWH*, as well the stranger as the home-born; half of them against of mount Gerizim and half of them against of mount Ebal; as Moses the servant of *YHWH* had commanded at the first, that they should bless the people of Israel.
And afterward he read all the words of the law, the blessing and the curse, according to all that is written in the book of the law.
There was not a word of all that Moses commanded, which Joshua read not before all the assembly of Israel, and the women, and the little ones, and the strangers that walked among them” (Jos 8:30-35).

Although we read that Joshua made an effort to follow the instructions of Moses, we find that while in the Book of Deuteronomy the Israelites were instructed about the specific tribes that should be positioned on each of these mounts, we now read that Joshua just assembled half the people against (and on upon) mount Gerizim, and the other half against mount Ebal. Unlike what we read in the Book of Joshua, the Book of Deuteronomy does not indicate that the “**ark of the covenant of *YHWH***”, or “**the women, and the little ones, and the strangers**” should participate in this ceremony.

In the Book of Deuteronomy the Israelites were instructed to set the blessing upon mount Gerizim and the curse upon mount Ebal, yet instead Joshua read: “**the blessing and the curse, according to all that is written in the book of the law.**” While we read in the Book of Joshua that as Moses commanded at first “**they should bless the people of Israel**”, it is not specified that the blessing should be carried out by the tribes that are to be positioned on mount Gerizim.

It is generally assumed that the location of the town of Shechem is in the valley between mount Gerizim and mount Ebal. Yet in the Book of Joshua there is no mention of Shechem in regard to this major religious event of the reading of “**all the words of the law, the blessing and the curse, according to all that is written in the book of the law**”, which Joshua read before all the assembly of Israel, in a location that was between these mounts.

Furthermore, this event occurred immediately after the conquest of the town of Ai, which is located about 19 mi south of Shechem, yet we do not here that Joshua and the Israelites had to conquer any of the many towns that they encountered along the way. We also do not hear that Joshua had then to conquer Shechem, a town that was much larger than the town of Ai. In fact, although we read in the Book of Joshua that he conquered many towns, oddly, Shechem is not among them.

In the Book of Deuteronomy we read about the location of mount Gerizim and mount Ebal:
הלא-המה בעבר הירדן, אחרי דרך מבוא השמש, בארץ הכנעני, הישב בערבה-מול הגלגל,
אצל אלוני מרה

“Are they not beyond the Jordan, behind the way of the going down of the sun, in the land of the Canaanites that dwell in the Arabah, over against Gilgal, beside the terebinths of Moreh” (Deu 11:30).

This description of the location of these mounts, although appears as very detailed, is quite enigmatic, and we may wonder, why its writer did not simply indicate that these mounts were adjacent to Shechem, a major urban settlement since the chalcolithic period.



“*Shachemu*” mentioned in the Egyptian, Sebek-khu Stele. C. 1880-1840 BC. Manchester Museum.

Clay tablets that were discovered in Ebla (Tell Mardikh, North-west Syria), and that were dated to 2250 BC, mention a place named Shechem. An Egyptian stele of the time of King Senusret III also refers to this name. Later (c. 1350 BC) *Shachmu*, is mentioned in the “Amarna Letters.”

We read in the Book of Joshua: **שכם, בהר אפרים** - “**Shechem in the hill-country of Ephraim**” (Jos 20:7; see also: 1 Ki 12:25), and this information about the location of the town of Shechem is not compatible with that found in the Book of Deuteronomy (11:30) about the location of mounts Gerizim and Ebal. If we would assume that both these sources of information are genuine, then we will have to conclude that the location of mounts Gerizim and Ebal is not in the vicinity of the town of Shechem.

In the Book of Genesis we read that after escaping from Laban, his father-in-law:

ויבא יעקב שלם עיר שכם, אשר בארץ כנען, בבאו מפדן ארם; ויחן את-פני העיר.
ויקן את-חלקת השדה, אשר נטה-שם אהלו, מיד בני-חמור אבי שכם-במאה קשיטה.
ויצב-שם מזבח; ויקרא-לו-אל אלהי ישראל.

“And Jacob came in peace to the city of Shechem, which is in the land of Canaan, when he came from Paddan-aram; and encamped before the city.

