**Offerings for Priests and Levites**

Moses repeats what was established by God in Numbers chapter 18: The Levites would have no share in the inheritance of the land in Canaan. God told Aaron that He was their inheritance (see Num. 18:20). In lieu of inheriting land, the Levites would receive the tithes of the other 12 tribes (see Num. 18:21). Moses set forth specific requirements for the Levites’ share of animals sacrificed and required that they receive the first fruits of grain, wine and oil and the first shearing of sheep. Animal sacrifices and first fruits belonged to God who exercised His sovereign right to give those offerings to the Levites.

Next Moses addressed how Levites were to be treated if they relocated. Although the Levites did not share in the allocation of land as the other tribes did, God made a provision for them to own houses and small parcels of land in the towns in which they lived (see Num. 35:2-5). The Levites were given cities to live in among the other tribes so they could minister to the people locally. As we have discussed, God selected one place among the Israelites where He would dwell and that was the tabernacle and later the temple. In verse 6 Moses refers to a Levite who goes to the place God would choose in all earnestness (all desire of his mind, KJV). This section makes an allowance for a Levite who wants to work at the tabernacle and leaves a city where he has a home. The Levite may have sold his home in a city and received money for the sale. He still would be eligible to share in the tabernacle offerings with the other Levites.

In verses 9-13 Moses warned against adopting the practices of the Canaanites who engaged in all sorts of evil behavior including sorcery, witchcraft and seances. Their greatest evil was sacrificing children in fires as part of their ceremonies. God had previously commanded the people not to sacrifice children to Molech (see Lev. 18:21), a law ignored in later generations (see 2nd Kings 23:10).

The last section of this chapter deals with false prophets and a true prophet. Moses tells the people that the nations they will displace listen to false prophets who practiced sorcery and divination which they were not permitted to follow. Instead God would raise up a true prophet from the midst of the Israelites. Some interpret this to refer to multiple prophets who would follow Moses, initially that would be Joshua. Others believe this to be a reference to Jesus which is more likely. Note that Moses said that the prophet God would send would be like him. Verse 34:10 says that no prophet had risen like Moses who knew God face to face. There are numerous similarities between Moses and Jesus. They were both born during times of slavery of Israel and both hidden from monarchs who sought to kill them. Both began their ministries with a supernatural event (see Ex. 3:2 and Matt. 3:16). God gave Moses the law on Mt. Sanai, Jesus gave a new law in His Sermon on the Mount. Jesus like Moses was a human and endured human temptations so that His sacrifice would be a human sacrifice, not one of an animal. In verse 15, Moses said that the people must listen to the prophet (see Luke 9:35). In verse 18 Moses said that God had told him that He would put words in the prophet’s mouth (see John 7:16). Finally, Moses told the people that they would know a false prophet by predictions made in the name of God which did not come true.

This chapter illustrates how the Levites depended on God for their existence. Aside from small plots of land for gardens, they relied on God to provide for their needs. Jacob had cursed Levi and Simeon on his deathbed saying that they would be scattered among the other tribes (see Gen. 49:5-7). His prophecy was realized as both tribes had no direct inheritance of land. Simeon’s land was subdivided from land inherited by Judah (see Josh. 19:1,9). For the Levites, God turned the curse into a blessing by giving them the honor of serving Him. Nevertheless, Levite men were required to serve in the ministry. Those who work in ministry today do so by choice and they also rely on God to provide for their needs.