

Numbers 18:12

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

All the best of the oil, and all the best of the wine, and of the wheat, the firstfruits of them which they shall offer unto the LORD, them have I given thee.

Analysis

All the best of the oil, and all the best of the wine, and of the wheat, the firstfruits of them which they shall offer unto the LORD, them have I given thee. God allocated agricultural firstfruits to priestly support—chelev (חֶלֶב, "the best," literally "fat") indicating premium quality. The three products—oil, wine, and wheat—represented the land's primary agricultural produce in ancient Israel, symbolizing comprehensive provision from God's bounty.

Reishit (רֵאשִׁית, "firstfruits") means the initial, choicest portion of harvest. Israel was to bring the best of the firstfruits—double emphasis on quality and priority. God deserved first and finest, not leftovers. The phrase "I have given thee" (lekha netattim, לָךְ נָתַתִּים) stresses divine bestowal—priests didn't earn these gifts but received them by God's gracious appointment.

This principle established that God's servants deserve excellent provision, not minimal sustenance. Churches that give God and His ministers leftovers violate this principle. The firstfruits concept also appears in New Testament ecclesiology—Christ is the firstfruits of resurrection (1 Corinthians 15:20), and believers are firstfruits of His creatures (James 1:18), consecrated to God in excellence.

Historical Context

Firstfruits offerings occurred at harvest festivals—Pentecost (wheat), and autumn ingathering (oil and wine from late summer harvest). Deuteronomy 18:4 reiterates this provision. Ancient Israelite agriculture centered on these three products: grain for bread, grapes for wine, olives for oil. Together they represented complete sustenance—carbohydrates, drink, and fat for cooking and lighting. Archaeological discoveries show olive presses and wine vats throughout ancient Israel, confirming these crops' centrality. The custom of bringing firstfruits continued in Second Temple Judaism and influenced Christian harvest thanksgiving traditions.

Related Passages

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

Study Questions

1. Do you give God and His work your firstfruits—the best of your time, talent, and treasure—or leftovers?
2. How does the principle of giving God the 'best' challenge cultural tendencies toward minimalism in supporting ministry?
3. What does it mean to treat your life as 'firstfruits' consecrated to God in excellence rather than mediocrity?

Interlinear Text

כָּל הַלֶּבֶת יֶזֶה וְכָל הַלֶּבֶת וְשֵׁן וְדָגָן
H3605 All the best of the oil H3605 All the best of the wine and of the wheat
H2459 H3323 H2459 H8492 H1715

רֵאשִׁיתוֹ אֲשֶׁר יִתְּנוּ לַיהוָה לֶבָן
H7225 H834 of them which they shall offer unto the LORD H0

נְתָתִים:

of them which they shall offer

H5414

Additional Cross-References

Exodus 23:19 (References Lord): The first of the firstfruits of thy land thou shalt bring into the house of the LORD thy God. Thou shalt not seethe a kid in his mother's milk.

Deuteronomy 18:4 (Parallel theme): The firstfruit also of thy corn, of thy wine, and of thine oil, and the first of the fleece of thy sheep, shalt thou give him.

Exodus 34:26 (References Lord): The first of the firstfruits of thy land thou shalt bring unto the house of the LORD thy God. Thou shalt not seethe a kid in his mother's milk.