

CHAPTER 18

INTRODUCTION TO DEUTERONOMY 18

This chapter gives an account of the provision made for the priests and Levites, with the reason of it, (⁽⁵¹⁸⁰⁾Deuteronomy 18:1-5), of allowance of a country Levite to minister at Jerusalem, and take his portion with the rest, (⁽⁵¹⁸⁶⁾Deuteronomy 18:6-8), and of several persons of bad practices not to be suffered among the people of Israel, (⁽⁵¹⁸⁵⁾Deuteronomy 18:9-14), and of an extraordinary prophet that should be raised up among them, to whom they should hearken, or it would be the worse for them, (⁽⁵¹⁸⁵⁾Deuteronomy 18:15-19), but a false prophet was to be put to death, of whom a sign is given by which he might be known, (⁽⁵¹⁸⁰⁾Deuteronomy 18:20-22).

Ver. 1. *The priests, the Levites, and all the tribe of Levi, shall have no part nor inheritance with Israel*, etc.] That is, in the land of Canaan, in the division of it among the tribes:

they shall eat the offerings of the Lord made by fire, and his inheritance; the meat offerings, (see ⁽⁵¹⁸²⁾Leviticus 2:2,3 6:17,18), and whatsoever of the sin offerings and peace offerings which were the Lord's; so Ben Melech says, the flesh of the offerings which belonged to the priests was called fire offerings, after part of it was consumed by fire. All these, with other things, (⁽⁵¹⁸⁸⁾Numbers 18:8,9), were given, as the Targum of Jonathan expresses it, for their inheritance, in lieu of their having none in the land of Canaan.

Ver. 2. *Therefore shall they have none inheritance among their brethren*, etc.] Neither of the field, nor of the vineyard, as the above Targum, because provision was made for them otherwise, and especially because

the Lord is their inheritance, as he hath said unto them, (see Gill on "⁽⁵¹⁸⁰⁾Numbers 18:20"), which as it may be understood in a spiritual sense of their interest in God, as their covenant God, and of their enjoyment of him, and communion with him; so chiefly in a temporal sense of all those things in the sacrifices which the Lord claimed to himself, and these he gave unto them; so the same Targum interprets this of the twenty four gifts of the priesthood, enumerated (⁽⁵¹⁸⁰⁾Numbers 18:1-32).

Ver. 3. *And this shall be the priest's due from the people, from them that offer sacrifice*, etc.] Not from the priests, as Jarchi observes, but from those that bring the sacrifices to the priests, particularly the peace offerings:

whether it be ox or sheep; the one of the herd, the other of the flock, creatures used in sacrifice, and takes in goats and the kids of them, rams and lambs:

and they shall give unto the priest the shoulder, and the two cheeks, and the maw; the first of these designs the upper part of the arm that joins to the neck and back, and the next the two cheeks with the tongue, as both Jarchi and Aben Ezra observe, and indeed the whole head is meant; the maw, which the Septuagint interpreters call *ενυστρον*, and other writers *ηνυστρον*, is, according to the philosopher^{f202}, the fourth and last ventricle or stomach, and which he thus describes;

“after the echinus or rough tripe is that which is called *ηνυστρον*, the maw, which is in size larger than the echinus, and in form longer, and has many large and smooth folds;”

and *ηνυστρον βοος*, the maw of an ox, and the belly of a swine, are reckoned by the poet^{f203} as delicious food.

