

Numbers 35:4

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And the suburbs of the cities, which ye shall give unto the Levites, shall reach from the wall of the city and outward a thousand cubits round about.

Analysis

And the suburbs of the cities, which ye shall give unto the Levites, shall reach from the wall of the city and outward a thousand cubits round about

—The specific measurement (ה אלף אמה, 'elef bā'ammāh, thousand by the cubit) shows God's concern for precise, equitable provision. One thousand cubits (approximately 1,500 feet or 450 meters) from the city wall created substantial common land for each Levitical city.

God's attention to measurement prevents exploitation—the Levites couldn't be shorted their due, nor could they claim excessive territory. This precision in Torah reflects God's character: He is a God of justice and order. The careful delineation of sacred space and provision extends from tabernacle measurements (Exodus 25-27) to the New Jerusalem's dimensions (Revelation 21:16). God's kingdom operates by covenant definition, not vague sentiment.

Historical Context

A cubit (אמה, 'ammāh) was approximately 18 inches or 45 centimeters, based on the length from elbow to fingertip. The thousand-cubit measurement appears here and is further specified in verse 5. This created a substantial buffer zone around each city for agricultural and pastoral use. Ancient Near Eastern land grants typically included such measurements to prevent boundary disputes.

Related Passages

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Study Questions

1. What does God's precision in defining the Levites' provision teach about His character and concern for justice?
2. How might churches today ensure equitable, clearly defined support for ministry workers (avoiding both exploitation and excess)?
3. Where in your life has vagueness about commitments or provision led to conflict that clearer boundaries could prevent?

Interlinear Text

וּמִגְרָשָׁי	הָעִיר	אֲשֶׁר	תִּתֵּן ו	לְלֵוִיִּם
And the suburbs	of the cities	H834	which ye shall give	unto the Levites
H4054	H5892		H5414	H3881
מִקֵּץ יֵרֶךְ	הָעִיר	וְחַוָּצָה	אֶלְפֵי	אַמָּה
shall reach from the wall	of the cities	and outward	a thousand	cubits
H7023	H5892	H2351	H505	H520
סָבִיב:				
round about				
H5439				