

At His Place

Deuteronomy 12:4-7

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I. At His Place v. 4-5

- a. Not Act v.4
 - i. Act- to **prepare and complete** a sacrifice
 - ii. Toward the Lord your God
- b. Seek- to **make supplication**
 - i. At the Place
 - 1. God Chose
 - a. From all you Tribes
 - ii. To Establish
 - 1. His Name
 - a. The place of the Lord's name, then, is his "palace," that is, the tabernacle or temple in which he resides among his people. Obviously, in line with human covenant analogy this could be only one place at a time, a place determined solely at the king's discretion.
 - 2. For His Dwelling
 - a. "to [make] dwell," are used throughout Deuteronomy in conjunction with "the place that YHWH your God will choose." The expression "to put his name there" is an attempt to clarify the actual relationship between God and his chosen sanctuary. God does not dwell literally in the sanctuary, but in heaven. In this context, the phrase "you shall seek" (תִּדְרְשׁוּ) means "to make pilgrimage"
 - b. The expression occurs nowhere else in the Hex., though the idea that the place of sacrifice is to be appointed by God, not by man, agrees with Ex. 20:24b. Of course the place tacitly designated by the expression is Jerusalem, which is described similarly in passages of Kings due to the as the city which Jehovah has "chosen," 1 K. 8:44, 48 (cf. v. 16) 11:13, 32, 36, 14:21, 2 K. 21:7, 23:27
 - iii. There You Shall COME

II. Bring to the Place v. 6

- a. Bring - As the beginning of Leviticus makes clear, all of these were gifts (*qorbān*), that is, presentations made to the Lord to effect and maintain peaceful fellowship with him (Lev 1:2; 2:1; 3:1; 4:23; 7:13–16, 29, 38). The tithe in particular should be viewed as tribute paid to the sovereign by his grateful and dependent servant (cf. Lev 27:30–32; Num 18:26, 28; Deut 14:23–25, 28).
- i. Burnt Offering those of a “pleasing odor an offering of ascent” or “an ascending offering”
 1. The offerings to be presented to YHWH are listed. The translation of עלות as “burnt offerings” (“holocausts”) comes from the Greek ὀλοκαυτώω, “to make a burnt offering.” The Hebrew עלה means “that which goes up”—the flesh of the burnt offering “goes up” in smoke, with nothing remaining as food for the priests or other worshipers.
 2. The burnt offering is discussed first because it was entirely consumed on the altar (and thus not eaten by anyone). After it follows the sacrifices distributed to the officiants (Lv 6:17, 25, 29; 7:1, 6). The *‘ôlâ* sacrifice was one which was entirely burnt on the altar and so its smoke—or better, its scent—was directed toward the heavenly realm, wherein the deity was thought to have “inhaled.”
 3. Another level of meaning present in the *‘ôlâ* is that of a gift to the deity. Of course the gift is not just any type of gift but a gift that the deity consumes, a “soothing odor.” The consumable gift was thought to be in many respects the food of the deity. Just as the temple was conceived to be the deity’s home, complete with furniture and other appurtenances, so this divine home had its hearth, the altar. The daily sacrifices for the deity are described in Exod 29:38–42 (Num 28:3–8 and Ezek 46:13–15). These sacrifices took place both in the morning and the evening and consisted of the *‘ôlâ* (lamb) along with a cereal and drink offering.
 - ii. Sacrifices
 1. the “sacrifice” specially intended in such cases by זבחים being doubtless the thank-offering (שלמים)
 - iii. Tithes- Words deriving from Old English for “tenth,” and representing a charge upon produce or labor levied for the maintenance mainly of religious activities. The custom is very ancient (Abraham paid tithe of spoil to Melchizedek, Gn 14:20; cf. 28:22),
 1. The “tithes” (מעשרות) refer to the payment of “a tenth” of the farmer’s agricultural produce and livestock, namely the “firstfruits” presented in the Festival of Weeks (cf. 26:4).
 2. Tithe - The people are instructed to tithe the following resources: seed, grain, wine, oil, and firstlings of herds and flocks (Deut 14:22–23). They are to consume the tithes of grain, wine, oil, and firstlings as a sacrificial meal in a place chosen by God. Since the

discovery of the Book of the Law generated a reformation of Israelite worship on the part of Josiah, and since one of Josiah's major reforms was the centralization of worship in Jerusalem, it appears certain that he understood the place chosen by God for the bringing of the tithes to be Jerusalem.

