

Deuteronomy

Lesson 15

Chapter 24

A. Laws for the Marriage of a Wife

1. The Case of a Defiled Wife

Moses addresses the summary for the laws for the divorce of a wife. He begins with the case of a defiled wife. Chapter 24, verse 1. *"When a man takes a wife and marries her, and it happens that she finds no favor in his eyes because he has found some indecency in her, and he writes her a certificate of divorce and puts it in her hand and sends her out from his house, ² and she leaves his house and goes and becomes another man's wife, ³ and if the latter husband turns against her and writes her a certificate of divorce and puts it in her hand and sends her out of his house, or if the latter husband dies who took her to be his wife, ⁴ then her former husband who sent her away is not allowed to take her again to be his wife, since she has been defiled; for that is an abomination before the LORD, and you shall not bring sin on the land which the LORD your God gives you as an inheritance."* (24:1-4).

The whole point of this law is to clarify that couples who divorce and joined in another failed marriage cannot marry each other again. It is an abomination.

2. The Case of a New Wife

Now for the case of a new wife. Verse 5. *"When a man takes a new wife, he shall not go out with the army nor be charged with any duty; he shall be free at home one year and shall give happiness to his wife whom he has taken."* (24:5).

Back in chapter 20, we discovered that when the Nation of Israel went out to fight, the army should be surveyed first to send certain men home. In chapter 20, verse 7, the instruction said, *"And who is the man that is engaged to a woman and has not married her? Let him depart and return to his house, otherwise he might die in the battle and another man would marry her."* (20:5-7).

The same is being repeated here with a little more clarification. The man is to do nothing in the first year of marriage but be with the new wife and establish a healthy and robust family.

B. Laws for the Business Among the Nation

1. Forbidden Collateral

Moses moves on to summarize the laws for the business among the nation. He begins with the forbidden collateral. Verse 6. *"No one shall take a handmill or an upper millstone in pledge, for he would be taking a life in pledge."* (24:6).

The millstone was essential to the life of a family. The wives used it to grind the different grain seeds into flour. One person used the hand-mill. The seed was placed in a bowl, and the mill was used to grind the contents into flour. Two women used an upper millstone. It was a larger operation. The stone had a handle attached to the top. One woman would turn the stone with the handle, and the other woman would feed seeds down under one side and scoop away the flour on the other side. Good millstones were very valuable. Every family needed one. With time, the stones wore down, broke, and needed to be replaced. Good millstones would be purchased. As such, they could be used as collateral for a loan because they could be sold quickly if needed. However, if used as collateral, the family could not grind flour for bread needed every day.

2. Forbidden Trafficking

Now for the summary of forbidden trafficking. Verse 7. *"If a man is caught kidnapping any of his countrymen of the sons of Israel, and he deals with him violently or sells him, then that thief shall die; so you shall purge the evil from among you."* (24:7).

Just because the Nation of Israel's people were the chosen nation of the LORD does not mean that there were not bad apples in the bunch. Every nation has desperate men who will do desperate

things in desperate situations. The kidnapping of humans is often a perverted answer for desperate people. It is strictly forbidden and bring the death penalty.

3. Forbidden Infection

Covered heavily in the book of Leviticus, Moses quickly summarizes the forbidden infection. Verse 8. *“Be careful against an infection of leprosy, that you diligently observe and do according to all that the Levitical priests teach you; as I have commanded them, so you shall be careful to do. ⁹ Remember what the LORD your God did to Miriam on the way as you came out of Egypt.”* (24:8-9).

The full law on leprosy is found in Leviticus chapters 13 and 14. There, the priests were instructed how to administer the laws and practices when leprosy occurred. Here, Moses simply reminds the people where to find those instructions. They were also reminded of why the LORD gave Miriam, Moses' sister, leprosy. It was because she disagreed with a personal decision Moses made.

4. Forbidden Pledge

Here Moses summarized the forbidden pledge for a loan. Verse 10. *“When you make your neighbor a loan of any sort, you shall not enter his house to take his pledge. ¹¹ You shall remain outside, and the man to whom you make the loan shall bring the pledge out to you. ¹² If he is a poor man, you shall not sleep with his pledge. ¹³ When the sun goes down you shall surely return the pledge to him, that he may sleep in his cloak and bless you; and it will be righteousness for you before the LORD your God.”* (24:10-13).

The millstone could not be used as a pledge, as we learned in verse 6 above. However, the home could contain many other items that could be used as a pledge or collateral on a loan. The warning here is that the lender cannot enter the house to take the pledge. The pledge had to be delivered by the borrower. Then Moses addresses the poor man. The most valuable thing a poor man would own was his cloak with which he wore during the day and covered himself with at night. If a poor man offers his cloak as collateral for a loan, it must be returned every night to protect him from the cold.

