

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

הָרַר עַל הָעָם אֶת לְבָרָךְ יַעֲמִדוּ אֵלֶּה
H428 **These shall stand** H5975 **to bless** H1288 H853 **the people** H5971 H5921 **upon mount** H2022

וַיְהִי־הָיָה וְלֵוִי וְשִׁמְעוֹן בְּעֶבְרֶכֶּם גֵּרִיזִים
H1630 **Gerizim** H5674 **when ye are come over** H853 **Jordan** H3383 **Simeon** H8095 **and Levi** H3878 **and Judah** H3063

וַיִּשְׁשַׁךְ וַיִּזְכֹּר וַיְבָרֵךְ
H3485 **and Issachar** H3130 **and Joseph** H1144 **and Benjamin**

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.