

LESSON FOURTEEN 16:18-20; 17:2—18:22

e. THE LEADERS OF GOD'S PEOPLE (16:18-20; 17:2—18:22)
(Laws concerning Judges, kings, priests, and prophets)

(1) JUDGES (16:18-20; 17:2-13)

18 Judges and officers shalt thou make thee in all thy gates, which Jehovah thy God giveth thee, according to thy tribes; and they shall judge the people with righteous judgment. 19 Thou shalt not wrest justice: thou shalt not respect persons; neither shalt thou take a bribe; for a bribe doth blind the eyes of the wise, and pervert the words of the righteous. 20 That which is altogether just shalt thou follow, that thou mayest live, and inherit the land which Jehovah thy God giveth thee.

2 If there be found in the midst of thee, within any of thy gates which Jehovah thy God giveth thee, man or woman, that doeth that which is evil in the sight of Jehovah thy God, in transgressing his covenant, 3 and hath gone and served other gods, and worshipped them, or the sun, or the moon, or any of the host of heaven, which I have not commanded; 4 and it be told thee, and thou hast heard of it, then shalt thou inquire diligently; and, behold, if it be true, and the thing certain, that such abomination is wrought in Israel, 5 then shalt thou bring forth that man or that woman, who hath done this evil thing, unto thy gates, even the man or the woman; and thou shalt stone them to death with stones. 6 At the mouth of two witnesses, or three witnesses, shalt he that is to die be put to death; at the mouth of one witness he shall not be put to death. 7 The hand of the witnesses shall be first upon him to put him to death, and afterward the hand of all the people. So thou shalt put away the evil from the midst of thee.

8 If there arise a matter too hard for thee in judgment, between blood and blood, between plea and plea, and between stroke and stroke, being matters of controversy within thy gates; then shalt thou arise, and get thee up unto the place which Jehovah thy God shall choose; 9 and thou shalt come unto the priests the Levites, and unto the judge that shall be in those days: and thou shalt inquire; and they shall show thee the sentence of judgment. 10 And thou shalt do according to the tenor of the sentence which they shall show thee from that place which Jehovah shall choose; and thou shalt observe to do according to all that they shall teach thee: 11 according to the tenor of the law which they shall teach thee, and according to the judgment which they shall

tell thee, thou shalt do; thou shalt not turn aside from the sentence which they shall show thee, to the right hand, nor to the left. 12 And the man that doeth presumptuously, in not hearkening unto the priest that standeth to minister there before Jehovah thy God, or unto the judge, even that man shall die: and thou shalt put away the evil from Israel. 13 And all the people shall hear, and fear, and do no more presumptuously.

THOUGHT QUESTIONS 16:18-20; 17:2-13

289. Think carefully about the full meaning of the term "judge" as used here; to what office or work does this term compare in our day? A lawyer?
290. How could justice be "wrested"?
291. Approximate a circumstance in which a bribe could be attractive.

AMPLIFIED TRANSLATION 16:18-20; 17:2-13

18 You shall appoint judges and officers in all your towns which the Lord your God gives you, according to your tribes; and they shall judge the people with righteous judgment.

19 You shall not misinterpret or misapply judgment; you shall not be partial, or take a bribe; for a bribe blinds the eyes of the wise, and perverts the words of the righteous.

20 Follow what is altogether just [that is, uncompromisingly righteous], that you may live and inherit the land which your God gives you.

2 If there is found among you, within any of your towns which the Lord your God gives you, a man or woman who does what is wicked in the sight of the Lord your God, by transgressing His covenant,

3 Who has gone and served other gods and worshiped them, or the sun or moon or any of the host of the heavens, which I have forbidden,

4 And it is told and you hear of it; then inquire diligently, and if it is certainly true that such an abomination has been committed in Israel,

5 Then you shall bring forth to your town's gates that man or woman who has done that wicked thing, and you shall stone that man or woman to death.

6 On the evidence of two or three witnesses, he who is worthy of death shall be put to death; he shall not be put to death on the evidence of one witness.

7 The hands of the witnesses shall be the first against him to put him to death, and afterward the hands of all the people. So you shall purge the evil from among you.

