

## **Patriarchs And The Tithe**

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Employers today are seldom blessed with the loyalty and competence displayed time and again by the servants of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. At Abraham's command they helped rescue Lot and his household in a daring raid upon the rear guard of an army that had just defeated five Canaanite kings (Genesis 14:13-16). Isaac's servants ventured into agriculture (Genesis 26:1f) breaking a famine and arousing envy of among the Philistines. When God called Jacob back to Canaan, his servants quickly mobilized their families. They were three days on the road moving Jacob's flocks before Laban got the word and pursued them (Genesis 31:19f).

The patriarchs commanded their servants' respect by being honest and diligent in their business dealings; a day's work for a day's pay. Genesis explicitly reveals Jacob's strengths in this regard (29:7f;31:38f). Moreover, the patriarchs avoided the "Scrooge" syndrome through faithful administration of God's tithe (Genesis 14:20;28:22). When the patriarch's tradition regarding God's tithe was codified by Moses, the tithe was used to support the teaching ministry and tabernacle service of the priests and Levites and minister to the needs of the poor (Deuteronomy 14:27f).

Israel of old repeatedly abandoned the tithe, and came under a curse for "robbing God" (Malachi 3:7-10). When God's people repented of their tithe "theft", as in the revival under Hezekiah, the priests and Levites could report "Since the people began to bring the offerings (and tithes) into the house of the LORD, we have had enough to eat, and have left plenty: for the LORD hath blessed his people" (II Chronicles 31:10). The temple was repaired and God's people celebrated one of the greatest Passover feasts in the history of Israel. And, it is recorded that the Lord "healed the people" (II Chronicles 30::19).

Deacons were first appointed in Jerusalem to minister to widows abandoned because of the practice of Corban (Mark 7:11; Acts 6:1ff). When Paul raised money to help them, he urged saints in mission churches to tithe out of their meager means. "Now concerning the collection for the saints, . . . Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him" (I Corinthians 16:1-2). Sadly, Abraham's children (Galatians 3:6-9) have once again stopped teaching and practicing giving of tithes and offerings with disastrous results.

America is polluted with the blood of innocent babies as was Judah when Hezekiah began to reign. The tithe-funded charitable ministries of America's churches have been largely replaced by costly bureaucratic programs of public welfare. We are also heavily taxed to support secular government schools that have put our "nation at risk" to the frustration of godly teachers therein. Parents find it very hard to be "a cheerful giver" (II Corinthians 9:7) when gifts to Christian ministries have to be weighed against dictates of a family budget. God's people must repent and heed Paul's admonition regarding planned giving. Otherwise, we will continue to be seen as "stingy and scrappy." We will have little impact as salt and light in a world obsessed with death (Matthew 5:13-16).