

Tithing for Jews and Christians ?

by
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Tithing in Judaism

- the mitzvahs

Deu 14:23-25 And thou shalt **eat** before the LORD thy God, in the place which he shall choose to place his name there, **the tithe** of thy corn, of thy wine, and of thine oil, and the firstlings of thy herds and of thy flocks; that thou mayest learn to fear the LORD thy God always.

Then shalt thou turn [it] into money, and bind up the money in thine hand, and shalt go unto the place which the LORD thy God shall choose:

And thou shalt bestow that money for whatsoever thy soul lusteth after, for oxen, or for sheep, or for wine, or for strong drink, or for whatsoever thy soul desireth: and thou shalt **eat** there before the LORD thy God, and thou shalt rejoice, thou, and thine household,

Deut 12:17-18 Thou mayest not **eat** within thy gates **the tithe** of thy corn, or of thy wine, or of thy oil (nothing else), or the firstlings of thy herds or of thy flock, nor any of thy vows which thou vowest, nor thy freewill offerings, or heave offering of thine hand:

But thou must **eat** them before the LORD thy God in the place which the LORD thy God shall choose, thou, and thy son, and thy daughter, and thy manservant, and thy maidservant, and the Levite that [is] within thy gates: and thou shalt rejoice before the LORD thy God in all that thou puttest thine hands unto.

Leviticus 27:30-33, "And all the TITHE of the LAND, whether of the SEED of the land, or of the FRUIT, of the tree, is the Lord's: it is holy unto the Lord. And if a man will at all redeem ought of his tithes, he shall add thereto the fifth part thereof. And concerning the TITHE of the HERD, or of the FLOCK, even of whatsoever passes under the rod, the tenth shall be holy unto the Lord. He shall not search whether it be good or bad, neither shall he change it..."

***Here, the land is Israel only, nowhere else. Also, it's the tenth one of a herd that belongs to God. If a herdsman had but *nine* cattle, *he didn't tithe his cattle at all!* God did not require the *best* of the cattle, just the tenth one to pass under the rod even if it was the least desirable of them all.

How does tithing work in Judaism?

The Torah requires tithing from every crop grown in Israel, not other income. There is a custom, which perhaps is a Rabbinic Law (there is a difference of opinion about it) to tithe 10% of one's net income to helping others. This excludes the synagogue, religious education for your own kids (but might include the extra tuition required to cover those on scholarship)--that is, it is just for helping those in need.

The biblical obligation to tithe involved a number of portions to be given out:

- * The first portion, called "terumah", was given to a kohein (priest, a descendent of Aaron). It could be any amount, although typically it was 1/50th, and normal range was between 1/40th and 1/60th.
- * 10% of what remained was given to a Levite (ma'aser).
- * The Levite in turn gave terumah from his take to a kohein (terumas ma'aser).
- * In the 3rd and 6th years of the Sabbatical cycle, 10% of what was left (ma'aser ani) was taken to Jerusalem and eaten. One could see the produce and carry only coins to Jerusalem and buy the food there.
- * In the 1st, 2nd, 4th and 5th years, the 2nd 10% (ma'aser sheini) is given to the poor. On the Sabbatical year farmers don't grow anything, so there is nothing to give.

In addition, farmers had other charities they had to give. The first is called leket: if, while harvesting, one or two stalks fall at once, the owner must leave them for the poor to gather. Over the course of an entire field, this will add up. There was also Shich'cha: if one or two sheaves were forgotten in the field when the harvest was brought in, those too must be left. Lastly, there was Pei'ah--ne corner of each field must be left for the poor to harvest.

In Judaism, what are some of the laws related to gleaning and tithing for the poor?