3. Lev 27:30–33 states that tithes come from the seed of the land, the fruit of the trees, and every tenth animal of the herds and flocks. The owner is simply to take every tenth animal that passes under the herdsman's staff without any inquiry as to whether it is a good animal or a bad animal, and he is not to exchange it for another. But if he exchanges it for another animal, both it and the animal for which he exchanged it become part of the tithe.
4. Probably some motive of propitiation (Dt 14:23), even of payment, underlay the original custom. Proverbs 3:9 suggests that such gifts honor God (cf. Hebrews 7:4, 7). Both the sage and the prophet Malachi (Prv 3:10; Mal 3:8–10), who scathingly declare the withholding of tithes to be "robbing God," promised full barns and vats, opened windows of heaven, outpoured blessing and deliverance from locusts, in return for faithful tithing. In the early tithe-feasts, thanksgiving for God's gifts would seem appropriate (cf Gn 28:22), though not emphasized. Maintenance of the service of God remained the chief purpose of tithing, along with a wide charity. (For the secular tithe to maintain the king, see 1 Sm 8:15–17; perhaps Am 7:1).
5. Apart from recalling Melchizedek's tithe (Heb 7), tithing is mentioned in the NT only critically. In Matthew 23:23 and Luke 11:42 Jesus instances the meticulous payment of tithes of three small garden herbs, while neglecting three "weightier matters of the Law," namely, justice, mercy, and faith, as an example of the want of moral proportion, the lack of a right sense of priorities, which marked Pharisaism. The explicit rule, precisely observed, is so much easier and self-satisfying than the moral sensitivity which should govern all relations with others and with God. In Luke 18:12 the Pharisee, congratulating himself in prayer upon his superior virtues
6. Jesus recommended payment of the temple tax without coercion (Mt 17:24–27), and especially praised the widow who gave not a tenth but her whole livelihood, though it made no appreciable difference to the temple's income (Lk 21:1–4). He also commanded that "those who proclaim the gospel should get their living by the gospel" (1 Cor 9:14, note 8–13), for the gospel's "laborer deserves his food" (Mt 10:10; Gal 6:6). Yet nowhere in the NT is the tithing rule urged for this purpose or for charity.

Instead, giving must be spontaneous, the amount governed by what a man has (2 Cor 8:1–15).

7. According to Deuteronomy (12:2–7, 17–19; 14:22–29) the centralization of worship meant that the tithe was consumed annually at the sanctuary as a religious feast shared by priests and Levites. Corn, wine, oil, and flocks were tithed. If distance required, the value of the tithe could be carried and expended on arrival. Every third year, the Levites, aliens, fatherless, and widows were given the whole tithe in charity (cf Dt 26:12).
 8. According to Numbers 18:21–32 all tithe in Israel is given to the Levites forever in return for sanctuary service and in place of other inheritance in the land. A tithe of this tithe became a “heave offering” (offered toward, but not consumed upon, the altar) for the priests. In Leviticus 27:30–32 the holiness of the tithe is stressed, and herd and flock especially included
- iv. Contributions of your Hand - from your hand what your hand contributes voluntarily
1. The “contribution of your hands” is sometimes rendered as a “heave offering” (תרומה) or what is set apart in the sense of being designated as a special offering (J. Milgrom, “Heave Offering,” It represented something heaved or raised up from the larger mass and set apart as an offering to God, which was normally the perquisite of the priests
 2. *the contribution (heave-offering) of your hand*, “what the hand lifts off (תָּרַם) from the produce of the soil, Nu. 15:19”, as a *contribution* to the service of the Deity. The usage of the term makes it probable that the reference is partly to the first-fruits, a regular and ancient offering (Ex. 23:16, 19 Dt. 26:2; cf. Nu. 18:12 in P), which would otherwise not be alluded to in the enumeration, partly to other voluntary offerings, taken from the produce of the soil, such as were presented at the three annual pilgrimages (see 16:10f, 14, 16b–17).
- v. Votive Offerings - any kind of votive offerings or promised gifts
1. The “votive offerings” (נדריים) were gifts to God that had been promised in vows made on specific occasions such as childbirth or in time of battle
- vi. Freewill Offering- The “freewill offerings” (נדבות) were gifts presented from a spontaneous impulse without prior obligation or commitment
1. This noun denotes that which is offered voluntarily The noun *nēdābâ* represents voluntary contributions (the objects of *nādab*) toward the building of the tabernacle and temple. In Ex 36 the people volunteered so much that Moses asked them to stop giving! Furthermore, this noun represents sacrifice made “out of devotion, not out of precept or promise

2. He prescribes and supervises the details of the entire proceeding, acting as host of the fellowship dinner. The same beasts are appropriate (although birds are excepted) as in the case of burnt offerings, but both male and female animals (even those with minor blemishes) are also allowed (Lev 22:23). The ritual embraces the same steps as does the burnt offering. In the *nēdābâ* part of the animal (all fat around the intestines, kidneys, and liver, as well as the sheep's tail) are to be burnt on the altar.
- vii. Firstborn of your Herd and Flock
 1. The firstlings of your herd and your sheep" are the firstborn males of the livestock, including oxen, sheep, and goats

III. Rejoice at the Place v. 7

- a. Shall Eat - The statement "you shall eat there" refers to offerings listed in v 6. The phrase "before YHWH your God" (לפני יהוה אלהיכם) suggests a specific place that is associated with God's presence in formal worship
 - i. Before the Lord
- b. Rejoice in all your Understandings.
 - i. Rejoice - to **be merry**, but not totally distinguished in meaning from 1, to rejoice
 1. To "rejoice" means to celebrate in assembled worship with a sacrificial meal, together with "your households
 2. At the three great annual festivals in ancient Israel there was always a communion meal or sacrificial feast "before YHWH" (i.e., in God's presence). It is repeatedly stressed in Deuteronomy that these occasions were times of joy and rejoicing during which the worshipers offered their thanksgiving to God for his blessings. Deuteronomy thus preserves a joyous note in worship that is lacking in the so-called Priestly tradition within the Pentateuch, and sadly absent in many formal worship services in churches and synagogues today
 - ii. Understandings – acquisitions
 1. Which the Lord God has blessed you

