

~GERIZIM, MOUNT (203)

(Ger'i-zim)

.. Samaritan Temple

- Mount **Gerizim**, now known as **Jebel et Tur**, **Har Gerizim**, together with Mount Ebal to the Northeast, is situated in the heart of the district of Samaria.
- Standing opposite each other, these mountains are the most eminent ones of the region and guard a significant East-West pass. Between the two mountains is a fertile valley, the Valley of Shechem, in which present-day Nablus is situated.
- Shechem, a strong and important city of Canaan before the Israelites entered the Promised Land, stood at the eastern end of the valley, about 1.5 kilometers (1 miles) Southeast of Nablus.
- The strategic location of Mounts **Gerizim** and Ebal gave them military and political significance, the area also being one of religious importance.
- Mount **Gerizim's** summit rises over 850 meters (2,800 feet) above the Mediterranean Sea. Though approximately 60 meters (200 feet) lower than Mount Ebal, **Gerizim** offers an excellent view of surrounding territory.
- From it one can see to the North the snowy peak of Mount Hermon, to the East the fertile valley of the Jordan, to the South the mountains in the territory of Ephraim, and to the West the Plain of Sharon and the blue Mediterranean.
- Abram or Abraham once camped near the big trees of Moreh between Mounts **Gerizim** and Ebal, and there he received Yehowah's promise;
- And Abram went on through the land as far as the site of Shechem, near the big trees of Moreh, and at that time the Canaanite was in the land. (**Genesis 12:6**)
- Yehowah now appeared to Abram and said; To your seed I am going to give this land. After that he built an altar there to Yehowah, who had appeared to him. (**Genesis 12:7**)

- **Jacob also camped in this vicinity.**
- **In time Jacob came safe and sound to the city of Shechem, which is in the land of Canaan, while he was coming from Paddanaram, and he pitched camp in front of the city. ([Genesis 33:18](#))**
- **In harmony with instructions given by Moses, the tribes of Israel assembled at **Mounts Gerizim** and Ebal under Joshua's direction shortly after their conquest of Ai.**
- **There the people heard the reading of the blessings they would receive if they obeyed Yehowah and the maledictions that awaited them if they disobeyed him.**
- **The tribes of Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar, Joseph, and Benjamin stood in front of **Mount Gerizim**. The Levites and the ark of the covenant were situated in the valley, and the other six tribes stood in front of Mount Ebal.**
- **And it must occur that when Yehowah your God brings you into the land to which you are going to take possession of it, you must also give the blessing upon **Mount Gerizim** and the malediction upon Mount Ebal. ([Deuteronomy 11:29](#))**
- **Are they not on the side of the Jordan toward the direction of the sunset, in the land of the Canaanites dwelling in the Arabah, in front of Gilgal, beside the big trees of Moreh? ([Deuteronomy 11:30](#))**
- **And Moses went on to command the people on that day, saying; ([Deuteronomy 27:11](#))**
- **The following are the ones who will stand to bless the people on **Mount Gerizim** when you have crossed the Jordan. Simeon and Levi and Judah and Issachar and Joseph and Benjamin. ([Deuteronomy 27:12](#))**
- **And the following are the ones who will stand for the malediction on Mount Ebal. Reuben, Gad and Asher and Zebulun, Dan and Naphtali. ([Deuteronomy 27:13](#))**
- **Then Joshua burned Ai and reduced it to an indefinitely lasting mound, as a desolation down to this day. ([Joshua 8:28](#))**

- And he hanged the king of Ai upon a stake until the evening time, and as the sun was about to set Joshua gave the command, and then they took his dead body down from the stake and pitched it at the entrance of the gate of the city and raised up a great pile of stones over him, down to this day. (Joshua 8:29)
- It was then that Joshua proceeded to build an altar to Yehowah the God of Israel, in Mount Ebal. (Joshua 8:30)
- Just as Moses the servant of Yehowah had commanded the sons of Israel, as it is written in the book of the Law of Moses. An altar of whole stones, upon which no iron tool has been wielded, and they went offering up burnt offerings upon it to Yehowah and sacrificing communion sacrifices. (Joshua 8:31)
- Then he wrote there upon the stones a copy of the Law of Moses that he had written before the sons of Israel. (Joshua 8:32)
- And all Israel and their older men and the officers and their judges were standing on this side and on that side of the Ark in front of the priests, the Levites, carrying the ark of the covenant of Yehowah, the alien resident as well as the native, one half of them in front of Mount Gerizim and the other half of them in front of Mount Ebal, just as Moses the servant of Yehowah had commanded, to bless the people of Israel first of all. (Joshua 8:33)
- And after this he read aloud all the words of the Law, the blessing and the malediction, according to all that is written in the book of the Law. (Joshua 8:34)
- There proved to be not a word of all that Moses had commanded that Joshua did not read aloud in front of all the congregation of Israel, together with the women and the little ones and the alien residents who walked in their midst. (Joshua 8:35)
- Apparently, the tribes stationed in front of Mount Gerizim responded to the blessings read in their direction, whereas the other tribes responded to the curses read in the direction of Mount Ebal.
- While it has been suggested that the blessings were read toward Mount Gerizim because of its greater beauty and fertility in contrast

with rocky, largely barren Mount Ebal, the Bible does not furnish any information on this matter.

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- This vast throng could hear the words from positions in front of either mountain. This was probably due, at least in part, to the excellent acoustics of the area.

See Also EBAL, MOUNT

- In the days of Israel's Judges, Gideon's son Jotham addressed the landowners of Shechem while standing on the top of **Mount Gerizim**.
- When they reported it to Jotham he at once went and stood on the top of **Mount Gerizim** and raised his voice and called out and said to them; Listen to me, you landowners of Shechem, and let God listen to you. ([Judges 9:7](#))
- Even today a ledge about halfway up the mountain is called Jotham's pulpit, but it is merely a traditional site.

• Samaritan Temple

- A Samaritan temple rivaling the one in Jerusalem was constructed on **Mount Gerizim** perhaps in the **Fourth Century B.C.E.** and was destroyed in **128 B.C.E.**
- According to tradition, it was desolated by John Hyrcanus. [[Jewish Antiquities, XI, 310,311,324, viii, 2,4](#)], [XIII, 254-256 \[ix, 1\]](#), [The Jewish War, I, 63, ii, 6](#)]
- Even up to modern times the Samaritans have celebrated festivals such as the Passover on **Mount Gerizim**, at what they believe to be the site of the ancient temple.

- It was evidently with reference to **Mount Gerizim** that the Samaritan woman told Jesus Christ; Our forefathers worshiped in this mountain, but you people say that in Jerusalem is the place where persons ought to worship.
- Accordingly he came to a city of Samaria called Sychar near the field that Jacob gave to Joseph his son. (**John 4:5**)
- The woman said to him; Sir, I perceive you are a prophet. (**John 4:19**)
- Our forefathers worshiped in this mountain, but you people say that in Jerusalem is the place where persons ought to worship. (**John 4:20**)
- As depicted on ancient coins discovered at Nablus, a temple of Zeus once stood on the Northeast part of **Mount Gerizim**, with an approach calculated to have had 1,500 steps.
- A church was built on the summit of the mountain in the **Fifth Century C.E.**, and another was constructed by the Byzantine emperor Justinian. It is suggested that ruins now found there are of Justinian's time.