

Maamarei Mordechai

הסבר לפי ממש פשוט

Parshas Ki Savo 5785

Mordechai Schlachter

The people are told of the Torah's blessings and curse.

וְאֵלֶּה יַעֲמִדוּ עַל-הַקְּלָלָה בְּהָר עֵיבָל רְאוּבֵן גָּד וְאַשֶּׁר וְזִבְּלֻן דָּן וְנַפְתָּלִי:

“And these shall stand upon the curse, within Mount Eval: Reuven, Gad, Asher, Zevulun, Dan, and Naftali.” (Devarim 27:13).

Why did anyone have to stand on a mountain to hear curses? Why were the tribes split that some heard blessings and some heard curses? Is there any meaning to the division?

Moshe instructed the people, “After you have crossed the Yarden River, these shall stand for the blessing of the nation on Mount Gerizim: Shimon, Levi, Yehuda, Yissachar, Yosef, and Binyamin.” (Ibid 27:12). There are a few fundamental differences in the two pesukim. Additionally, Moshe commanded that upon crossing into the Land the people should “set up large stones and coat them in plaster.” (Ibid 27:2). At the time you cross, on the stones the people should write the body of law – this subsection of law – so that Hashem can give them the Land. (Ibid 27:3). Then it says, set up these stones on Mount Eval, coat them in plaster, when you cross the Yarden. (Ibid 27:4). All three pesukim mention “traversing the Yarden.” And the command to coat them in plaster is repeated in the pasuk to set up the stones with the writing on Mount Eval.

Moshe meant, on the day that you will cross the Yarden, carve out stones and you will coat them in plaster. Write on them this body of law, no plaster yet, and then cross the Yarden. That is a prerequisite to Hashem giving them the Land. Then, after they traverse the Yarden they shall erect these stones on Mount Gerizim and coat them in plaster. The plaster should cover the stones in locations where the writing is not present – the top and the base to hold the stones in place. It can also mean that the entire stones should be covered in plaster, covering the writings. Plaster should be thin enough so that the carvings in the rock will still leave the impression of the letters through the thin plaster. This is all if we take “and write” to refer to chiseling. The Torah uses the word to “write” by the luchos and they were chiseled. It could mean, literally write, (although writing on paper and parchment came later), and the plaster will surely cover the letters. It seems the plaster was meant to protect the writing – be it carved or inked. The writing was not to be on the plaster but the plaster was to be put on after the stones were set.

These stones were only to be put on Mount Gerizim. There were no stones put on Mount Eval. Further, when Moshe refers to Mount Gerizim, he says “these shall stand for the blessing on top of Har Gerizim. It can also mean, “these shall stand to bless the people.” In the next pasuk, it says, “And these shall stand upon the curse, within Har Eval.” One half were to stand to bless on the top of the mountain and one half were to stand on top of the curse with the mountain.

The blessings and curses were conditional. If the people obeyed then they will get all the blessings. (Ibid 28:1). The curses were only for those that commit certain sins. (Ibid 27:14-26). The next section of, "And if you will not listen with the voice of Hashem, your Lord..." with all its doom predictions, is a new section. It was not part of the curse given upon Mount Eval. That was the current instruction given by Moshe. The previous section of the Curse and the Blessing is stated now but were to be given later by the Leviim – and kohanim, along with Yehoshua – while the Levite women and children stood on Har Gerizim. (Yehoshua 8:30-35). Therefore, no tribes were cursed. They stood on top of the Curse. It would only happen upon individuals that actually sinned. They also stood "with" the mountain. They were fortified and steadfast. The Blessing was given through the six tribes to all the nation and they stood above the mountain. The blessings would uphold them. They did not need the mountain's resolve or protection.

There is also something special with the division of these six tribes. From Levi came naviim Yermiyahu, Yechezkel, Chabakuk, Chaggai, Zechariah, and Malachi (if he was Ezra). From Yehuda came shofet Othniel and also, naviim Yeshayahu, Amos, Micha, Nachum, and Tzefania. From Yissachar came shofet Tola. From Yosef came out shoftim Devorah, Gideon, Yair, Yiftach, and Avdon, and also Shmuel HaNavi. From Binyamin came out shofet Ehud. The kings of Klal Yisroel came from Binyamin, Yehuda, and Yosef. Yehoshua also descended from Yosef. These were the major leaders of Bnei Yisroel throughout the generations. They are the ones that would bless the people. Leaders are meant to the source of blessing for their people.

There were other leaders. From the other tribes came shoftim Ibzan and Elon from Zevulun, and Shimshon from Dan. Reuven had neviim Hoshea and Yoel; and Zevulun had navi Yona. Clearly these were not cursed tribes. They stood above the curse. The only ones that would be cursed, regardless of tribal affiliation, would be those that actually sinned. Blessings, though, come from the top and are then bestowed and showered upon the nation. The six tribes on Har Gerizim stood on top of the mountain. They stood as the leaders and teachers of Bnei Yisroel. They stood to bless. They would be blessed and they would then shower it upon the nation. It is true that the blessings came to all that followed the Torah. One need only to follow the Torah and the blessings will shower upon him or her. The extra benefit to blessing is that it can also be bestowed by the leaders. Good leaders can facilitate the blessings upon the nation, even if an individual is undeserving. The blessings were given upon the nation if the leaders were worthy and the nation as a whole were worthy. Even undeserving individuals, or even if the entire Bnei Yisroel is not worthy, but the leaders are, they will all still get the benefit of the blessings.

To the contrary, the tribes that stood on top of the curse showed they were above it. Only sinning individuals would suffer. A bad leader would not make the entire Bnei Yisroel doomed. They stood within the mountain or with the mountain. The curse would not penetrate the stone. A mountain cannot be cursed so the people would not be cursed, so long as they did not sin. This body of law was written, protected, and made to stand on that mountain, the mountain that would hear the curse. The Torah would stand as eternal protection.