

A word-search puzzle from the Bible Pages. Theme: The ‘tithe question’.

For a version with larger text on A4-printers, go to the address www.biblepages.net/rpa010.htm#32

54 words are hidden in this puzzle. They are printed across, or up or down, or diagonally, backwards or forwards, but always in a straight line, with no letters skipped. Each letter may form a part of more than one word. All letters do not belong to words, and there is no “hidden message”.



List of words (related to the “tithe question”):

AGRICULTURAL, ALTAR, ANCIENT, APOSTLES, CANAAN, CATHOLIC, CHANGE, COVENANT, CRAFTSMEN, DEUTERONOMY, ELDERS, FIRSTBORN, FIRSTLINGS, GENESIS, GOLD, HEBREWS, HOW, INCREASE, INHERITANCE, ISRAEL, JACOB, JOSEPHUS, LABOURED, LAND, LAW, LEVITES, LEVITICUS, MANY, MELCHIZEDEK, MORTAL, NEW, OFFERINGS, OLD, PAUL, PHARISEES, PREACHERS, PRIESTHOOD, PRODUCE, PROMISED, RECEIVED, REPLACED, SAINTS, SCRIPTURES, SERVED, SILVER, SUPPORTED, TEACHINGS, TEMPLE, TENT, TESTAMENT, TITHES, TRANSLATIONS, WAGES, WILDERNESS

(Regarding the choice of words in this puzzle, see pages 2 and 3 in this document.)

An article on the “tithe question”: www.biblepages.net/rma012.htm

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Regarding the choice of words in this puzzle

Below, the first occurrence of each word that appears in the word-maze on page 1, is highlighted in **bold** style.

The “tithing question” has for a long time been a subject of hot debate. Countless **preachers** live on **tithes**, and often they claim that even the **apostles**, including **Paul**, supposedly did that. The article which is mentioned at the end of this document has more on that matter (and makes the choice of words in this puzzle easier to understand), but here is a short summary.

Abraham’s “tithing”: Chapter 14 in the book of **Genesis** in the **Old Testament** records that Abraham helped the inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah and got their people and belongings back from certain warlords. It appears that it was of those recovered goods that he gave a tenth part to a person called **Melchizedek**. But, this had nothing to do with the Old **Covenant** or its tithing system; that covenant was made a long time after Abraham’s day and age.

Jacob and tithing: The book of Genesis records that the Lord **promised** the **land** of **Canaan** to Jacob who was Abraham’s grandson. The right to that land then went further to his descendants, as an **inheritance**. The **Scriptures** do not say that the Lord would have made some demands in connection with that promise, but for some reason, Jacob said that if the Lord was with him (and did this and that; see Genesis 28:20-21), then he would give the Lord a tenth of what the Lord gave to him. This obviously referred to a tenth part of the **agricultural produce** of the land which the Lord had just promised to give him. (We do not know why Jacob promised that, but perhaps it was like a lease fee for the land.)

Jacob whose other name was **Israel**, never gained control of that land, but later his descendants did. After the Exodus when they left Egypt, they made a covenant with the Lord by Mount Sinai (the Old Covenant). The arrangement which they gave their agreement to, stipulated that the Israelites were to give their **firstborn** sons to the Lord’s service, and also the **firstlings** of their cattle, and so on. But almost immediately, after the golden calf event, that deal was revised, so that the tribe of Levi **replaced** the Israelites’ firstborn sons, and **served** the Lord. (The tribe of Levi consisted of the descendants of Levi, one Jacob’s twelve sons. They were called “**Levites**”.) When the Israelites in the days of Joshua entered the Promised Land which then was divided between the tribes of Israel, the tribe of Levi **received** much less agricultural land than what the other tribes did – they were given only smaller parcels around towns and no farms or fields in the countryside. This is why the Levites were to a certain degree **supported** by the other tribes who shared a part of their agricultural produce with them. (The Levites’ role is described in the Bible in the books of **Leviticus**, Numbers and **Deuteronomy**.)

