

Summary Handout

The Law of Tithing and the Law of the Fast

Lesson

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Summary

Scripture Summary:

Doctrine and Covenants 59:13–14, 21; Revelation given through Joseph Smith the Prophet, in Zion, Jackson County, Missouri, August 7, 1831. HC 1: 196—201. Preceding his record of this revelation, the Prophet writes descriptively of the land of Zion wherein the people were then assembled. The land was consecrated, as the Lord had directed, and the site for the future temple was dedicated. The Lord makes these commandments especially applicable to the saints in Zion. 1—4, The faithful saints in Zion shall be blessed; 5—8, They are to love and serve the Lord and keep his commandments; 9—19, By keeping the Lord's day holy, the saints are blessed temporally and spiritually; 20—24, The righteous are promised peace in this world and eternal life in the world to come.

Doctrine and Covenants 119; Revelation given through Joseph Smith the Prophet, at Far West, Missouri, July 8, 1838, in answer to his supplication: "O Lord, show unto thy servants how much thou requirest of the properties of thy people for a tithing." HC 3: 44. The law of tithing, as understood today, had not been given to the Church previous to this revelation. The term "tithing" in the prayer just quoted and in previous revelations (64: 23; 85: 3; 97: 11) had meant not just one-tenth, but all free-will offerings, or contributions, to the Church funds. The Lord had previously given to the Church the law of consecration and stewardship of property, which members (chiefly the leading elders) entered into by a covenant that was to be everlasting. Because of failure on the part of many to abide by this covenant, the Lord withdrew it for a time, and gave instead the law of tithing to the whole Church. The Prophet asked the Lord how much of their property he required for sacred purposes. The answer was this revelation. 1—5, The saints are to pay their surplus property and then give, as tithing, one-tenth of their interest annually; 6—7, Such a course will sanctify the land of Zion.

Doctrine and Covenants 120; Revelation given through Joseph Smith the Prophet, at Far West, Missouri, July 8, 1838, making known the disposition of the properties tithed as named in the preceding revelation, Section 119. HC 3: 44.

Isaiah 58:6–12; True law of the fast, with its attendant blessings, is set forth—Sabbath observance enjoined.

Malachi 3:8–12; The Lord's messenger shall prepare the way for the Second Coming—Christ shall sit in judgment—Israel commanded to pay tithes and offerings—They keep a book of remembrance.

Matthew 4:3–11; Jesus fasts forty days and is tempted—He begins his ministry, calls disciples, and heals the sick.

Matthew 6:18–18; Jesus continues the Sermon on the Mount—He teaches the disciples the Lord's Prayer—They are commanded to seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness.

3 Nephi 13:16–18; Jesus teaches the Nephites the Lord's Prayer—They are to lay up treasures in heaven—The Twelve in their ministry are commanded to take no thought for temporal things.

Supplemental Holy Land and Jewish insights:

God's Math is Different than Man's: The Law of Tithing was given as a part of the plan to teach, by means of serving each other, how to develop a total commitment to serving Him. God's instruction is to bring the tithes, 10%, to him and that the remaining 90% will go further than the 100% could.

Jewish View of Tithing: There is still some biblical meaning, yet Jews do not have an order or organized way of collecting and distributing tithes. Judaism reflects a great history of instructions and traditions in paying tithes, giving charity and making offerings to assist the less fortunate. Philanthropy is a basic part of Biblical life, and hence, a religious life. To devout Jews, Biblical life means a Jewish life. The tithes were used to take care of the Jerusalem Temple. After it was destroyed, a memory of the last temple was perpetuated and a hope for its return is still constantly repeated. The principle of tithes, however, has diminished and now includes offerings for the needy.