There are four gifts given to the poor:

1. In the third and sixth year of the sabbatical cycle, the second tithe is given to the poor. This is given after the priests' gift of approximately 2% and the levites' tithe which comes to 9.8% (10% of the 98% that remains). So, we are talking about 8.64% or so. (this tithe was shared by about 40,000 levites)
2. Fallen stalks: stalks dropped by the harvesters in ones or twos may not be picked up, but must be left for the poor. (If three or more fall, they may be picked up)
3. Forgotten sheaves: if one or two bundles are forgotten when the grain is brought in from the field, you may not go back to get them, they are left for the poor. (Again, if three or more are left, you may bring them in for threshing.) For vineyards, this not only includes overlooked bunches of grapes, but there is also a law against taking one or two grapes left behind when a bunch is picked.
4. A corner of the field must be left for the poor. For this, there is no measure; the farmer's conscience is his guide.

A couple of notes: We do not believe these numbers are rabbinic.

Rather, they are part of an oral tradition that dates back to the giving of the law. Not every detail that God gave us is recorded in the Torah. In particular, measures for each law are rarely given in the text.

Second, these laws are viewed as being tied to the sanctity of the land of Israel and sanctifying the Jewish settlement of that land.

Non-Jewish citizens of Biblical Israel were not expected to give any of these. Nor were Jews who resided outside of Israel.

Tithing and Modern day Christian Traditions

In the bible, tithing, offerings, and the temple tax is mentioned. But, many, not all, churches teach it today in a way that is non-biblical. The temple tax was what was used to support the temple. The tithes was not used to support the temple, but used for the poor and the levite tribe. It was a set amount, like a shekel per person, about 25 cents each. With several million people giving a shekel, this was adequate. Today it is about \$800-\$1000 a year in America. In other countries, it may be less, and according to the economy.

Today, the tithe is used instead of the temple tax. Originally, only the men came 3 times a year to bring an offering...not the women or children....especially not single mothers, widows, cripples, sick people, or poor people. When tithing was done, only landowners did it, because the tithe came from their harvest of land that was completely paid for. In the beginning, this was very possible, because God had given the land to the people through conquest. No one had a mortgage to pay off. People, like servants, who did not own property did not tithe. The high priest only got 1/50. When the tithe was brought in sabbatical years 3 and 6, as well as offerings, the giver ate the 10% tithe before the Lord (ma'aser sni). This was a time of fellowship with God, like having an intimate dinner with the Lord. In years 1,2, 4 and 5, a second 10% tithe was given to the poor (ma'aser sheini). The tithe was not used to support the priest's salary, or buy him a car, or build him a house. In fact, the priest was not allowed to own any property. In the 7th year, there was no harvest, so there were no tithes paid.

Today, pastors use the tithe to pay themselves, buy a house and a car, build additions on to the church, and pay administrative costs. The poor usually get close to nothing, and "eating the tithe (saving some money for groceries)" is considered robbing God, even it is years 3 and 6. Support for the poor come from separate offerings, when and if they occur. This is because the tithe belongs to God, not the giver, according to the church view. This is not what scripture says. Every church violates God's commands when it requires tithes in the 7th year. Scripture says the purpose of the tithe is for the giver to eat it (actually physically benefiting from it), and do so before the Lord, sharing with others who have need (also giving to the poor).

Today, the giver is denied any benefit from the tithe, thus denying him his fellowship dinner with the Lord. Instead, it is removed from him under a message of guilt and obligation, and the pastor and elders pull a salary from his gift. The tithe belongs to God, but God does not get it. In the bible, the new testament pastors and elders did not get paid. The Bible said they all worked for a living, and anyone who did not work, did not eat. No one, especially the leaders, expected others to work while they sat around, and waited for a free handout. All the believers studied, and shared, the scriptures, not just the pastors. And all the believers were ministers to others. No

one had a paid position. This is an artificial system created by so called leaders who did not want to work for a living.

We are told that we must support the pastor with our tithes, which is confused with the temple tax. Since the tithe brings in more money than the temple tax, the tithes are required instead. But the modern church is not based on the levitical priesthood system, where there was an entire tribe to support with offerings. Only the high priest got 1/50 of the net, not gross, profit from the harvest. Today the high priest is only Jesus Himself. The tithe was for the poor, and the 10% was distributed to the poor and the levites. The tribe shared the 10% when it was available. There were initially 7500 Gershonites, 8600 Kohathites, 6200 Merarites, and 22,000 Levites that served in the temple (44,300 priests total). So each priest only received 0.00023 %, not 10%. No priest ever kept the entire 10% for himself.