Ver. 4. *The firstfruit also of thy corn, and of thy wine, and of thy oil*, etc.] This is the “terumah”, or heave offering, the offering of the firstfruits; what the measure or quantity was is not declared, but is fixed by the Jews; (see Gill on “~~Exodus~~ Exodus 22:29”),

and the first of the fleece of thy sheep shall thou give him: concerning which in the Misnah^{f204} it is said, the first of the fleece is used in the land and without the land, of which they give the weight of five shekels in Judea, which are ten shekels in Galilee; and they give white wool, and not defiled, enough to make of it a little garment. He that buys a fleece of the sheep of a Gentile, he is free from the first of the fleece; but if he buys it of his neighbour, if he leaves any of it, the seller is bound, if none the buyer is bound; if there are two sorts, russet and white, and he sells the russet but not the white, the males but not the females, everyone gives for himself. It may be observed in this account, that as much wool was to be given as would make a small garment; enough, says one of the commentators^{f205}, to

make a little garment to minister in; and the least garment fit for a priest to minister in is a girdle. Jarchi's paraphrase of it is,

“when thou shearest thy flock every year, give the first of it to the priest; it does not determine the quantity, but our Rabbins fix it to the sixtieth part;”

with which agrees the observation of another writer ^{f206}, that there is no quantity fixed for the first of the fleece from the law, but from the words of the Scribes it must not be less than the sixtieth part. There is no obligation to the first of the fleece until five sheep are shorn, and the fleece of everyone of the five must not be less than twelve shekels' weight; but if there is one fleece of them less than twelve shekels, though the five fleeces are more than sixty shekels, lo, this is free; so that, as Maimonides ^{f207} says, the first of the fleece is not less than the weight of a shekel.

Ver. 5. *For the Lord thy God hath chosen him out of all thy tribes*, etc.] That is, has chosen the tribe of Levi out of all the other tribes of Israel:

to stand to minister in the name of the Lord; the priests to minister to the Lord by offering sacrifices, and the Levites to minister to the priests in assisting them in their service; and both their ministry were in the name of the Lord, and for his glory, and done standing; for there was no sitting in the sanctuary ^{f208}; the priestly ministry was only performed standing ^{f209}, whatever was done sitting was rejected ^{f210}; (see ^{<801>}Hebrews 10:11),

him and his sons for ever; Levi and his posterity, or the posterity of the tribe of Levi, were chosen by the Lord to this service, to be employed in it as long as the ceremonial law continued, on which stood the Levitical priesthood; but both are now abolished by Christ, having their accomplishment in him, (^{<801>}Hebrews 7:11 12:18).

Ver. 6. *And if a Levite come from any of thy gates out of Israel, where he sojourned*, etc.] In any of the cities through the land, for they were dispersed all over the country, and employed in instructing and teaching the people; and, excepting the cities which were given them to dwell in out of the various tribes, they were but sojourners:

and come with all the desire of his mind unto the place which the Lord shall choose; the city of Jerusalem, where the temple would be built, and sacrifices offered, at which the Levites were assisting to the priests, and in various parts of the service of the sanctuary; and to which they are

supposed to come with an hearty good will, with great eagerness of soul, and a vehement desire of being employed in the work of the Lord. Though Jarchi interprets it of a priest, that comes and offers his freewill offerings, or what he is obliged to, and even in a ward not his own; or, as otherwise expressed, of the priests that come to the feast, who offer in the ward, and serve in the offerings that come by virtue of the feast, as the additions of the feast, though it is not in their own ward; and indeed every priest was a Levite, though every Levite was not a priest; and the description of him after given, as standing ministering in the name of the Lord, best agrees with a priest.

Ver. 7. *And he shall minister in the name of the Lord his God,* etc.] The Targum of Jonathan is,

“he shall minister in the name of the Word of the Lord his God;”

in the name of Christ, as a type of him, as every priest and every sacrifice were: he was to be allowed to officiate, though it was not his course or turn:

as all his brethren the Levites do, which stand there before the Lord; daily offering the same sacrifices, and whatsoever are brought unto them; who might be said to stand before the Lord, because they stood at the altar of the Lord, and offered the sacrifices of the people to him; and a country Levite or priest was to be admitted to do the same thing at Jerusalem, and in the temple there, as they did; and this shows that a priest is meant by the Levite.

