



# The Sinaitic Light

## Decoding the Tithing Mystique

### Study Article No. VII

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This article uses the English terms for Elohim (God), Yah (Father) Yahoshua (Christ).

## **Objective and Learning Outcome**

### **Objective:**

The objective of this article is to better understand the origin and purpose of tithes and tithe from a biblical perspective. In this article we want to ascertain information from Yah about tithe and its application to the New Testament.

### **Learning Outcome:**

Upon completion of this study, the reader will:

1. Understand the origin, purpose and history of tithes;
2. Understand who tithe was applicable to;
3. Understand when tithe changed its form from dietary to monetary by law;
4. Understand who changed tithes to a monetary form;
5. Understand how the New Testament ministry and church was funded;
6. Contrast freewill offerings with tithe and;
7. Understand how God funded the building of His Tabernacle.

## Introduction

**W**ithout question, every ecclesiastical institution (church) must be supported financially if it is going to serve as a centralized location of prayer, fellowship, biblical exposition, and worship. The question is, how is it to be funded? And, will it be funded by freewill offerings or tithes? The Bible specifically states that religious institutions operating from a biblical premise are to be financially sustained from free will offerings, not tithes. Tithes were the very first form of compensation God created for the Levites and Priests. They were always given in Jerusalem at the temple and always given in the form of food (Deut. 12:5-14). God said to the children of Israel, “To the Levites I have given every tithe in Israel for an inheritance, in return for their service that they do their service in the tent of meeting” (Num. 18:21, ESV). God commanded the Levite “only” to receive tithes from the people. Ten percent of the tithes given to the Levites were presented to God as a heave-offering, and then the Levites gave ten percent to the Priests for their service (Num. 18:25-28). The Levites and the Priests *ate* the tithes. The only time tithing was associated with money was when a person wanted to bring their tithes to Jerusalem, but it was too far. God commanded that their tithes be converted into money, then reconverted into food after they arrived at the temple, there it would be given to the Levites and consumed (Deut. 14: 24-27).<sup>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</sup>

In the ninth century BCE, King Hezekiah built storehouses to store excess tithes (2 Chron. 31:8-11). However, by the fifth century BCE, the people stopped offering their tithes, thereby, forcing the Levites and Priests to work in the fields to feed their families (Neh. 13:1-12). Later, when the Israelites once again fell away from offering their tithes, God cursed the nation. God says,

Should people cheat God? Yet you have cheated me! “But you ask, ‘What do you mean? When did we ever cheat you?’ “You have cheated me of the tithes and offerings due to me. You are under a curse, for your whole nation has been cheating me. Bring all the tithes into the *storehouse* so there will be enough *food* in my Temple. If you do,” says the LORD of Heaven’s Armies, “I will open the windows of heaven for you. I will pour out a blessing so great you won’t have enough room to take it in! Try it! Put me to the test! (Mal. 3:8-10, NLT) [emphasis added].

When the children of Israel neglected to tithe their grains, oils, wines, fruit, and animals from the herd and flock, the Levites and the priests hungered. Thus, God viewed the children of Israel’s

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1. Who was commanded to give tithes?
  2. Who were tithes given to?
  3. What percentage of tithes did the Levites give to the priests?
  4. Where were tithes commanded to be given?
  5. When and why were tithes converted to money?
  6. What happened to the tithes when they were presented?
  7. What was the very first form of compensation God gave His priests?

neglect as not only disobeying His commandment, but also theft. They were robbing God, therefore He cursed them. Nowhere in the Old Testament do we see tithing giving to God in the form of money. It was always presented to God in the form of food.<sup>8 9 10 11</sup>

One thousand years after God first instituted the system of tithing to provide food for the Levites and the Priests, it continued to be given in a dietary form. This premise never changed. Christ confirmed this when he spoke of tithes being given in the form of spices (Matt. 23:23; Luke 11:42). In the New Testament Christ never taught the disciples to command or request 10 percent of a person's earnings to support the ministry or provide a salary. Christ did say that whatever one gives take it because it will serve as restitution for ministering to them (Matt. 10:8-10; Luke 10:7-8). Paul echoed these sentiments when he said to the Corinthians that while they had a right to demand payment for ministering the gospel to them, he had not used this right lest it offended some. Paul writes:

