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DEUTERONOMY 27:1 Moses and the elders of Israel commanded the people, saying, "Keep all the commandment which I command you this day.

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Moses commands the people to write the law upon stones, when they shall come to the promised land, Deu 27:1-3. And to set up these stones on Mount Ebal, Deu 27:4; and to build an altar of unhewn stones, and to offer on it burnt-offerings and peace-offerings, Deu 27:5-7. The words to be written plainly, and the people to be exhorted to obedience, Deu 27:8-10. The six tribes which should stand on Mount Gerizim to bless the people, Deu 27:11, Deu 27:12. Those who are to stand upon Mount Ebal to curse the transgressors, Deu 27:13. The different transgressors against whom the curses are to be denounced, Deu 27:14-26.

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DEUTERONOMY 27:2 It shall be on the day when you shall pass over the Jordan to the land which the LORD your God gives you, that you shall set yourself up great stones, and coat them with plaster.

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#### Verse 2

Thou shalt set thee up great stones - How many is not specified, possibly twelve, and possibly only a sufficient number to make a surface large enough to write the blessings and the curses on.

Plaster them with plaster - Perhaps the original *ושדת אתם בשיד vesadta otham bassid* should be translated, Thou shalt cement them with cement, because this was intended to be a durable monument. In similar cases it was customary to set up a single stone, or a heap, rudely put together, where no cement or mortar appears to have been used; and because this was common, it was necessary to give particular directions when the usual method was not to be followed. Some suppose that the writing was to be in relievo, and that the spaces between the letters were filled up by the mortar or cement. This is quite a possible case, as the Eastern inscriptions are frequently done in this way. There is now before me a large slab of basalt, two feet long by sixteen inches wide, on which there is an inscription in Persian, Arabic, and Tamul; in the two former the letters are all raised, the surface of the stone being dug out, but the Tamul is indented. A kind of reddish paint had been smeared over the letters to make them more apparent. Two Arabic marbles in the University of Oxford have the inscriptions in relievo, like those on the slab of basalt in my possession. In the opinion of some even this case may cast light upon the subject in question

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DEUTERONOMY 27:3 You shall write on them all the words of this law, when you have passed over; that you may go in to the land which the LORD your God gives you, a land flowing with milk and honey, as the LORD, the God of your fathers, has promised you.

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#### Verse 3

All the words of this law - After all that has been said by ingenious critics concerning the law ordered to be written on these stones, some supposing the whole Mosaic law to be intended, others, only the decalogue, I am fully of opinion that the (*תורה torah*) law or ordinance in question

simply means the blessings and curses mentioned in this and in the following chapter; and indeed these contained a very good epitome of the whole law in all its promises and threatenings, in reference to the whole of its grand moral design. See at the end of this chapter, Deu 27:26 (note).

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DEUTERONOMY 27:4 It shall be, when you have passed over the Jordan, that you shall set up these stones, which I command you this day, on Mount Ebal, and you shall coat them with plaster.

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#### Verse 4

Set up these stones - in Mount Ebal - So the present Hebrew text, but the Samaritan has Mount Gerizim. Dr. Kennicott has largely defended the reading of the Samaritan in his second dissertation on the present state of the Hebrew text, and Dr. Parry has defended the Hebrew against the Samaritan in his Case between Gerizim and Ebal fairly stated. So has J. H. Verschuur, in his Dissert. Critica. Many still think Dr. Kennicott's arguments unanswerable, and have no doubt that the Jews have here corrupted the text through their enmity to the Samaritans. On all hands it is allowed that Gerizim abounds with springs, gardens, and orchards, and that it is covered with a beautiful verdure, while Ebal is as naked and as barren as a rock. On this very account the former was highly proper for the ceremony of blessing, and the latter for the ceremony of cursing.

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DEUTERONOMY 27:5 There you shall build an altar to the LORD your God, an altar of stones. You shall not use any iron tool on them.

DEUTERONOMY 27:6 You shall build the altar of the LORD your God of uncut stones. You shall offer burnt offerings on it to the LORD your God.

DEUTERONOMY 27:7 You shall sacrifice peace offerings, and shall eat there. You shall rejoice before the LORD your God.

DEUTERONOMY 27:8 You shall write on the stones all the words of this law very plainly."

DEUTERONOMY 27:9 Moses and the priests the Levites spoke to all Israel, saying, "Be silence, and listen, Israel! Today you have become the people of the LORD your God.

DEUTERONOMY 27:10 You shall therefore obey the LORD your God's voice, and do his commandments and his statutes, which I command you this day."