And he bought the parcel of ground, where he had spread his tent, at the hand of the children of Hamor, Shechem's father, for a hundred pieces of money.

And he erected there an altar, and called it El-elohe-Israel” (Gen 33:18-20; see also Jos 24:32).

The Greek translator wrote here “Salem, a city of”, which suggests that he believed that here שלם (*shalem*) does not mean “in peace” but is a name of a place that belonged to a person named “Shechem” (e.g. Gen 14:18). Yet we may wonder, why Jacob bought the parcel of land there from the “**children of Hamor**” and not from Shechem himself.



Dinah's brothers avenge her honor. Matthaeus Merian I. 1625.

After the rape of Dinah by Schem the son of Hamor, and the massacre of the town's people by Simeon and Levi, God instructs Jacob to relocate to Beth-el (Gen 35:1):

ויאמר יעקב אל-ביתו ואל כל-אשר עמו: הסרו את-אלהי הנכר אשר בתככם והטהרו והחליפו שמלתיכם.

ונקומה ונעלה בית-אל; ואעשה-שם מזבח לאל הענה אתי ביום צרתי, ויהי עמדי בדרך אשר הלכתי.

ויתנו אל-יעקב את כל-אלהי הנכר אשר בידם, ואת-הנזמים אשר באזניהם; ויטמן אתם יעקב תחת האלה אשר עם-שכם.

“Then Jacob said to his household, and to all that were with him: Put away the strange gods that are among you, and purify yourselves, and change your garments; And let us arise, and go up to Beth-el; and I will make there an altar to God, who answered me in the day of my distress, and was with me in the way which I went.

And they gave to Jacob all the foreign gods which were in their hand, and the rings which were in their ears; and Jacob hid them under the terebinth which was by Shechem” (Gen 35:2-4).

A somewhat similar event is described in the Book of Joshua:

ויאסף יהושע את-כל-שבטי ישראל שכמה; ויקרא לזקני ישראל ולראשיו, ולשפטיו ולשטריו, ויתיצבו לפני האלהים.

“And Joshua gathered all the tribes of Israel to Shechem, and called for the elders of Israel, and for their heads, and for their judges, and for their officers; and they presented themselves before God” (Jos 24:1).

After recounting the history of the Israelites and their tumultuous relation with God, the Israelites committed themselves to worship God:

ויאמר יהושע אל-העם, עדים אתם בכם כי-אתם בחרתם לכם את-יהוה לעבד אותו; ויאמרו, עדים.

ועתה הסירו את-אלהי הנכר אשר בקרבכם; והטו את-לבבכם אל-יהוה אלהי ישראל.

“And Joshua said to the people: You are witnesses against yourselves that you have chosen you *YHWH*, to serve Him. And they said: We are witnesses.

Now therefore put away the strange gods which are among you, and incline your heart to *YHWH*, the God of Israel” (Jos 24:22-23).

ויכתב יהושע את-הדברים האלה בספר תורת אלהים; ויקח אבן גדולה ויקימה שם תחת האלה אשר במקדש יהוה.

ויאמר יהושע אל-כל-העם, הנה האבן הזאת תהיה-בנו לעדה-כי-היא שמעה את כל-אמרי יהוה אשר דבר עמנו; והיתה בכם לעדה פן-תכחשון באלהיכם.

“And Joshua wrote these words in the book of the law of God; and he took a great stone, and set it up there under the oak that was in the sanctuary of *YHWH*.

And Joshua said to all the people: Behold, this stone shall be a witness against us; for it had heard all the words of *YHWH* which He spoke to us; it shall be therefore a witness against you, lest you deny your God” (Jos 24:26-27).

This is the only time in the Bible that we hear about the “sanctuary of *YHWH*” in Shechem. Furthermore, while the Bible repeatedly relates to worship under trees as a blasphemy (e.g. Eze 6:13), we read here that an oak tree was growing in this Divine sanctuary. This information apparently did not sit well with the pious Greek translator who ignores the word **מקדש** - “sanctuary” and wrote here: “under the terebinth tree before the Lord.” In addition, the Greek translator relocated this whole event from Shechem (Jos 24:1) to Selo (**שילו** - “Shiloh”).

However, the association of Shechem with a certain tree apparently was a widely known fact.