The modern church has typically only a single pastor, and maybe an assistant pastor. So why would one pastor receive the same volume of benefits as all these levites? If modern pastors wish to be biblically correct, they need to pay back salary overpayments if they have received 10% from each person, because they have been overpaid by 44,300 times. The early apostles did not take a salary. They all worked for a living, and everyone shared what they had, in a fashion similar to a commune, or the modern day kibbutz. Peter would tell people he prayed for that "silver and gold I have none," indicating he did not have any constant flow of cash coming into his purse. St Paul did not take a salary either, because he did not want to be indebted to anyone. He worked for a living as a tent maker. Early followers did not pay tithes to the apostles, because the tithe was for the poor, not the leadership, but gave occasional free will offerings when there was a need. Even modern day Jewish teachings indicate that the tithe is not for the synagogue, but for the poor. Modern pastors need to get a personal source of income, and stop twisting the old testament to get this money which does not belong to them. When God said the tithe belonged to Him in Malachi 3:10, he was talking to the priests, not the sheep, who kept the money for themselves. That is what is happening now in the church.

To make it worse, instead of just demanding tithes from the men who own their property, and have a harvest, the church now shamelessly demands tithes out of widows, students, single moms, low income families, and sick people on disability. Instead of feeding the poor, the church is taxing the poor. If one is not a tithe giver in the church, then they cannot have membership. If one then is not a member, then they deserve no benefits from the church, especially financial help, which is the main need of the poor. People who are still trying to buy their first property, and are in debt, are required to give, even though this is against scripture. Some ministers actually have the nerve to tell people who do not have any money (the poor), to put large donations on their credit cards, go into debt, and just believe that God will bring money to them, so they can pay the credit card bill.

People are threatened with the curses of God if they do not tithe. Even the unbelievers can see this is wrong, and they call this "fleecing the flock." (So why are

the believers so blind?) In the Bible, God wanted 10% of what the property owner had produced on his land as a profit, not 10% before expenses. In the church today, members are required to give 10% of their gross, before expenses, not their "profit" after expenses. In the bible days, there were no federal taxes, state taxes, social security deductions, parking fees, gasoline expenses, auto insurance, electricity bills, property taxes, IRS, and babysitting fees. All there was - was the temple tax of one shekel (25 cents). Some churches have no mercy on people who actually work for a living, and demand 10% of the gross. This is really sick. The average church does not preach the gospel to the unsaved. The average church supports its own "me first" programs. Church programs may be fine in concept (many help to equip the saints for ministry), but the meaning of the offerings and tithes is lost in a new social hall, and a pay raise for the pastor, who will not work for a living, as the bible requires. The bible never told any pastor to quit working, and hang around full time as a pastor. What do these pastors do all week? Are they reaching the lost as they claim? Do they even know anyone who is lost? Are they teaching new converts, or the same people every week, who should already know the Bible?

The sheep need to get smart. They are ministers too. The church was originally intended to make all believers leaders in advancing the gospel. But over time, there has been a hierarchy established, where only a few are allowed to be qualified as shepherds, and the rest are just sheep forever. Pastors are only for the newly saved, because once they are taught, they should be out helping others, bringing new converts into the church. In the Bible, the pastors were only for the untaught gentiles. The believing Jews did not need pastors, since they already knew the scriptures. It is a modern day disgrace that pastors have convinced members that they are to remain forever in the church, once they are taught, and just stay to pay tithes to support the pastor's salary. This is passivity. After 20-30 years, these members should be doing more than sitting there. They should know the Bible also after all this time, and should be teaching others. They also should be out preaching the gospel to the unsaved. They do not "need" their pastor anymore, because they are no longer newly saved, and in need of teaching. They have been equipped, and so it is time to leave, and demonstrate leadership, and help others. They are to be in fellowship with each other, and on equal standing with the pastor who helped them get started.

If the sheep just realized the power they had, they would get loose from this bondage, and turn the world upside down in a radical and wonderful way for God. I hope and pray they get the point soon.