DEUTERONOMY 27:11 Moses commanded the people the same day, saying,

DEUTERONOMY 27:12 "These shall stand on Mount Gerizim to bless the people, when you have passed over the Jordan: Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar, Joseph, and Benjamin.

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#### Verse 12

These shall stand upon Mount Gerizim to bless the people - Instead of upon Mount, etc., we may translate by, as the particle על al is sometimes used; for we do not find that the tribes did stand on either mount, for in Jos 8:33, when this direction was reduced to practice, we find the people did not

stand on the mountains, but over against them on the plain. See the observations at the end of this chapter, Deu 27:26 (note).

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DEUTERONOMY 27:13 These shall stand on Mount Ebal for the curse: Reuben, Gad, Asher, Zebulun, Dan, and Naphtali.

DEUTERONOMY 27:14 With a loud voice, the Levites shall say to all the men of Israel,

DEUTERONOMY 27:15 'Cursed is the man who makes an engraved or molten image, an abomination to the LORD, the work of the hands of the craftsman, and sets it up in secret.' All the people shall answer and say, 'Amen.'

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#### Verse 15

Cursed be the man, etc. - Other laws, previously made, had prohibited all these things; and penal sanctions were necessarily understood; but here God more openly declares that he who breaks them is cursed - falls under the wrath and indignation of his Maker and Judge. See the note on Exo 20:4.

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DEUTERONOMY 27:16 'Cursed is he who dishonours his father or his mother.' All the people shall say, 'Amen.'

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#### Verse 16

Setteth light by his father or his mother - See the note on Exo 20:12.

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DEUTERONOMY 27:17 'Cursed is he who removes his neighbour's landmark.' All the people shall say, 'Amen.'

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#### Verse 17

Removeth his neighbor's landmark - See before on Deu 19:14 (note), and on Exo 20:17 (note). And for all the rest of these curses, see the notes on Exodus 20 (note), and the observations at the end of it.

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DEUTERONOMY 27:18 'Cursed is he who leads the blind astray on the road.' All the people shall say, 'Amen.'

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#### Verse 18

The blind to wander out of the way - A sin against the sixth commandment. See on Exo 20:13 (note).

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DEUTERONOMY 27:19 'Cursed is he who withholds justice from the foreigner, fatherless, and widow.' All the people shall say, 'Amen.'

DEUTERONOMY 27:20 'Cursed is he who lies with his father's wife, because he dishonours his father's bed.' All the people shall say, 'Amen.'

DEUTERONOMY 27:21 'Cursed is he who lies with any kind of animal.' All the people shall say, 'Amen.'

DEUTERONOMY 27:22 'Cursed is he who lies with his sister, his father's daughter or his mother's daughter.' All the people shall say, 'Amen.'

DEUTERONOMY 27:23 'Cursed is he who lies with his mother-in-law.' All the people shall say, 'Amen.'

DEUTERONOMY 27:24 'Cursed is he who secretly kills his neighbour.' All the people shall say, 'Amen.'

DEUTERONOMY 27:25 'Cursed is he who takes a bribe to kill an innocent person.' All the people shall say, 'Amen.'

DEUTERONOMY 27:26 'Cursed is he who doesn't uphold the words of this law by doing them.' All the people shall say, 'Amen.'"

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#### Verse 26

That confirmeth not all the words of this law - The word כל col, All, is not found in any printed copy of the Hebrew text; but the Samaritan preserves it, and so do six MSS. in the collections of Kennicott and De Rossi, besides several copies of the Chaldee Targum. The Septuagint also, and St. Paul in his quotation of this place, Gal 3:10. St. Jerome says that the Jews suppressed the word, that it might not appear that they were bound to fulfill All the precepts in the law of Moses.

1. Dr. Kennicott, who contends that it was the Decalogue that was written on the stones mentioned in this chapter, says, "If we examine these twelve curses, they will appear to contain a strong enforcement of the ten commands; and it is highly probable that the curses were here proclaimed principally to secure obedience to the commandments, as will be made more clear by the table: -

The first, second, third, and fourth Commandments Gal 3:15 - Cursed be the man that maketh any graven or molten image, an abomination to the Lord, etc.

The fifth Commandment Gal 3:16 - Cursed be he that setteth light by his father or his mother.

The sixth Commandment Gal 3:25 - Cursed be he that taketh reward to slay an innocent person. Gal 3:24 - Cursed be he that smiteth his neighbor secretly. Gal 3:18 - Cursed be he that maketh the blind to wander out of the way.

The seventh Commandment Gal 3:20 - Cursed be he that lieth with his father's wife. Gal 3:21 - Cursed be he that lieth with any beast. Gal 3:22 - Cursed be he that lieth with his sister. Gal 3:23 - Cursed be he that lieth with his mother-in-law.