8 If there arise a matter too hard for you in judgment, between one kind of bloodshed and another, between one legality and another, between one kind of assault and another, matters of controversy within your towns, then arise and go to the place which the Lord your God chooses,

9 And you shall come to the Levitical priests, and to the judge who is in office in those days, and you shall consult them, and they shall make clear to you the decision.

10 And you shall do according to the decision which they declare to you from that place which the Lord chooses, and you shall be watchful to do according to all that they tell you;

11 According to the decision of the law which they shall teach you, and the judgment which they shall announce to you, you shall do; you shall not turn aside from the verdict they give you, either to the right hand or the left.

12 The man who does presumptuously, and will not listen to the priest who stands to minister there before the Lord your God, or to the judge, that man shall die; so you shall purge the evil from Israel.

13 And all the people shall hear, and (reverently) fear, and not act presumptuously again.

COMMENT 16:18-20; 17:2-13

We have treated the last of these two sections in lesson ten because the basic subject matter is the same. But because the scripture also concerns the judges, we include it again here.

JUDGES AND OFFICERS SHALT THOU MAKE IN ALL THY GATES (v. 18)—Obviously anticipating the settled life in Canaan. In ancient times, the gates of the city composed the "city hall," and the chief area of civil business. In Ch. 1:13-18 we saw how judges were appointed for Israel's good for the length of their wilderness wanderings. Now, a similar system was in order for each city. "JUDGES . . . *shophetim*, among the Hebrews, were probably the same as our *magistrates* or *justices of the peace*. OFFICERS . . . *shoterim*, seems to have been the same as our inquest sergeants, beadles [formerly, messengers of the court] & c., whose office it was to go into the houses, shops, & c., and examine *weights, measures*, and the civil conduct of the people. When they found anything amiss, they brought the person offending

before the *magistrate*, and he was punished by the *officer* on the spot. They seem also to have acted as heralds in the army, chap. xx. 5." (Clarke, who is, of course, comparing Britain).

The Hebrew word for judge (*shaphat*) is the same as occurs in the book of Judges, but, as we saw in Lesson Ten (17:9), the same word is used for men who usually performed very different functions than those outlined here.*

THOU SHALT NOT WREST JUSTICE (v. 19)—See 1:16, 17, notes.

IF THERE BE FOUND IN THE MIDST OF THEE (v. 2)—On vv. 2-13, see our remarks in lesson ten. Note that the judge is involved in judgment of the difficult cases (v. 9) working in conjunction with the priests. Cf. 19:15-21.

(2) KINGS (17:14-20)

14 When thou art come unto the land which Jehovah thy God giveth thee, and shalt possess it, and shalt dwell therein, and shalt say, I will set a king over me, like all the nations that are round about me; 15 thou shalt surely set him king over thee, whom Jehovah thy God shall choose: one from among thy brethren shalt thou set king over thee; thou mayest not put a foreigner over thee, who is not thy brother. 16 Only he shall not multiply horses to himself, nor cause the people to return to Egypt, to the end that he may multiply horses; forasmuch as Jehovah hath said unto you, Ye shall henceforth return no more that way. 17 Neither shall he multiply wives to himself, that his heart turn not away: neither shall he greatly multiply to himself silver and gold.

18 And it shall be, when he sitteth upon the throne of his kingdom, that he shall write him a copy of this law in a book, out of *that which is* before the priests the Levites: 19 and it shall be with him, and he shall read therein all the days of his life; that he may learn to fear Jehovah his God, to keep all the words of this law and these statutes, to do them; 20 that his heart be not lifted up above his brethren, and that he turn not aside from the commandment, to the right hand, or to the left: to the end that he may prolong his days in his kingdom, he and his children, in the midst of Israel.

*Some judges during that era *did* appear to perform in an office similar to Moses' in the wilderness, judging the "hard matters"—Judges 3:10, 4:5, I Sam. 4:18, 7:6, 15. But when it is said of a man, "he judged Israel twenty years" (Samson. Judges 16:31), much more is meant.

THOUGHT QUESTIONS 17:14-20

292. These verses contain a prophesy covering how many years?
 293. Was this prediction an encouragement to disobedience? Discuss.
 294. Discuss the importance of the three prohibitions. Cf. verses 16, 17.
 295. What law book was to be copied by the King? For what purpose?
 296. What are some of the indications of "his heart" being "lifted up above his brethren"?