Ver. 8. *They shall have like portions to eat,* etc.] Equal parts of the sacrifices with the priests that usually ministered there; hence we learn, says Jarchi, that they divided the skins and flesh of the sin offerings; perhaps even such as did not come by virtue of the feast, as the daily sacrifices, and the additions of the sabbath, and the vows, and the freewill offerings:

beside that which cometh by the sale of his patrimony: for though the priests and Levites had no inheritance divided to them in the land, yet they might buy houses and fields, and leave them to their children, and this may be called their patrimony; now it was not reasonable that they should wholly live upon this, or spend what their fathers left them; but, besides the income of that, were to have their part and portion with their brethren in the sacrifices of the sanctuary. But some interpret these words in a

different way, as if they had respect to the gifts and oblations in the several wards in which the priests ministered, as they were ordered by their fathers, Eleazar, Ithamar, Samuel, David, and Solomon; so the Targums of Onkelos, Jonathan, and Jarchi. In the times of Eleazar and Ithamar, there were only eight wards or courses, which ministered in their turns, but in the days of David they were divided into twenty four; (see Gill on “⁴⁰⁰⁸Luke 1:8”); now the ordering and fixing these in their turns is called a vendition or sale; and these country priests might partake of all sacrifices at the feast, excepting those which belonged to him whose course it was that week.

Ver. 9. *When thou art come into the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee*, etc.] The land of Canaan, often thus described, to express the goodness of God in bestowing it on them, as a mere favour of his, without any desert of theirs; and so typical of the heavenly Canaan, or eternal life, which is the free gift of God through Christ:

thou shall not learn to do after the abominations of these nations; the seven nations which before inhabited it; they might learn, as Jarchi observes, to know how corrupt their works were, and to show to their children, that they might not do so; but they were not to learn them so as to practise them, but to have them in the utmost abhorrence, as being abominable to God, and which should be so to them; some of which are as follow.

Ver. 10. *There shall not be found among you anyone that maketh his son or his daughter to pass through the fire*, etc.] To Moloch, which was a sort of lustration by fire, two fires being made, and the child led by a priest between them, and which was an initiation of him into the religion of that deity, and devoting him to it; so Jarchi says, this is the service of Moloch, making piles of fire here and there (on this side and on that), and causing (the children) to pass between them both. Besides this they used to burn them with fire to this deity, perhaps after the performance of this ceremony; (see ^{4523b}Deuteronomy 12:31): or that useth divination: according to Aben Ezra this is a general name, and so Ben Melech, the particulars of which are what follow,

an observer of times, etc. Cicero says ^{f211}, there are two sorts of divination, one is of art, the other of nature. What nation or what city is not moved by prediction, either by the entrails of beasts, or of those that interpret strange things and lightnings, or of soothsayers, or astrologers, or of lots (for these are mostly of art); or of dreams or prophecies, for these two are thought to

be natural? Again he says ^{f212}, the Phrygians, Pisidians, and Cilicians, pay a great respect to the signs of birds--from the beginning of the world it was that certain signs were forerunners of certain things; some in the entrails of beasts, some in birds, others in lightnings, others in marvellous things, others in the stars; some in visions and dreams, and others in the words of frantic persons. So the comedian remarks ^{f213}, that if a strange black dog comes into a house, or a snake falls from the tiles through rain, or a hen crows, these, are observed as ominous, by the diviner or soothsayer. Porphyry says ^{f214}, that soothsayers divine by the noise of crows and ravens; and it is said ^{f215} the Arabians, from birds as from oracles, divine what shall come to pass; and that they attain to, as they say, by eating the heart and liver of dragons. Jarchi on this place asks, who is the diviner? one that lays hold on his staff, and says, shall I go? or shall I not go? that is, to such a place; and according as it fell, so judgment was made; (see ~~3042~~Hosea 4:12). Now such sort of diviners and divinations are cautioned against, as not to be admitted among the people of Israel, and regarded by them:

