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*Two mountains...*

*Rabbi Alon Meltzer*

*A New Page of Talmud –  
Re'eh 5782*



When your Hashem, your God brings you into the land that you are about to enter and possess, you shall pronounce the blessing at Mount Gerizim and the curse at Mount Ebal. Both are on the other side of the Jordan, beyond the west road that is in the land of the Canaanites who dwell in the Arabah—near Gilgal, by the terebinths of Moreh. — **Devarim 11:29-30**<sup>1</sup> The rabbis say: God said: "I did not give Israel the blessings in the curses for their hurt, but only to show them the good way which they should choose in order to receive reward." — **Devarim Rabbah 4:1**<sup>2</sup> Rabbi Levi said: To what can this be compared? To a slave

whose master says to them: If you listen to me I have a bracelet of gold for you, and if not, then I have chains of iron for you. Such God said to the Israelites: If you do My will, then blessing and goodness, and if not, then curse. Behold, two

paths are before you. See that I have placed before you the choice of blessing or curse.— **Devarim Rabbah 4:2**<sup>3</sup> MISHNAH: Blessings and curses, how? When Israel had crossed the Jordan they came to Mount Gerizim and Mount Ebal in Samaria, next to Sichem which is close to the terebinths of guidance, as it is said: "They are on the other side of the Jordan, etc.", and at another place it says: "Abram travelled through the Land up to the place of Sichem, up to the terebinth of guidance." Since the terebinth of guidance mentioned there is at Shechem so the terebinths of guidance mentioned here are at Shechem— **Jerusalem Talmud, Sotah 7:3:1**<sup>4</sup> Both procedures – setting up the engraved stones, and the blessings and curses recited on the two mountains – are designed to give visual impact to an essentially auditory experience. Seeing, in Judaism, is ultimately about hearing.

you shall pronounce the blessing at Mount Gerizim and the curse at Mount Ebal

את־הבְּרָכָה עַל־הַר גְּרִזִים וְאֶת־הַקְּלָלָה  
עַל־הַר עֵיבָל  
**Devarim 11:29**

Israel is the people called on to reject images in favour of words; to discard appearances and follow, instead, the commanding voice. **Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks**<sup>5</sup> The clear message, I believe, is that the covenant to be enacted on Mounts Gerizim and Ebal upon entry to the Land is the second generation's Matan Torah, the concretizing of their unique relationship with God. THAT is in fact something worthy of virtually an entire book of the Torah. Significantly, each generation's covenant with God is tailor-made to uniquely suit its particular needs. Consider the differences between the two covenants. At

Mount Sinai, the people are warned repeatedly not to touch the mountain, and they cower in the background, daring to speak only so as to express the request that God stop communicating with

them directly, lest they perish. In contrast, at Mounts Gerizim and Ebal, the people stand at the very tops of the mountains, and verse after verse repeatedly informs us that the entire nation declares, "Amen," after each and every utterance.—

**Dena Rock,**

<https://blogs.timesofisrael.com/the-real-message-of-mount-gerizim-and-mount-ebal/><sup>6</sup>

**A new page of Talmud - Rabbi Alon Meltzer**