

THE DAVAR BIBLE SCHOOL

Bible

CORRESPONDENCE COURSE

LESSON 11

An Open Letter from the Dean

Greetings and welcome to our growing family of Davar Bible School correspondence course students. This is a totally new and different kind of Bible study course. This informative course of study will help you understand the clear, simple, plain truths of your Bible. The only textbook you will need for this correspondence course is your Bible. You will find these studies fresh and interesting, not dull and dry. You will be richly rewarded with enlightening new truth in each lesson. There is no tuition or cost to you whatsoever, this course is absolutely free of charge. Your enrollment has already been paid by the voluntary freewill tithes and offerings of those who have elected to support this teaching. Those who wish to support this work are gladly welcomed as coworkers in this important effort to proclaim truth to all people. As you read each lesson, make sure you look up each Scripture that is cited. A separate test booklet is provided for each lesson. This way you can keep the lessons for further study, returning only your test booklet to be graded by your teacher. (Alternatively you may just email your answers to us.) It is our prayer that Elohim will bless you as you seek to understand His word.

- James Trimm

Davar Bible School
Beit Netzarim Yeshiva
P.O. Box 471
Hurst, TX 76053
U.S.A.
jstrimm@yahoo.com

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LESSON 11

So you are excited about Torah. So you are ready to say “we will hear and do”. Not so fast... there is a disclosure to be made first.

In Rabbinic Judaism Gentiles seeking conversion are discouraged. Gentiles seeking conversion are turned away three times. Then after being turned away three times it is required to make a full disclosure of the financial obligations of the Covenant. It is said that few Gentiles would willingly enter the Covenant once they know the cost.

To begin with we must understand that EVERYTHING belongs to YHWH (Ex. 9:29; 2Kn. 19:15; Is. 66:1-2; Jer. 27:5; Job 12:9-10; Ps. 89:11; 95:3-5; Dan. 4:7; Neh. 9:16; 1Chron. 29:13-14). He owns this universe, all of its resources, all of its energy, and he owns YOU. YHWH is entitled to ask for 100%. In His CHESED, in His undue favor, He allows us to keep 90%.

Now one might ask: Where in the Mosaic Torah is the commandment “Thou shalt tithe?”. The answer is, nowhere. When Moshe went up on Mount Sinai to receive the Torah, he did NOT receive a commandment to tithe. Nowhere in the Mosaic Torah is there the Tithe instituted. Instead the very first mention of the tithe in the Mosaic Covenant is not until the end of Leviticus where we read:

30 And all the tithe of the land, whether of the seed of the land, or of the fruit of the tree, is YHWH's: it is Set-Apart unto YHWH.

31 And if a man will redeem aught of his tithe, he shall add unto it, the fifth part thereof.

32 And all the tithe of the herd, or the flock, whatsoever passes under the rod, the tenth shall be Set-Apart unto YHWH.

33 He shall not inquire whether it be good or bad, neither shall he change it. And if he change it at all, then both it, and that for which it is changed, shall be Set-Apart; it shall not be redeemed.

34 These are the commandments, which YHWH commanded Moshe for the children of Yisra'el in mount Sinai.

(Lev. 27:30-34)

Notice that this first mention of the “tithe” does not initiate the tithe, it simply recognizes the fact of the tithe saying “it is Set-Apart unto YHWH”. Notice also this first passage says nothing about Levites or Priests. It does not say that the tithe belongs to the Levites, but rather to YHWH.

When next we read on the Tithe in the Mosaic Torah is in the book of Numbers:

And unto the children of Levi, behold,
I have given all the tithe in Yisra'el for an inheritance,
in return for their service which they serve,
even the service of the tent of meeting.

