

## Christian Faith & Practice Through...Money

*“Be careful not to forget Adonai your God by not obeying his mitzvot, rulings and regulations that I am giving you today. Otherwise, after you have eaten and are satisfied, built fine houses and lived in them, and increased your herds, flocks, silver, gold and everything else you own, you will become proud hearted. Forgetting Adonai your God – who brought you out of the land of Egypt, where you lived as slaves; who led you through the vast and fearsome desert, with its poisonous snakes, scorpions and waterless, thirsty ground: who brought water out of flint rock for you: who fed you in the desert with man (mannah), unknown to your ancestors; all the while humbling and testing you in order to do you good in the end – you will think to yourself, ‘My own power and the strength of my own hand have gotten me this wealth.’ No, you are to remember Adonai your God, because it is he who is giving you the power to get wealth, in order to confirm his covenant, which he swore to your ancestors, as is happening even today.” (Deut. 8:11-18 CJB)*

This is another in a continuing series for those of us who have chosen to ignore the doctrines of men and embrace all that the Father gives us, including His Torah. If you are fairly new to this, some practices might seem a little overwhelming, or you may not know exactly what to do. These brief articles will help you explore the Law for yourself and begin to learn some of the applications to your life. This article covers some basics in the Law concerning the big “M” word that gets a lot of motors running: money.

**Tithing.** It is interesting to note that the tithe is closely associated with agriculture and the ceremonial Law. Most of the biblical references concern giving a tenth of the produce and/or flock to the Levites because they didn’t have any land to grow food for themselves or raise material necessary for clothing. Tithing is also intimately related to offerings and sacrifices. There are no specific connections anywhere in the Law to profits or money, except for converting agricultural tithe to money and spending it on yourself (Deut. 14:22-26). Of course this doesn’t mean we cannot give a tithe of our money to whomever we wish. Sometimes the tithe is mentioned in connection with plunder, as it is in Genesis (14:20) where Abraham pays tithes of spoil to Melchizedek. So we need to make sure and tithe of our plunder when we have it. Does this apply to Enron and the phone company?

You might be surprised to learn (I know I was), that tithing is not mentioned in the Apostolic Scriptures (NT) at all, except for a couple of sayings from Yahshua concerning produce. It’s a wonder then how and why the Laws have made it into the current Church practices. Last time I checked, they think the Law has been eliminated (especially the imaginary designation “ceremonial” laws), except for the 10... no wait make that nine (skip the Sabbath)...er, no make that eight (graven images such as a crucifix are okay) commandments. Logically, there should be nothing of tithing in the Church, because tithing is part of the ceremonial law, not the moral law.

So considering that the tithe is closely associated with the ceremonial Law, and considering that the Church has summarily declared that the ceremonial Laws are null and void, why then has the concept of tithing been taught and encouraged? This is kind of a problem, isn't it? Please understand, it's not so much the presence of the tithe I am questioning, but the absence of the Law. Could it be that this is such a convenient way for a Church leader to make money, that he or she finds it acceptable to contrive an excuse to continue this practice even though in their view the Law has been eliminated? Hmm, I wonder. The pastor or priest should be getting paid in chicken feed. Literally.

**Giving.** Remember that the tithe does not prevent us from giving more or in different ways. Charity is another area we can participate in to help those less fortunate than ourselves (Deut. 15:8). And the Father's Law helps us with some suggestions for how to go about it. There are Laws instructing us to be a little sloppy in how we harvest:

*'Now when you reap the harvest of your land, you shall not reap to the very corners of your field, nor shall you gather the gleanings of your harvest.*

*'Nor shall you glean your vineyard, nor shall you gather the fallen fruit of your vineyard; you shall leave them for the needy and for the stranger. I am the LORD your God. (Lev. 19:9,10 NASB)*

As well as not to be too particular about picking up after ourselves:

*"When you reap your harvest in your field and have forgotten a sheaf in the field, you shall not go back to get it; it shall be for the alien, for the orphan, and for the widow, in order that the LORD your God may bless you in all the work of your hands. When you beat your olive tree, you shall not go over the boughs again; it shall be for the alien, for the orphan, and for the widow. When you gather the grapes of your vineyard, you shall not go over it again; it shall be for the alien, for the orphan, and for the widow." (Deut. 24:19,20 NASB)*

These Laws preserve some dignity for the poor (they have to go out and work, usually alongside the other harvesters), while at the same time testing the generosity of the person that is better off. In theory, the field owner would not just leave a few crumbs specifically commanded by Law, but would make sure that enough was left to feed his share of the poor. The truly generous would not beat his olive branch too hard, or would conveniently forget some extra sheaves in the field. Get it? So all the poor would (again in theory) be fed if all the field owners were leaving enough to spread around.