This is evident from the following verse of the Book of Judges:

“And they made Abimelech king, by the terebinth of the pillar that was in Shechem” (Jud 9:6).

While the Greek translator interprets differently the word **מצב** (*mutsav*), which probably is partially corrupt, he confirms that he read here about the association between a certain tree and Shechem.

We also read that many years later:

וילך רחבעם שכם: כי שכם בא כל-ישראל להמליך אתו.

“And Rehoboam went to Shechem; for all Israel were come to Shechem to make him king”
(1 Ki 12:1; see also: 2 Ch 10:1).

Although a tree is not mentioned here, we may wonder what was so unique about this town that it filled these important functions for such extended period of time.

We should notice that Shechem was already mentioned in the days of Abraham. We read that as Abram and his entourage came to Canaan for the first time:

ויעבר אברם בארץ, עד מקום שכם, עד אלון מורה; והכנעני אז בארץ.

וירא יהוה אל-אברם, ויאמר לזרעך אתן את-הארץ הזאת; ויבן שם מזבח ליהוה הנראה אליו.
“And Abram passed through the land up to the place of Shechem, up to the terebinth of Moreh. And the Canaanite was then in the land.

And YHWH appeared to Abram, and said: To your seed will I give this land; and he built there an altar to YHWH, who appeared to him” (Gen 12:6-7).

The grammatical structure of this verse is odd, and it is possible that it is due to an erroneous omission of the word **ומשם** (*umisham*) - “and from there” (Gen 2:10; 11:9). If this assumption is correct then we should comprehend this verse as saying that Abram came first to Shechem and then continued to the “**terebinth of Moreh.**”

We should also notice the similarity in sound between **אלון מורה** (*elon Moreh*) - “**the terebinth of Moreh**” and **אלני ממרא** (*alonei mamrea*) - “**the terebinths of Mamre**” which does not exclude the possibility that one of this terms is spelling error of the other.

However, we should also consider the possibility that the odd grammar of verse Gen 12:6 is not due to an erroneous omission of the word **ומשם** - “and from there.” In the next chapter we read: **וישב באלני ממרא-אשר בחברון** - “and he dwelt by the terebinths of Mamre, which are in Hebron” (Gen 13:18), or **ממרא-הוא חברון** - “Mamre-the same is Hebron” (Gen 23:19; see also: Gen 14:2, 3, 7, 8, 17; 23:2; 28:19; 35:6, 27, 19; 36:8; 48:7). We may therefore wonder whether Abram came to “**to the place of Shechem**” or to the “**terebinth of Moreh**”? And if both are the same place then why the words “which is in” or “the same is” were replaced here by “up to”?

However, if there is no grammatical error in verse Gen 12:6 then we have to consider the possibility that a late scribe, who apparently was aware of the association between Shechem and a certain tree, inserted here one of these place names.

We are told that after leaving Shechem, Jacob and his household continued their way southward and finally:

ויבא יעקב אל-יצחק אביו, ממרא קרית הארבע-הוא חברון, אשר-גר-שם אברהם ויצחק.

“And Jacob came to Isaac his father to Mamre, to Kiriath-arba-the same is Hebron-where Abraham and Isaac sojourned” (Gen 35:27).

Now we read about Joseph's brothers:

וילכו אחיו לרעות את-צאן אביהם בשכם.
ויאמר ישראל אל-יוסף, הלוא אחיך רעים בשכם-לכה ואשלחך אליהם; ויאמר לו, הנני.
ויאמר לו, לך-נא ראה את-שלום אחיך ואת-שלום הצאן והשבני דבר; וישלחהו מעמק חברון,
ויבא שכמה.

“And his brethren went to feed their father's flock in Shechem.

And Israel said to Joseph: Do not your brethren feed the flock in Shechem? come, and I will send you to them. And he said to him: Here am I.

And he said to him: Go now, see whether it is well with your brethren, and well with the flock; and bring me back word. So he sent him out of the vale of Hebron, and he came to Shechem” (Gen 37: 12-14).