(Num. 18:21)

Notice that these are two different precepts of Torah. Lev. 27:30 recognizes that the Tithe belongs to YHWH, while a separate commandment in Num. 18:21 tells us that the Levites were to be paid out of the tithe, for their service in the Tabernacle (later Temple). The tithe was not directly paid to the Levites, it was paid to YHWH and from that "fund" the Levites were paid. This was so that the Levites could devote themselves to full time Torah Study (2Chron. 31:4-5) so that they could in turn teach Torah to the people of Israel (Deut. 14:22-23; Ezek. 44:23-24).

Nowhere are we told to pay the Tithe to the Levitical priesthood. We are told only that the Tithe is paid to YHWH and YHWH gave the Levites payment from the Tithe "for their service."

THE SECOND AND THIRD TITHES

Now before moving on from the Mosaic Torah we should also cover the second and third tithes. Some lump these together as "the second tithe" because they are never paid on the same year.

There are actually two tithes in the Mosaic Covenant which were tied to the seven year cycle of the Land. The first tithe (Masseket) is due every year.

The second tithe (Maaser Sheni) was converted to money and used to make a personal pilgrimage to Jerusalem. The "pilgrim" could spend this money however he liked on the pilgrimage but was expected to treat the Levites to a feast as well upon his arrival and any surplus was given to the Levites (Deut. 14:22-27). Every third year however the tither used this second tithe (some all this third year tithe as a "third tithe") to feed the needy and local Levites (Deut. 14:28-29). Thus the Mosaic tithing schedule goes like this:

Year

1. First Tithe: Levites; Second Tithe: Pilgrimage and Levites
2. First Tithe: Levites; Second Tithe: Pilgrimage and Levites
3. First Tithe: Levites; Third Tithe: Feeds the needy and Levites
4. First Tithe: Levites; Second Tithe: Pilgrimage and Levites
5. First Tithe: Levites; Second Tithe: Pilgrimage and Levites
6. First Tithe: Levites; Third Tithe: Feeds the needy and Levites

7. The Sabbath of the land, only the First Tithe was paid on any volunteer crop and on other non-planted produce.

(The first tithe could only be converted into money by paying a 20% penalty (Lev. 27:31) however the second tithe was generally converted to money as a matter of course (Deut. 14:25).)

The three Tithes are laid out in the book of Tobit as follows:

6 And I went to Yerushulayim at the appointed times as it is written in the Torah of YHWH concerning Yisrael in firstfruits and tithes and firstlings.

7 To the priests, sons of Aharon and new wine and fat and labors and pomegranates and from all fruits of the ground to the sons of Levi, ministers before, the presence of YHWH in Yerushalayim, and the second tithe. (8) And the third tithe to the stranger, to the orphan and to the widow. And I would go in every year with all these, to Yerushalayim by the commandments of YHWH and according to that duty upon me, Devorah mother of my Father.

(Tovi (Tobit) 1:6-7 HRV – From our ongoing work :-)

ABRAHAM TITHED

Now as we have shown, the Tithe was not initiated in the Mosaic Torah. Instead the first mention of the Tithe in the Mosaic Covenant only acknowledges that the Tithe is YHWH's. The principle of tithing did not originate in the Mosaic Covenant. Avraham tithed in Genesis 14 long before the Mosaic Covenant (or even the Abrahamic Covenant) was entered into.

Lets examine Gen. 14 and see what the Torah tells us about this pre-Mosaic tithe.

18 And MalkiTzadek, king of Shalem, brought forth bread and wine, and he was a cohen of El Elyon.

19 And he blessed him, and said, Blessed be Avram, of El Elyon--Maker of heaven and earth.

20 And blessed be El Elyon, who has delivered your enemies into your hand. And he gave him a tenth (tithe) of all.

(Gen. 14:18-20 HRV)

Who was this Melchizedek and why did Abraham pay the tithe to him? The answer may be found in the Book of Jasher also known as Midrash Sefer HaYashar. The Book of Jasher contains this same account but with some important additional information:

And Adonizedek king of Jerusalem, the same was Shem, went out with his men to meet Abram and his people, with bread and wine, and they remained together in the valley of Melech.

