

October 11-17, 2021

## Doctrine and Covenants 115–120

“HIS SACRIFICE SHALL BE MORE SACRED UNTO ME THAN HIS INCREASE”

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**Summary:** *Doctrine and Covenants 115. Revelation given through Joseph Smith the Prophet, at Far West, Missouri, April 26, 1838, making known the will of God concerning the building up of that place and of the Lord’s house. This revelation is addressed to the presiding officers and the members of the Church. 1–4, The Lord names His church The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints; 5–6, Zion and her stakes are places of defense and refuge for the Saints; 7–16, The Saints are commanded to build a house of the Lord at Far West; 17–19, Joseph Smith holds the keys of the kingdom of God on earth.*

*Doctrine and Covenants 116. Revelation given to Joseph Smith the Prophet, near Wight’s Ferry, at a place called Spring Hill, Daviess County, Missouri, May 19, 1838.*

*Doctrine and Covenants 117. Revelation given through Joseph Smith the Prophet, at Far West, Missouri, July 8, 1838, concerning the immediate duties of William Marks, Newel K. Whitney, and Oliver Granger. 1–9, The Lord’s servants should not covet temporal things, for “what is property unto the Lord?”; 10–16, They are to forsake littleness of soul, and their sacrifices will be sacred unto the Lord.*

*Doctrine and Covenants 118. Revelation given through Joseph Smith the Prophet, at Far West, Missouri, July 8, 1838, in response to the supplication, “Show us thy will, O Lord, concerning the Twelve.” 1–3, The Lord will provide for the families of the Twelve; 4–6, Vacancies in the Twelve are filled.*

*Doctrine and Covenants 119. Revelation given through Joseph Smith the Prophet, at Far West, Missouri, July 8, 1838, in answer to his supplication: “O Lord! Show unto thy servants how much thou requirest of the properties of thy people for a tithing.” The law of tithing, as understood today, had not been given to the Church previous to this revelation. The term tithing in the prayer just quoted and in previous revelations (64:23; 85:3; 97:11) had meant not just one-tenth, but all free-will offerings, or contributions, to the Church funds. The Lord had previously given to the Church the law of consecration and stewardship of property, which members (chiefly the leading elders) entered into by a covenant that was to be everlasting. Because of failure on the part of many to abide by this covenant, the Lord withdrew it for a time and gave instead the law of tithing to the whole Church. The Prophet asked the Lord how much of their property He required for sacred purposes. The answer was this revelation. 1–5, The Saints are to pay their surplus property and then give, as tithing, one-tenth of their interest annually; 6–7, Such a course will sanctify the land of Zion.*

*Doctrine and Covenants 120. Revelation given through Joseph Smith the Prophet, at Far West, Missouri, July 8, 1838, making known the disposition of the properties tithed as named in the preceding revelation, section 119.*

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### Supplemental Jewish and Holy Land Insights

immediately bring to my mind a connection to the Temple. Some of the saving ordinances in the Temple include

### What can “refuge” mean to me

The term “Stakes,”  
or “Cities of  
Refuge,”

immersions for the dead who did not have or take an opportunity to do so on earth. In these latter days there will be so much need for these proxy ordinances, that additional places will be designated for them. “And after this time, your baptisms for the dead, by those who are scattered abroad, are not acceptable (sufficient)

unto me, saith the Lord. For it is ordained that in Zion, and in her stakes, and in Jerusalem, those places which I have appointed for refuge, shall be the places for your baptisms for your dead.” (**Doctrine and Covenants 124:35-36**) Anciently, cities of refuge were “mercy centers” available for those accused of murder or a killing, until a proper trial could be held. The Talmud (oral interpretations of Biblical Law) states that requirements to build roads to the cities of refuge marked by signposts saying “Refuge,” that had to be twice the regulation width, smooth and even, in order that fugitives were unhindered as possible to arrive for refuge. (**Talmud, Deut. 180; Tosefta 3:5 (or 2:5); Makkot 10b; Bava Batra 100b**) Rabbinical authorities argued that if the perpetrator had died before reaching a city of refuge, their body still had to be taken there, and, if they had died before the high priest had, then their body had to be buried at the city of refuge until the high priest deceased. (**Talmud, Makkot 11b**) I see the implications of proxy work for the dead in this instance.

### **What are ancient and Holy Land references of “Spring Hill?”**

Spring Hill is named by the Lord Adam-ondi-Ahman, because, said he, it is the place where Adam shall come to visit his people, or the Ancient of Days shall sit, as spoken of by Daniel the prophet.” (**Doctrine and Covenants 116**) There is a site called “Tel Abib” (tel [hill] – Abib [spring]), or “spring hill” by the Kebar or Chebar Canal (River) a setting of several important scenes of the Book of Ezekiel. Some older biblical commentaries it with the Khabur (Habor) River mentioned in (**1 Chronicles 5:26**) near Nippur in today’s Iraq. “And the hand of the Lord was there upon me; and he said unto me, Arise, go forth into the plain, and I will there talk with thee. Then I arose, and went forth

into the plain: and, behold, the glory of the Lord stood there, as the glory which I saw by the river of Chebar: and I fell on my face. Then the spirit entered into me, and set me upon my feet, and spake with me, and said unto me, Go, shut thyself within thine house.” (**Ezekiel 3:22-24**) When Theodor Herzl (1860-1904) envisioned the return of the Land and State of Israel, he wrote a novel, “Alt Neu Land” including a city named “Alt Neu Stadt,” (Old New City). Its name was changed the following year to ‘Tel Aviv’, after the biblical name Tel Abib, by Nahum Sokolow (1859-1936) as the title for the Hebrew translation of Herzl’s 1902 novel. Tel is a “old” (archaeological) site, Aviv is spring, a “new” season! The Prophet Joseph Smith named Spring Hill in Missouri as a temple site where old covenants were restored to new.