AMPLIFIED TRANSLATION 17:14-20

14 When you come to the land which the Lord your God gives you, and you possess it and live there, and then say, I will set a king over me, like all the nations that are about me;

15 You shall surely set as king over you him whom the Lord your God will choose; one from among your brethren you shall set as king over you; you may not set a foreigner, who is not your brother, over you.

16 But he shall not multiply horses to himself, or cause the people to return to Egypt in order to multiply horses, since the Lord said to you, You shall never return that way.

17 And he shall not multiply wives to himself, that his [mind and] heart turn not away; neither shall he greatly multiply to himself silver and gold.

18 And when he sits on his royal throne, he shall write him a copy of this law in a book out of what is before the Levitical priests;

19 And he shall keep it with him, and he shall read it in all the days of his life, that he may learn (reverently) to fear the Lord his God, by keeping all the words of this law and these statutes, and doing them;

20 That his [mind and] heart may not be lifted up above his brethren, and that he may not turn aside from the commandments, to the right hand or to the left; so that he may continue long, he and his sons, in his kingdom in Israel.

COMMENT 17:14-20

As we have already seen, and *shall* see in this book, God divinely anticipates the evil into which Israel would degenerate and makes provision for it. See another example of this in I Sam. 8:4-22, 12:12. He does not condone or endorse all he allows—or all he foreknows. Their desire for a king would represent a degeneration and corruption of Israel's Theocracy. But God was still their father, and Israel was still

his nation, and he was not about to forsake them on this account. So the regulatory laws we have here. As we will see, even *these* were soon broken!

Because God knew ahead of time what Israel would do after they arrived in the promised land, did not mean he *caused* or *compelled* them to do it—much less authorized it. A scientist-astronomer may now know that an eclipse will take place exactly at such-and-such a time in 1980. Does his foreknowledge *cause* the eclipse? No, but it may cause *him* to do many things in *anticipation* of it. It seems we have a fair parallel here. God anticipated the evil into which Israel would degenerate in clamoring for a king, and the present scriptures provide *for that state of things*. McGarvey asks, "What was to prevent Moses from anticipating this? He was starting his people on their national career without a king, when all the nations round about them had kings, and had been ruled by them in the past. He would have been grossly ignorant of human nature had he not anticipated and feared that in the course of time they would grow weary of such singularity, and want to live like other nations. Such has been the fearful anticipation of every body of patriots who ever organized a democratic or republican form of government."*

AND SHALT SAY, I WILL SET A KING OVER ME (v. 14)—I Sam. 8:5, 19, 20.

KING . . . WHOM JEHOVAH THY GOD SHALL CHOOSE (v. 15)—An Israelite that had God's divine approval. Note, for example, David's anointing, I Sam. 16:4-13. Of course, this principle was often broken after the kingdom divided.

HE SHALL NOT MULTIPLY HORSES (v. 16) . . . WIVES (v. 17) . . . SILVER AND GOLD (v. 17)—King solomon probably represents the most flagrant transgressor of these prohibitions. He at first obeyed the Lord, and riches (which he had not asked for)were added to his request for wisdom (I K. 3:9-14). But he was soon sidetracked from whole-hearted service to Jehovah. Exactly as these verses specify he was *not* to do, he multiplied

- (1) Horses—I K. 4:26 (Cf. II Chron. 9:25) 10:26, 28, 29. Note also that his horses "were brought out of Egypt"—again breaking the command of God as we have it here (v. 16).
A king would not "multiply" horses normally, unless prepar-

*Authorship of Deuteronomy, p. 116

ing for war or building up military might. See Ps. 20:7, 33:16-19, 147:10, 11; Prov. 21:31; Isa. 2:5-8. "Woe to them that go down to Egypt for help, and rely on horses, and trust in chariots because they are many, and in horsemen because they are very strong, but they look not unto the Holy One of Israel, neither seek Jehovah!" (Isa. 31:1).