And Adonizedek blessed Abram, and Abram gave him a tenth from all that he had brought from the spoil of his enemies, for Adonizedek was a priest before God. (Jasher 16:11-12)

Now according to the Book of Jasher Abraham tithed to Melchizadek (or Adonizadek) because he was a "priest". How is it that Melchizadek is called a "priest"? Although Melchizadek was not a Levite (there were not yet any Levites) we do have a clue in Jasher as to why he is called a "priest". Jasher reveals the identity of Melchizadek saying

"the same is Shem" (this identity of Melchizadek is also recorded in the Talmud in b.Ned. 32). Now this is very important because the Book of Jasher also records the fact that Shem had been Abraham's Torah teacher:

And when Avram came out from the cave, he went to Noach and his son Shem, and he remained with them to learn the instruction of YHWH and his ways, and no man knew where Avram was, and Avram served Noach and Shem his son for a long time. And Avram was in Noach's house thirty-nine years, and Abram knew YHWH from three years old, and he went in the ways of YHWH until the day of his death, as Noach and his son Shem had taught him; (Jasher 9:5-6)

Thus Abraham paid the tithe to Shem because Shem had been his personal Torah teacher. (If you do the "Bible Math" you will find that Noach and Shem died AFTER Avraham was born, a point that surprises some people.)

Note that Abraham's tithe in Gen. 14 was not being made on agricultural produce but on "all" (Gen. 14:20) and specifically in this case the "spoils of his enemies" (Jasher 16:12; also Hebrews 7:4). This dispels the theory taught by some, that the Tithe is only paid on agricultural produce.

Now some have taught that the tithe Melchizadek paid was not the same Tithe mentioned in the Mosaic Torah from which the Levites were paid. This is also not true, as Paul argues in the book of Hebrews:

4 Consider and see his greatness, which also Avraham our father, gave to him a tenth from the spoil.

5 And also the sons of L'vi collect for the priesthood, having received a commandment to collect the tithe from the people, according to the decree of the Torah. And this is of their brothers, although having come from the loins of Avraham.

6 Truly he who is not from their tribe, has received the tithe from Avraham, and blessed those, who are blessed, to him.

7 And behold, this no one disputes: that the lesser is blessed by the greater.

8 Behold here, sons of man which die, receive tithes: but sleep received he of whom it is said that He lives.

9 For so to say, that to he who was accustomed to take the tithe, he also tithes through

Avraham.

10 For He was yet in the loins of the Father, when He met, he who was called Malki-Tzedek.

(Heb. 7:4-10 HRV)

The whole logic of Paul's argument here is based in the fact that the tithe that Avram paid to Melchizadek was EXACTLY the same tithe that the Levites were paid from.

Another example of the pre-Mosaic tithe is the vow Jacob made to tithe saying to Elohim "and of all that you shall give me I will surely give the tenth unto you" (Gen. 28:22). Note that Jacob tithed on all that Elohim had given him and not simply on agricultural produce. In fact Jacob even tithed from his sons. In the Midrash Rabbab there is an important story related to Jacob's tithe told by Rabbi Joshua of Sikaan in the name of his teacher Rabbi Levi:

A certain Curthean (Samaritan) attempted to trap Rabbi Mier in a question concerning Jacob's vow to HaShem to give a "tithe of all."

You Jews teach that Jacob gave a tenth of all to HaShem; yet Jacob had twelve sons: Jacob also said, 'Ephraim and Manasseh are mine.' That makes fourteen sons of Jacob, yet Jacob gave only one son to HaShem and that was Levi," spoke the Curthean, implying that Jacob the Jew had broken his vow to HaShem. "How," continued the Curthean, "can only one of fourteen sons be reconciled as a tithe of fourteen sons?"

Rabbi Mier replied, "How many matriarchs of Jacob's sons were there?"