or an observer of times: and such things the Egyptians were very inquisitive about, what month or day belonged to the gods, what day any one was born on, what shall befall him, how he will die, and what he shall be, as Herodotus ^{f216} relates; and such are they who are here meant, according to R. Akiba ^{f217} that count times and hours, and say such a time is beautiful (or seasonable) to go out in and trade; but the wise men say, as Jarchi observes, these are they that hold the eyes, cast a mist over people's eyes, that they cannot perceive their juggling tricks. Some think the word has the signification of clouds, and so designs such that observed them and their motions, and made their conclusions according to them; (see ~~3825~~Leviticus 19:26),

or an enchanter; according to Jarchi, one that remarks things as ominous; as when a morsel falls out of a man's mouth, a roe stops him in the way, or his staff falls out of his hands: the word has the signification of a serpent in it, and so may signify one that enchants them; (see ~~4584~~Psalm 58:4,5) or makes observations by them, as portending this and that, and the other, as before observed of the snake falling from the tiles; and Horace ^{f218} speaks of a serpent lying in the way, and frightening horses, as taken notice of by soothsayers:

or a witch; of whom (see ~~1228~~Exodus 22:18).

Ver. 11. *Or a charmer*, etc.] That pretends to cure diseases by charms, or a charmer of serpents; according to Jarchi, one that gathers together serpents and scorpions, and other animals, into one place; with which agree the Targums of Jonathan and Jerusalem,

“which bind serpents and scorpions, and all kind of creeping things;”

but, according to Aben Ezra, one that says certain words to gather demons together:

or a consulter with familiar spirits; or the inquirer of “Ob”, or the bottle, which the Jews interpret of Python, or one that has the spirit of Python; (see ⁴⁴⁶⁶Acts 16:16), a ventriloquist, one that spoke or seemed to speak out of his belly, or from under his armpits; so it is said in the Misnah ^{f219} of Ob, this is Python, one that speaks out of his arm holes; agreeably to which, Jarchi says, this is that sort of witchcraft which is called Python, and he speaks from his arm holes, and brings up the dead thither: of Baal Ob, or the master of the bottle, say some Jewish writers, one way he uses is, he takes the skull of a dead man, the flesh of which is consumed from it, and he hides it and burns incense to it, and mutters words by it, and hears from it, as if from a dead man ^{f220}: or a wizard: a knowing one, as the word signifies, such an one as we call a cunning man; (See Gill on “⁴⁸⁸⁸Leviticus 19:31”)

or a necromancer that inquiries of the dead, or seeks instruction from them, as the Targum of Jerusalem. Aben Ezra describes him as one that goes to burying grounds, and takes the bone of a dead man, and because of his wild imagination there appears to him the likeness of forms; or as Maimonides ^{f221}, better still, he is one that fasts and sleeps in graveyards, and utters words; and, according to his imagination, sees future things in dreams.

Ver. 12. *For all that do these things are an abomination to the Lord*, etc.] Not that do all these things, but whoever does any of them, as Jarchi notes; all such persons that use such unlawful methods, or any of them, to gain knowledge; and likewise all those that consult them, and make use of them; and especially it must be very abominable in the people of Israel to encourage such persons and practices, who had the knowledge of the true God, and him to consult on all occasions; had his law and testimony to

attend unto as the rule of their conduct, and his prophets to advise with in matters of difficulty; (see ^{<2183>}Isaiah 8:20)

and because of these abominations the Lord thy God doth drive them out from before thee; as well as other sins mentioned in (^{<1834>}Leviticus 18:24-28) and, as before observed from Cicero, all nations have been addicted to the arts of divination here condemned.

Ver. 13. *Thou shalt be perfect with the Lord thy God.*] Sincerely serve and worship him, faithfully adhere to his word, laws, statutes, and ordinances, and walk uprightly before him.