If our current knowledge of the locations of Shechem and Hebron are correct, then the information about Jacob residing in Hebron while his flock was pasturing 59 mi northward near Shechem appears somewhat odd. We may therefore need to consider the possibility that Jacob had other motives for maintaining a flock near Shechem. It is also somewhat macabre that Joseph will be sent to Shechem, a place where, several hundred years later, his bones will be brought to their final rest place.

In the Book of Genesis we read also about: **שכם בן-חמור החוי-נשיא הארץ** - “Shechem the son of Hamor the Hivite, the prince of the land” (Gen 34:2).

The Greek translator wrote here “the Chorrite” which suggests that he believed that here **החוי** (*hakhivi*) is a letter-deletion error of **החורי** (*hakhori*) - “the Horites” (e.g. Gen 14:6; 36:20, 21, 29, 30; Num 2:22). However, in verse Gen 36:2 the Greeks translated **החוי** (*hakhivi*) as “the Heuite”, and in verse Gen 26:34, they translated **החתי** (*hakhithi*) also as “the Heuite.” These changes in the Greek translation suggest the word **החוי** (*hakhivi*) could also be a letter-substitution error of **החתי** (*hakhithi*) - “the Hittite.”

In the Book of Genesis we also read:

ותאמר רבקה אל-יצחק, קצתי בחיי מפני בנות חת; אם-לקח יעקב אשה מבנות-חת כאלה,
מבנות הארץ-למה לי חיים.

“And Rebekah said to Isaac: I am weary of my life because of the daughters of Heth. If Jacob take a wife of the daughters of Heth, such as these, of the daughters of the land, what good shall my life do me?” (Gen 27:46).

Here **בנות חת** - “the daughters of Heth” is the same as **בנות הארץ** - “the daughters of the land.” The expression “the daughters of the land” appears in the Bible only once more. We read in the Book of Genesis:

ותצא דינה בת-לאה, אשר ילדה ליעקב, לראות בבנות הארץ.

“And Dinah the daughter of Leah, whom she had borne to Jacob, went out to see the daughters of the land” (Gen 34: 1).

The comparison between these verses suggests that Dinah went out to see the daughters of the Hittites. It also suggests that **החוי-נשיא הארץ** (*hakhivi-nesi haarets*) of verse Gen 34:2, is a

letter-substitution error of **החתי-נשיא הארץ** (*hakhithi-nesi haarets*) - “the Hittite, the prince of the land.”



The expanded **Hittite Empire** (red) c. 1290 BC and its border with Egyptian kingdom (green)

With a possible background of the Hittite empire, the unique term **בנות הארץ** (*benoth haarets*) which was translated to: “**the daughters of the land**” could mean: “the daughters of Arzawa.” Arzawa was a state in western Anatolia that in c. 1400 BC was conquered by the Hittites. It is not unlikely that refugees from Arzawa had moved south and settled in Shechem that at that time was in the sphere of the Egyptian hegemony.

We should also note that in the Hittite language the word “*khumra*” means: “a priest”, and therefore the words **שכם בן-חמור** (*Shechem ben-khamor*) could mean “Shechem, the son of a priest.” Another Hebrew word with a similar sound: **כמרים** (*kemarim*) is also believed to mean: “priests” (Hos 10:5; 2 Ki 23:5; Zep 1:4). The singular of **כמרים** (*kemarim*) - “priests” would be **כומר** (*komer*) which sound similar to the Hebrew: **חמור** (*khamor*) and to the Hittite: “*khumra*.”

We read in the Book of Genesis that in response to Hamor’s offer:

**והתחתנו אתנו: בנתיכם תתנו-לנו, ואת-בנותינו תקחו לכם.
ואתנו תשבו;**

“And make you marriages with us; give your daughters to us, and take our daughters to you.

And you shall dwell with us” (Gen 34:9-10), the sons of Jacob answered:

**לא נוכל לעשות הדבר הזה-לתת את-אחתנו לאיש אשר-לו ערלה: כי-חרפה הוא, לנו.
אך-בזאת, נאות לכם: אם תהיו כמנו, להמללכם כל-זכר.
ונתנו את-בנותינו לכם, ואת-בנתיכם נקח-לנו; וישבנו אתכם והיינו לעם אחד.**

“We cannot do this thing, to give our sister to one that is uncircumcised; for that was a reproach to us.

