

Deuteronomy 12:19

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Take heed to thyself that thou forsake not the Levite as long as thou livest upon the earth.

Analysis

The warning regarding Levites: 'Take heed to thyself that thou forsake not the Levite as long as thou livest upon the earth.' The emphatic hishamer (הִשָּׁמֶר, 'guard yourself') warns against neglecting Levites. Their landlessness made them economically dependent on tithes and fellowship offerings. The temporal extent 'as long as thou livest' indicates permanent obligation. Supporting ministers of God isn't optional charity but covenant duty. This principle extends to New Testament: 'they which preach the gospel should live of the gospel' (1 Corinthians 9:14). Neglecting those who serve God spiritually violates covenant obligation.

Historical Context

Malachi 3:8-10 indicts Israel for 'robbing God' by withholding tithes that supported Levites. Nehemiah 13:10-13 describes Levites abandoning temple service to work fields because people failed to support them. Later Judaism developed elaborate tithe systems. Early church support of apostles and elders (1 Timothy 5:17-18; Philippians 4:15-18) continues this principle. Covenant communities must sustain those devoted to spiritual ministry.

Related Passages

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Study Questions

1. What responsibility do believers have to support those in full-time ministry?
2. How does neglecting ministers of God's word reflect ingratitude toward God Himself?
3. What balance should exist between voluntary giving and obligatory support for church leadership?

Interlinear Text

הִשָּׁמֶר	לְךָ	פָּן	תַּעַז ב	אֶת	הַלֵּוִי	כָּל
Take heed	H0	H6435	to thyself that thou forsake	H853	not the Levite	H3605
H8104			H5800		H3881	
יָמֶיךָ	עַל	אֲדָמָתְךָ:				
as long as thou livest	H5921	upon the earth				
H3117		H127				

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