5. Forbidden Wages

The forbidden wages. Verse 14. *“You shall not oppress a hired servant who is poor and needy, whether he is one of your countrymen or one of your aliens who is in your land in your towns. ¹⁵ You shall give him his wages on his day before the sun sets, for he is poor and sets his heart on it; so that he will not cry against you to the LORD and it become sin in you.”* (24:14-15).

In our world today, the poor who work are paid like the rich, most often two weeks after the work is completed. But in the Nation of Israel, the law was different. The worker was to be paid each day at the end of the day for what he earned that day. He was not to return home empty-handed. He needed that money for food supplies for his family that day in the market.

6. Forbidden Punishment

The forbidden punishment. Verse 16. *“Fathers shall not be put to death for their sons, nor shall sons be put to death for their fathers; everyone shall be put to death for his own sin.”* (24:16).

Focus on the last part of the verse, “*everyone shall be put to death for his own sin.*” We cannot help but think this short phrase has only earthly importance but also eternal importance. All humans will die someday. Some will be put to physical death because of their personal sin, but that does not mean they will experience eternal death away from the presence of the LORD. The LORD forbids the punishment of anyone for the sins of another.

7. Forbidden Corruption

The forbidden corruption. Verse 17. *“You shall not pervert the justice due an alien or an orphan, nor take a widow’s garment in pledge. ¹⁸ But you shall remember that you were a slave in Egypt, and that the LORD your God redeemed you from there; therefore, I am commanding you to do this thing.”* (24:17-18).

When Moses uses the words “*justice due*,” he does not mean punishment; he means equality on the same plain as those of the Nation of Israel. Back in chapter 1, Moses said, “*Then I charged your judges at that time, saying, Hear the cases between your fellow countrymen, and judge righteously between a man and his fellow countryman, or the alien who is with him.*”^{17a} *You shall not show partiality in judgment; you shall hear the small and the great alike.*” (1:16-17a).

In chapter 10, Moses said, “*He executes justice for the orphan and the widow, and shows His love for the alien by giving him food and clothing.*”¹⁹ *So show your love for the alien, for you were aliens in the land of Egypt.*” (10:18-19).

Most importantly, in Leviticus 24, the LORD says, “*There shall be one standard for you; it shall be for the stranger as well as the native, for I am the LORD your God.*” (Leviticus 24:22).

All living in the Promised Land are to be treated the same. In addition, the widow can never offer her garments as pledges on loans. It is forbidden.

8. Forbidden Gathering

a) From the Field

The forbidden gathering, first from the field. Verse 19. “*When you reap your harvest in your field and have forgotten a sheaf in the field, you shall not go back to get it; it shall be for the alien, for the orphan, and for the widow, in order that the LORD your God may bless you in all the work of your hands.*”²⁰ *When you beat your olive tree, you shall not go over the boughs again; it shall be for the alien, for the orphan, and for the widow.*” (24:19-20).

Simply, the owners were always to leave something for the needy to gather.

b) From the Vineyard

Second, from the vineyard. Verse 21. “*When you gather the grapes of your vineyard, you shall not go over it again; it shall be for the alien, for the orphan, and for the widow.*”²² *You shall remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt; therefore, I am commanding you to do this thing.*” (24:21-22).

Once again, the owners were always to leave something for those in need.

Chapter 25

9. Forbidden Lashes

For the first time in the Scripture, we come to the forbidden lashes. Chapter 25, verse 1. “*If there is a dispute between men and they go to court, and the judges decide their case, and they justify the righteous and condemn the wicked,*”² *then it shall be if the wicked man deserves to be beaten, the judge shall then make him lie down and be beaten in his presence with the number of stripes according to his guilt.*”³ *He may beat him forty times but no more, so that he does not beat him with many more stripes than these and your brother is not degraded in your eyes.*” (25:1-3).

Forty lashes with a whip were all that the law permitted for the punishment on a wicked man. However, verse 3 struck fear among those who would beat the man. “*He may beat him forty times but no more, so that he does not beat him with many more stripes than these and your brother is not degraded in your eyes.*” Hence the custom was to developed in Israel to only strike a wicked man thirty-nine times just in case they accidentally hit him forty-one times and incur the wrath of the LORD. Jesus was stuck thirty-nine times. Paul also (2 Corinthians 11:24).

10. Forbidden Muzzle

Moses summarizes another new law with the forbidden muzzle in verse 4. “*You shall not muzzle the ox while he is threshing.*” (25:4).

