

Deuteronomy 18:6

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And if a Levite come from any of thy gates out of all Israel, where he sojourned, and come with all the desire of his mind unto the place which the LORD shall choose;

Analysis

If a Levite come from any of thy gates out of all Israel, where he sojourned (וְכִי־בָּזָא בְּלִי מֶאֱחָד שָׁעַרְבָּךְ)—this protects itinerant Levites' rights. Though Levites received 48 cities (Numbers 35:1-8), many lived scattered throughout Israel teaching the law. The phrase **with all the desire of his mind** (bechol-avvat nafsho) shows passionate devotion—literally "with all the desire of his soul." This wasn't mercenary service but wholehearted commitment.

Unto the place which the LORD shall choose refers to the central sanctuary—first the tabernacle, later Jerusalem's temple. Before Solomon's temple, Shiloh served this function (Joshua 18:1). The law ensures that any Levite, regardless of where he lived in Israel, could come to the central sanctuary to serve and receive equal treatment with resident priests.

This prevented a two-tier priesthood—local vs. temple priests—ensuring equality based on tribal calling, not geography or connections. It also protected against impoverishment of rural Levites who might lack adequate local support. 2 Chronicles 31:2-19 describes Hezekiah implementing this provision, registering all Levites by genealogy to ensure fair distribution of offerings.

Historical Context

This law anticipated Israel's settlement in Canaan with a central sanctuary (eventually Jerusalem). During the judges period, Levites did travel seeking service (Judges 17-19, showing both the practice and its potential abuses). When Jeroboam established rival sanctuaries at Dan and Bethel (1 Kings 12:28-31), he violated this centralization principle, appointing non-Levitical priests and fragmenting worship. Faithful Levites migrated to Judah, strengthening Jerusalem's orthodoxy.

Related Passages

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

Study Questions

1. How does God's provision for itinerant ministers challenge churches to support missionaries and traveling ministries?
2. What does the phrase 'with all the desire of his mind' teach about the heart attitude required for ministry?

Interlinear Text

וְיָבֹא אֶל מִקְלֶת שַׁעַר יְהוָה מִן־אֹתָהָיִם
H3588 and come H3881 And if a Levite H259 from any H8179 of thy gates H3605 out of all Israel H3478

אֲוֹתָה בְּכָל וְיָבֹא אֶל אֲשֶׁר הָיָה רְגָבָה
H834 H1931 where he sojourned H1481 H8033 and come H3605 with all the desire H185

יְהוָה: אֲשֶׁר יְבִחַר רְגָבָה וְמִן־אֶל גְּפַשׁ וְ
H3068 which the LORD H977 shall choose H834 unto the place H4725 of his mind H5315

Additional Cross-References

Deuteronomy 12:5 (References Lord): But unto the place which the LORD your God shall choose out of all your tribes to put his name there, even unto his habitation shall ye seek, and thither thou shalt come:

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