"Four," answered the Curthean, "Leah, Rachel, Bilhah and Zilpah."

"True," answered Rabbi Mier. "Then how many were sanctified by Pid-yon-ha Ben or the Redemption of the Firstborn?"

"Four," responded the Curthean.

"True," responded Rabbi Mier. "And what is redeemed as holy need not be sanctified again. Therefore, since there were four firstborn sons sanctified by the redemption of the firstborn, they need not be sanctified by the tithe of Jacob's sons.

Hence, Levi, who was not the firstborn of Leah; was given by Jacob of his nine remaining sons: Jacob gave more than one ninth, he gave one tenth of his sons, more than fulfilling his vow to "give a tenth of all."

(Midrash Rabbab, 70:7-8, page 640)

YESHUA UPHELD THE TITHE

Yeshua also upheld the principle of Tithing:

Woe to you, scribes and P'rushim; hypocrites--who tithe mint, and rue, and cumin, and have neglected those things which are weightiest in the Torah: judgment,

lovingkindness, and trust. Those things ought you to have done, neither to have rejected these.

(Matt. 23:23 HRV)

When Yeshua says "neither to have rejected these" he is speaking in part of tithing even on produce of garden herbs.

THE LABORER IS WORTHY OF HIS WAGE

But let us look to see what the Scriptures say about this very important matter. The prophet Malachi writes:

1 Behold, I send My messenger, and he shall clear the way before Me; and the Adon, whom you seek, will suddenly come to His temple, and the messenger of the covenant, whom you delight in, behold, he comes, says YHWH Tzva'ot.

2 But who may abide the day of his coming? And who shall stand when he appears? For he is like a refiner's fire, and like fullers' soap;

3 And he shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver; and he shall purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver; and there shall be they that shall offer unto YHWH offerings in righteousness.

4 Then shall the offering of Y'hudah and Yerushalayim be pleasant unto YHWH, as in the days of old, and as in ancient years.

5 And I will come near to you to judgment; and I will be a swift witness against the sorcerers, and against the adulterers, and against false swearers; and against those that oppress the hireling in his wages, the widow, and the fatherless, and that turn aside the stranger from his right, and fear not Me, says YHWH Tzva'ot.

6 For I YHWH change not; and you, O sons of Ya'akov, are not consumed.

7 From the days of your fathers you have turned aside from My ordinances, and have not kept them. Return unto Me, and I will return unto you, says YHWH Tzva'ot. But you say: 'Wherein shall we return?'

8 Will a man rob Elohim? Yet you rob Me. But you say: 'Wherein have we robbed You?' In tithes and heave-offerings.

9 You are cursed with the curse, yet you rob Me, even this whole nation.

10 Bring you the whole tithe into the store-house, that there may be food in My house, and try Me now herewith, says YHWH Tzva'ot, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall be more than sufficiency.

(Malchi 3:1-10)

Now it is very clear that this is speaking of the last days judgment "And I will come near to you to judgment; and I will be a swift witness" (Mal. 3:5). In this context, YHWH calls the Body to return to keeping Torah, and the Body says "Wherein shall we return" (3:7) in other words "But YHWH, we HAVE been keeping Torah." Then YHWH informs them to their surprise that they have failed to keep his Torah because they have failed to tithe, though they did not even realize that they were not tithing (3:8). The context here is clear, why would YHWH rebuke his last days people for not tithing, if there is not obligation to tithe in these last days?

We also get a reminder here. We do not GIVE the Tithe to YHWH, it was already His. He GIVES the 90% to us. When we do not tithe, we are not simply choosing not to give, we are actually stealing from YHWH!

Tithing is not restricted to the Mosaic covenant. Those who labor in the Word and teach the community, are entitled to be supported by the tithes and offerings of the community. In these last days YHWH says to his people "Return to my Torah". The people say "But we are Torah observant." YHWH responds, "Then why are you stealing from Me?". The people say "what do you mean, stealing from You?" and YHWH says "You have been stealing My tithe".

