

**Text: Dt 18.1-22**

**THEOLOGICAL OUTLINE OF DEUTERONOMY<sup>1</sup>**

1. **Consider:** a review of God’s faithfulness (1.6–4.40)
2. **Covenant:** an exposition of the law (5–26)

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3. **Commence:** preparations for renewing the covenant (27.1–28.68)
4. **Commit:** an exhortation to obedience (29.2–30.20)

Our chapter tonight contains two distinct sections and subjects. In the NAU, the headers are:

1. Portion of the Levites (1-8)
2. Spiritism Forbidden (9-22)

I’ve changed the second subject from Spiritism Forbidden to “the True Prophet” in my title.

**Three paragraphs discuss the Portion of the Levites**

1. (1-2) The difference between Levi and the other eleven tribes: no property, but provision
2. (3-5) The priests’ portion as ordered in the sacrificial system
3. (6-8) The Levites could join the tabernacle service at will, taking part in the portions of the tabernacle

**General information about Levites**

“The tribe of Levi was divided into three families (Gershonites, Kohathites, and Merarites). Each division originally had different responsibilities regarding the tabernacle (Num. 3–4). The Kohathites were further divided into those who were descendants of Aaron and those who were not (Josh. 21:4–5).

“Only the descendants of Aaron were permitted to serve as priests (Num. 3:10). They are generally referred to as ‘the priests’ or ‘the sons of Aaron’ (Num. 10:8). The rest of the tribe, those not serving as priests, were designated as Levites. Thus priests were a minority in the tribe of Levi.

<sup>1</sup> Adapted from an outline in Lawrence O Richards, *The Bible Readers Companion*, electronic ed. (Wheaton: Victor Books, 1991), 117.

“The Levites served as ministers to the priests (Num. 18:1–7; 1 Chron. 23:28–32), and in general as teachers of the Law in Israel (Deut. 33:10a; 2 Chron. 17:8–9). The priests officiated at the tabernacle and also had other duties. They served as judges (Deut. 17:8–9), guardians of the scroll of the Law (17:18; 31:9), teachers of regulations concerning skin diseases (24:8), and assistants to Moses in the covenant renewal ceremony (27:9).”<sup>2</sup>

The Levites were given forty-eight cities in the land, with fields, so they could provide for themselves through their own small farms. Apparently, they also received portions of the offerings with the priests, though they may have sold off possessions in their cities to make the transition.

### Discussion

What lay at the bottom of the Levitical inheritance? What did they get instead of lands and territory?

**They had the Lord’s promise, and a share in the people’s offering**

Though dependent on their countrymen, what did the Lord’s provision enable the Levites (especially the priests) to do for the rest of Israel?

**Stand and serve before the Lord [including a teaching role]**

### Two long paragraphs on the True Prophet

1. (9-14) God prohibited spiritism in the land
2. (15-22) God promised a Prophet like Moses who would someday come

### Additional information on spiritism

“The pagans used various phenomena as instruments to ‘divine’ (foretell) the future. These devices included: the patterns of birds as they flew, the arrangement of the organs of an animal offered as a sacrifice, and the relationship of the heavenly bodies to one another. Soothsayers practiced witchcraft, which involved dealing with Satan and his demons to obtain desired ends. Omens were signs of coming events or conditions. Sorcerers cast spells. Mediums and spiritists supposedly called up the dead, though actually demons responded (cf. 1 Sam. 28:8–14).”<sup>3</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Jack S. Deere, “Deuteronomy,” in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*, ed. John F. Walvoord and Roy B. Zuck (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1983), 295.

<sup>3</sup> Tom Constable, *Tom Constable’s Expository Notes on the Bible* (Galaxie Software, 2003), Dt 18.9.

## Discussion

Why might the Israelites be tempted to consult with various kinds of spiritists?

They might have pressing questions concerning life situations and want an answer from God (or at least from the spirit beings the spiritists connected with)

Instead of the spiritists, what did God promise to give the Israelites for spiritual guidance? (15-18)

A prophet like me (Moses)

What response should the Israelites give to a prophet like Moses? (19)

They were to listen to him as the voice of God

On the other hand, what if a man spoke “presumptuously,” uttering prophecies that did not come from the Lord? (20)

Such a man was subject to the death penalty

How were the people to discern between true and false prophets? (21-22)

If the word of the prophet did not come to pass, he was a false prophet.

Why was the test oriented towards failed rather than fulfilled prophecy?

Sometimes a false prophet can say a true thing, but a true prophet will never say a false thing

“Jesus Christ was one of the prophets that God raised up as promised here, and He is the ultimate fulfillment of this promise (v. 15; Matt. 17:5; John 4:25; 5:45–47; 12:48–50; Acts 3:22–23; 7:37).”<sup>4</sup>

“However distinguished a future prophet’s role might be in Israel, none would be like Moses until the Mediator of the New Covenant, Jesus Christ, came. Moses set the standard for every future prophet. Each prophet was to do his best to live up to the example of Moses until the One came who would introduce the New Covenant.”<sup>5</sup>

To sum up, through the Levitical system and the call of prophets, God provided for the spiritual life of the Israelites.

<sup>4</sup> Constable, Dt 18.9.

<sup>5</sup> Deere, “Deuteronomy in BKCOT,” 297.