

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 (הִשְׁמֵר, '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

הַשְׁמָר לְבִנְךָ תִּפְנַצֵּךְ אַתָּה כָּל־פָּלִי וְכָל־
Take heed H8104 H6435 to thyself that thou forsake H5800 H853 not the Levite H3605
H3881

עַל אַדְמָתֶךָ יְמִינְךָ יְמִינְךָ
upon the earth H5921 H127
as long as thou livest H3117

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