

the limiting word is always placed after the one which it limits. Thus the phrase could be correctly translated 'the Levitical priests.' This does not imply that all Levites are priests, but only that all priests belong to the tribe of Levi. Most modern or modernistic translations render the phrase in this way, but some of them, for example the RSV, insert in Dt.xviii.1, between the phrases 'the Levitical priests' and 'all the tribe of Levi,' the words 'that is.' These words do not occur in the Hebrew original and their insertion is utterly unwarranted apart from a doctrinaire assumption that Deuteronomy considers all the tribe of Levi to be priests. There was no reason why such a book as Deuteronomy, consisting of orations to the people as a whole, and not principally of detailed laws for study, should go into the details of the restriction of the priesthood to the descendants of Aaron. It was quite sufficient to refer to them as 'the Levitical priests.' In Deuteronomy xviii.1 the restriction upon the priests applied equally to the rest of the tribe of Levi, and it is entirely justifiable to understand 'and' between the two phrases, as is done by the AV. Emphasis is placed first on the restriction as it applied to the priests so as to prevent the development in Israel of a situation such as Moses had observed in Egypt, where the priests gradually acquired the greater part of the land for themselves. It is unfortunate that the RV at this point inserted the word 'even' in the text, even though it gave the reading 'and' in the margin. Yet it should be noted that 'even' does not necessarily imply that all the members of the tribe of Levi were priests, as is done if the phrase 'that is' is inserted.

Throughout the book of Numbers the priests and the Levites are sharply distinguished and the position of the Levites is represented as one of great dignity. This does not accord with the critical view, according to which the distinction originated in post-exilic times, and the Levites actually were only degraded priests. Furthermore, the proportion of priests to Levites here is very different from that in Ezr.ii.36-40.