

Numbers 35:2

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Command the children of Israel, that they give unto the Levites of the inheritance of their possession cities to dwell in; and ye shall give also unto the Levites suburbs for the cities round about them.

Analysis

Command the children of Israel, that they give unto the Levites of the inheritance of their possession cities to dwell in—The Levites received no tribal land inheritance (Numbers 18:20, 24) because 'the LORD is their inheritance.' Yet God commanded the other tribes to provide ערים ('ārîm, cities) from their נחלתם (nahālātām, inheritance). This was not charity but covenant obligation—enabling Levitical service throughout Israel.

This distribution of Levites among all tribes (48 cities total, v. 7) strategically scattered teachers of the Law, priests, and worship leaders throughout the nation. The Levitical cities became centers of instruction and justice, preventing the centralization of spiritual knowledge. This principle of supporting full-time ministry from the tithes and offerings of God's people extends into the New Covenant (1 Corinthians 9:13-14).

Historical Context

The Levites were the priestly tribe descended from Levi, set apart for tabernacle/temple service and teaching the Law. They comprised three clans: Kohathites, Gershonites, and Meraanites. This command was fulfilled during Joshua's

distribution of the land (Joshua 21). The Levitical cities were distributed proportionally among the twelve tribes' territories.

Related Passages

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Study Questions

1. How seriously do you take your responsibility to support those who devote themselves to teaching God's Word and spiritual ministry?
2. What does the principle 'the LORD is their inheritance' teach about the calling and compensation of those in ministry?
3. How might scattering spiritual leaders throughout communities (rather than centralizing them) benefit the church today?

Interlinear Text

לְלִזְמָן:	תַּתְּנַתֵּן וְ	יִשְׂרָאֵל	בְּנֵי	אַתָּה	צַדְקָה	לְלִזְמָן:	תַּתְּנַתֵּן וְ	יִשְׂרָאֵל	בְּנֵי	אַתָּה	צַדְקָה
Command	H853	the children	H1121	of Israel	H3478	and ye shall give	H5414	also unto the Levites	H3881		
H6680											
מִמֶּנֶךָ שֶׁ	מִבְּפָלֵל תְּ	אֶחָזֶת מִ	לְעָרִים	לְשֵׁבֶת	לְשֵׁבֶת	לְעָרִים	מִמֶּנֶךָ שֶׁ	מִבְּפָלֵל תְּ	אֶחָזֶת מִ	לְעָרִים	מִמֶּנֶךָ שֶׁ
of the inheritance	H5159	of their possession	H272	cities	H5892	to dwell in	H3427	suburbs	H4054	cities	H5892
סְבִיב תִּיחָרֵךְ	תַּתְּנַתֵּן וְ	round about	H5414	and ye shall give	H3881	also unto the Levites					
H5439											

Additional Cross-References

Ezekiel 48:8 (Parallel theme): And by the border of Judah, from the east side unto the west side, shall be the offering which ye shall offer of five and twenty thousand reeds in breadth, and in length as one of the other parts, from the east side unto the west side: and the sanctuary shall be in the midst of it.

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