Since we have planted spiritual seed among you, aren't we entitled to a harvest of physical food and drink? If you support others who preach to you, shouldn't we have an even greater right to be supported? *But we have never used this right.* We would rather put up with anything than be an obstacle to the Good News about Christ. Don't you realize that those who work in the temple get their meals from the offerings brought to the temple? And those who serve at the altar get a share of the sacrificial offerings. In the same way, the Lord ordered that those who preach the Good News should be supported by those who benefit from it. Yet I have never used any of these rights. And I am not writing this to suggest that I want to start now. In fact, I would rather die than lose my right to boast about preaching without charge. Yet preaching the Good News is not something I can boast about. I am compelled by God to do it. How terrible for me if I didn't preach the Good News! If I were doing this on my own initiative, I would deserve payment. But I have no choice, for God has given me this sacred trust. What then is my pay? It is the opportunity to preach the Good News without charging anyone. That's why I never demand my rights when I preach the Good News (1 Cor. 9:11-18, NLT)  
[emphasis added].<sup>12 13 14 15</sup>

New Testament ministers like Peter and Paul encouraged everyone to give according to their heart (2 Cor. 9:6-15), thus a freewill offering of whatever they felt appropriate or could afford. Paul also asserts that the Gentiles who received the gospel through the Israelites only felt that the right thing to do was to support them monetarily. Paul writes, "But before I come, I must go to Jerusalem to take a gift to the believers there. For you see, the believers in Macedonia and Achaia have eagerly taken up an offering for the poor among the believers in Jerusalem. They

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8. Why did Hezekiah build storehouses?
  9. Why were the Levites working in the fields instead of working in the Temple of God?
  10. What was one of the reasons God cursed the nation of Israel?
  11. Where in the Old Testament do we see the Israelites offering tithes to God in the form of money?
  12. What form were tithes offered to the priests in the days of Christ?
  13. Where does Christ command his disciples and apostles to collect tithes from the people they ministered to?
  14. How were the churches and ministers in the New Testament funded and compensated?
  15. What right did ministers of the New Testament have that they did not use?

were glad to do this because they feel they owe a real debt to them. Since the Gentiles received the spiritual blessings of the Good News from the believers in Jerusalem, *they feel the least they can do in return is to help them financially* (Rom. 15:25-27, NLT) [emphasis added]. No place in the New Testament are the apostles or disciples requiring anyone to give 10 percent of their earnings or from God's law, command a tithe. Tithing was never given in the form of money. So, where does this mysterious unbiblical tithe originate?<sup>16 17</sup>

The Catholic church instituted the concept of *monetary ecclesiastical tithes*, which is tithing that originates from the *church's* governing body, not God's law. Church tithes were commissioned by Gentiles of the European Catholic church for the sole purpose of creating revenues for the Catholic church. God's law established a dietary tithe which only went to the Levites. Theologian, Methodist Pastor and Author, Arthur V. Babbs (AD 1864 - 1943) writes: "The history of tithing in the Jewish Church practically ceases with the destruction of the temple at the siege of Jerusalem, A.D. 70; and with that event, the chronicle is taken up by the historians and analysts of the Christian Church" (Babbs: 139). Tithing was adopted by Christians after the destruction of Jerusalem and after the death of the apostles. The Church would take a biblical concept created by God for the Levites and the Aaronites and use it to create revenues for their ecclesiastical institutions. From Arthur V. Babbs, *The Law of Tithe as Set Forth in the Old Testament*,

"After a century or two, zeal in the observation of the tithing law commenced to grow lukewarm. This is specially mentioned by Cyprian, 'De Unitate Ecclesiae,' p. 23. In the East, all soon united in demanding tithers in accordance with the Old Testament precepts" [Shaff:140]. 'Tithes were recommended by the Second Council of Tours, A.D. 567' [Shaff: 140] and excommunication was added to the command to observe the tithing law, by the 'Council of Macon which met in 585. Even the confessional was used to enforce the decree' [Shaff: 139] and the matter was finally clinched by Charlemagne, who firmly established tithing in his empire. "In 779 he ordained that everyone should pay tithes, and that the proceeds should be disposed of by the bishop; and A.D. 787, it was made imperative by the legatine councils held in England" [Stubbs: 141].<sup>18 19 20 21 22</sup>

