

Deuteronomy 18:2

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Therefore shall they have no inheritance among their brethren: the LORD is their inheritance, as he hath said unto them.

Analysis

This verse establishes the unique inheritance of the Levitical priesthood. The Hebrew phrase **וְנַחֲלָה לֹא־יִהְיֶה־לוֹ** (venachalah lo-yihyeh-lo, 'and inheritance shall not be to him') emphasizes total absence—no land allotment like the other tribes. The term **נַחֲלָה** (nachalah, 'inheritance') appears three times in this verse, creating deliberate emphasis through repetition. Most striking is the declaration **יְהוָה הוּא נַחֲלָתוֹ** (YHWH hu nachalato, 'the LORD Himself is his inheritance')—not blessings from God, but God Himself as the possession.

The phrase **כַּאֲשֶׁר דִּבֶּר־לוֹ** (ka'asher dibber-lo, 'as He spoke to him') references God's earlier promises (Numbers 18:20). This arrangement required radical faith—the Levites depended entirely on tithes and offerings from other tribes for sustenance. The word **בְּקֶרֶב אֶחָיו** (beqereb echav, 'among their brothers') shows they lived scattered throughout Israel, not in one territory, enabling their teaching and priestly ministry throughout the nation. This scattered distribution made them accessible to all tribes while maintaining their dependence on God's provision through the people's faithfulness. The concept anticipates New Testament teaching about storing treasures in heaven (Matthew 6:19-21).

Historical Context

When Israel conquered Canaan under Joshua (around 1406-1400 BC), the land was divided among twelve tribes—but Levi received no territorial inheritance. Instead,

they received 48 cities scattered throughout Israel's territory (Joshua 21), including six cities of refuge. The Levites served as priests, teachers of the Law, judges, and preservers of Israel's spiritual heritage. Their financial support came through tithes (one-tenth of crops and livestock) and portions of sacrifices. This system created dependence on both God and the faithfulness of fellow Israelites. When Israel became spiritually corrupt, the Levites often suffered poverty (Malachi 3:8-10). This arrangement prefigures New Testament principles of spiritual leaders being supported by the congregation (1 Corinthians 9:13-14).

Related Passages

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Study Questions

1. What does it mean practically for God Himself to be one's inheritance rather than material possessions?
2. How did the Levites' lack of land inheritance actually enhance their spiritual ministry?
3. What parallels exist between the Levitical system and modern church leadership support?
4. How does this verse challenge contemporary attitudes about materialism and security?
5. In what ways did the scattered placement of Levitical cities benefit Israel's spiritual life?

Interlinear Text

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|--|-------|--|-----------|-----------------|----------------|
| נָחֳלָת וְ | לֹא | לֹא | לֹא | בְּקִרְבֵּן | אֶחָיו |
| Therefore shall they have no inheritance | H3808 | H1961 | H0 | among | their brethren |
| H5159 | | | | H7130 | H251 |
| יְהוָה | הָ | נָחֳלָת וְ | בְּאִשׁוֹ | דָּבָר | |
| the LORD | H1931 | Therefore shall they have no inheritance | H834 | as he hath said | |
| H3068 | | H5159 | | H1696 | |
| לִי | | | | | |
| H0 | | | | | |

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