

What did the tithe illustrate?

- A tenth of gross income is significant but not burdensome. As a comparison, Social Security Tax is 15.3% of something between gross and net.
- Hebrews 7:1 – 11 This gift is given to someone who has greater standing with God.
- Numbers 18:24 – 32 Those who receive shall also give. What is received is as income, without restriction within the bounds of good sense.
- Deuteronomy 12:6 – 19 A significant portion of income should be spent on celebrations of forgiveness with family and friends in the presence of God. That which is ear-marked for such things cannot be diverted to everyday use. Those who work at the details of ceremony should be supported.
- Deuteronomy 14:21 – 29, 26:12 - 15 The widow, the orphan, the stranger, and those who perform the ceremonies should receive gifts of significant proportion.

Observations

- The Levites did not receive 10% of the gross national product. Rather, in two of three years, the Levites were invited to share in the sacrificial meals along with relatives, friends, and the needy. In the third year, the expense of the sacrificial meal was not included in the tithe. Rather, the whole tithe was made available to the Levite, the widow, the orphan, and the stranger. The giver had the choice concerning with whom to share. The Israelites were cautioned not to overlook the Levite, but the no specific proportion was due them. I see this as voting with your wallet.
- The Israelites were composed of a vast majority of unfaithful and a minority of faithful people. Therefore, they needed laws to force them to share. As Paul put it in 1 Timothy 1:9, “Law is for the lawless.” If God had not made a law that 10% of their gross income was for sacrificial meals, the Levites, and the needy, such generosity probably would not have happened. The same is true today. Our government does not believe that its citizens will take care of the needy voluntarily, so sharing is enforced by law.
- The point was to share with the needy and with those of great faith who served without pay. The tithe was not for supporting a system of clergy, buildings, and programs, but as direct income (not through a third party) for those who otherwise would not be paid.
- The tithe was 10% of gross income, not net income. The tithe would be between 30% and 50% of net income. When Israel became a monarchy, another tithe went to the government, then two tenths. When the government tax hit 30%, there was a revolt.
- The tithe was the first 10% harvested, not 10% of what had been gathered. The part to give came off the top as an estimate. If you exceeded your estimate, you could thank God later. If the estimate was high or, for example, there was a fire, God still got His.
- A good way to spend a significant part of your income is to finance parties for the purpose of thanking God, to which friends, family, and the needy are invited.
- Estimate what to share and do it. Don’t wait until the storehouses are full; they never will be. (Matthew 6:24 – 34)
- Share your money as you see needs. God will not ask if you gave to the system, but if you helped those who needed it. (Matthew 25:31 – 46)