

LESSON NINE 12:1-28

B. THE LAW ("the Statutes and Ordinances") (12:1—26:19)

1. ONE SANCTUARY (12:1-28)

These are the statutes and the ordinances which ye shall observe to do in the land which Jehovah, the God of thy fathers, hath given thee to possess it, all the days that ye live upon the earth. 2 Ye shall surely destroy all the places wherein the nations that ye shall dispossess served their gods, upon the high mountains, and upon the hills, and under every green tree: 3 and ye shall break down their altars, and dash in pieces their pillars, and burn their Asherim with fire; and ye shall hew down the graven images of their gods; and ye shall destroy their name out of that place. 4 Ye shall not do so unto Jehovah your God. 5 But unto the place which Jehovah 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; 6 and thither ye shall bring your burnt-offerings, and your sacrifices, and your tithes, and the heave-offering of your hand, and your vows, and your freewill-offerings, and the firstlings of your herd and of your flock: 7 and there ye shall eat before Jehovah your God, and ye shall rejoice in all that ye put your hand unto, ye and your households, wherein Jehovah thy God hath blessed thee. 8 Ye shall not do after all the things that we do here this day, every man whatsoever is right in his own eyes; 9 for ye are not as yet come to the rest and to the inheritance, which Jehovah thy God giveth thee. 10 But when ye go over the Jordan, and dwell in the land which Jehovah your God causeth you to inherit, and he giveth you rest from all your enemies round about, so that ye dwell in safety; 11 then it shall come to pass that to the place which Jehovah your God shall choose, to cause his name to dwell there, thither shall ye bring all that I command you: your burnt-offerings, and your sacrifices, your tithes, and the heave-offering of your hand, and all your choice vows ye vow unto Jehovah. 12 And ye shall rejoice before Jehovah your God, ye, and your sons, and your daughters, and your men-servants, and your maid-servants, and the Levite that is within your gates, forasmuch as he hath no portion nor inheritance with you. 13 Take heed to thyself that thou offer not thy burnt-offerings in every place that thou seest; 14 but in the place which Jehovah shall choose in one of thy tribes, there thou shalt offer thy burnt-offerings, and there thou shalt do all that I command thee.

15 Notwithstanding, thou mayest kill and eat flesh within all thy gates, after all the desire of thy soul, according to the blessings of Jehovah thy God which he hath given thee; the unclean and the clean may eat thereof, as of the gazelle, and as of the hart. 16 Only ye shall not eat the blood; thou shalt pour it out upon the earth as water. 17 Thou mayest not eat within thy gates the tithe of thy grain, or of thy new wine, or of thine oil, or the firstlings of thy herd or of thy flock, nor any of thy vows which thou vowest, nor thy freewill-offerings, nor the heave-offering of thy hand; 18 But thou shalt eat them before Jehovah thy God in the place which Jehovah thy God shall choose, thou, and thy son, and thy daughter, and thy man-servant, and thy maid-servant, and the Levite that is within thy gates: and thou shalt rejoice before Jehovah thy God in all that thou puttest thy hand unto. 19 Take heed to thyself that thou forsake not the Levite as long as thou livest in thy land.

20 When Jehovah thy God shall enlarge thy border, as he hath promised thee, and thou shalt say, I will eat flesh, because thy soul desireth to eat flesh; thou mayest eat flesh, after all the desire of thy soul. 21 If the place which Jehovah thy God shall choose, to put his name there, be too far from thee, then thou shalt kill of thy herd and of thy flock, which Jehovah hath given thee, as I have commanded thee; and thou mayest eat within thy gates, after all the desire of thy soul. 22 Even as the gazelle and as the hart is eaten, so thou shalt eat thereof: the unclean and the clean may eat thereof alike. 23 Only be sure that thou eat not the blood: for the blood is the life; and thou shalt not eat the life with the flesh. 24 Thou shalt not eat it; thou shalt pour it out upon the earth as water. 25 Thou shalt not eat it; that it may go well with thee, and with thy children after thee, when thou shalt do that which is right in the eyes of Jehovah. 26 Only thy holy things which thou hast, and thy vows, thou shalt take, and go unto the place which Jehovah shall choose: 27 and thou shalt offer thy burnt offerings, the flesh and the blood, upon the altar of Jehovah thy God; and the blood of thy sacrifices shall be poured out upon the altar of Jehovah thy God; and thou shalt eat the flesh. 28 Observe and hear all these words which I command thee, that it may go well with thee, and with thy children after thee forever, when thou doest that which is good and right in the eyes of Jehovah thy God.

