

THE LEVITES INHERITANCE

This tract supplements our booklet "Jacob's Vow". That booklet related to Jacob when he vowed a tenth (tithe) to God of all that would be given him from the land that God had given him and his descendants (Genesis 28:13 to 22). This tract will focus on how the children of Israel fulfilled the vow and paid this tithe to God. When Jacob made the vow, there was no nation of Israel and while he was the father of the tribes of Israel, there would be no systematic way for his descendants to honour their forefather's vow for many years to come. A system of paying the vowed tithe would come into existence during the time of Moses.

To begin our study, let us read Leviticus 27:30 to 34 to see what the tithe law entailed when Moses first gave it to the people of Israel at mount Sinai. *"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 passeth 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: and if he change it at all, then both it and the change thereof shall be holy: it shall not be redeemed. These are the commandments, which the LORD commanded Moses for the children of Israel in mount Sinai."*

Now go to Numbers 18 and read verses 20 to 24: *"And the LORD spake unto Aaron, Thou shalt have no inheritance in their land, neither shalt thou have any part among them: I am thy part and thine inheritance among the children of Israel. And behold, I have given the children of Levi all the tenth in Israel for an inheritance, for their service which they serve, even the service of the tabernacle of the congregation. Neither must the children of Israel henceforth come nigh the tabernacle of the congregation, lest they bear sin, and die. But the Levites shall do the service of the tabernacle of the congregation, and they shall bear their iniquity: it shall be a statute for ever throughout your generations, that among the children of Israel they have no inheritance. But the tithes of the children of Israel which they offer as an heave offering unto the LORD, I have given to the Levites to inherit, therefore I have said unto them, Among the children of Israel they shall have no inheritance."* From these verses we can see that the Levites were a tribe that received no land inheritance. They were to live among the other Israelites, but they had no land to call their own. The Levites were a special tribe from which came men that would serve in the tabernacle.

By reading the remainder of Numbers 18, we can see that the Levites' inheritance was not the land, but the tithe which the people of Israel gave. Of these tithes received, the Levites were to offer the best one tenth as an offering unto the LORD (verses 28, 29) and the rest belonged to the Levites: *"And ye shall eat it in every place, ye and your households: for it is your reward for your service in the tabernacle of the congregation."* (verse 31).

Verses one to eight in Deuteronomy 18 also states that the Levites purpose was to serve in the tabernacle and that their reward was the tithe offering. *"The priests the Levites, and all the tribe of Levi, shall have no part nor inheritance with Israel: they shall eat the offerings of the LORD made by fire, and his inheritance. Therefore shall they have no inheritance among their brethren: the LORD is their inheritance, as he hath said unto them. And this shall be the priest's due from the people, from them that offer a sacrifice, whether it be ox or sheep, and they shall give unto the priest the shoulder, and the two cheeks, and the maw. The firstfruit also of thy corn, of thy wine, and of thine oil, and the first of the fleece of thy sheep, shalt thou give him. For the LORD thy God hath chosen him out of all thy tribes, to stand to minister in the name of the LORD, him and his sons for ever. And if a Levite come from any of thy gates out of all Israel, where he sojourned, and come with all the desire of his mind unto the place which the LORD shall choose. Then he shall minister in the name of the LORD his God, as all his brethren the Levites do, which stand there before the LORD. They shall have like portions to eat, beside that which cometh of the sale of his patrimony."* Note that they would not receive any land inheritance except for the cities that were given unto the Levites from the tribes of Israel for