- (2) Riches—I K. 10:27, II Chron. 1:15. At first given by God, money apparently became an obsession with him. This meant heavy, excessive taxes, plus a system of forced labor, I K. 5:13-17. Compare Israel's complaint to Rehoboam, I K. 12:4.
- (3) Wives—I K. 11:1-10. These turned Solomon's heart away from God.

HE SHALL WRITE HIM A COPY OF THIS LAW OUT OF THAT WHICH IS BEFORE THE PRIESTS THE LEVITES (v. 18)—"It is likely this means, that the copy which the king was to write out was to be taken from the autograph kept in the tabernacle before the Lord, from which, as a standard, every copy was taken, and with which doubtless every copy was compared; and it is probable that the priests and Levites had the revising of every copy that was taken off, in order to prevent errors from creeping into the sacred text." (Clarke) The priests were the custodians of the law (31:26).

The book was to be constantly studied and meditated upon by the king (vv. 19, 20)—and be his directory and guide in daily life. Joshua was not a king, but was God's leader of Israel, note Josh. 1:7, 8. David, of course, is the king who truly held God's law in its proper esteem (Ps. 119, etc.).

It is probable, however, that the "book" here referred to was neither the book of Deuteronomy or the Pentateuch. "As this law was to be copied 'out of that which was before the priests,' it did not, of course, contain all that was in that book; and as it was to govern the king rather than the priests or the people, it included only such portions as related to the king's personal and official duties. It was not, therefore, a very long document." (McGarvey)

This may have been "the testimony" given Jehoash (Joash), II K. 11:12.

SUMMARY OF CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

All sacrifices to be without blemish, 1. Of persons convicted of idolatry and their punishment, 2-7. Difficult matters in judgment to be laid before the priests and judges, and to be determined by them;

and all to submit to their decision, 8-13. The king that may be chosen to be one of their brethren; no stranger to be appointed to that office, 14, 15. He shall not multiply horses to himself, nor cause the people to return unto Egypt, 16. Nor multiply wives, money, &c., 17. He shall write a copy of the law for his own use, and read and study it all his days, that his heart be not lifted up above his brethren, 18-20.

(3) PRIESTS (18:1-8)

The priests the Levites, *even* all the tribe of Levi, shall have no portion nor inheritance with Israel: they shall eat the offerings of Jehovah made by fire, and his inheritance. 2 And they shall have no inheritance among their brethren: Jehovah is their inheritance, as he hath spoken unto them. 3 And this shall be the priests' due from the people, from them that offer a sacrifice, whether it be ox or sheep, that they shall give unto the priest the shoulder, and the two cheeks, and the maw. 4 The first-fruits of thy grain, of thy new wine, and of thine oil, and the first of the fleece of thy sheep, shalt thou give him. 5 For Jehovah thy God hath chosen him out of all thy tribes, to stand to minister in the name of Jehovah, him and his sons for ever.

6 And if a Levite come from any of thy gates out of all Israel, where he sojourneth, and come with all the desire of his soul unto the place which Jehovah shall choose; 7 then he shall minister in the name of Jehovah his God, as all his brethren the Levites do, who stand there before Jehovah. 8 They shall have like portions to eat, besides that which cometh of the sale of his patrimony.

THOUGHT QUESTIONS 18:1-8

297. What distinction was there between a priest and a Levite?
298. What three portions of the sacrificial animal belonged to the Levite?
299. The attitude of the worshipper toward God is reflected in what he gave to the man of God; how so?
300. There is a special type of Levite described in verses 6 through 8; who is he?
301. What is "patrimony"?

AMPLIFIED TRANSLATION 18:1-8

The Levitical priests and all the tribe of Levi shall have no part or inheritance with Israel; they shall eat the offerings made by fire to the Lord, and His rightful dues.

2 They shall have no inheritance among their brethren; the Lord is their inheritance, as He promised them.

3 And this shall be the priest's due from the people, from those who offer a sacrifice, whether it be ox or sheep: they shall give to the priest the shoulder and the two cheeks and the stomach.

4 The first fruits of your grain, of your new wine, and of your oil, and the first or best of the fleece of your sheep, you shall give the priest.

5 For the Lord your God has chosen him out of all your tribes, to stand to minister in the name [and presence] of the Lord, him and his sons for ever.

