

Deut. 18:1 ¶ The priests the Levites, *and* all the tribe of Levi, shall have no part nor inheritance with Israel: they shall eat the offerings of the LORD made by fire, and his inheritance.

Deut. 18:2 Therefore shall they have no inheritance among their brethren: the LORD *is* their inheritance, as he hath said unto them.

This next section of instructions concerns the Levites. This tribe is not to be allotted a portion of the land inheritance in the Promised Land. They have been set apart by YHWH to serve Him. They are to be provided for through the sacrifices, offerings and the tithes that the people offer to the Lord.

I've always made reference to the tribe of Levi as the priestly tribe. That is true in that Aaron and his descendants are part of that tribe, but only the descendants of Aaron are to serve as priests. The rest of the Levites are set apart for other responsibilities associated with the function of the tabernacle in service to the priests.

Num. 3:9 And thou shalt give the Levites unto Aaron and to his sons: they *are* wholly given unto him out of the children of Israel.

Num. 1:50 But thou shalt appoint the Levites over the tabernacle of testimony, and over all the vessels thereof, and over all things that *belong* to it: they shall bear the tabernacle, and all the vessels thereof; and they shall minister unto it, and shall encamp round about the tabernacle.

Num. 1:51 And when the tabernacle setteth forward, the Levites shall take it down: and when the tabernacle is to be pitched, the Levites shall set it up:

Num. 18:20 ¶ And the LORD spake unto Aaron, Thou shalt have no inheritance in their land, neither shalt thou have any part among them: I *am* thy part and thine inheritance among the children of Israel.

Num. 18:21 And, behold, I have given the children of Levi all the tenth in Israel for an inheritance, for their service which they serve, *even* the service of the tabernacle of the congregation.

The Levites were to be given specific cities scattered throughout the nation of Israel.

Num. 35:1 ¶ And the LORD spake unto Moses in the plains of Moab by Jordan *near* Jericho, saying,

Num. 35:2 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.

After the temple was built in Jerusalem, the Levites continued to have duties to assist the priests in taking care of the temple and performing their priestly duties. In addition, they served as scribes, porters, judges, musicians, teachers of the law, and as supervisors of the standards of weights and measures that were used in transacting business. These positions are all recorded in the books of the Chronicles.

Deut. 18:3 And this shall be the priest's due from the people, from them that offer a sacrifice, whether *it be* ox or sheep; and they shall give unto the priest the shoulder, and the two cheeks, and the maw.

Deut. 18:4 The firstfruit *also* of thy corn, of thy wine, and of thine oil, and the first of the fleece of thy sheep, shalt thou give him.

Though the reference is to “the priest’s,” the context clearly indicates that this term references all the Levites. It is declaring that the priests are to be allowed to eat a portion of the sacrifices that are offered and are also to have their needs supplied by the tithes that are given to the Lord as members of His inheritance (v2).

Deut. 18:5 For the LORD thy God hath chosen him out of all thy tribes, to stand to minister in the name of the LORD, him and his sons for ever.

Again, we are told that the Levites were specifically chosen by YHWH among all the tribes of Israel to be consecrated to His service and that this position was to belong to them “for ever.” Although the temple has not functioned for thousands of years, we know from the prophet Ezekiel that the temple will be reestablished and that the sons of Levi will once again be privileged to serve in its ministry, but it will be the sons of Zadok that are given honored positions of service. (See journal on Ezekiel 43→.)

Deut. 18:6 And if a Levite come from any of thy gates out of all Israel, where he sojourned, and come with all the desire of his mind unto the place which the LORD shall choose;

Deut. 18:7 Then he shall minister in the name of the LORD his God, as all his brethren the Levites *do*, which stand there before the LORD.

Deut. 18:8 They shall have like portions to eat, beside that which cometh of the sale of his patrimony.

These verses indicate that the Levites had the freedom to relocate according to the Lord’s leading. Obviously, the tabernacle could only be in one location and only those living in that city could “stand there before the Lord.” “The place which the LORD shall choose” seems to be a direct reference to the words of Moses as recorded in chapter 12.

Deut. 12:5 ¶ But unto the place which the LORD your God shall choose out of all your tribes to put his name there, *even* unto his habitation shall ye seek, and thither thou shalt come:

Deut. 12:6 And thither ye shall bring your burnt offerings, and your sacrifices, and your tithes, and heave offerings of your hand, and your vows, and your freewill offerings, and the firstlings of your herds and of your flocks:

Deut. 12:7 And there ye shall eat before the LORD your God, and ye shall rejoice in all that ye put your hand unto, ye and your households, wherein the LORD thy God hath blessed thee.

So it would seem that the context is referencing relocating to serve at the tabernacle. Those who so choose are to be given equal treatment with the others already serving there without regard to their personal possessions.

Deut. 18:9 ¶ When thou art come into the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee, thou shalt not learn to do after the abominations of those nations.

Moses now turns his attention to warning the people against adopting the wicked practices of the heathen nations. The Hebrew for *abominations* makes

direct reference to things that are morally disgusting and associated with the worship of idols.