their dwelling. ***"All the cities of the Levites within the possession of the children of Israel were forty and eight cities with their suburbs."*** Joshua 21:41. At the later time when the temple replaced the tabernacle, the Levites with the priests continued to carry out their respected duties: 1 Chronicles 6:32: ***"And they ministered before the dwelling place of the tabernacle of the congregation with singing, until Solomon had built the house of the LORD in Jerusalem: and then they waited on their office according to their order."*** Read also 1 Chronicles 23: 24 to 32. The Levites received tithes from the children of Israel, but of the tithes received they were to give a tenth to the priests. Numbers 18:26: ***"Thus speak unto the Levites, and say unto them, When ye take of the children of Israel the tithes which I have given you from them for your inheritance, then ye shall offer up an heave offering of it for the LORD, even a tenth part of the tithe."*** and Nehemiah 10:38: ***"And the priest the son of Aaron shall be with the Levites, when the Levites take tithes: and the Levites shall bring up the tithe of the tithes unto the house of our God, to the chambers, into the treasure house."*** Ezekiel 44:29: ***"They shall eat the meat offering, and the sin offering, and the trespass offering; and every dedicated thing in Israel shall be theirs."*** Leviticus 2:3: ***"And the remnant of the meat offering shall be Aaron's and his sons': it is a thing most holy of the offerings of the LORD made by fire."*** The Levites received the tithe from the children of Israel as an inheritance from God (vowed by Jacob to God) for their services. In turn, the Levites offered a tithe unto the LORD, which was received through the priests, who were the only ones who could make these heave offerings, and in return they received the necessities needed for daily life and ate from the offerings of the LORD. As we can see, only the Levites and the sons of Aaron could receive tithes for only they received this inheritance from God through Jacob's vow.

Now that we know that Levites received the tithe offerings from the people of Israel, we should go to an interesting prophecy brought to us by Daniel as revealed to him by God. Read Daniel 9:26, 27: ***"And after threescore and two weeks shall Messiah be cut off, but not for himself: and the people of the prince that shall come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary; and the end thereof shall be with a flood, and unto the end of the war desolations are determined. And he shall confirm the covenant with many for one week: and in the midst of the week HE SHALL CAUSE THE SACRIFICE AND THE OBLATION TO CEASE, and for the overspreading of abominations he shall make it desolate, even until the consummation, and that determined shall be poured upon the desolate."*** From these verses, we learn that after the Messiah has come, the time of giving heave offerings to God would be discontinued, that is, the obligated tithe offerings would be terminated.

Upon examination of the crucifixion of Christ in the New Testament, we find that Daniel's prophecy had begun to be fulfilled when Jesus ***"gave up the Spirit"***, and the temple's veil was rent in two from top to bottom (Matthew 27:50, 51; Mark 15:37, 38; Luke 23:45, 46), an event which signified the end of the need for the temple duties (i.e. the binding of tithe offerings and sacrifices). Jesus was the once-and-for-all, perfect sacrifice, negating the need for further temple sacrifices. While temple duties were not stopped immediately at the crucifixion, the process had now begun which would bring sacrifices to its end.

Concerning Daniel 9:26, 27, a great majority of people believe this prophecy of Daniel is referring to Antiochus Epiphanes and his sacking of the temple and Jerusalem, which occurred in 168 B.C. Tradition says the Temple was re-dedicated exactly 3 years after this desecration and not 3 1/2 years as suggested by Daniel prophecy. Also, the oblations and sacrifices at the Temple did not come to a permanent end by Antiochus' deed, but were discontinued for the brief period of three years, during the time in which Antiochus desecrated the Holy Temple by the placing of the image of Zeus upon the great altar. By the end of 165 B.C., the Temple was re-dedicated and the Jews resumed their Temple services. Furthermore, the Temple may have been desecrated as we well know, but it was not in the condition of being in the state of complete devastation or total abandonment, falling short of the fulfillment of the prophetic total desolation of the Temple and the dispersion of the Jews as spoken by Jesus in quoting Daniel.

Read what Jesus had to say of Daniel's prophecy and notice that Jesus spoke of it as an event

yet to occur. Matthew 24:15: *"When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place (whoso readeth, let him understand:)."* See also Mark 13:14. Now read Luke 21:20, 24: *"And when ye shall see Jerusalem compassed with armies, then know that the desolation thereof is nigh... And they shall fall by the edge of the sword, and shall be led away captive into all nations: and Jerusalem shall be trodden down by the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled."* Jesus spoke not only of a desecration, but of the total destruction of the Temple and city, and the dispersion of the Jewish people, which did not occur during Antiochus' reign, but did during the time from Titus to Hadrian (70 to 135 A.D.) fulfilling Daniel's prophecy.

With the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem, the Levitical priesthood and servants ceased to exist and so did their inheritance of the tithe, which had been paid to them by the children of Israel according to the tenth vowed to God by Jacob. But after Jesus willingly shed his blood for us on the cross, in came a new priesthood under Christ, under a new covenant. This new covenant was not as the old one with an obligatory system of tithe giving, but one of voluntarily giving from the heart in a loving and free-will attitude.