These are people in the last days who think they are Torah Observant because they have convinced themselves that they do not need to tithe. They are keeping the 612 commandments.

But to the contrary, they are oppressing the laborer in His Word, denying him his wage, when the laborer is worthy of his wage.

Now lets look at the phrase "against those that oppress the hireling in his wages" (3:5). What does this mean?

Yeshua said:

for nothing you have received,
for nothing you will give.
(Mt. 10:8)

Sadly for years this passage has been quoted out of context and misused by many to "prove" that those in the ministry should not receive community support for our efforts.

In fact the verse in question is, in context, saying exactly the opposite of what these people represent it as saying.

Actually, Yeshua in the next few verses following this statement instructs his talmidim to request and subsist on community support:

Provide neither gold, nor silver, nor lesser coin in
your belts. Pack not for the journey, either two coats, or sandals, or a staff, for the laborer
is worthy of his food. And into whatever city or town you will enter, enquire who in it is
honorable, and there abide until you go out from there."
(Mt. 10:9-11)

Some light on this text may be acquired by examining a statement by Josephus concerning the first century Essene sect of Judaism:

...and if any of their sect come from other places,
what they have lies open for them, just as if it were their own;
and they go into such as they never knew before,
as if they had been ever so long acquainted with them.
For which reason they carry nothing with them
when they travel into remote parts,
though still they take their weapons with them, for fear of thieves. Accordingly there is,
in every city where they live,
one appointed particularly to take care of strangers,
and provide garments and other necessaries for them.
(Josephus; Wars 2:8:4)

Yeshua's talmidim had for the most part, come from an Essene back ground. It would appear that they were therefore able to travel within Essene circles from town to town without having to carry additional supplies. Yeshua felt that his twelve were entitled to be supported by the community.

Yeshua drives the point home saying "the laborer is worthy of his food." A saying which Paul later cites to prove that "those who labor in the word and its teaching" are worthy of "double honor" which in context seems to indicate that they have the right, like any other laborer, to expect to be paid for their work in the ministry. In fact he even quoted this statement by Yeshua (Mt. 10:10) to support the point:

Those elders who conduct themselves well
should be esteemed worthy of double honor,
especially those who labor in the word and
in teaching, For the Scripture says that
'you should not muzzle the ox, while threshing,' (Deut. 25:4)
and 'the laborer is worthy of his wage.' (Mt. 10:10)
(1Tim. 5:17-18)

Paul also expands on this thought in 1Cor. 9:6-14:

Also, I only, and Bar Nabba, have we not the power not to work?
Who is this who labors in the service (ministry) by the expanse of his nefesh?
Or who is he who plants a vineyard and from its fruit does not eat?
Or who is he who tends the flock and from the milk of his flock does not eat?
Do I say these [things] as a son of man?
Behold, the Torah also said these [things]. For it is written in the Torah of Moshe,
'You shall not muzzle the ox that threshes.' (Deut. 25:4)
It is a concern to Eloah about oxen? But, it is known that because of us he
said [it] and because of us it was written, because it is a need [that] the plowman plow
unto hope and he who threshes, unto the hope of the harvest. If we have sown spiritual
[things] among you, is it a great [thing] if we reap [things] of the flesh from you? ...
those who labor [in] the Beit Kodesh [the Temple] are sustained from the Beit Kodesh
and those who labor for the alter have a portion with the alter?

So also, our Adon commanded that those who are proclaiming his goodnews should live from his goodnews."
(1Cor. 9:6-14)

Certainly the context of Yeshua's statement "for nothing you have received, for nothing you will give." (Mt. 10:8) was that of a society in which all things were held in common and each person's needs were taken care of by that community (Mt. 10:9-11 and Acts 2:44 & 4:32) but we do not live in such a society, and so citing Mt. 10:8 to those in the ministry today, is akin to asking us to make bricks without straw.

