



Coptic Orthodox Diocese of
the Southern United States

The Monthly Message
to the Priests' Wives
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A Tenth of the Tithe

"Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, 'Speak thus to the Levites, and say to them: 'When you take from the children of Israel the tithes which I have given you from them as your inheritance, then you shall offer up a heave offering of it to the LORD, a tenth of the tithe. And your heave offering shall be reckoned to you as though it were the grain of the threshing floor and as the fullness of the winepress. Thus you shall also offer a heave offering to the LORD from all your tithes which you receive from the children of Israel, and you shall give the LORD's heave offering from it to Aaron the priest'" (Numbers 18:25-28)

When God Chose the tribe of Levi to be consecrated to Him, He did not give them a portion in the promised land but said about them to Joshua, *"But the Levites have no part among you, for the priesthood of the Lord is their inheritance"* (Joshua 18:7). Meanwhile, God ordered the remaining tribes of Israel to give the tithe of their harvest, grain, winepress and beasts to the Levites as a portion for them. The strange thing we see in the above Scriptural passage is that He ordered the Levites themselves to tithe these tithes which they receive from the other tribes and to offer them to God. Therefore, all tribes, including the Levites, were submitted to the law of tithing.

One can wonder on the first glance from this commandment that God gave to the Levites. Isn't it He who prevented them from possessing a portion in the land? Didn't they consecrate their entire life to serve God and His temple? Weren't the

tithes of the remaining tribes the main source for the Levites from which they were sustained and they filled their needs and the needs of their families? Why was God insisting that the Levites had to tithe the tithes? One tithe of the tithe actually equals one tenth of ten percent i.e. one percent. What did this one percent, that meant a lot for the Levites, mean for God?!

In fact, God wanted to emphasize to the Levites that consecrating their lives to serve God does not give them special privileges and does not exempt them from their spiritual duty as they are required to fulfil it like the remaining people.

Actually this wonderful Scriptural passage does not only concern the Levites in the Old Testament but also the priests in the New Testament. But how can this passage apply to the priest and his family?

- Priesthood does not exempt the priest and his wife from offering the tithe of their income to God. It is true that the priest and his family, by accepting the priesthood call, may have been drifted from a higher socioeconomic state to a lower one and accepted gladly to enter through the narrow gate in this matter, yet this does not justify them to excuse themselves from offering their tithes exactly like the Levites whom God did not exempt from tithing the tithes. Even if a priest and his wife's income is as low as a tithe, yet he is still required before God to tithe this tithe.

- Priesthood does not exempt a priest and his wife from offering the tithe of their time to God. One may wonder, "Aren't the priest and his wife giving their entire life to God?!" Yes, a priest and his wife dedicate their entire life to serve God, yet they still need to give the tithe of their time to their personal relationship with Him away from

the prerequisites and burdens of service. They are still required to watch over their own spiritual canon.

- When a priest and his wife offer their tithes to the Lord and consequently experience God's blessing coming upon their home, money, time, health and children, then when the priest talk about this commandment to his congregation he does not talk in theoretical way but as a one who practically experienced the grace of obeying this commandment and acquired its power in his own life and his family's life.

- When a priest and his wife offer their tithes to the Lord they teach their children the habit of obeying this commandment with all zeal and joy.

- When a priest and his wife offer their tithes to the Lord they experience a deep experience of faith and get a remedy that

antagonizes all worry about the future and all grumbling about the narrow way. It is the experience which the widow of Zarephath of Sidon and the widow who threw the two mites experienced.

"Will a man rob God? Yet you have robbed Me! But you say, 'In what way have we robbed You?' In tithes and offerings. You are cursed with a curse, for you have robbed Me, Even this whole nation. Bring all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be food in My house, and try Me now in this," Says the LORD of hosts, "If I will not open for you the windows of heaven and pour out for you such blessing That there will not be room enough to receive it. And I will rebuke the devourer for your sakes, so that he will not destroy the fruit of your ground, nor shall the vine fail to bear fruit for you in the field," Says the Lord of hosts; "And all nations will call you blessed, for you will be a delightful land," Says the Lord of hosts" (Malachi 3:8-12)

Let every one of you become a delightful land for the Lord!!