Ver. 14. *For those nations which thou shalt possess hearkened unto observers of times, and unto diviners,* etc.] Such as are before mentioned, and did as they directed them:

but as for thee, the Lord thy God hath not suffered thee so to do; or, “but thou not so” ^{f222} thou shouldst not do so, not hearken to such persons, but to the Lord thy God, and to his law and testimony; nor art thou left to the deception of such persons:

the Lord thy God hath given thee: his word and statutes, as a rule to go by, which he has not given to other nations: the Targum of Jonathan adds,

“the priests shall ask by Urim and Thummim, and a true prophet shall the Lord your God give unto you;”

so that they had no need to hearken to such impostors and deceivers: or,

“*as for thee, not so are they whom the Lord thy God giveth thee*” ^{f223}; that is, the prophets whom the Lord would give unto them would not be like the diviners of the Heathens, who imposed on the people and deceived them; but would be men sent and inspired by God, and true and faithful in the discharge of their office; and to hearken to these they are encouraged by the promise of a very eminent one, like to Moses, in the next verse.

Ver. 15. *The Lord thy God will raise up unto thee a prophet,* etc.] Not Joshua, as Aben Ezra, not Jeremiah, as Baal Haturim, nor David ^{f224}, as others; nor a succession of prophets, as Jarchi; for a single person is only spoken of; and there is a dissimilitude between Moses and anyone of the prophets, and all of them in succession, (^{<1540>}Deuteronomy 34:10-12), but the Messiah, with whom the whole agrees; and upon this the expectation of a prophet among the Jews was raised, (^{<314>}John 6:14) and is applied to him,

and referred to as belonging to him in (~~418~~ Acts 3:22 7:37), who was a prophet mighty in word and deed, and not only foretold future events, as his own sufferings and death, and resurrection from the dead, the destruction of Jerusalem, and other things; but taught and instructed men in the knowledge of divine things, spake as never man did, preached the Gospel fully and faithfully, so that as the law came by Moses, the doctrine of grace and truth came by him; and he was raised up of God, called, sent, commissioned and qualified by him for the office of a prophet, as well as was raised from the dead as a confirmation of his being that extraordinary person:

from the midst of thee; he was of Israel, according to the flesh, of the tribe of Judah, and of the house of David, born of a virgin in Bethlehem, preached only in Judea, and was raised from the dead in the midst of them, and of which they were witnesses:

of thy brethren; the Israelites, of whom, as concerning the flesh, Christ came, and to whom he was sent as a prophet, and among whom he only preached:

like unto me; the Targum of Jonathan adds,

“in the Holy Spirit;”

which he received without measure, and in respect of which was superior to Moses, or any of the prophets: he was like to Moses in the faithful discharge of his office, in his familiar converse with God, in the miracles which he wrought; as well as in his being a Mediator, and the Redeemer of his people, as Moses was a mediator between God and the people of Israel, and the deliverer of them out of Egypt; and it is a saying of the Jews ^{f225} themselves,

“as was the first redeemer, so is the second:”

unto him ye shall hearken; externally attend on his ministry, internally receive his doctrine, embrace and profess it; do what is heard from him, hear him, and not another, always and in all things; (see ~~407~~ Matthew 17:5).

Ver. 16. *According to all that thou desiredst of the Lord thy God at Horeb*, etc.] This was promised them, in answer to their request at Horeb or Mount Sinai, when the law was delivered to them in the terrible manner it was: in the day of the assembly; in which the tribes were gathered

together to receive the law, when they were assembled at the foot of the mount for that purpose:

saying, let me not hear again the voice of the Lord my God; which was such a voice of words, attended with so much terror, that they that heard entreated the word might not be spoken to them any more, as the apostle says in (^{<S8219>}Hebrews 12:19),

neither let me see this great fire any more, that I die not; out of which the Lord spoke; the congregation of Israel is here represented speaking as if a single person.