**Only on this condition will we consent to you: if you will be as we are, that every male of you be circumcised;
Then will we give our daughters unto you, and we will take your daughters to us, and we will dwell with you, and we will become one people”** (Gen 34:14-16).

This answer did not seem unusual to Hamor and his people, because they must have known that in Egypt the priests were circumcised.

Taking this information into account, it is possible that the whole narrative around the rape of Dinah described in Gen 34:1-31, was actually a rivalry between two priestly clans, Levi and Shechem on the possession of an important religious center.

After annihilating the former clan of priests that owned this religious center, it is not surprising to read in the Book of Joshua:

ולמשפחות בני-קהת הלויים הנותרים מבני קהת; ויהי ערי גורלם, ממטה אפרים. ויתנו להם את-עיר מקלט הרצח, את-שכם ואת-מגרשה-בהר אפרים; ואת-גזר ואת-מגרשה
“**And the families of the children of Kohath, the Levites, even the rest of the children of Kohath, they had the cities of their lot out of the tribe of Ephraim.**
And they gave them Shechem with the open land about it in the hill-country of Ephraim, the city of refuge for the manslayer, and Gezer with the open land about it” (Jos 21:20-21).

Years later the Prophet Hosea said:

וכחכי איש גדודים, חבר כהנים, דרך, ירצחו-שכמה: כי זמה, עשו.
בבית ישראל ראיתי שעריריה (שערוריה); שם זנות לאפרים, נטמא ישראל.
“**And as troops of robbers wait [for a man], so does the company of priests; they murder in the way toward Shechem; yea, they commit enormity.**
In the house of Israel I have seen a horrible thing; there harlotry is found in Ephraim, Israel is defiled” (Hos 6:9-10).

We may wonder whether Hosea is referring here to the old narrative about Levi the son of Jacob and Shechem the son of Hamor. Although we heard Simon and Levi saying:
הכזונה, יעשה את-אחותנו - “**Should one deal with our sister as with a harlot?”** (Gen 34:31), it appears that Hosea believed that Dinah’s brothers used her as a harlot to lure Shechem to a trap that they set for achieving their goal.

It is possible that after this event, although Jacob told Simon and Levi:

עכרתם אתי, להבאישני בישב הארץ - “**You have troubled me, to make me odious to the inhabitants of the land”** (Gen 34:30), he considered the possession of the religious center in Shechem as an asset, and even after relocating to Hebron he would send his sons to Shechem to maintain ownership of that place.

We should notice that while Shechem is mentioned 19 times in the Book of Genesis, it is never in association with mounts Gerizim and Ebal. In fact, these mounts are never mentioned in the Book of Genesis.

The single association between mount Gerizim and Shechem appears in one of the least credible narratives of the Bible.

We read in the Book of Judges that after rescuing the Israelites from the Midianites:

ויאמרו איש-ישראל אל-גדעון, משל-בנו גם-אתה, גם-בנד גם-בן-בנד: כי הושעתנו מיד מדין.

ויאמר אלהם גדעון, לא-אמשל אני בכם, ולא-ימשל בני בכם: יהוה ימשל בכם.

“Then the men of Israel said to Gideon: Rule you over us, both you, and your son, and your son's son also; for you had saved us out of the hand of Midian.

And Gideon said to them: I will not rule over you, neither shall my son rule over you; YHWH shall rule over you” (Jud 8:22-23).

ויכנע מדין לפני בני ישראל, ולא יספו לשאת ראשם; ותשקט הארץ ארבעים שנה בימי גדעון. וילך ירבעל בן-יואש, וישב בביתו.

“And Midian was subdued before the children of Israel, and they lifted up their heads no more. And the land had rest forty years in the days of Gideon.

And Jerubbaal, the son of Joash, went and dwelt in his own house” (Jud 8:28-29).

Previously we read that Gideon's house was in Ophrah, one of the poorest areas of the tribe of Manasseh (Jud 6:15), and that his only connection with a major urban center was through his Shechemite concubine (Jud 8:31). We do not hear that after Gideon death any of his seventy sons that were in Ophrah made an effort to become the ruler of the Israelites.