Charity, Almsgiving Called 'Loving Kindness:' "Although the idea of charity and almsgiving is spread throughout the whole of the Bible, there is no special term for it. The rabbis of the Talmud, however, adopted the word (*zedakah*) for charity and it is used (but not exclusively so) throughout rabbinic literature in the sense of helping the needy by gifts. The word has since passed into popular usage and is almost exclusively used for charity. The term *hesed* ('loving-kindness'), which is used widely in the Bible, has taken on the meaning of physical aid, or lending money without interest." (*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*)

Obligation Extends to All: "Everybody is obliged to give charity; even one who himself is dependent on charity should give to those less fortunate than himself. The court can compel one who refuses to give charity—or donates less than his means allow—to give according to the court's assessment. "To give a tenth of one's wealth to charity is

Considered to be a 'middling' virtue, to give a 20th or less is to be "mean"; but the rabbis decided that one should not give more than a fifth lest he become impoverished himself and dependent on charity. (*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*)

Scale of Virtuous Giving: "The rabbis were especially concerned about the manner in which alms are to be dispensed. The prime consideration is that nothing be done that might shame the recipient. "Maimonides lists seven ways of giving *zedakah* which are progressively more virtuous: to give (1) but sadly; (2) less than is fitting, but in good humor; (3) only after having been asked to; (4) before being asked; (5) in such a manner that the donor does not know who the recipient is, (6) in such a manner that the recipient does not know who the donor is; and (7) in such a way that neither the donor nor the recipient knows the identity of the other." (*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*)

The Highest Form of Charity: ". . . is not to give alms but to help the poor to rehabilitate themselves by lending them money, taking them into partnership, employing them, or giving them work, for in this way the purpose is achieved without any loss of self-respect at all. "This last way of helping the poor is known as *gemilut basadim*, 'dispensing kindness.' This term also includes aiding people who need help and encouragement and includes such matters as visiting the sick and looking after them and inviting needy guests to eat at your home. One of the greatest acts of charity is to provide for orphans." (*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*)

Charity and Fasting in the Islamic Religion: Charity is one of the basic five pillars or tenants of faith, generally considered to be 2 percent. "Muhammad, a seventh century C.E. merchant of Mecca, and founder of Islam, is considered by believers to have been the last of a line of prophets . . . acceptance of Muhammad's teaching implies belief in Allah as the only god . . . pray five times daily . . . fast from dawn to sunset in the month of Ramadan . . . pay legal alms (charity); and to go on at least one pilgrimage to Mecca, site of the holy Black Stone, the Ka'aba." (*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*)

Jewish Fasting: In addition to tithes, the religious Jew have a fasting day each month. It stands to reason that the meal afterwards is a "feast" of sorts - with prayers before and after every meal. Each prayer is preceded by a washing of hands in "living water" that is naturally flowing. Over time, these and other prayers have come to be prewritten. Fasting is never done on a Sabbath day because Sabbath is a day of joy and fasting (to many) is less than joyful! Yom Kippur (a High Day - hence, treated as a Sabbath) is the only exception. On that day, fasting begins an hour before that Sabbath and continues until an hour afterwards. The book of Jonah is read by religious Jews on Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement, accompanied by a full day of fasting and prayer. The prayers that day ask for forgiveness and for the Lord's spirit to be with them. Other days of fasting also include prayers.

Mourning and Fasting: "Yahrzeit . . . is a Yiddish word which comes from the German meaning 'year-time' or anniversary. Among Ashkenazi Jews it has come to refer exclusively to the anniversary of the death of a relative for whom one was required to mourn. The anniversary is according to the Hebrew date of death, and so in the secular calendar it will be on different dates each year. Very pious people observe a fast on the *yahrzeit* of parents and it is the general custom that a candle or light is kindled for the whole day, and that a mourner who is able to, leads the daily services on that day. Sons recite the *Kaddish* prayer on the *yahrzeit* of parents." (*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*)

Customs Connected with Fasting: "Fasting is an act of repentance or of supplication seeking divine forgiveness or the prevention of disaster. Public fasts also commemorate catastrophic events in Jewish history. On fast days one neither eats nor drinks. On major fasts, other prohibitions are washing, wearing leather shoes, using ointments or perfumes, and other physical pleasures. There are special prayers and the Torah is read in the synagogue. Yom Kippur and Tishah be-Av are observed from sunset to sunset. All other fasts are from sunrise to sunset." (*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*)

Community Fasting: "When a natural or human disaster threatens or strikes a whole community, a public fast is proclaimed. In biblical times, fasting served to beseech the Almighty to end a famine or to lighten the oppression of foreign rulers." (*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*)

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