

The Law of the Tithe

Narrator

Be sure to set aside a tenth of all of all that your fields produce each year. Eat the tithe of your grain, new wine and oil and the firstborn of your herds and flocks in the presence of the Lord. Do this at the place he will choose as a dwelling place for his Name, so that you may learn to revere the Lord your God always.

Tobias

Another harvest safely in and thank God for that. No, I really mean that! Farming this land is not easy but with enough water things can grow well and for that I am very grateful. Grateful to those who help, because the whole community shares in the harvest and grateful to God who gave our fathers this land. So now it's time for the tithe when we say thank you to God. After all, it's his land I farm. That's right! It's not my land but God's; I only farm it for him – and share in all the blessings. When I tithe I say thank you to God and remember whose land it is that I farm, who gives the growth.

Narrator

But if the place is too far and God has blessed you and you cannot carry your tithe because it is just too far, then exchange your tithe for silver, bind it in your hand and go to the place the Lord your God will choose. Use the silver to buy whatever you like: cattle, sheep, wine or strong drink – anything you like. Then you and your household shall eat there in the presence of the Lord your God and rejoice.

Issachar

I'll never forget my first journey to Schechem to celebrate the tithe. I was with my father and it was some party! The thing that struck me was that everybody celebrated together. It was a real community affair, just like the harvest itself when everybody pitches in to help. We were spending the first part of our hard earned harvest, giving it away, and everyone is laughing and joking and singing to God! When I asked, someone just said to me, "God gave the gift of the harvest, lad, so if he can be generous, so must we". And that was that. I don't doubt that some people kept their tithe but I am sure they missed out on something more special than money. They missed out on sharing with us all – aye, and they missed out on God's blessing as well I think.

Narrator

And do not neglect the Levites living in your towns, for they have no allotment or inheritance of their own.. At the end of every three years bring all the tithes of that year's produce and store it in your towns so that the Levites, who have no inheritance of their own, and the strangers, the orphans and the widows who live in your towns may come, and eat, and be satisfied

Anna

You know, it's a funny thing. I'm a widow and I don't have to pay the tithe.

Levi

And I'm a priest and I don't pay because I have not got any land to pay with!

Anna

So when we go to Schechem, the place of worship when we all gather together, you'd think we might feel a bit embarrassed – like turning up at a party with nothing to eat or drink!

Levi

Yet it never feels like that. The tithe is there for people like us. Anna here has got no fella to look after her so the community helps out. She can share in the party on equal terms with the rest. There are other things as well; like when the lads are harvesting the wheat they are not allowed to go back over the field to get the bits they missed. People like Anna follow the pickers and can have anything they miss – for free! That's because the land belongs to God.

Anna

No, it never feels like charity, like someone is doing us a favour. Levi here is our priest; he didn't ask to have no land but we want him to pray for us, guide and teach us – and believe me that's a full time job for anyone! So the tithe is how we pay for our priests. God gave us the land and the priests teach us how to live with gratitude and generosity. That's how I see it anyway.

Narrator

Do all this so that the Lord your God may bless you in all the work of your hands.