The eighth Commandment Gal 3:17 - Cursed be he that removeth his neighbor's landmark.

The ninth Commandment Gal 3:19 - Cursed be he that perverteth the judgment of the stranger, fatherless, and widow.

The tenth Commandment Gal 3:26 - Cursed be he that confirmeth not all the words of this law to do them."

Many will think this arrangement fanciful; and the analogy far from being natural.

2. In pronouncing these blessings and curses, the Talmud says, six tribes went up towards the top of Mount Gerizim, and six towards the top of Mount Ebal; and the priests and the Levites, and the ark stood beneath in the midst. The priests encompassed the ark, and the Levites stood around about the priests; and all Israel on this side and on that; see Jos 8:33. Then they turned their faces towards Mount Gerizim and pronounced the blessings, Blessed be the man, etc., and those on each side answered Amen! then they turned their faces towards Mount Ebal, and pronounced the curse, Cursed be the man, etc., and those on each side answered Amen! till they had finished the blessings and the curses; and afterwards they brought stones and built an altar. Some suppose that the Levites were divided into two grand bodies, part standing at or on Mount Gerizim, and part on Mount Ebal, and that with each division were some of the priests. The whole Dr. Parry supposes to have been arranged in the following manner: -

3. It is worthy of remark that Moses assigns to the children of Rachel and Leah, the two mothers of the family, the office of blessing the people, as being the most honorable; and these he places on Mount Gerizim. On the contrary, he assigns the office of cursing the people to the sons of Zilpah and Bilhah, as being the least honorable office; but with these he joins Zebulun, the youngest of Leah's sons, and Reuben, the eldest. As there must be six tribes on each mountain, it was necessary that while six of the sons of Rachel and Leah, the legitimate wives, should be employed in blessing, two tribes descending from the same mothers should be joined to the other four who proceeded from the handmaids in order to make up the number six. The question is, which two of the more honorable tribes should be joined to the four least honorable, in order to complete the number six? Zebulun is chosen, because being the sixth and youngest of all Leah's sons, he was the least honorable of those who proceeded from the free woman; and Reuben is chosen, who, though the eldest of Jacob's sons, and entitled to the birthright, had lost it by his transgression. And hence he, in his posterity, was degraded, and was obliged to pronounce the curse, Cursed is he that lieth with his father's wife. See Gen 49:3-4 (note), and Gen 35:22 (note), and the notes on both places.

4. It is strange how long the disgrace consequent on some flagrant transaction of a parent may cleave to his posterity! See this exemplified in the posterity of Reuben. Hence, with great propriety we may pray, Remember not, Lord, our offenses, nor the offenses of our forefathers; neither take thou vengeance of our sins." - Litany. For the offenses of our forefathers may be so remembered against their posterity, that God, in the course of his providence, may still keep up a controversy in secular matters with the descendants (though even pious) of unholy ancestors; for as all men are seminally included in the parents, they come into the world depraved with their depravity, and in some sort liable to their curses, though not so far as to affect their eternal interests without the addition of their own personal offenses. Thus God may be said to visit the sins of the fathers upon the children, even unto the third and fourth generation; as he may have a controversy with the land for the evil which has been done in it, and for which no proper atonement has been made. Why is it that at this moment Spain is suffering the most afflictive and cruel desolations? What has she done to merit all this? Is she more wicked than all the European nations because she suffers such things? Here is the mystery: Nations, as such, can only be punished in this world. Look at the torrents of innocent blood shed by their ancestors in South America 300 years ago; and see now and adore the

awful hand of retributive justice! (December, 1811). We often see persons tried and afflicted, for whose distresses we can give no legitimate reason. We find others who, though they rise early, sit up late, work hard, eat the bread of carefulness, and have a full knowledge of their business, yet never get on in life. Who can account for this? Shall we say that some injustice in their ancestors has brought down the displeasure of God upon the earthly possessions that descended in that line, so that the goods ill gotten shall never be permitted to multiply? I knew an honest man, dead many years since, who by great diligence, punctuality, and integrity in his business, had acquired considerable property. Some time before his death, having by will divided his substance among his sons and his daughters, he expressed himself thus: "Children, you need not fear the curse of God on this property; every penny of it was honestly earned." Many years have since elapsed, and the blessing of God has been in the basket and in the store of all his children. Parents! leave nothing behind you that you cannot say before your God, with a clear conscience, "This has been honestly earned." If all bequests of a contrary description were to be deducted from last wills and testaments, the quantum of descending property would be, in many cases, small indeed.