6 And if a Levite comes from any of your towns out of all Israel, where he is a temporary resident, he may come whenever he desires to [the sanctuary] the place the Lord will choose,

7 Then he may minister in the name [and presence] of the Lord his God, like all his brethren the Levites, who stand to minister there before the Lord.

8 They shall have equal portions to eat, besides what may come of the sale of his patrimony. [Jer. 32:6-15.]

COMMENT 18:1-8

We have already studied considerably concerning the priests and their divine allotment from the tithes and offerings of Israel (10:8, 9, 12:12, 17-19, 14:27-29). Having no inheritance, they were dependent upon the goodness and faithfulness of Israel for their support and livelihood.

THE PRIESTS AND LEVITES, EVEN ALL THE TRIBE OF LEVI (v. 1)—
On the term "Levites," Smith's Bible Dictionary states, "Sometimes the name extends to the whole tribe, the priests included, Ex. 6:25; Lev. 25:32; Num. 35:2; Dt. 18:1; Josh. 21:3, 41, etc; sometimes only to those members of the tribe who were not priests, and as distinguished from them. Sometimes again it is added as an epithet of the smaller portion of the tribe, and we read of "the priests the Levites" Josh. 3:3; Ezek. 44:15."

One family of Levites, Aaron and his sons, was set apart to be priests as such. The rest of the Levites were assistants to the priests, caring for the transportation and upkeep of the tabernacle, and later, the service of the temple. But they were all a part of the *priestly tribe*.

AND HIS INHERITANCE (v. 1) i.e., God's. ". . . and His rightful dues" [Amplified].

AND THIS SHALL BE THE PRIESTS' DUE (v. 3)—Of that part of the sacrifice that he was to keep for himself.

THE MAW (v. 3)—better, *the stomach*. The "rough stomach of ruminants, in which the digestion was completed" (Pulpit).

As much as it might seem otherwise to us, these were regarded as the choice parts of the animal. They were given in addition to the wave breast and heave leg of the peace offerings (Lev. 7:32 ff., Num. 18:11, which belonged with the "offerings made by fire" (v. 1). God's ministers of Israel were to eat well!

THE FIRST-FRUITS . . . SHALT THOU GIVE HIM (v. 4)—See Num. 18:12, 13. Moses here adds that the first fleece of the sheep shall be the priests'.

We can see from these verses, (and by comparing our discussion in ch. 12) that the Israelite had not only to think about the *amount* he gave, but also the *quality*. God's servants should not have the worst part of the animal, but the *best*; and of the tithe from the field and flock, they were to get their share *first*. And why? Because God had chosen them to minister in his name (v. 5)! Is anything more important than that?

How often this simple principle could well be learned today, among God's people. Those who preach the gospel should live of the gospel (I Cor. 9:14)—*live*, not *exist*. If we have attached the proper *importance* and *dignity* to the work of Christ, his *servants* will have our generous and hearty assistance. Aaron and Hur, *God's servants*, needed some one else to hold up their hands to be effective with God.

AND IF A LEVITE COME FROM ANY OF THY GATES (note vv. 6-8) —Only a portion of the Levites were engaged in the service of the sanctuary; the rest lived in their towns throughout the country, Num. 35:7. It might happen, however, that a Levite, moved by holy feeling, would come to the place of the sanctuary to worship there; and it is prescribed that such a one should fare as his brethren the Levites engaged in the service of the sanctuary fared; he should minister along with them, and share with them in the gifts of the worshippers; and this in addition to any means he might have from the sale of his patrimony.

THE SALE OF HIS PATRIMONY (v. 7)—The latter word literally signifies "the fathers" and which Young renders "upon (concerning) the fathers (clans)." The I.S.B.E. states, "e.g. 'house of the fathers.'" It may indicate some private source of income possessed by the Levite [who has come up from a country district] distinct from what he receives as a priest officiating at the central sanctuary." Beyond this one occurrence of "patrimony," we have the same idea conveyed elsewhere: "Father, give me the portion of thy [Greek, *the*] substance that falleth unto me. And he divided unto them his living" (Lk. 15:12). "Teacher, bid my brother divide the inheritance with me" (Lk. 12:13).