I think it is again important to note how often Moses makes the point that it is God that is giving them the land. They will not be able to conquer in their own strength apart from God's enablement.

Deut. 18:10 There shall not be found among you *any one* that maketh his son or his daughter to pass through the fire, or that useth divination, or an observer of times, or an enchanter, or a witch,

Deut. 18:11 Or a charmer, or a consulter with familiar spirits, or a wizard, or a necromancer.

In these verses Moses lists some of the *abominations* being referenced in verse 9. No one is to be found in Israel who:

- **Makes sons/daughters pass through the fire** – This is a reference to sacrificing one's children's to idols.
- **Uses divination** – Webster defines *divination* as "the pretended art discovering secret or future by preternatural [not natural, inexplicable] means."
- **Is an observer of times** – The Hebrew makes reference to one that practices magic. Chuck Smith states that this is the use of astrology and horoscopes. This made sense to me since astrology is all predicated on "times." As I looked further, I found this comment in John Wesley's Notes: "Superstitiously pronouncing some days lucky, and others unlucky. Or, an observer of the clouds or heavens, one that divineth by the motions of the clouds, by the stars, or by the flying or chattering of birds, all which Heathens used to observe."
- **Is an enchanter** – The Hebrew makes reference to whispering magic spells and prognosticating (using signs to tell the future). Wesley identifies this person as one who "discovers hidden things by a superstitious use of words or ceremonies, by observation of water or smoke or any contingencies." [Couldn't help but think of Nostradamus who came up with his famous quatrains by staring at water.]
- **Is a witch** – Again, the Hebrew makes reference to whispering spells and practicing magic. As we continue in this list, it is quite clear that all these practices are centered on appearing to be able to duplicate the power and authority of God. This has ever been Satan's goal, to establish himself as "God," through the use of lies and deceit. I couldn't help but think of the following verses in Thessalonians.

2Thess. 2:3-4 Let no man deceive you by any means: for *that day shall not come*, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition; Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God.

- **Is a charmer** – The Hebrew makes reference to being able to charm or fascinate people through the use of spells; Webster adds through the use of *enchantment*, the use of "certain wonderful effects by the aid of demons, or the agency of supposed spirits; the use of magic arts, spells, or charms;

- incantation.” (2/10) Considering the focus on Haiti after the earthquake, couldn’t help but think of voodoo in connection with this command.
- **Is a consulter with familiar spirits** – The Hebrew made a direct connection to the necromancer and one who uses ventriloquism to practice his deception. This is referring to those who seek to talk to the dead.
 - **Is a wizard** – The Hebrew defines a *wizard* as “a knowing one” and one who can conjure up ghosts. Wesley adds that it is one who “by any forbidden ways undertakes the revelation of secret things.”
 - **Is a necromancer** – This appears to be the same as one who consults familiar spirits. It stood out to me, however, when looking at the Hebrew, that this was seeking the dead as a part of worship (obviously in reference to idols or false gods).

Deut. 18:12 For all that do these things *are* an abomination unto the LORD: and because of these abominations the LORD thy God doth drive them out from before thee.

Moses is emphatic in stating that all the practices listed in the preceding two verses are “an abomination unto the LORD”; He hates them. It is because of these very practices that the Lord is taking the land away from the nations currently in Canaan and giving it to Israel. Those who practice such things have rejected the one true God and have chosen to follow the “father of lies,” the devil.

John 8:44 Ye are of *your* father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it.

Deut. 18:13 Thou shalt be perfect with the LORD thy God.

The Hebrew for the word *perfect* states “entire...complete...sincerely.” In other words, all the people of Israel are to follow YHWH, the God of Israel, completely and sincerely in rejection of the wicked practices of the heathen nations and how they worshipped their gods. I liked the way the CJB put it:

You must be wholehearted with *ADONAI* your God.

Deut. 18:14 For these nations, which thou shalt possess, hearkened unto observers of times, and unto diviners: but as for thee, the LORD thy God hath not suffered thee so *to do*.

Moses emphasizes in this verse that the heathen nations whose lands they will possess in Canaan followed these very practices, summarized at this point with reference to observers of times and diviners. YHWH will not allow His people to do such things.

As I looked back over the list and thought about these summary categories, it stands out that the common purpose of these practices can be summed up in the desire to know secret things and foretell the future. As I thought about it, I realized that those who have no hope in the future through faith in YHWH can’t help but be fearful about the future and want to know what it holds. They are obsessed with learning “secret” things that might give them an advantage in this

world or possibly allow them to extend their life and get access to another world of existence.

Deut. 18:15 ¶ **The LORD thy God will raise up unto thee a Prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me; unto him ye shall hearken;**
Deut. 18:16 **According to all that thou desiredst of the LORD thy God in Horeb in the day of the assembly, saying, Let me not hear again the voice of the LORD my God, neither let me see this great fire any more, that I die not.**

At this point Moses prophesies of a coming Prophet in Israel, a Hebrew man like Moses. The implication seems to be that this Prophet, like Moses, will not fear to be in the presence of God and will enjoy personal fellowship with YHWH. None of the other prophets that served God in Israel were like Moses.

