

"And you shall build there (on Mount Evol) an altar to Hashem your G-d." (27:5)

It seems rather peculiar that Mount Evol, the place where the curses were uttered, was chosen as the site for the erection of an altar for offering peace sacrifices and great rejoicing in tribute to Hashem. Would not Mount Gerizim, which was the site where the blessings were pronounced, have been a more suitable place? *Rabbi Moshe Feinstein Zt"l* points to expediency by which the curses brought about Jewish observance rather than to that of the blessings. Hashem in His infinite compassion employs disciplinary and punitive methods only as a means to induce us into the correct observance of His *mitzvos*. If there would be only reward and no punishment then people would be more easily swayed into transgression. They would think that the monetary and other physical pleasures to be accrued, override the everlasting rewards one would reap in the world-to-come. Therefore it is indeed the curses and punishments which have greater influence, and are the insurance that we will continue to serve Hashem. Mount Evol was therefore appropriately chosen as the site for rejoicing.

The commentaries reflect upon the aesthetic contrast between these two mountains. Mount Gerizim, covered with weeds and nettle, was bleak, and desolate, nurturing only thorns and thistle. In contrast Mount Evol was like a garden, where beautiful plants and trees sprouted all over its fertile land. *Rabbi Zalman Sorotzkin Zt"l* explains the blessings and curses which a person receives from Hashem, are by no means dependent on his place of dwelling. Whether he lives in an aesthetically attractive and culturally refined environment, or he resides in an underdeveloped and distasteful place, it is his actions, which ultimately determine his spiritual success or failure, and his being worthy of curse or blessing.