

Ezekiel 45:4

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

The holy portion of the land shall be for the priests the ministers of the sanctuary, which shall come near to minister unto the LORD: and it shall be a place for their houses, and an holy place for the sanctuary.

Analysis

The holy portion designation—'This shall be the holy portion of the land; it shall be for the priests the ministers of the sanctuary, which shall come near to minister unto the LORD'—allocates land for priestly support. The Hebrew קָדֵשׁ (qodesh, 'holy portion') indicates consecrated territory, not common use. Priests receive this 'for houses, and for an holy place for the sanctuary.' The double provision—houses (dwelling) and sanctuary service—demonstrates comprehensive care for ministers. Reformed theology sees the principle continuing: 'they which preach the gospel should live of the gospel' (1 Corinthians 9:14). Churches must support pastors adequately—not luxuriously but sufficiently (1 Timothy 5:17-18). The holy portion's designation prevents priests from worldly entanglements while serving God (2 Timothy 2:4).

Historical Context

Levitical law provided for priests through tithes, offerings, and land allocation (Numbers 18:20-24, 35:1-8). Priests received no tribal inheritance—'the LORD is their inheritance' (Deuteronomy 18:1-2)—but required material support. The Levitical cities (48 total) distributed throughout Israel provided priestly housing (Joshua 21). When priests were neglected, worship deteriorated (Nehemiah 13:10-11). Malachi condemned withholding tithes—'robbing God' (Malachi 3:8-10).

Paul defended his right to financial support while sometimes foregoing it to avoid accusations (1 Corinthians 9:3-18, 2 Corinthians 11:7-9). The principle remains: faithful ministers deserve adequate support enabling full-time focus on spiritual service without financial distraction or secular employment necessity.

Related Passages

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Study Questions

1. How generously do you support gospel ministers—viewing it as duty, privilege, or optional charity?
2. Does your church provide adequate pastoral support enabling focused ministry versus forcing bi-vocational scrambling?
3. How do you balance supporting ministers while avoiding enriching charlatans (testing fruit, accountability)?

Interlinear Text

לְשָׁרֶת תִּשְׁבֶּן יְמֵינוֹ מִן־קְרֵב־דָּשָׁן
The holy portion of the land shall be for the priests the ministers
H6944 H4480 H776 H1931 H3548 H8334

אֶת־לְשָׁרֶת תִּשְׁבֶּן יְמֵינוֹ מִן־קְרֵב־יְמֵינוֹ יְהִי־הַלְּמִידָּשׁ:
and an holy place which shall come near the ministers
H4720 H1961 H7131 H8334 H853

לְבָתְּמִינְדָּה מִלְּקָדְשָׁן לְבָתְּמִינְדָּה
unto the LORD and it shall be a place for their houses
H3068 H1961 H0 H4725 H1004

לְמִינְדָּה לְמִינְדָּה
and an holy place and an holy place
H4720 H4720

Additional Cross-References

Ezekiel 40:45 (Parallel theme): And he said unto me, This chamber, whose prospect is toward the south, is for the priests, the keepers of the charge of the house.

Ezekiel 43:19 (References Lord): And thou shalt give to the priests the Levites that be of the seed of Zadok, which approach unto me, to minister unto me, saith the Lord GOD, a young bullock for a sin offering.

Numbers 16:5 (Holy): And he spake unto Korah and unto all his company, saying, Even to morrow the LORD will shew who are his, and who is holy; and will cause him to come near unto him: even him whom he hath chosen will he cause to come near unto him.