These Laws, as with most of the Laws, should be seen as starting points only. In other words, I think it's clear that our Father is just giving us examples to start us thinking about what types of behavior we should have, rather than making specifics about what is allowed and not allowed. Taken together, these instructions do not just apply to olives, grapes and grain only, but in a wider sense apply to all similar endeavors. We could get

really nit-picky and argue over the size of a corner, or how much is in a sheaf, or how hard to beat a branch; or, we can just learn to be generous in all our activities.

Did you know that the Father promised that there would be no poor among the Israelites if they obeyed His commands?

*“However, there will be no poor among you, since the LORD will surely bless you in the land which the LORD your God is giving you as an inheritance to possess, if only you listen obediently to the voice of the LORD your God, to observe carefully all this commandment which I am commanding you today. For the LORD your God will bless you as He has promised you, and you will lend to many nations, but you will not borrow; and you will rule over many nations, but they will not rule over you.”* (Deut. 15:4-6 NASB)

Did you catch that? *There will be no poor among you...if only you listen obediently.* Therefore, if there is poor among us (yes I include us under the heading of Israel) we are not obeying the Father. I wonder why Yahshua said, “For you always have the poor with you?” (Mt. 26:11; Mk. 14:7; Jn. 12:8; see also Deut. 15:11) To me, the obvious conclusion is that we are always disobedient (as a group at least).

**Loans.** Oddly enough, a loan is considered to be a greater act of love than merely giving money away. Rabbi’s call a free loan a “*gemach*” (geh-m-akh) which is an acronym for “*gemilut chasadim*” (geh-m-ee-loot khahs-a-deem) meaning “granting kindness(es).” The Torah specifically commands us to help our fellow man with free loans:

*“If you lend money to my people, to the poor among you, don't be like a creditor to him, don't impose interest on him. If you should pawn your fellow's garment, return it to him by nightfall.”* (Exodus 22:24-25)

One of the reasons a loan is considered a greater act than giving is that you are treating the person who has experienced some misfortune in his or her life as an equal, expecting that they will be able to recover and pay the loan back. This shows you have confidence in them and gives them an opportunity to recover with their active participation. Another reason is that you are providing material as well as moral support. And it shows that you regard the borrower as an honest person who won’t take off with the money. In a way, you are also showing that the borrower is successful; one who will surely recover and regain secure financial standing. The absence of money is usually the least of the borrower’s problems – several financial setbacks in a row can demoralize someone and rob them of their hope. The encouragement you provide through the loan and your faith in the borrower can be of greater value than the coin you part with.

The various restrictions on collecting a debt in the Father’s Instructions also serve to show us how to treat the borrower. In the passage above we are told not to “act like a creditor.” This means you cannot hound the borrower if you know he cannot repay. It also means we should not deprive the borrower of essential possessions such as clothing

for warmth or those which affect his or her livelihood. In the past (and not so distant, either), people were jailed for failing to repay an obligation. Sometimes even whole families and other relatives were included in this form of payment. This, of course, is exactly the sort of behavior the Father enjoins us from pursuing. If the lender has ironclad guarantees for repayment, including the ability to “lien” the borrower, how does that show love? It becomes merely a mercantile transaction.

Every seventh year is a Sabbath year (*Shemitta*), in which no crops are planted and debts are summarily discharged (Deut. 15:1-3). We are not to avoid making loans because the Sabbath year is near (Deut. 15:9-11), but borrowers shouldn't take advantage of the generosity (Ps. 37:21), especially if he wants to treat others as he has been treated.

As the verses at the head of this article tell us, our wealth does not really belong to us anyway. It was given to us by God, and He expects us to use it in a manner consistent with His goodness and rightness. If we are His children, we should act like He does in all things, including the disbursement of the funds He gives us. As we imitate Him in His generosity and patience with our own failings and mistakes, then we reduce our attachment to earthly treasure and build up for ourselves treasure of the heavenly variety.

Loaning also promotes good stewardship. If your money belonged to you alone then you could do with it what you would. But, since we know that everything belongs to YHVH in the first place (Ex. 9:29; Ps. 24:1), then we have a responsibility to use it in accordance with His Word and Will. The concept of using whatever we have to produce fruit is found throughout the Scriptures. And it is reasonable to expect that loaning money would also produce fruit as well as increasing our heavenly gain. Behind these ideas is the understanding that the real security behind the money (collateral) is YHVH Himself. And there just ain't no better guarantee that the act of loaning will bear fruit.

*One who is gracious to a poor man lends to the LORD,  
And He will repay him for his good deed. (Prov. 19:17 NASB)*

*...then hear from heaven Your dwelling place, and forgive, and render to each according to all his ways, whose heart You know for You alone know the hearts of the sons of men, (II Chron. 6:30 NASB)*

To loan is to trust in the Father. YHVH is the one who gives the money, or the ability to make money which is the same thing, and lending shows our trust in Him as the Coordinator of all Blessings. The next time around we may be the one needing a hand from our brother.

May the Father reward you according to your ways  
Bruce Bertram