Yet now we read that Abimelech, the son of Gideon's Shechemite concubine tells his mother's relatives in Shechem:

דברו-נא באזני כל-בעלי שכם, מה-טוב לכם-המשל בכם שבעים איש כל בני ירבעל, אם-משל בכם איש אחד; וזכרתם, כי-עצמכם ובשרכם אני.

“Speak, I pray you, in the ears of all the owners of Shechem: Which is better for you, that all the sons of Jerubbaal, who are threescore and ten persons, rule over you, or that one rule over you? Remember also that I am your bone and your flesh” (Jud 9:2).

It appears that this false argument convinced the owners of Shechem (Jud 9:4) and after Abimelech murdered most of his brothers:

ויאספו כל-בעלי שכם וכל-בית מלוא, וילכו וימליכו את-אבימלך למלך-עם-אלון מצב אשר בשכם.

“And all the owners of Shechem assembled themselves together, and all Beth-millo, and went and made Abimelech king, by the terebinth of the pillar that was in Shechem” (Jud 9:6).

We do not hear that any of the tribes of Israel was involved or even knew about the crowning of Abimelech in Shechem, and while this may have been the result of a local agreement between the Shechemites and Abimelech, it is quite surprising to read:

“And Abimelech was prince over Israel three years” - וישר אבימלך על-ישראל, שלש שנים (Jud 9:22).

Furthermore, it seems that King Abimelech, although the son of a Shechemite woman, did not even reside in Shechem but in **תרמה** - “**Tormah**” (Jud 9:31), or in **ארומה** - “**Arumah**” (Jud 9:41), both place-names that were never mentioned again in the Bible. As for Shechem it was ruled by: **זבל שר-העיר** - “**Zebul the ruler of the city**” (Jud 9:30), who is described as Abimelech’s officer (Jud 9:28).

It is also rather odd to read that Gaal the son of Ebed, who just passed through Shechem, and in whom the owner of Shechem now suddenly put their trust in (Jud 9:26), says: **הלא בן-ירבעל זבל פקידו; עבדו את-אנשי חמור אבי שכם** - “**is not he the son of Jerubbaal? and Zebul his officer? Served the men of Hamor the father of Shechem**” (Jud 9:28).

While it appears that Gaal the son of Ebed (or the writer of this narrative) was familiar with the content of the Book of Genesis, it is preposterous to declare that Abimelech and Zebul served the “men of Hamor the father of Shechem” who lived hundreds of years earlier.



Jotham adresse son allégorie
d'après la *Chronique universelle* de **Rodolphe d'Ems** (1350-75)

We also read that Abimelech killed his seventy brothers that were in Ophrah (Jud 9:5; see also: Jud 9:18, 24, 56), yet we are told about Gideon youngest son **יותם** - “**Jotham**”:

ויותר יותם בן-ירבעל הקטן-כי נחבא

“**But Jotham the youngest son of Jerubbaal was left; for he hid himself**” (Jud 9:5).

It is rather peculiar that the name of this youngest son of Gideon **יותם** (*Yotham*) sounds so similar to the name of Gideon first born son: **יתר** (*yether*) - “**Jether**” (Jud 8:20). Furthermore, the name **יתר** (*yether*) - “**Jether**” is of the same root as the word as **ויותר** (*vivather*) - “and was left.”

We read that after Jotham was told that Abimelech was crowned in Sheshem:

וילך ויעמד בראש הר-גרזים, וישא קולו ויקרא; ויאמר להם, שמעו אלי בעלי שכם, וישמע אליכם אלהים.

“And he went and stood in the top of mount Gerizim, and lifted up his voice, and cried, and said to them: Harken to me, you owners of Shechem, and may God hearken to you” (Jud 9:7).

The top of the mountain that is currently believed to be mount Gerizim is 2890 ft. above sea-level, while the city of Shechem is in a nearby valley which is 1800 ft. above sea-level. As it is preposterous to assume that a human being can deliver a parable to listeners over a distance greater than 1090 ft., we must conclude that whoever wrote this verse was not familiar with the geography of the town of Shechem.

We may conclude that there is no credible evidence in the Bible that mounts Gerizim and Ebal are in the vicinity of the town of Shechem. It is rather interesting that although based on different reasoning, the Talmudic sages reached the same conclusion

(תלמוד ירושלמי, מסכת סוטהת פרק ז', הלכה ג').