

Stones and Stories #2

Joshua: Gerizim, Eival and the Covenant

Commanded in the Desert

Devarim 11: 29 And it shall come to pass, when the LORD your God shall bring you into the land whither you go to possess it, **that you shall set the blessing upon mount Gerizim, and the curse upon mount Ebal. 30** Are they not beyond the Jordan, behind the way of the going down of the sun, in the land of the Canaanites that dwell in the Arabah, over against Gilgal, beside the terebinths of Moreh?

The Samaritan version of the Torah: 30 Are they not beyond the Jordan, behind the way of the going down of the sun, in the land of the Canaanites that dwell in the Arabah, over against Gilgal, beside the terebinths of Moreh **opposite Shechem?**

Devarim 27: 1 And Moses and the elders of Israel commanded the people, saying: 'Keep all the commandment which I command you this day. **2** And it shall be on the day when you shall pass over the Jordan unto the land which the LORD thy God giveth you, that you shall set up great stones, and plaster them with plaster. **3** And you shall write upon them all the words of this law, when you have passed over; that you may go in unto the land which the LORD your God gives you, a land flowing with milk and honey, as the LORD, the God of your fathers, has promised you. **4** And it shall be when you are passed over the Jordan, that you shall set up these stones, which I command you this day, **in mount Ebal**, and you shalt plaster them with plaster.

The Samaritan version of the Torah: 4 And it shall be when you are passed over the Jordan, that you shall set up these stones, which I command you this day, in **Mount Gerizim**, and you shall plaster them with plaster.

Joshua Fulfills the Commandment

At that time Joshua built an altar to the LORD, the God of Israel, on Mount Ebal, as Moses, the servant of the LORD, had commanded the Israelites—as is written in the Book of the Teaching of Moses.—an altar of unhewn stone upon which no iron had been wielded. They offered on it burnt offerings to the LORD, and brought sacrifices of well-being. And there, on the stones, he inscribed a copy of the Teaching that Moses had written for the Israelites. All Israel—stranger and

citizen alike—with their elders, officials, and magistrates, stood on either side of the Ark, facing the levitical priests who carried the Ark of the LORD's Covenant. Half of them faced Mount Gerizim and half of them faced Mount Ebal, as Moses the servant of the LORD had commanded them of old, in order to bless the people of Israel. After that, he read all the words of the Teaching, the blessing and the curse, just as is written in the Book of the Teaching. There was not a word of all that Moses had commanded that Joshua failed to read in the presence of the entire assembly of Israel, including the women and children and the strangers who accompanied them. (Joshua 8:30)

“Opposite Gilgal” It seems to mean a place from where you can see Gilgal. . .the Yerushalmi says according to Rabbi Elazar there were two hills called Mt. Gerizim and Mt. Eival [near Gilgal], according to Rabbi Yehudah they walked 120 mil in one day, according to Rabbi Elazar they did not leave their place. The Yerushalmi also adds that Rabbi Yishmael says that all times when it says “they came” in the Torah, it means after fourteen years: seven of conquest and seven of settlement. The blessings and curses were only said after those fourteen years. Rabbi Hanina asked Rabbi Mana, but it says when you cross the Jordan you will put up these stones [i.e., on that day]? He answered that the stones were put up immediately but the blessings and curses were only said after fourteen years. (Tosafot Sotah 33b:)

A Natural Amphitheater

Our route took us back through the valley, and we resolved that while passing between the two mountains of Ebal and Gerizim, in the still morning air, **we would try the experiment of reading the blessings and curses.** . . .But it is interesting to know that the spot chosen by God for this reading is **a vast natural amphitheatre**, in which the human voice can be heard to a surprising distance. About half-way between Shechem and the mouth of the valley in which it stands there is a deep, semicircular recess in the face of Mount Ebal, and a corresponding one precisely opposite to it in Mount Gerizim. **No man with his eyes open can ride along the valley without being struck with this singular formation.** As soon as I saw it I recognized it as the place of Joshua's reading. It has been asserted repeatedly by travelers that, although two men stationed on the opposite slopes of these two mountains are a mile apart, they can read so as to be heard by each other. We preferred to try the experiment in stricter accordance with Joshua's example; so I took a position, Bible in hand, in the middle of the valley, while Brother Taylor and Frank, to represent six tribes, climbed halfway up the slope of Mount Gerizim; and Brother Earl, to represent the other six tribes, took a similar position on Mount Ebal. I read, and they were to pronounce the amen after each curse or blessing. **Brother Taylor heard me distinctly, and I could hear his response.** But Brother Earl, though he could hear my voice, could not distinguish the words. This was owing to the fact that

