

rendered, "unto the plain of Moreh;" that is unto the large plain of Mukhna, already mentioned, lying in immediate connection with the vale of Shechem. Here Abraham had the first vision of the Almighty with which he was favoured in Canaan, and here he received the first express promise of the land as the assured inheritance of his seed. And again, when Jacob came from Padan-Aram, he crossed the Jordan in the vicinity of Succoth, traveled south-west in the direction of Shechem, and pitched his tent at Shalim, a city of Shechem; or, as the passage may be correctly rendered—"came in safety to the city of Shechem." Gen. xxxiii. 18. Attracted by the great beauty and fertility of the place, he formed the resolution of acquiring a permanent settlement there; and for that purpose, as already mentioned, he bought a piece of land from the natives. And although his residence there was of much shorter duration than was at first intended, owing to the savage outrage of his ruthless sons on the poor defenceless Shechemites, for the unhappy defilement of his daughter Dinah, he still regarded the land as his lawful inheritance. When far removed from this place, he was still in the habit of sending his flocks to feed there. "Joseph's brethren went to feed their father's flocks at Shechem." Gen. xxxvii. 12. It was on a visit of tender affection to his brethren in this very region, that Joseph was unhumanly sold by them to the Ishmaelites going down to Egypt.

One of the most impressive scenes ever witnessed by the Israelites, and one intended and calculated to make a deep and lasting impression on their minds, took place in this region: it was the ceremonies connected with reading the law in the valley of Shechem, and the solemn and awful responses given from the lofty summits of the adjacent mountains. "These shall stand upon mount Gerizim to bless the people—and these shall stand on mount Ebal to curse." Deut. xxvii. 12, 13. The tribes appointed to bless were descended from Leah and Rachel, the free women; while those appointed to curse, were, with two exceptions, the descendants of the bond women. The mountains were clothed with a living mass of men; the priests standing with the ark in the valley beneath, read the law with a loud voice, turning their faces alternately to Gerizim and Ebal, as they pronounced the blessing and the curse; and from the overpowering throng that hung upon the respective mountains, came forth, with the voice of thunder, the solemn response—"amen." It is difficult to conceive a ceremony more simple, and yet so solemnly grand than this. By this expressive solemnity all Israel deliberately consented to the national covenant; declared that they expected the blessings stipulated to them, only in a way of obedience; and confessed that, individually and nationally, they should merit, and might expect, to be accursed of God, if they were disobedient to his commands.

Not long after, when Joshua convened and met the assembled tribes to give them his last and parting address, it took place on this very scene. It is recorded in the 24th chapter of his Book, and it is very earnest and very affecting. He brings them under a solemn engagement to serve the Lord; and the people, still retaining a lively impression of the wonderful scenes which that generation had passed through, yielded a ready and a cordial obedience. "And the people said unto Joshua, the Lord our God will we serve, and his voice will we obey. So Joshua made a covenant with the people that day, and set them a statute and an ordinance in Shechem."

About two hundred years after this the city of Shechem was the scene of a fearful tragedy. Abimelech, an unworthy son of the celebrated Gideon, born of a concubine of Shechem, contrived to ingratiate himself with his mother's people, and persuaded them to recognise him as king in preference to