

# Deuteronomy 27:13

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And these shall stand upon mount Ebal to curse; Reuben, Gad, and Asher, and Zebulun, Dan, and Naphtali.

## Analysis

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**These shall stand upon mount Ebal to curse**—The six tribes assigned to Ebal (Reuben, Gad, Asher, Zebulun, Dan, Naphtali) included the sons of the concubines Bilhah and Zilpah, plus Reuben (who lost his birthright through sin, Genesis 35:22) and Zebulun. This arrangement wasn't about inherent unworthiness but liturgical function in a covenant ceremony emphasizing human accountability.

The Hebrew *qelalah* (curse) represents more than mere misfortune—it signifies divine judgment, covenant sanctions, and exclusion from blessing. Mount Ebal would later receive the altar of unhewn stones (Deuteronomy 27:5-6) and the inscribed law stones (27:2-3), making it paradoxically both the mountain of cursing and the place of sacrifice. This foreshadows how Christ became a curse for us (Galatians 3:13) to transform judgment into redemption.

The symmetry of six tribes on each mountain creates balance in the ceremony, but the content of the liturgy (verses 15-26) contains only curses, not explicit blessings. The blessings are assumed in covenant faithfulness; the curses require dramatic public articulation to establish accountability for secret sins.

## Historical Context

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Mount Ebal rises approximately 3,080 feet, while Gerizim across the valley reaches about 2,890 feet. The acoustics between these mountains are remarkable—modern experiments have demonstrated that a speaker positioned correctly can

be heard throughout the valley. The Samaritans later built their temple on Gerizim (John 4:20), claiming it as the true worship site, but Scripture consistently identifies Ebal as the altar location (Deuteronomy 27:4-8, Joshua 8:30).

## Related Passages

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**James 2:17** — Faith and works

**Hebrews 11:1** — Definition of faith

## Study Questions

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1. How does the placement of the altar on the mountain of cursing (not blessing) prefigure the gospel message of atonement through judgment-bearing?
2. What does the public, communal nature of this curse ceremony teach about corporate responsibility for covenant faithfulness?

## Interlinear Text

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רְאֹבוֹן עֵבֶל עֵבֶל לְעֵבֶן  
H428 And these shall stand H5975 H5921 to curse  
H7045 H2022 H5858 H7205

וְנִפְתָּלִים אֶשְׁר וְזָבָל אֶשְׁר  
Gad and Asher and Zebulun Dan and Naphtali  
H1410 H836 H2074 H1835 H5321

## Additional Cross-References

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**Deuteronomy 27:4** (Parallel theme): Therefore it shall be when ye be gone over Jordan, that ye shall set up these stones, which I command you this day, in mount Ebal, and thou shalt plaster them with plaster.

