

Deuteronomy 27:12

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

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

Analysis

These shall stand upon mount Gerizim to bless the people—The six tribes positioned on Gerizim (Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar, Joseph, Benjamin) were descendants of Jacob's wives Rachel and Leah, representing covenant privilege. The Hebrew berakah (blessing) contrasts with qelalah (curse) in verse 13, creating a dramatic liturgical antiphony.

The choice of Gerizim and Ebal was divinely ordained (Deuteronomy 11:29) for this covenant ratification ceremony to be performed **when ye are come over Jordan**. Joshua 8:30-35 records the actual fulfillment. Geographically, these twin mountains flank ancient Shechem (modern Nablus), creating a natural amphitheater where the entire assembly could hear. Theologically, this ceremony placed Israel between blessing and curse, life and death—the two paths of covenant response that structure all of Deuteronomy (30:15-20).

The placement of Levi among the blessing tribes is significant, as verses 14-26 assign the Levites to pronounce the curses. This paradox shows that even those who declare judgment stand under the same covenant obligations, and that true priestly ministry includes prophetic denunciation of sin.

Historical Context

This ceremony occurred at Shechem, a site rich with patriarchal history—Abraham built an altar there (Genesis 12:6-7), Jacob buried foreign gods there (Genesis 35:4), and Joseph's bones would later be interred there (Joshua 24:32). Shechem's location in the central hill country made it the geographical heart of the Promised Land. The ceremony likely occurred soon after the conquest of Ai (Joshua 8:30-35), demonstrating Israel's commitment to covenant obedience before continuing military campaigns. Archaeological evidence confirms significant Late Bronze Age occupation at Shechem, consistent with the biblical timeline.

Related Passages

1 John 4:8 — God is love

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

Study Questions

1. How does the physical positioning of tribes on mountains of blessing and cursing illustrate the spiritual reality that we all stand before God's judgment?
2. What does the inclusion of Levi among both blessing-proclaimers and curse-pronouncers teach about the responsibilities of spiritual leadership?

Interlinear Text

אַלְהָ	יְעַמֵּד	בְּרוּ	אֶת	בְּעַמָּה	עַל	בְּרֵ
H428	These shall stand	to bless	H853	the people	H5921	upon mount
	H5975	H1288		H5971		H2022
גֶּרֶזִים	כְּעַבְרֵךְ מִ	אֶת	פְּרָד	שְׁמֻעוֹן	וְלֵוִי	וְיְהוּדָה
Gerizim	when ye are come over	H853	Jordan	Simeon	and Levi	and Judah
H1630	H5674		H3383	H8095	H3878	H3063
וְבְנֵי	וְיְהִזְחָקָר					
and Issachar	and Joseph	and Benjamin				
H3485	H3130	H1144				

Additional Cross-References

Judges 9:7 (Parallel theme): And when they told it to Jotham, he went and stood in the top of mount Gerizim, and lifted up his voice, and cried, and said unto them, Hearken unto me, ye men of Shechem, that God may hearken unto you.

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