

Deuteronomy 27:11

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And Moses charged the people the same day, saying,

Analysis

And Moses charged the people the same day, saying—The Hebrew vayetsav Moshe et-ha-am ba-yom ha-hu lemor ("and Moses commanded the people on that day, saying") introduces the dramatic covenant renewal ceremony at Mounts Gerizim and Ebal. Tsavah (commanded/charged) indicates authoritative instruction with binding force. Ba-yom ha-hu ("on that day") refers to Moses' final addresses before Israel crosses the Jordan.

This verse begins the liturgical instructions for the Shechem covenant ceremony (verses 11-26), where Israel will publicly affirm covenant blessings and curses upon entering the land. Six tribes will stand on Mount Gerizim to bless, six on Mount Ebal to curse (verses 12-13). The Levites will pronounce twelve curses covering covenant violations (verses 15-26), and the people will respond "Amen" to each.

This ceremony was fulfilled in Joshua 8:30-35, where Joshua built an altar on Ebal, wrote the law on stones, and read all the blessings and curses with Israel assembled between the two mountains. The geographical setting—Gerizim (blessing) and Ebal (curse)—dramatized the two covenant paths before Israel: obedience leading to blessing, disobedience to curse (chapter 28).

Historical Context

Mount Gerizim and Mount Ebal stand opposite each other in central Canaan near ancient Shechem (modern Nablus), creating a natural amphitheater. Gerizim rises

south of the valley, Ebal to the north. The site's acoustics allow voices to carry across the valley. Shechem held deep patriarchal significance—Abraham built an altar there (Genesis 12:6-7), Jacob purchased land there (Genesis 33:18-20), and Joseph's bones were later buried there (Joshua 24:32). Choosing this location for covenant renewal connected Israel's present to their ancestral past. Archaeological excavations on Mount Ebal have uncovered what some scholars identify as Joshua's altar, though this remains debated.

Related Passages

Psalms 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Study Questions

1. How does the public, dramatic nature of the Gerizim-Ebal covenant ceremony teach us about the necessity of open commitment and corporate accountability in covenant relationship with God?
2. What does Moses' instruction on "the same day" reveal about the urgency of preparing God's people for covenant faithfulness before entering seasons of new opportunity and challenge?

Interlinear Text

וַיִּצַּח	וַיִּצַּח	וַיִּצַּח	וַיִּצַּח	וַיִּצַּח	וַיִּצַּח	וַיִּצַּח
charged	And Moses	H853	the people	the same day	H1931	saying
H6680	H4872		H5971	H3117		H559

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