THOUGHT QUESTIONS 12:1-28

226. Wouldn't it have been enough to simply worship the Lord in sincerity and truth and not to fight other religions? Why all the negative action?
227. What advantage was there in one place of worship?
228. Notice the laxity suggested in verse 8, or is this the thought of the verse?
229. What could be slaughtered at home?
230. What attitude was to prevail when offerings were made?
231. What was never to be eaten?
232. How could a Levite be forsaken?
233. Did God permit meat eating? (cf. verse 20) What of some present-day prohibitions of flesh eating?
234. What new rule for slaughtering animals is given verse 21?
235. How we need to believe God's will is both *good* and *right*. Cf. verse 28. What will help us understand this?

AMPLIFIED TRANSLATION 12:1-28

These are the statutes and ordinances which you shall be watchful to do in the land, which the Lord, God of your fathers, gives you to possess all the day you live on the earth.

2 You shall surely destroy all the places where the nations you dispossess served their gods, upon the high mountains and the hills and under every green tree;

3 You shall break down their altars, and dash in pieces their pillars, and burn their Asherim with fire; you shall hew down the graven images of their gods, and destroy their name out of that place.

4 You shall not behave so toward the Lord your God.

5 But you shall seek the place which the Lord your God shall choose out of all your tribes to put His name and make His dwelling-place, and there shall you come;

6 And there you shall bring your burnt offerings, and your sacrifices, your tithes, and the offering of your hands and your vows, and your freewill offerings, and the firstlings of your herd and of your flock;

7 And there you shall eat before the Lord your God, and you shall rejoice in all to which you put your hand, you and your households, in which the Lord your God has blessed you.

8 You *shall not do according to all we do here [in the camp] this day, every man doing whatever looks right in his own eyes.

9 For you have not yet come to the rest and to the inheritance which the Lord your God gives you.

10 But when you go over the Jordan and dwell in the land which the Lord your God causes you to inherit, and He gives you rest from all your enemies round about, so that you dwell in safety,

11 Then there shall be a place which the Lord your God shall choose to cause His name [and His presence] to dwell there; to it you shall bring all that I command you; your burnt offerings, your sacrifices, your tithes, and what the hand presents [as a first gift from the fruits of the ground], and all your choicest offerings which you vow to the Lord.

12 And you shall rejoice before the Lord your God, you and your sons and your daughters, and your menservants and your maidservants, and the Levite that is within your towns; since he has no part or inheritance with you.

13 Be watchful not to offer your burnt offerings in every place you see;

14 But in the place which the Lord shall choose in one of your tribes, there you shall offer your burnt offerings, and there you shall do all I command you.

15 However, you may kill and eat flesh in any of your towns, whenever you desire, according to the provision for the support of life with which the Lord your God has blessed you; those [ceremonially] unclean and the clean may eat of it, as of the gazelle and the hart.

16 Only you shall not eat the blood; you shall pour it upon the ground as water.

17 You may not eat within your towns the tithe of your grain or of your new wine or of your oil or the firstlings of your herd or flock, or anything you have vowed, or your freewill offerings, or the offerings from your hand [of garden products].

18 But you shall eat them before the Lord your God in the place which the Lord your God shall choose, you and your son and your

* "It has been too much overlooked that the Law of Moses had a prophetic side. It was given to him and to Israel when they were not in a position to keep it [fully]. It was *the law of the land* which God would give them. In many ways its observance depended on the completion of the conquest of the land, and upon the quietness of the times in which they lived. This prophetic aspect was certainly not unrecognized by the Jews, or they would not (for example) have neglected to dwell in booths at the Feast of Tabernacles from the time of Joshua to Nehemiah. See Neh. 8:17." (*Ellicott's Commentary*.)

daughter, your manservant and your maidservant, and the Levite that is within your towns; and you shall rejoice before the Lord your God in all that you undertake.

19 Take heed not to forsake or neglect the Levite [God's minister] as long as you live in your land.

20 When the Lord your God enlarges your territory, as He promised you, and you say, I will eat flesh, because you crave flesh, you may eat flesh, whenever you desire.

