

Numbers 35:3

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And the cities shall they have to dwell in; and the suburbs of them shall be for their cattle, and for their goods, and for all their beasts.

Analysis

And the cities shall they have to dwell in; and the suburbs of them shall be for their cattle, and for their goods, and for all their beasts—God's provision was comprehensive: not just housing (cities) but also מִגְרָשׁ (miḡrāš, suburbs/pasture lands) for livestock and possessions. The Levites' spiritual calling didn't negate physical needs—God ordained material provision for those who serve Him.

The inclusion of 'cattle...goods...beasts' shows that ministry support isn't merely subsistence but adequate provision for family, possessions, and economic stability. Paul echoes this in 1 Timothy 5:17-18: elders who labor in preaching are 'worthy of double honor.' The Levitical system modeled that those who serve the altar should live from the altar, but with dignity and sufficiency, not poverty.

Historical Context

Levitical cities were functioning towns with surrounding pasturelands, not isolated religious compounds. Levites lived among their fellow Israelites, raising families, tending flocks, and engaging in normal economic life while fulfilling their priestly and teaching duties. The suburban lands extended 1,000-2,000 cubits from the city walls (v. 4-5), providing adequate grazing and agricultural space.

Related Passages

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Study Questions

1. How does God's comprehensive provision for Levites (housing, pastureland, goods) challenge any notion that spiritual leaders should live in poverty?
2. What practical needs of those in ministry (beyond salary) might your church community be overlooking?
3. How can you ensure that your support of ministry enables both service and stable family life?

Interlinear Text

וְהָיָה H1961	וְהָיוּ H5892	לָהֶם H0	לִשְׁכָּנָתָם H3427	וּמִגְרָשֵׁיהֶם H4054	וְהָיָה H1961
And the cities			shall they have to dwell in	and the suburbs	
	לְבִהֵמָתָם H929	וּלְרֶכֶשָׁם H7399	וְלֹכְלָם H3605	תָּתֵתָם H2416	
of them shall be for their cattle		and for their goods		and for all their beasts	