

## These shall stand to bless the people on Har Gerizim...And these shall stand for the curse on Har Eival...and Zevulun... (27:12,13)

Prior to entering *Eretz Yisrael*, the Jews were to assemble at two mountains. Hashem would enumerate twelve specific commandments, and *Klal Yisrael* would acknowledge the blessings to be provided for those who upheld these *mitzvos*, and the curses to befall those who spurned them. Six *shevatim*, tribes, stood on *Har Gerizim*, the mountain selected for blessing, while six other tribes stood on *Har Eival* to acknowledge the curses. The commentators explain why these twelve subjects were selected as the vehicles for the public affirmation of blessing and curse. The consensus of opinion is that these are unique commandments that the transgressor could do clandestinely, unknown to others. Others suggest that due to the nature of the sinner's noble position, they seemed to be above the law. The *Torah* emphasizes that blessing and curse will reach its mark - regardless of the individual, the circumstances surrounding his act, or the manner in which he executes the action.

A number of issues regarding this event should be clarified. First, how do we choose six tribes and impose curses upon them, while six others are being used for blessing? The *Yerushalmi* explains that the tribes that descended from Bilhah and Zilpah, who were originally the maidservants, and two of Leah's sons, Reuven and Zevulun, stood on *Har Eival*. We understand that Reuven should stand for curse, because he sinned, but what did Zevulun do to deserve this treatment? Furthermore, Zevulun had a partnership with Yissachar; Zevulun took care of Yissachar's material needs, so that he could fully devote himself to *Torah* study. Why should this partnership be divided, with Yissachar standing on the mountain for blessing and Zevulun standing for curse?

**Horav Boruch Sorotzkin, z"l**, responds by first explaining the nature and purpose of the partnership. It was essential that a segment of *Klal Yisrael* devote itself--entirely--to *Torah* study. In order to effect this, Hashem engineered a partnership in which those devotees' material needs would be met. Moreover, no Jew can exist without having some portion in *Torah*--either by direct study or material support of *Torah* study. The purpose of the Yissachar-Zevulun bond was to offer Zevulun this opportunity.

Regrettably, in most instances, the relationship is disparate. Zevulun has a limited scope of vision, seeing only one thing--that he is providing financial support to Yissachar, who seems to be doing nothing much. Yissachar, on the other hand, is willing to subsist upon very little. In most circumstances, he does so with the greatest appreciation to Zevulun for the meager support he receives.

One of the extraordinary aspects of these two mountains was the relationship of their aesthetic appearance to their function. *Har Gerizim*, the mountain of blessing, was barren and desolate, while *Har Eival*, the mountain singled out for curse, was in full bloom. One would expect

consistency between role and appearance. *Horav Sorotzkin* infers from this anomaly that he who thinks he is blessed and firmly rooted, whose material needs are well met, should not be so foolish as to think that the situation is firmly established and nothing can change his situation. Hashem can send His curse even to the fertile, beautifully landscaped mountain. Likewise, he who lives in a desolate, barren place, vulnerable and exposed to the elements, should not give up hope from receiving blessing. Hashem's blessing reaches all who are deserving, regardless of where they are located and the hopelessness of their circumstances.

The twelve "curses"/admonishments, coincided specifically with the twelve tribes. Each one was to receive a special, personal message from the curse that was directed to him. The curse, "*Cursed be the one who will not uphold the words of the Torah,*" was designated for the tribe of Zevulun. It was, therefore, necessary to place Zevulun on *Har Eival*, the mountain of curse, with its lush foliage, and Yissachar on the barren *Har Gerizim*, awaiting his blessing. They would turn to Zevulun and say, "*Cursed be the one who will not uphold the words of the Torah.*" Look at your circumstances and that of your brother/partner, Yissachar. Do not think that you, who are sitting amidst wealth and beauty are blessed, while your brother who wallows in desolation, is not. This may seem to be the case on this temporal world. One day, in *Olam Habah*, you will see that Yissachar is the one who is really blessed. Support and sustain him, so that you, too, can share in his good fortune.