21 If the place where the Lord your God has chosen to put His name [and presence] is too far from you, then you shall kill from your herd or flock which the Lord has given you, as I [Moses] have commanded you; eat in your towns as much as you desire.

22 Just as the roebuck and the hart is eaten, so you may eat of it [but not offer it]; the unclean and the clean alike may eat of it.

23 Only be sure that you do not eat the blood; for the blood is the life; and you may not eat the life with the flesh.

24 You shall not eat it; you shall pour it out on the earth like water.

25 You shall not eat it; that all may go well with you and with your children after you, when you do what is right in the sight of the Lord.

26 Only your holy things which you have [to offer], and what you have vowed, you shall take, and go to the place [before the sanctuary] which the Lord shall choose,

27 And offer your burnt offerings, the flesh and the blood, upon the altar of the Lord your God; and the blood of your sacrifices shall be poured out on the altar of the Lord your God, and you may eat the flesh.

28 Be watchful and obey all these words which I command you, that it may go well with you and with your children after you for ever, when you do what is good and right in the sight of the Lord your God.

COMMENT 12:1-28

Note here, that in anticipation of their stay in Canaan, God demands that Israel have one central sanctuary—his offerings are to be made in one place, and other offering places are to be destroyed (vv. 1-14). Then, in vv. 15-18 note that flesh, but *not the blood* nor consecrated things, could be eaten at home.

THE NATIONS . . . SERVED THEIR GODS, UPON THE HIGH MOUNTAINS, AND UPON THE HILLS, AND UNDER EVERY GREEN TREE (v. 2)—

Cf. Isa. 57:5, 7; Jer. 2:20, 3:6, 17:1, 2; Hos. 4:13; II K. 16:4, 17:10. "The heathen had their places of worship on lofty elevations, probably because they imagined they were thus nearer to the object of their worship; and they sought also the shade of woods, or thick-foliaged trees (Ezek. vi. 13), under which to perform their rites, as tending to inspire awe, and as in keeping with the mysterious character of their rites." (Pulpit Commentary)

AND YE SHALL BREAK DOWN THEIR ALTARS . . . etc. (v. 3)—Cf. 7:5 and notes. The destructive process was to be complete and total: AND YE SHALL DESTROY THEIR NAME OUT OF THAT PLACE. No vestige or reminder of idolatry and the carnal rites that accompanied such worship were to remain in the land. As we have already seen in the names Baal-peor and Beth-peor (3:29, 4:3, 46), the *names* traceable to the idolatry of the land were everywhere in Canaan. A check with a concordance will show many names with the prefix Baal—existing in the land when Israel conquered it. Clarke mentions that these names "were no doubt at first graven on the stones, and carved on the trees, and then applied to the surrounding districts. In various instances the names of whole mountains, valleys, and districts were borrowed from the gods worshipped there."

YE SHALL NOT DO SO UNTO JEHOVAH (v. 4)—i.e., he is not to be worshipped (formally) in *any place* you might deem convenient (v. 2) and certainly not in the *manner* the heathen do (v. 3).

BUT UNTO THE PLACE WHICH JEHOVAH YOUR GOD SHALL CHOOSE . . . (v. 5 ff)—"A particular place for the general rendezvous of all the tribes would be chosen by God himself; and the choice of one common place for the solemn rites of religion was an act of divine wisdom, for the security of true religion; it was admirably calculated to prevent the corruption which would otherwise have crept in from their frequenting groves and high hills—to preserve uniformity of worship, and keep alive their faith in Him to whom all their sacrifices pointed. The place was successively Mizpeh [or *Mizpah*, A.S.V., in Judah, near Gilgal; Judges 20:1, 5; I Sam. 7:5-9. Not to be confused with the Mizpah in Genesis, which was east of the Jordan], Shiloh [Josh. 18:1; Judges 18:31, 21:19; I Sam. 1:3], and especially Jerusalem [conquered by David, II Sam. 5:4-10, I Chron. 11:4-9]; but in all the references made to it by Moses, the name is never mentioned . . ." We can only conjecture at the reason for this silence. The above quote is taken from Robert Jamieson, who continues, "and this studied

silence was maintained partly lest the Canaanites within whose territories it lay might have concentrated their forces to frustrate all hopes of obtaining it; partly lest the desire of possessing a place of such importance might have become a cause of strife or rivalry amongst the Hebrew tribes, as about the appointment to the priesthood (Numbers 16)."