To the contrary Paul quotes the verse shortly afterward (10:10) to reach a principle by which those who are proclaiming his goodnews should be supported for doing so, just as those who labor in the Temple and for the alter are supported for doing so. In other words, Paul draws a midrash from the fact that Levites and Priests received tithes and offerings to teach a principle that "those who labor in the word and teach" should be supported with tithes and offerings.

POURING OUT A BLESSING

“Bring you the whole tithe into the store-house, that there may be food in My house, and try Me now herewith, says YHWH Tzva’ot, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall be more than sufficiency.”
(Mal. 3:10)

The Old Worldwide Church Of God under Hebert W. Armstrong are a good example of what tithing can accomplish. From time to time I have been asked my opinion of Herbert W. Armstrong and the Worldwide Church of God. Let me begin by saying that I do not agree with everything Armstrong taught. However Armstrong taught many truths that were definitely on the cutting edge for his time.

Armstrong taught seventh day, evening to evening Sabbath observance, while exposing the pagan origins and nature of Sunday Worship. Armstrong taught the Scriptural feasts (which also happen to be the Jewish Holidays) while exposing the pagan origins and nature of the Pagan holidays like Halloween, Christmas and Easter. Armstrong also criticized pagan customs in general, not just Pagan holidays and Sunday worship.

And long before the so-called “Two House” movement, Armstrong was teaching:

“The peoples of the United States, the British Commonwealth nations, and the nations of northwestern Europe are, in fact, the peoples of the Ten Tribes of the House of Israel. The Jewish People are the House of Judah.”
(The United States and Britain in Prophecy, ninth ed. P. 144; Herbert W. Armstrong)

Not long before his death in 1986, Armstrong finally came to the following far reaching conclusion:

"Satan has deceived this world's churches into the belief that God's law was done away-that Jesus, rather than paying the price in human stead for transgressing the law, did away with it-"nailing it to his cross." The expression used by Protestants "nailing the law to his cross" can mean only one thing. This is Satan's teaching that by being nailed to the cross, Christ abolished the law, making it possible for humans to sin with impunity. What actually was nailed to the cross was Christ our sin bearer, who took on himself our sins, paying the death penalty in our stead, so that we are freed from the ultimate penalty of sinning, not made free to sin with impunity. The very basic teaching, belief AND DOCTRINE OF God's true Church therefore is based on the righteousness of and obedience to the law of God."
(Mystery of the Ages; Herbert W. Armstrong p. 274)

For this reason I say that in a world that was blind, Armstrong saw with blurred vision.

The tithe is badly needed to finance the work of teaching the truth of Torah and Messiah as we "labor in the word". "Bring you the whole tithe into the store-house, that there may be food in My house" (Mal. 3:10). Back during the 70's and 80's Armstrong's "World Wide Church of God" distributed millions of free books and booklets and had a disproportionate impact on theology in America. Their free "Plain Truth" color magazine had a circulation reaching eight million! More than Time, Newsweek and US News and World Report COMBINED at the time! They had a weekly TV show and owned two colleges, not to mention a world class auditorium. How was this small sect (they only numbered in the thousands) able to accomplish so much? Because their members were actually tithing!

Nazarenes need to get as serious. Nazarenes need to ask themselves if the cost of the covenant is more than they are willing to pay. Others have paid with their lives, just read 2nd and 4th Maccabees. They were tortured and killed..

Yeshua said:

Again, the Kingdom of Heaven is comparable to a man that is a merchant, seeking good pearls: Who, when he had found one precious pearl, went and sold all that he had and bought it.
(Matt. 13:45-46)

Is the cost of the covenant too high for you? Nazarenes need to be as serious about tithing as about the Sabbath and eating kosher.

Bring you the whole tithe into the store-house,
that there may be food in YHWH's house.
(Mal. 3:10).
(End of lesson eleven)