

**Shayla:** Are believers obligated to pay tithes and offerings?

**Meforshim:**

**History** - The first biblical instance of the tithe was the war booty tithe given by Abraham to the priest-king of Jerusalem named Melchizedek.<sup>1</sup> About 162 years later, Abraham's grandson, Jacob, made a vow to pay God a tithe of everything, just as a subject king would pay his overlord a portion of his region's income in return for his alliance.<sup>2</sup> Nearly 500 years later, the Lord made the tithe an official part of Israeli national law.<sup>3</sup>

**Basis** - Tithing is based on the fundamental understanding that everything belongs to Hashem in the first place. We are not owners. We are *asher al bayit* or "stewards".<sup>4</sup> He just lets us use some of His stuff. The tithe is simply a way of acknowledging that truth.<sup>5</sup> The tithe is also a way of recognizing that any wealth, power or influence that we may have accrued came from the Lord. There are no "self-made" men.<sup>6</sup>

Worship has always been associated with sacrifice. The Bible makes the purpose of tithing very clear – to put God first in our life. Tithing is a way to express that God is our #1 priority.<sup>7</sup> We are to give God the first and best of what we earn. For example, what we do first with our money shows what we value most. Giving the first part of our paycheck to God immediately focuses our attention on Him. It also reminds us that all we have belongs to Him. A habit of regular tithing can keep God at the top of our priority list and give us a proper perspective on everything else we have. Therefore, before we start spending, we are to honor God by giving Him his part first.<sup>8</sup> By the way, there is not a clerical exemption to the tithe. Those who are supported by the tithe should also tithe.<sup>9</sup>

**Attitude** - Paying that tithe gratefully, even joyfully, has always been a given.<sup>10</sup> Notice in Deuteronomy that the way the tithe was given to the Lord was by feasting? You could even use the tithe to purchase wine or beer! Even in the New Testament church, our money goes to helping the church purchase music, potluck dinners and pay for good teachers. Just as we don't mind spending money on eating out or renting movies, we should not resent putting out so that we can better celebrate our God! We should give with joy, if for no other reason than the desire to please God.<sup>11</sup>

The tithes and offerings should never come from money that was not well-earned, however. Dirty money has no place being offered to a holy God.<sup>12</sup> Tithing must be accompanied by righteous living or it is worse than worthless, it is actually an insult to the Lord!<sup>13</sup>

**Purpose** - In Israel, the tithe was always used to support those who are in ministry so that they could dedicate themselves more fully to their charge.<sup>14</sup> Thousands of years later, our Master also endorsed tithing<sup>15</sup> and the Apostle Paul endorsed the same process for the support of the ministry in the New Testament.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Genesis 14:18-20; Hebrews 7:1-3

<sup>2</sup> Genesis 28:22

<sup>3</sup> Leviticus 27:30

<sup>4</sup> Genesis 43:19; 44:1, 4; 1 Kings 16:9

<sup>5</sup> Psalm 24:1

<sup>6</sup> Deuteronomy 8:17-20

<sup>7</sup> Numbers 7:1-3

<sup>8</sup> Proverbs 3:9

<sup>9</sup> Numbers 18:26; Nehemiah 10:38

<sup>10</sup> Deuteronomy 14:22-26; 2 Corinthians 9:7

<sup>11</sup> 2 Corinthians 9:7

<sup>12</sup> Deuteronomy 23:18

<sup>13</sup> Isaiah 1:12-13; Matthew 23:23-24; Luke 11:42

<sup>14</sup> Numbers 18:21; Deuteronomy 14:28-29

<sup>15</sup> Matthew 23:23

<sup>16</sup> 1 Corinthians 9:7-14; 1 Timothy 5:17-18

Besides, wanting things too much is incredibly dangerous for our souls. Deliberately setting aside a certain percentage of our incomes to establish God's priority in our lives helps avoid that danger. Giving away a tenth of our incomes to the mission and ministry of Christ is an antidote to covetousness.<sup>17</sup>

**Offerings** - The tithe is not all we must give. In addition to the tithe, we are told to bring offerings to Hashem's courts.<sup>18</sup> Hashem appreciates sacrificial giving (giving out of our need not our surplus).<sup>19</sup> In the Lord's eyes, this poor widow of Mark 18 gave more than all the others put together, though her gift was by far the smallest.

This demonstrates that the value of a gift is not determined by its amount, but by the spirit in which it is given. A gift given grudgingly or for recognition loses its value. When we give, we need to remember that no matter how small or large our income our tithe is pleasing to God when it is given out of gratitude and a spirit of generosity.

God says our gifts should honestly reflect how much we've been given. 10% is simply a guideline – a minimum that does not actually include "offerings". The level of our sacrificial giving reflects the level of our gratitude for what God has done for us.<sup>20</sup>

After all, EVERYTHING belongs to God, not just the tenth. So what we're actually deciding is not how much of our money we will give to God, but how much of God's money to keep for ourselves.<sup>21</sup> However, we should not give to the point that it damages our ability to take care of ourselves or our families.<sup>22</sup>

God says we rob Him if we don't give tithe and offerings.<sup>23</sup> If we make a vow to give the tithe of our income to God, we'd better keep our vow.<sup>24</sup> The Lord God challenges us to test Him on this matter and discover His good blessings in the process.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Exodus 20:17; Luke 12:15; Colossians 3:5; Hebrews 13:5

<sup>18</sup> Psalm 96:8

<sup>19</sup> Mark 12:43-44

<sup>20</sup> Leviticus 27:8; Deuteronomy 16:17; Mark 12:41-44; Luke 11:41; 2 Corinthians 8:12

<sup>21</sup> Psalm 24:1

<sup>22</sup> 2 Corinthians 8:12-14; 1 Timothy 5:8

<sup>23</sup> Malachi 3:8

<sup>24</sup> Deuteronomy 23:21-23

<sup>25</sup> Malachi 3:10-12; 2 Corinthians 9:6-7