TO PUT HIS NAME THERE (v. 5)—i.e., the place God would designate as his special place of worship—eventually Jerusalem. See I K. 8:27-29; also II Chron. 7:11, 12, 15, 16. Back in Ex. 20:24 it was specified that an altar was to be built and sacrifices to be made "in every place where I record my name . . ."—i.e. any place where he specially manifests himself as present. The temple at Jerusalem was in later times known as the place of the name of Jehovah (Is. 18:7), the dwelling place of his glory (Ps. 26:8) The reference here, therefore, is quite *general*, and applies to *any* place where, by the Divine appointment, the tabernacle might be set up and the worship of Jehovah instituted.

THERE YE SHALL EAT (v. 7)—This statement, and the similar ones later in the chapter, are not incompatible with Num. 18:18, which specifies that the flesh of the sacrifices was to be given to the priest. An explanation is found in the Pulpit Commentary thus: "The animal belonged originally to the offerer; when he brought it before the Lord part of it was consumed on the altar, part of it was assigned to the priest, and the rest, as a matter of course, remained with himself. The law in Numbers, addressed to the priest, intimates what *he* might claim as his portion; the law in Deuteronomy, where the people are addressed, directs them how to use the portion that remained with *them*. It may be added that, even supposing that all the flesh was given to the priest, yet, as it had to be consumed on the day in which the sacrifice was offered, and as every clean person in the house might partake of it, it is almost certain that the offerer would, as a matter of course, share in the meal, as was usual in the case of sacrificed meals." McGarvey adds concerning both verses 6 and 7, "Here they are told to eat, but they are not told which they shall eat of the various offerings mentioned. We know, however, from other legislation, that they were not to eat of the burnt offerings, which were totally consumed on the altar. They were not to eat of the heave-offering, which was to be consumed by the priest and his family; and, if the law in Numbers had been already given, they were not to eat of the firstlings. But other legisla-

tion gave them the right to eat of the tithes, of the free-will offerings, and of the offerings in fulfillment of vows. When, then, they were told to bring all these offerings to the place that God would choose, and to eat there, they were necessarily restricted in their eating to these three classes of offerings, the others having been forbidden."

THE LEVITE . . . FORASMUCH AS HE HATH NO PORTION NOR INHERITANCE WITH YOU (v. 12)—See also vv. 18, 19, 26:11-13, 14,27, 10:9 and notes, and elsewhere in this chapter. Remarking on the statement about the Levites in v. 19, Clarke says, "These had no inheritance, and were to live by the sanctuary: if therefore the offerings were withheld by which the Levites were supported, they of course must perish. Those who have devoted themselves to the service of God in ministering to the salvation of the souls of men, should certainly be furnished at least with all the *necessaries* of life. Those who withhold this from them sin against their own mercies, and that ordinance of God by which a ministry is established for the salvation of souls.

OFFER NOT THY BURNT OFFERINGS IN EVERY PLACE THAT THOU SEEST (v. 13)—which was, of course, exactly what the heathens did in their idolatrous worship (v. 2). The period of Judges provides a grim commentary on the breaking of this command, for there, again and again Israel *did* "every man whatsoever is right in his own eyes" (v. 8, Cf. Judges 17:6, 21:25)—always to their degradation and shame. And even though they had no king in those days, the law of God had been given, and if it had been taught as it should have been (6:6-9) it would not have taken the brute force and legislation of a *king* to enforce it.

Mackintosh here gives us another of his many excellent remarks. Concerning the centralized worship so clearly demanded in this chapter, he says, "Here was *the* one grand and all-important point. It was the dwelling-place of Jehovah which was dear to the heart of every true Israelite. Restless self-will might desire to run hither and thither, the poor vagrant heart might long for some change, but, for the heart that loved God, any change from the place of His presence, the place where He had recorded His blessed name, could only be a change for the worse. The truly devout worshipper could find satisfaction and delight, blessing and rest, only in the place of the divine presence; and this, on the double ground,—the authority of His precious word and the powerful attractions of His presence. Such an one could never think of going anywhere else. Whither could he go? There was but one altar,

one habitation, one God—that was the place for every right-minded, every true-hearted Israelite. To think of any other place of worship would, in his judgment, be not only a departure from the word of Jehovah, but from His holy habitation.”