### **How are “Tithes” viewed by the Jews?**

“The tithes served the purpose of supporting the priest and Levite who did not have any ancestral holdings of land and were occupied with the Temple service and other ritual duties, of supporting the poor, and of strengthening the position of Jerusalem in the consciousness of all the people of Israel. Basing themselves on the close similarity in sound between the words *te aser* (give tithes) and *tit’asher* (become rich), Rabbi Johanan said: ‘Give tithes so that you will become rich,’ and Rabbi Akiva added that, ‘tithes are a fence which guards one’s riches.’ After the exile from Erez (land of) Israel, pious people became accustomed to give one-tenth of their earnings to charity, although this ‘tithe’ is of comparatively modern origin.” “It is still customary among Orthodox Jews to set aside tithes from all produce of the Land of Israel, and the produce marketed by Tnuva, the large agricultural collective, is

tithed at source before it is sold. The *terumah* part is either destroyed or used as fodder for animals owned by priests; because they are ritually unclean, the *kohanim* themselves cannot eat it. The other tithes are distributed to the poor and needy.” (Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.)

### Where did the principle of “Tithes” originate?

“Thou shalt truly tithe all the increase (income) of thy seed, that the field bringeth forth year by year.” (Deuteronomy 14:22) The tithes were used to take care of the Jerusalem Temple, the House of the Lord. After it was destroyed, a memory of the last temple was perpetuated and a hope for its return was and still is constantly repeated. The biblical principle of tithes, however, has diminished and now includes offerings for the needy. “The obligation to help the poor and the needy and to give them gifts is stated many times in the Bible and was considered by the rabbis of all ages to be one of the cardinal *mitzvot* [good deed or commandment] of Judaism.” “In the Bible there are several laws which are in effect a sort of tax for the benefit of the poor. Among these are *leket*, *shikhhah* and *pe’ah*, according to which the farmer could not pick up the ears of corn that had fallen during the harvest, or go back for forgotten sheaves or reap into the corners of the field. All these he was required to leave for the poor. Every third year the farmer was also required to put aside a special tithe for the needy. The institution of the Sabbatical Year and Jubilee was in order ‘that the poor of your people may eat’ as well as to cancel debts. The *Torah* also insists that the needy be remembered when the Festivals are celebrated, e.g., ‘You shall rejoice before the Lord your God, with your son and daughter, your male and female slave, the Levite in your communities, and the stranger, the fatherless and the widow in

your midst.’ The Bible expects Israel to be aware of the needs of the poor and the stranger because Israel itself had experienced this situation in Egypt.” “Although the idea of charity and almsgiving is spread throughout the whole of the Bible, there is no special term for it. The rabbis of the *Talmud*, however, adopted the word (*zedakah*) for charity and it is used (but not exclusively so) throughout rabbinic literature in the sense of helping the needy by gifts. The word has since passed into popular usage and is almost exclusively used for charity. The term *hesed* (loving-kindness), which is used widely in the Bible, has taken on the meaning of physical aid, or lending money without interest.” (Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.)

### What affects my attitude of giving?

“Everybody is obliged to give charity; even one who himself is dependent on charity should give to those less fortunate than himself. The court can compel one who refuses to give charity—or donates less than his means allow—to give according to the court's assessment.” “To give a tenth of one's wealth to charity is considered to be a ‘middling’ virtue, to give a 20th or less is to be “mean;” but the rabbis decided that one should not give more than a fifth lest he become impoverished himself and dependent on charity. “The rabbis were especially concerned about the manner in which alms are to be dispensed. The prime consideration is that nothing be done that might shame the recipient. About one pious man it was related that if he met a man of good family who had become impoverished he would say, ‘I have heard that a legacy has been left to you in such a place; take this money in advance and pay me back later.’ When the man accepted it he then said to him, ‘It is a gift.’ “Maimonides (1138-1204) lists eight ways of giving *zedakah* which are progressively more virtuous: to give: (1) but sadly; (2) less than is fitting, but in

good humor; (3) only after having been asked to; (4) before being asked; (5) in such a manner that the donor does not know who the recipient is, (6) in such a manner that the recipient does not know who the donor is; and (7) in such a way that neither the donor nor the recipient knows the identity of the other.” “The highest form of charity is not to give alms but to help the poor to rehabilitate themselves by lending them money, taking them into partnership, employing them, or giving them work, for in this way the purpose is achieved without any loss of self-respect at all. “This last way of helping the poor is known as *gemilut hasadim*, ‘dispensing kindness.’ This term also includes aiding people who need help and encouragement and includes such matters as visiting the sick and looking after them and inviting needy guests to eat at your home. One of the greatest acts of charity is to provide for orphans.” (Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.)

### **How can I view tithes and offerings?**

In modern times, the principle of tithing has been modified to reflect the charity and alms given. It is a general Jewish understanding that three percent of one’s income should be used for charitable purposes. I have found a few who prefer the tithing amount to be ten percent. In the Islamic religion, charity is one of the basic five pillars or tenants of faith. The charitable contribution is generally considered to be two percent. Members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints are taught; “And after that, those who have thus been tithed shall pay one-tenth of all their interest (income) annually; and this shall be a standing law unto them forever, for my holy priesthood, saith the Lord.” (Doctrine and Covenants 119:4) Realizing that temple covenants include, “everything with which the Lord has blessed us,” makes tithing rather uncomplicated!