Ver. 17. *And the Lord said unto me,* etc.] Unto Moses, who carried the above request to the Lord:

they have well spoken that which they have spoken; (see ^{<R878>}Deuteronomy 5:28).

Ver. 18. *I will raise them up a prophet from among their brethren like unto thee,* etc.] So that it seems this promise or prophecy was first made at Mount Sinai, but now renewed and repeated, and which is nowhere else recorded; (see ^{<B1815>}Deuteronomy 18:15) when they were not only made easy for the present by appointing Moses to receive from the Lord all further notices of his mind and will, but were assured that when it was his pleasure to make a new revelation, or a further discovery of his mind and will, in future times, he would not do it in that terrible way he had delivered the law to them; but would raise up a person of their own flesh and blood, by whom it should be delivered, which was sufficient to prevent their fears for the future:

and will put my word in his mouth; the doctrines of the Gospel, which come from God, and are the words of truth, faith, righteousness, peace, pardon, life, and salvation; and which Christ says were not his own, as man and Mediator, but his Father's, which he gave unto him, and put into his mouth, as what he should say, teach, and deliver to others; (see ^{<B1716>}John 7:16 8:28 17:6,8)

and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him; nor did he keep back, but faithfully declared the whole counsel of God; and as he gave him a commandment what he should say, and what he should speak, he was entirely obedient to it; (see ^{<B1249>}John 12:49,50 15:15).

Ver. 19. *And it shall come to pass, that whosoever will not hearken unto my words,* etc.] To the doctrines of the Gospel, but slight and despise them:

which he shall speak in my name; in whose name he came, and whose words or doctrines he declared them to be; not as his own, but his Father's, (^{<415B>}John 5:43 7:16).

I will require it of him; or, as the Targums of Onkelos and Jonathan, ``my Word shall require it of him, or take vengeance on him;”

as Christ the Word of God did in the destruction of the Jewish nation, city, and temple; (see ^{<417>}Luke 19:27,44).

Ver. 20. *But the prophet which shall presume to speak in my name,* etc.] Pretending a mission and commission from God, and yet was never sent by him, like the prophets in (^{<247>}Jeremiah 23:21),

which I have not commanded him to speak; which though true was not to be spoken in a public manner, by assuming a public office, without a divine authority or a commission from God, and much less what was false, and never commanded to be spoken at all by any:

or, that shall speak in the name of other gods; the idols of the people, as the Targum; as if any should affirm they were sent by Jove, or inspired by Apollo, as some are said to prophesy by Baal, as if they had received their orders and instructions from him, and were inspired by him, (^{<248>}Jeremiah 2:8)

even that prophet shall die; the Targum of Jonathan is, be killed by the sword, but the Jews ^{f226} generally interpret it of strangling.

Ver. 21. *And if thou say in thine heart,* etc.] Such a thought arises in the mind, and it appears to be a difficulty, and a query is made upon it,

how shall we know the word which the Lord hath not spoken? What marks, signs, and criterions are those by which it may be known that it is not a word that comes from the Lord?

Ver. 22. *When a prophet speaketh in the name of the Lord,* etc.] Says he comes from God, is sent by him, and has a commission from him to say so:

if the thing follow not, nor come to pass; as the prophecy of Hananiah, (^{<249>}Jeremiah 28:3) that is the thing which the Lord hath not spoken; or

otherwise it would have come to pass, unless when a condition is either expressed or implied, as the repentance or disobedience of a people; (see ~~2480~~ Jeremiah 18:7-10)

but the prophet hath spoken it presumptuously; in a bold and daring manner, with great impiety and impudence, out of his own head and heart, being a mere device and imagination of his own, which, not having the fear of God, he delivered as coming from the Lord:

thou shall not be afraid of him; not only to reprove him for his wickedness, but also to punish him for it; showing no regard to the high character he assumes, nor to the great pretensions he makes to sanctity, knowledge, and familiarity with God.