THOU MAYEST KILL AND EAT FLESH WITHIN ALL THY GATES (v. 15)— (also vv. 6, 17, 18). They were to beware of offering sacrifice in any place that might seem to them best; their offerings were to be presented only in that place which God should choose. But this did not imply that they were not to kill and eat in their own abodes whatever they desired for food. But . . .

YE SHALL NOT EAT THE BLOOD (v. 16, 23, 24). See also Gen. 9:4; Lev. 7:26, 17:10-14; Acts 15:19, 20, 28, 29. Note the reason given: it contains the life. It is the life stream of the human body. No part of the body can live without this red fluid. It carries oxygen and food to every part of the body, fights disease, and helps the body get rid of wastes. Modern medicine would only “Amen” the statement of this verse, but witness the practice of bloodletting (the process of drawing blood from the body in treatment of disease) which surgeon-barbers practiced for so many years—a practice which usually only weakened the body. (Polycythemia, a disease in which the blood cells grow too rapidly, is one of the few maladies that is today treated by bloodletting).

The fact that the life is in the blood cannot, of course be separated from the grand plan of the redemption of the world through the Saviour. Shedding his *blood* in the sacrifice of himself, he gave his *perfect life* for our sinful ones.

THOU MAYEST NOT EAT WITHIN THY GATES THE TITHE OF THY GRAIN, etc. (v. 17)—This was not to say they could not also partake of such items when they brought them in as offerings (Note vv. 6, 7, 18, 26) but they were not to do so “within thy gates.”

“These are the offerings which they would be most tempted to partake of at their homes; and this accounts for the repetition. It seems from this that, while not commanded to eat of the firstlings, they were permitted to do so [See 15:19-23]. The case, then, is like that of the tithes, which though given to the Levites, the giver was permitted to have one feast from them with the Levites, at the time of delivering them to the latter. This provision is not contradictory to the one that gave the firstlings to the priests, but an addition to it by

which the offered was permitted to have one feast with the priests who received them" . . .

"It provided only for a single meal out of the tithe before it was left for the Lord's ministry—the priests and Levites . . . [And here McGarvey refers to a custom of his day that, with the details altered, still exists among many churches]. "There is a custom in modern times, though not known in the established churches of the Old World, which illustrates the sacred feasts of Deuteronomy. The members of a congregation often gather at the house of the minister, bringing with them various articles of food to supply his storeroom for months to come; yet the whole company remains to have a feast with the family out of what has been brought. The feast adds a charm to the occasion, and increases the good will of both the givers and the receiver. Such was the evident intention of the feast given on the occasion of delivering the tithe to the Levites" (McGarvey *Authorship*, pp. 102, 103, 64, 67).

FORSAKE NOT THE LEVITE (v. 19)—See also v. 12, notes; 14:27. As we have already seen, the Levites had no property *as a tribe*, though they did have towns allotted to them among the different tribes. (Num. 35)—forty-eight cities with their "suburbs" (pasture-lands), including the six cities of refuge. Thus they were dispersed throughout the land and are described as "within the gates" of the rest of the people.

Dependent as they were upon Israel for support, what could they do if it was *withheld*? "All depended on the conscientiousness of the individual tithe-payer. It is easy to see that an income of this sort was in the highest degree precarious, and that in times of religious declension, the body of the Levites would be reduced to great straits. These facts sufficiently account for the reiterated injunctions not to forsake the Levite, but to include him in every festive gathering. Three reasons for his liberal support: 1. His calling deprived him of the usual means of livelihood. 2. His office was one of service for the people. 3. His relation to the altar made neglect shown to him a dishonour done to God." (J. Orr, in *Pulpit Com.*).