Charles Spurgeon (AD 1834 – 1892) a Baptist preacher, renowned biblical expositor and minister, called the "Prince of Preachers" states:

It is also noteworthy that, with regard to Christian liberality, there are no rules laid down in the Word of God. I remember hearing somebody say, 'I should like to know exactly

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16. Who gave money to the ministry because they felt they had been blessed spiritually through the ministry?
  17. What percentage of monies does Paul say that one should give to the ministry?
  18. Who instituted the concept of monetary tithing?
  19. True or False. Monetary tithing was instituted after the destruction of the Temple by Gentiles who were seeking biblical justification to enrich themselves.
  20. When was tithing first commanded to be given in the form of money?
  21. When was the decree given to excommunicate parishioners if they did not give the church 10 percent of their income?
  22. What emperor officially established monetary tithing as law and in what year?

what I ought to give.' Yes, dear Friend, no doubt you would; but you are not under a system similar to that by which the Jews were obliged to pay tithes to the priests. If there were any such rule laid down in the gospel, it would destroy the beauty of spontaneous giving, and take away all the bloom from the fruit of your liberality (Spurgeon: Kindle).

Spurgeon understood tithing to be a commandment from Yah to the Israelites, and as a Baptist preacher in the nineteenth century, he did not see merit in the edict compelling the worshipers of God to pay tithes.<sup>23</sup>

The New Testament church never exacted tithes from the people because they could not. It would have been illegal, immoral, and unrighteous, completely outside of the realm of God's commandments and will. No one saw churches collecting tithes from the first through the early fifth centuries after the death of the apostles. The practice emerged in the 6<sup>th</sup> century under a Catholic decree. The ministers of the early church were sustained only by the people's freewill offerings and generosity (1 Tim. 5:17-18). Most times the people were not very *free willing* or *generous* (as it is today), so the New Testament church suffered as one can see in the Pauline epistles (1 Cor. 4:11-12; 2 Cor. 11:8).

Today, the church is the number one depositor of massive amounts of money every Monday morning, driven by tithes, yet, through deceptive practices by using God's word deceitfully. Without question, ministers within neo-Christianity are preying upon the naïve, imperceptive, hopeless, and desperate. These are people who are looking for God's help in their tribulation and have been encouraged by the neo-Christian church to pay tithes of 10 - 20 percent to receive a blessing from God. Paul says to the assembly at Corinth, "We reject all shameful deeds and underhanded methods. We don't try to trick anyone or distort the word of God. We tell the truth before God, and all who are honest know this" (2 Cor. 4:2, NLT). The apostles taught Yah's word and could have asked for compensation for their labors. The compensation would have been in the form of freewill offerings, not tithes, as the apostles were not Levitical priests. The apostles never commanded or asked for compensation, lest they hinder the spread of the gospel.<sup>24</sup>

Ministers in neo-Christianity are not Levitical priests, a requirement made by God to receive tithes, they are not in Israel, another requirement made by God when offering tithes. Neo-Christian ministers do not serve in the Temple of God where tithes were presented, by the commandment of God, and finally, tithing never left its context, which was food as Yah ordained until the Catholic church changed its context nearly 500 years after the death of the apostles. The reality is that if churches today were not deceiving people into paying tithes, they would not have the impeccable facilitates they have, nor would their pastors be as wealthy as they are. When God built His tabernacle and temple, He commanded everyone to give according to their heart, willingly. He never commanded a percentage for the building of His church (Ex. 25:1-8).<sup>25</sup>

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23. What was Charles Spurgeon's view of tithes as a Baptist preacher?

24. True or False. To assert to a parishioner that tithing is 10 percent of one's income commanded by God to be given to the church is untrue and deceptive.

25. What percentage of income did God require from the Israelites to fund the building of His Tabernacle?

There is much more to discuss on this subject. If you have questions about this study or others, feel free to join us in fellowship, prayer, praise, and study every Saturday at 11:30 am. You may also call us for a consultation pertaining to this subject, or any other you might find intriguing. We are a Messianic Sinaitic assembly teaching the doctrine of Sinaiticism, which means keeping God's Word in the faith of Christ (Rev. 12:17; 14:12-13) and proclaiming God's gospel to the world and to those who are seeking His truth without interpretation or church tradition. May the blessings of the Most High be with you and thank you for reading our article.

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