some terrace-walls on the side of the mountain prevented him from ascending high enough, and the trees between me and him interrupted the passage of the sound. The experiment makes it perfectly obvious that if Joshua had a strong voice,—which I have not,—he could have been heard by his audience without the assistance of the Levites. As to the space included in the two amphitheatres, I think it ample to accommodate the six hundred thousand men with their families, though of this I cannot be certain. If more space was required, the aid of the Levites was indispensable.” (J.W. McGarvey 1879)

Joseph’s Tomb

The bones of Joseph, which the Israelites had brought up from Egypt, were buried at Shechem, in the piece of ground which Jacob had bought for a hundred from the children of Hamor, Shechem’s father, and which had become a heritage of the Josephites. (Joshua 24:32)

Who Are You Samaritans?

The king of Assyria brought [people] from Babylon, Cuthah, Avva, Hamath, and Sepharvaim, and he settled them in the towns of Samaria in place of the Israelites; they took possession of Samaria and dwelt in its towns. When they first settled there, they did not worship the LORD; so the LORD sent lions against them which killed some of them.

They said to the king of Assyria: “The nations which you deported and resettled in the towns of Samaria do not know the rules of the God of the land; therefore He has let lions loose against them which are killing them—for they do not know the rules of the God of the land.” The king of Assyria gave an order: “Send there one of the priests whom you have deported; let him^b *Heb.* “them.” go and dwell there, and let him teach them the practices of the God of the land.” So one of the priests whom they had exiled from Samaria came and settled in Bethel; he taught them how to worship the LORD. However, each nation continued to make its own gods and to set them up in the cult places which had been made by the people of Samaria; each nation [set them up] in the towns in which it lived. (Kings 2 17: 24-29)

When Was the Temple?

- **נחמיה יג (כג)** גם בַּיָּמִים הָהֵם רָאִיתִי אֶת הַיְּהוּדִים הַשֹּׁבֵי נְשִׁים <אֲשֶׁר דָּוְדוּת> אֲשֶׁר דָּדוּת <עֲמוֹנִיּוֹת> עֲמֻנִיּוֹת מוֹאָבִיּוֹת : (כח) וּמִבְּנֵי יוֹדָע בֶּן אֶלְיָשִׁיב הַכֹּהֵן הַגָּדוֹל חָתָן לְסַנְבַּלֵּט הַחֹרֶנִי וְאַבְרִיחָהוּ מֵעָלֵי :

But the elders of Jerusalem being very uneasy that the brother of Jaddua the high priest, though married to a foreigner, , should be a partner with him in the high priesthood, so they commanded Manasseh to divorce his wife, or not to

approach the altar, the high priest himself joining with the people in their indignation against his brother, and driving him away from the altar. Whereupon Manasseh came to his father-in-law, Sanballat, and told him, that although he loved his daughter Nicaso, yet was he not willing to be deprived of his sacerdotal dignity on her account, which was the principal dignity in their nation, and always continued in the same family.

And then Sanballat promised him not only to preserve to him the honor of his priesthood, but to procure for him the power and dignity of a high priest, and would make him governor of all the places he himself now ruled, if he would keep his daughter for his wife. He also told him further, that he would build him a temple like that at Jerusalem, upon Mount Gerizim which is the highest of all the mountains that are in Samaria (Josephus Antiquities of the Jews, Book 11, Chapter 8 2)