

Numbers 35:7

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

So all the cities which ye shall give to the Levites shall be forty and eight cities: them shall ye give with their suburbs.

Analysis

So all the cities which ye shall give to the Levites shall be forty and eight cities: them shall ye give with their suburbs—The total of ארבעים ושמנה ('arba'îm ūšemôneh, forty-eight) cities strategically distributed the Levites throughout Israel. This wasn't random but reflected twelve tribes × four cities average, ensuring nationwide access to priestly teaching and worship leadership. Joshua 21 details the actual distribution.

The repetition 'them shall ye give' emphasizes this as divine command, not optional charity. Each tribe was required to allocate cities proportionally to their own inheritance (v. 8). This created interdependence: tribes needed Levites for spiritual guidance, Levites needed tribes for material support. The Church continues this pattern—mutual dependence between those called to Word ministry and those called to other vocations (1 Corinthians 12:12-27).

Historical Context

The 48 cities were distributed as follows (Joshua 21): 13 to Aaron's descendants (priests), 10 to Kohathites, 13 to Gershonites, 12 to Merarites. Six were designated cities of refuge (Numbers 35:9-15). These cities remained Levitical throughout Israel's history, mentioned in later accounts (1 Chronicles 6:54-81). The system functioned for centuries until the Babylonian exile.

Related Passages

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Psalm 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Study Questions

1. How does the strategic distribution of spiritual leaders throughout society (rather than isolating them) benefit both the leaders and the community?
2. What does the commanded nature of this provision (not optional generosity) teach about our responsibility to support gospel ministry?
3. How can your church foster genuine interdependence between those in full-time ministry and those in other callings?

Interlinear Text

כָּל עַיִר אֲשֶׁר תַּתְנִיחַ לְלוּיִם אֶרְבֶּעָם
H3605 So all the cities H834 which ye shall give H5414 to the Levites H3881 shall be forty H705

וְשָׁמְנָה הַמִּגְרְשִׁים: אֶת אֶחָתָה | עַיִר So all the cities them shall ye give with their suburbs
H8083 H853 H853 H4054

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