Deut. 34:10 And there arose not a prophet since in Israel like unto Moses, whom the LORD knew face to face...

Only Jesus, the Son of God, who came to earth as a man could be described in the same way. Many of those who saw and heard Jesus made the connection to this prophecy.

John 6:14 Then those men, when they had seen the miracle that Jesus did, said, This is of a truth that prophet that should come into the world.

John 7:39-40 (But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive: for the Holy Ghost was not yet *given*; because that Jesus was not yet glorified.) Many of the people therefore, when they heard this saying, said, Of a truth this is the Prophet.

Peter boldly declared that Jesus was this Prophet.

Acts 3:20 And he shall send Jesus Christ, which before was preached unto you:

Acts 3:21 Whom the heaven must receive until the times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began.

Acts 3:22 For Moses truly said unto the fathers, A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me; him shall ye hear in all things whatsoever he shall say unto you.

Acts 3:23 And it shall come to pass, *that* every soul, which will not hear that prophet, shall be destroyed from among the people.

Deut. 18:17 **And the LORD said unto me, They have well *spoken* that which they have spoken.**

Deut. 18:18 **I will raise them up a Prophet from among their brethren, like unto thee, and will put my words in his mouth; and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him.**

Deut. 18:19 **And it shall come to pass, *that* whosoever will not hearken unto my words which he shall speak in my name, I will require *it* of him.**

The Lord declares through Moses that it is good that they have a healthy fear of Him and would rather have a mediator between them and God. He is now declaring that He will again raise up another "Prophet" like Moses. This Prophet, like Moses, will be a man of Israel that will speak the words of YHWH according to God's command. Those who choose to reject His message will suffer as declared by Peter—He will be destroyed from among the people.

The people of Israel have allowed this verse to become a stumblingblock to their faith by taking it out of context with the rest of scripture. They have been/are looking for a "man" like Moses, not the Son of God in flesh. Scripture is clear in stating that God would send His Son.

Is. 9:6 For unto us a child is born, unto us **a son is given**: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and **his name shall be called** Wonderful, Counsellor, **The mighty God, The everlasting Father**, The Prince of Peace.

Because they are looking for a "man," they will believe the antichrist, the false Messiah, as prophesied by Jesus.

John 5:43 I am come in my Father's name, and ye receive me not: if another shall come in his own name, him ye will receive.

Deut. 18:20 But the prophet, which shall presume to speak a word in my name, which I have not commanded him to speak, or that shall speak in the name of other gods, even that prophet shall die.

Verses like this are confusing because our thinking is so narrow. This verse declares that false prophets will "die." Throughout the centuries false prophets have come on the scene and often profited from their heretical teaching; they didn't die—at least not right away. This is comparable to the narrative about Adam and Eve in which they were told that on the day they ate of the forbidden tree they would die. The Bible then goes on to record that they lived for hundreds of years. We know that God is true and His words truth. It becomes obvious that there is more than physical death being referenced here. Scripture is clear that there are two deaths confronting man.

Rev. 20:6 Blessed and holy *is* he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such **the second death** hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years.

Rev. 21:8 But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is **the second death**.

Physical death holds no fear for the man or woman who has placed their faith in God's provision for their salvation. It is spiritual death, being separated from God forever, that is the second death, eternal death.

Psa. 37:9 For evildoers shall be cut off: but those that wait upon the LORD, they shall inherit the earth.

Prov. 11:7 ¶ When a wicked man dieth, *his* expectation shall perish: and the hope of unjust *men* perisheth.

This truth is vividly pictured in Luke's record of the rich man and Lazarus.

Luke 16:22-26 And it came to pass, that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom: the rich man also died, and was buried; And in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom. And he cried and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in

this flame. But Abraham said, Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things: but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented. And beside all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed: so that they which would pass from hence to you cannot; neither can they pass to us, that *would come* from thence.

Deut. 18:21 And if thou say in thine heart, How shall we know the word which the LORD hath not spoken?

Deut. 18:22 When a prophet speaketh in the name of the LORD, if the thing follow not, nor come to pass, that *is* the thing which the LORD hath not spoken, *but* the prophet hath spoken it presumptuously: thou shalt not be afraid of him.

Moses then proceeds to give answer to the obvious question—How can you know that a prophet is not declaring God’s word? The answer—When the prophecy does not come to pass. This leaves no room for error, much to the chagrin of self-declared prophets today. There is no learning curve for a true prophet of God.

I couldn’t help but think back to chapter 13 regarding prophets that were luring the people to worship other gods using signs and wonders that did come to pass. The Lord declares that He allows that to prove the faith of His people. There is a key difference in the two scenarios though. The prophets being referenced in chapter 13 were trying to lure the people to false gods, while the prophets referenced in these verses in chapter 18 are declaring themselves as speaking for the one true God, YHWH. Interestingly enough, Satan has perfected his deception to the point that many today who present themselves as representing YHWH are actually representing false gods. It is crucial for the believer to be saturated in the Word of God and availing oneself of the power of the Holy Spirit to be able to discern between true and false teaching.