While those **ancient** Israelites were in the **wilderness** (the 40-year desert sojourn after the covenant-making by Mount Sinai but before the entry into the Promised Land), they did not tithe. For instance the **Tent** or “tabernacle” (the portable sanctuary) was built by the help of voluntary gifts and work. The reason why they did not tithe, was that they had not yet come to the Promised Land. In the desert, they ate manna (for free) and neither sowed nor harvested. (Again, the tithing was only on the Promised Land’s agricultural produce. Even the “**increase**” or reproduction of cattle in that land was tithed, in a certain special way. A note: **Craftsmen** and wage-workers did not tithe.)

Tithing started when Jacob’s descendants crossed the river Jordan and entered the Promised Land, and began to eat of the produce of that land (the land of Canaan, which the Lord had promised to Jacob).

How many tithes did the Old Covenant have? Some **Pharisees**, among them **Josephus**, claimed that

there were three tithes. Those claims have then affected even **translations** of the Bible. The meaning of the Hebrew text in the passages in question is not easy to decipher, but we know this: It was one tenth that Jacob vowed to give to the Lord.

But, it is not important to know how many tithes the Old Covenant had. Around 2000 years ago, when the Lord Jesus made his Sacrifice, the **New Covenant** was launched and the Old Covenant came to its end. Some time after this, the **temple** in Jerusalem was destroyed, and the role of the Levite **priesthood** came to its end even in that way. The New Covenant does not have any **mortal** priesthood. The saints had only one priest – the resurrected Jesus. (Here, the word “saints” refers to those who received the Holy Spirit in the first century.)

But, who invented the concept of exacting a tithe on **wages**? The answer is that it was the **Catholic Church** who invented that practice, in the 900s or so. In our day, the Catholic Church no longer demands a tithe, but many other churches and churchmen do, and they have quoted various scriptures and produced various kinds of **teachings** in defence of that originally Catholic invention. Even translations of the Bible have been written so that they might seem to be in agreement with those teachings.

Some preachers have quoted the words “the **silver** is mine and the **gold** is mine” in Haggai 2:8. But, that passage does not refer to money or even to gold and silver in general but only to certain items of temple-silver and temple-gold which Nebuchadnezzar’s troops had taken to Babylon but which later were returned to Jerusalem.

The apostle Paul wrote, in the epistle to the Jewish believers (“**Hebrews**”), “for the priesthood being changed, there takes place of necessity a **change of law** also”. That was not “changes to an existing law”, but a change *of* law. That is: The Old Covenant came to its end. The New Covenant is a totally new, separate and different covenant. The Old Covenant had a mortal priesthood, but the New Covenant does not. Again, the saints had only one priest – the resurrected Jesus.

The **elders** in the saints’ fellowships were not priests, and they were not paid. It is true that in one letter, the apostle Paul used the word “altar”, but that was a symbolic expression. Referring to those elders (who served the *New Covenant’s* “Tent” or “House of God” which consisted of the saints in whom God dwelled through his Holy Spirit), Paul noted, “we have an altar of which those who serve the tent have no right to eat”. He was comparing the two covenants, old and new. The former had mortal priests who had a right to eat certain parts of the animals and other things that were by the altar offered as sacrifices in the “Tent” (the sanctuary), later in the Temple. In contrast to that, the New Covenant does not have any mortal priesthood. (Again, the “tent” or “house of God” which Paul referred to, Hebrews 13:10, consisted of the saints in whom God dwelled through his Spirit.)

Several times, the apostle Paul reminded the believers of the fact that he had always **laboured**, working with his own hands, and supported himself. And again, the elders in the saints’ fellowships were not paid.

What about “**offerings**”? Well, the Old Covenant had such things – “offering” is the same as sacrifice. But, when it comes to the New Covenant, Jesus’ Sacrifice covered all. The New Covenant has no sacrifices in addition to that.

An article on “tithes and offerings”: www.biblepages.net/rma012.htm

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