The Levite, as we have already learned (12:12, 19, 14:27) had no inheritance as such. He was therefore to be provided for out of the tithes and offerings of Israel. But when this sojourner came to the house of God and the place of sacrifice, he too, was to have his portion, along with the other priests. And this was to be so, even though he sold the house he had inherited (that is, that had been passed down to him) from his fathers. See Lev. 25:32-34. He might also have had such supplies, furniture, etc. as was voluntarily contributed to him by grateful Israelites. These might be passed down from generation to generation, and the "sale" here might include such. When a man leaves the home he has known from childhood to devote his life to the Lord's ministry, he is not to be deprived the income he might receive in the process of "selling out."

(4) PROPHETS (18:9-22)

9 When thou art come into the land which Jehovah thy God giveth thee, thou shalt not learn to do after the abominations of those nations. 10 There shall not be found with thee any one that maketh his son or his daughter to pass through the fire, one that useth divination, one that practiseth augury, or an enchanter, or a sorcerer, 11 or a charmer, of a consulter with a familiar spirit, or a wizard, or a necromancer. 12 For whosoever doeth these things is an abomination unto Jehovah: and because of these abominations Jehovah thy God doth drive them out from before thee. 13 Thou shalt be perfect with Jehovah thy God. 14 For these nations, that thou shalt dispossess, hearken unto them that practise augury, and unto diviners; but as for thee, Jehovah thy God hath not suffered thee so to do.

15 Jehovah 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; 16 according to all that thou desiredst of Jehovah thy God in Horeb

in the day of the assembly, saying Let me not hear again the voice of Jehovah my God, neither let me see this great fire any more, that I die not. 17 And Jehovah said unto me, They have well said that which they have spoken. 18 I will raise them up a prophet from among their brethren, like unto thee; and I will put my words in his mouth, and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him. 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.

20 But the prophet, that shall speak a word presumptuously in my name, which I have not commanded him to speak, or that shall speak in the name of other gods, that same prophet shall die. 21 And if thou say in thy heart, How shall we know the word which Jehovah hath not spoken? 22 when a prophet speaketh in the name of Jehovah, if the thing follow not, nor come to pass, that is the thing which Jehovah hath not spoken: the prophet hath spoken it presumptuously, thou shalt not be afraid of him.

THOUGHT QUESTIONS 18:9-22

302. What is meant by the expression "to pass through the fire"? Cf. 12:31.
303. Please define separately the following terms: (1) divination, (2) augury, (3) enchanter (4) sorcerer, (5) charmer, (6) consulter with familiar spirits, (7) wizard, (8) necromancer.
304. "Abomination" is a strong word. How is it used here.
305. Besides the immoral and idolatrous practices accompanying the use of these various "fortune tellers" there was a basic sin more fundamental than these external practices. What was it?
306. Verse 13 is a key verse. Read it carefully.
307. Give three qualities of "the prophet" God was to raise up.
308. Read Acts 3:19-23; 7:37 and re-read these verses to understand just how this prophecy is fulfilled.
309. A prophet could speak "presumptuously." If so, what would be involved?
310. Some prophets were to be put to death. What test was to be exercised?

AMPLIFIED TRANSLATION 18:9-22

9 When you come into the land which the Lord your God gives you, you shall not learn to follow the abominable practices of these nations.

10 There shall not be found among you any one who makes his son or daughter pass through the fire, or who uses divination, or is a soothsayer, or an augur, or a sorcerer,

11 Or a charmer, or a medium, or a wizard, or a necromancer.

12 For all who do these things are an abomination to the Lord; and it is because of these abominable practices that the Lord your God is driving them out from before you.

13 You shall be blameless (and absolutely true) to the Lord your God.

14 For these nations, whom you shall dispossess, listen to soothsayers and diviners, but as for you, the Lord your God has not allowed you to do so.

15 The Lord your God will raise up for you *a prophet from the midst of your brethren, like me [Moses]; to him you shall listen.

16 This is what you desired (and asked) of the Lord your God at Horeb on the day of the assembly, when you said, Let me not hear again the voice of the Lord my God, or see this great fire any more, lest I die.

17 And the Lord said to me, They have well said all that they have spoken.

18 I will raise up for them a prophet from among their brethren, like you, and will put My words in his mouth; and he shall speak to them all that I command him.

