

Deuteronomy 11:29-32

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Moses asks the Israelites to have a covenant-renewal ceremony in Canaan soon after entering the land.

Moses commanded the Israelites to have a covenant-renewal ceremony when they entered the Promised Land. This ceremony was to *come about, when the LORD your God brings you into the land where you are entering to possess it, that you shall place the blessing on Mount Gerizim and the curse on Mount Ebal. Mount Gerizim lies to the south of Shechem, and Mount Ebal lies to the north. Shechem was located on the shoulder between the two, on the eastern approach to the modern town of Nablus.*

According to [Deuteronomy 27](#), “Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar, Joseph, and Benjamin, six of the tribes, were to stand on Mount Gerizim to bless the people” ([Deuteronomy 27:12](#)). Conversely, “Reuben, Gad, Asher, Zebulun, Dan, and Naphtali,” the other six tribes, were to “stand on Mount Ebal for the curse” ([Deuteronomy 27:13](#)). These two mountains were at the base of the Canaanite city named Shechem.

Shechem was likely chosen because of its association with Israel’s forefathers to whom the Suzerain (Ruler) God first appeared and made lasting promises regarding Canaan. In fact, after receiving God’s instructions to leave his country, Abram “passed through the land as far as the site of Shechem, to the oak of Moreh and built an altar there to the LORD who had appeared to him” ([Genesis 12:6-7](#)). It was there in Shechem also that Isaac settled and “bought the piece of land where he had pitched his tent from the hand of the sons of Hamor, Shechem’s father and erected an altar” ([Genesis 33:19-20](#)). It was there that they “buried the bones of Joseph, which the sons of Israel brought up from Egypt” ([Joshua 24:32](#)). Thus, it seems appropriate that the place named “Shechem” was chosen for the renewal of God’s covenantal relationship with His people.

Just in case the Israelites would have any doubt regarding the location of Mount Gerizim and Mount Ebal, Moses tried to pinpoint their exact location while he was on the plain of Moab. He did this by asking *are they not across the Jordan, west of the way toward the sunset, in the land of the Canaanites who live in the Arabah, opposite Gilgal, beside the oaks of Moreh?*

The phrase *across the Jordan, west of the way toward the sunset* refers to the land of Canaan (west of the Jordan river). More specifically, these mountains were located *in the land of the Canaanites who live in the Arabah, opposite Gilgal, beside the oaks of Moreh*. The Arabah refers to the Jordan valley where the Canaanites dwelt ([Deuteronomy 1:7](#); [Joshua 8:14](#)). Gilgal was a place near Mount Gerizim and Mount Ebal, and was inhabited by Canaanites. The *oaks of Moreh* were located near Shechem ([Genesis 12:6](#); [Joshua 24:26](#)).

Moreover, Moses said to Israel, *For you are about to cross the Jordan to go in to possess the land which the LORD your God is giving you, and you shall possess it and live in it*. Moses told the people that they were *crossing over the Jordan*. This statement served as a motivation (encouragement) for the people of God, who had been wandering in the wilderness for about 40 years. They needed to know that they would *cross the Jordan* river to go in and possess the land the LORD had promised to them.

Nevertheless, as the Israelites would possess the land of Canaan and live in it, they were to obey all God's commandments in order to be blessed. To reinforce this concept, Moses repeated what he said earlier (v. 1) about what was necessary to receive the LORD's blessing in the land. The people needed to *be careful to do all the statutes and the judgments which I am setting before you today*. God was clear that if Israel was to continue in the land they were to fulfill their assignment to be a priestly nation, and live in the self-governing manner God had commanded, to love and serve one another. To live in truth and security, without envy or guile.

Biblical Text

²⁹ **“It shall come about, when the Lord your God brings you into the land where you are entering to possess it, that you shall place the blessing on Mount Gerizim and the curse on Mount Ebal. ³⁰ Are they not across the Jordan, west of the way toward the sunset, in the land of the Canaanites who live in the Arabah, opposite Gilgal, beside the oaks of Moreh? ³¹ For you are about to cross the Jordan to go in to possess the land which the Lord your God is giving you, and you shall possess it and live in it, ³² and you shall be careful to do all the statutes and the judgments which I am setting before you today.**