Paul's application to the Christian ministry (I Cor. 9:6-14) is obvious. The principle is, that if a man *gives his* life to a particular pursuit, is it asking too much if he derives a decent *living* from that work, and from the people *served* in that work? Some ministers (as Paul) may be able to resort to some kind of secular labor with relative ease and little hindrance to their ministry, especially when a wife and children are not being supported by their income. But how often *today*

it is true that a minister has so devoted himself to study, prayer, and the ministry of the word (cf. Acts 6:4) that he is virtually unable to support himself and his family except *by this means*. And what if the volunteer and generous support of the church fails? Frequently, it means embarrassment, humiliation, and a lowering of his office in the eyes of the community. It is honorable for anyone to "labor, working with his hands the thing that is good," but how much *more* honorable when those who *deserve* the support of "the Israel of God," his church, receive those material things necessary to live respectfully in a community. "Are you ignorant of the fact that those who minister sacred things take part of the sacred food of the Temple for their own use, and those who attend the altar have their share of what is placed on the altar? On the same principle the Lord has ordered that those who proclaim the Gospel should receive their livelihood from those who accept the Gospel" (I Cor. 9:13, 14, J.B. Phillips). "Forsake not the Levite,"—nor his present-day counterpart!

IF THE PLACE WHICH JEHOVAH THY GOD SHALL CHOOSE . . . BE TOO FAR FROM THEE, etc. (v. 21, see also 14:22-27)—In Lev. 17:3 ff. it is specified that every animal designed for food, whether ox, goat, or lamb, was during the abode in the wilderness ordered to be slain as a peace offering *at the door of the tabernacle*. Its blood was to be sprinkled, and its fat burnt upon the altar by the priest. The encampment, being then round about the altar, made this practice (probably commanded to prevent idolatry) easy and practical. But on their arrival in Canaan the obligation to slay *at the tabernacle* was to be dispensed with, and the people left at liberty to prepare their meat in their own homes, if necessary.

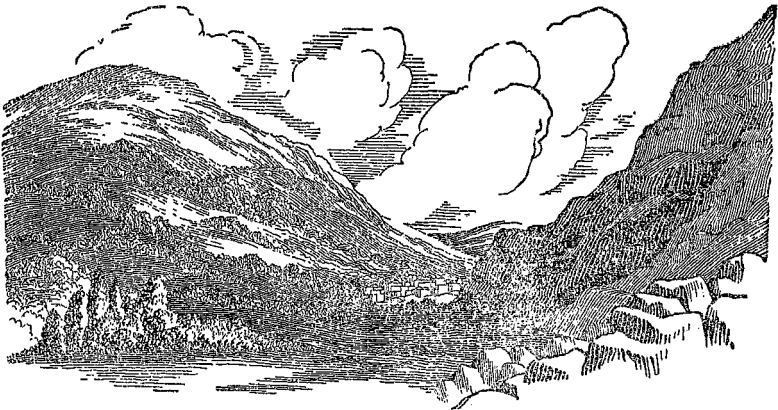
SUMMARY OF CHAPTER TWELVE

All monuments of idolatry in the promised land to be destroyed, 1-3; and God's service to be duly performed, 4-7. The difference between the performance of that service in the wilderness and in the promised land, 8-11. The people are to be happy in all their religious observances, 12. The offerings must be brought to the place which God appoints, and no blood is to be eaten, 13-16. The tithe of corn, wine, oil, &c., to be eaten in the place that God shall choose, 17, 18. The Levite must not be forsaken, 19. All clean beasts may be eaten, but the blood must be poured out before the Lord, and be eaten on no pretence whatever, 20-25. Of vows, burnt-offerings, &c., 26, 27. These

precepts are to be carefully obeyed, 28. Cautions against the abominations of the heathen, 29-31. Nothing to be added to or diminished from the word of God. 32.

QUESTIONS, LESSON NINE (12:1-28)

1. Where were the various places the heathen might worship?
2. The destruction of idolatry and heathen practices was to be so complete, Moses said "Ye shall destroy their _____ out of that place."
3. Why have a centralized worship?
4. Their place of sacrifice was to be "the place which Jehovah your God shall choose . . ." What place is mentioned in Deuteronomy? It was, successively, _____, _____, and _____.
5. How do you reconcile the statements of scripture that specify in one place the tithes and offerings are to be the *priests'*, and elsewhere that "thou shalt eat the flesh"?
6. Suppose a man felt, in his own considered judgment, that it was not expedient or convenient to worship in the place which Jehovah chose? What then?
7. Suppose a man lived a long way from the designated place of sacrifice. What provision was made for him? Did he have to go to the designated place at all?
8. What part (s) of the sacrificial victim could *not* be eaten?
9. What reason is given for this?
10. What harm would result if the Levite was forsaken? How does Paul apply this principle?



Mount Ebal and Mount Gerizim

Deut. 11, 29