19 And whoever will not hearken to My words which he shall speak in My name, I Myself will require it of him.

20 But the prophet who presumes to speak a word in My name which I have not commanded him to speak, or who speaks in the name of other gods, that same prophet shall die.

21 And if you say in your [mind and] heart, How shall we know which words the Lord has not spoken?

*The insertion of this promise in connection with the preceding prohibition, might warrant the application which some make of it, to that order of true prophets whom God commissioned in unbroken succession to instruct, to direct, and warn His people; and in this view the gist of it is, "there is no need to consult with diviners and soothsayers, for I shall afford you the benefit of divinely appointed prophets, for judging of whose identity a sure clue is given" (vs. 20,22). But the prophet here promised was pre-eminently the Messiah, for He alone was 'like unto Moses in His mediatorial character; in the peculiar excellence of His ministry; in the number, variety and magnitude of His miracles; in His close and familiar communion with God; and in His being the author of a new dispensation of religion.' This prediction was fulfilled 1500 years afterwards, and was expressly applied to Christ by Peter (Acts 3:22,23), and by Stephen (Acts 7:37)—*Jamieson, Fausset and Brown Commentary*.

22 When a prophet speaks in the name of the Lord, if the word does not come to pass or prove true, that is a word which the Lord has not spoken; the prophet has spoken it presumptuously; you shall not be afraid of him.

COMMENT 18:9-22

We have included these three paragraphs together because the spokesman of *God*, his true mouthpiece, is contrasted to the diviner, wizard, and *false* prophet best by taking this entire section together.

Included here, of course, is one of the most wonderful prophecies of Christ in the Old Testament.

In vv. 9-13 sorcery and divination are forbidden.

PASS THROUGH THE FIRE (v. 10)—See 12:31 and notes.

DIVINATION . . . AUGURY . . . ENCHANTER, etc. (v. 10-14)—These terms would cover all types of the magical or secret arts. How could one claim total trust and faith in the leading *Jehovah*, and also claim guidance by *these means*? They were *destructive* of such trust. God would have us "come ye out from among them, and be ye separate." *God's* people do not need to consult the stars, "fortune tellers," gypsies, or other of the "black arts" for their guidance.

These people were not to be imitated by Israelites (Lev. 19:26), nor be consulted by them (Lev. 19:31), but both they and those who turned to them were to be put to death, (Lev. 20:6, 27, Ex. 22:18).

King Saul, who at first responded wonderfully to this commandment, later degenerated to a point of consulting a witch himself! See I Sam. 28:3 ff., I Chron. 10:13, 14. King Manasseh fell into a similar sin, II K. 21:6, II Chron. 33:6, but king Josiah put all who dealt with them out of the land, II K. 23:24.

FAMILIAR SPIRIT (v. 11)—Probably so called because it was regarded as the "friend" and "servant" of the person possessing it, and might be summoned to do services at his command.

NECROMANCER (v. 11)—One who inquires for, or consults with, the spirits of the dead.

Obviously, some of these names overlap. Keil and Delitsch will remark,

"Moses groups together all the words which the language contained for the different modes of exploring the future and discovering the will of God, for the purpose of forbidding every description of

soothsaying, and places the prohibition of Moloch-worship at the head [v. 10], to show the inward connection between soothsaying and idolatry, possibly because februation, or passing children through the fire in the worship of Moloch, was more intimately connected with soothsaying and magic than any other description of idolatry" (*Commentary on the Pentateuch*, III, 393).

A PROPHET FROM THE MIDST OF THEE (v. 15)—Here we have a blessed prophecy of Christ, the great prophet (*Nabi*, spokesman, mouthpiece, preacher) of God. He would not be a foreigner, but would arise "from the midst of thee," His office and work, Moses tells us, will be "like unto me," and unto him shall all hearken. Even as Moses was God's divinely appointed delivered and saviour of Israel, so it would be with this Prophet. ". . . and thou shalt call his name JESUS; for it is he that shall save his people from their sins" (Matt. 1:21).

That this is a divine prophecy of our Lord is made clear by inspiration (Acts 3:19-23, 7:37). Thus John denies that *he* is "the prophet" (Jn. 1:19-25). See also Matt. 21:10, 11; Jn. 1:45, 6:14, 7:40. Compare Jn. 5:45-47.

As in 13:1-5, we *may* have here also the requirements for *God's true prophets*—i.e. the prophet of *God* as contrasted to the false, lying and deceitful prophets of Baal and other dieties. "No doubt the language of Moses had a *general* fulfillment in the raising up of a prophetic succession, culminating in the appearance and work of Jesus Christ, to Whom therefore it eminently refers" (Joseph Angus, *The Bible Handbook*). Because of his position as successor to Moses as God's chosen leader and spokesman, many have thought the *immediate* fulfillment of this prophecy was found in Joshua (Heb. savior). But so far as the Bible statements are concerned, Christ represents the fulfillment of this prophecy.

AND I WILL PUT MY WORDS IN HIS MOUTH (v. 18)—Jesus said, "For I spoke not from myself; but the Father that sent me, he hath given me a commandment, what I should say and what I should speak. And I know that his commandment is life eternal: the things therefore which I speak, even as the Father hath said unto me, so I speak" (Jn. 12:49, 50). See also Jn. 7:16-17.

AND WHOSOEVER WILL NOT HEARKEN (v. 19)—See Jn. 12:48, Acts 3:23, Heb. 12:24, 25. The words of our divine Prophet must be heeded. God said "This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased;

HEAR YE HIM" (Matt. 17:5). Note the application the Holy Spirit makes in Heb. 10:28-31. O that we might stand in awe of Christ's words!

BUT THE PROPHET THAT SHALL SPEAK A WORD PRESUMPTUOUSLY IN MY NAME (v. 20)—See "presumptuously" defined under 1:43. Note that it is done in the name of God! Ff. Matt. 7:21-23. See 13:1-5 and notes. Also Matt. 24:24, Mk. 13:22. False prophets always speak *some* truth—else *no one* would believe them!

Whether he spoke in the name of *God*, or in the name of *gods*, if it was not that which God had commanded to be spoken, he was to die! Surely we can learn here how imperative it is that God's spokesmen teach *his words* (Jas. 3:1).

HOW SHALL WE KNOW . . . ? (v. 21)—By comparing Ch. 13:1-5 we arrive at three tests of this prophet. 1. Was his teaching in accord with the teachings of God? 2. Did he prophesy in the name of other gods? 3. Did his prophecies come to pass? It might take a while to check him out on the third qualification, but not the first and second. On any of these counts he was to be put to death.

SUMMARY OF CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

The priests and Levites to have no inheritance, 1, 2. What is the priest's due, 3-5. Of the Levites that come from any of the other cities, 6-8. The Israelites must not copy the abominations of the former inhabitants, 9. None to cause his son or daughter to pass through the fire, or use any kind of divination or enchantment, as the former inhabitants did, 10-14. The great prophet which God promised to raise up, 15-19. Of false prophets, 20; and how to discern them, 21, 22.

QUESTIONS, LESSON FOURTEEN

(16:18-20; 17:2—18:22)

1. Name at least two temptations faced by the judges.
2. Was a king for Israel within the will of God? Explain.
3. What two qualifications does God here lay down for the king-to-be?
4. Once he became king, a ruler was forbidden to multiply _____ or _____ or _____.
5. Why not multiply horses?

6. What great king was the most flagrant transgressor on all three counts?
7. What was the king to do with at least this portion of the word of God?
8. Do you remember the part of the animal the priest received? What is significant about this?
9. If a new priest began to serve in the sanctuary, would he have "eating privileges"?
10. What was the priest's "patrimony" (v. 8)? Does not this "contradict" previous statements that the priest had no inheritance?
11. What would happen to the Levites if the people were not generous and obedient to the commands to support them? . . . What would happen to the *quality* of the various services surrounding the sanctuary?
12. Couldn't a person use divination, sorcery, and consult wizards *as well as* worship God? Explain.
13. Who is the "prophet" of vv. 15-19. (*Prove* your answer with scripture!)
14. Without looking, can you remember three identifying characteristics of this prophet?
15. In what three ways could a "prophet" show that he was *not* God's prophet?



9 as frontlets between thine eyes. And thou shalt write them upon the posts of thy house, and on thy gates.