The word muzzle means *to stop the mouth*. The ox was used for threshing the grain. It was a process where the ox would drag a heavy log over the grain spread out on the threshing floor. The log would break the grains and allow the seed to fall out. However, the ox would become hungry and reach down to eat some of the grain before moving on to pull the log again. Why? The food found in the grain seeds was the wages for the ox for doing the work. This was perfectly fine and

was the law. In 1st Corinthians 9:9 and 1st Timothy 5:18, Paul uses the same reference to state that the worker should not be deprived of his wages.

11. Forbidden Excuses

Forbidden Excuses. Verse 5. *'When brothers live together and one of them dies and has no son, the wife of the deceased shall not be married outside the family to a strange man. Her husband's brother shall go in to her and take her to himself as wife and perform the duty of a husband's brother to her. ⁶ It shall be that the firstborn whom she bears shall assume the name of his dead brother, so that his name will not be blotted out from Israel. ⁷ But if the man does not desire to take his brother's wife, then his brother's wife shall go up to the gate to the elders and say, 'My husband's brother refuses to establish a name for his brother in Israel; he is not willing to perform the duty of a husband's brother to me.' ⁸ Then the elders of his city shall summon him and speak to him. And if he persists and says, 'I do not desire to take her,' ⁹ then his brother's wife shall come to him in the sight of the elders, and pull his sandal off his foot and spit in his face; and she shall declare, 'Thus it is done to the man who does not build up his brother's house.' ¹⁰ In Israel his name shall be called, 'The house of him whose sandal is removed.'* (25:5-10).

This rather long passage has two parts. First, the duty of the brother-in-law to his dead brother's wife if no male heir had been born. Second, the legal action if the brother-in-law refused to fulfill his duty.

All sexual relationships with anyone connected by marriage or blood were strictly forbidden except for this one condition. Why would a brother-in-law go into a sister-in-law to have a sexual relationship to produce a son? No formal marriage is mentioned in this passage; therefore, the two would not be joining together in marriage. Their purpose was to produce a son and give him the name of his dead father. Here is the reason. When the nation of Israel entered the Promised Land and divided it among the families, each brother would be given a portion of land. If a brother died without a male heir to inherit that land, the land could not be passed on to future heirs resulting in a problem where no male owned the land. To remedy that problem, the brother-in-law would go to his brother's widow and begin having children until a male heir was born. At that point, the male heir, even as a newborn, became the owner of the family land and the dead brother's name lived on through the wife and the surrogate father.

If the brother-in-law refused, the widow took her case to the city's gate and the magistrates there. The brother-in-law would be called to testify. If he still declined, the widow took one of his shoes and spit in his face. The man would not get the shoe back. In that day, deeds and transactions were made at the gates in front of the magistrates. To sign the deal, one shoe was exchanged as proof. With this transaction, one shoe, taken by the widow, transferred all claims to the land to her. In addition, it forever placed a stigma on the unfaithful brother-in-law. When people went by his land, they would say, *"The house of him whose sandal is removed."*

12. Forbidden Actions

Moses then summarizes a new specific item of forbidden actions. Verse 11. *'If two men, a man and his countryman, are struggling together, and the wife of one comes near to deliver her husband from the hand of the one who is striking him, and puts out her hand and seizes his genitals, ¹² then you shall cut off her hand; you shall not show pity.'* (25:11-12).

The private parts of a man belong to his wife only – they are one flesh. Another woman was forbidden to touch the private parts of a man that was not her husband. What is the penalty? The woman's hand, who handles a man's parts who is not her husband, was to be cut off. No pity.

13. Forbidden Scales

Now we come to the topic of forbidden scales. Verse 13. *'You shall not have in your bag differing weights, a large and a small. ¹⁴ You shall not have in your house differing measures, a large and a small. ¹⁵ You shall have a full and just weight; you shall have a full and just measure, that your days may be prolonged in the land which the LORD your God gives you. ¹⁶ For everyone who does these things, everyone who acts unjustly is an abomination to the LORD your God.'* (25:13-16).

The LORD expects everyone to be fair in all business transactions with everyone. No one should be cheated. Fairness was important to the LORD, and there was a penalty for not being honest. The penalty is found in a promise *“that your days may be prolonged in the land which the LORD your God gives you.”* Conversely, if the nation's businessmen did not use fair weights, their days would not be prolonged in the land.

14. Forbidden Enemies

Finally, under the laws for business in the Promised Land, we come to the forbidden enemies. Verse 17. *“Remember what Amalek did to you along the way when you came out from Egypt, ¹⁸ how he met you along the way and attacked among you all the stragglers at your rear when you were faint and weary; and he did not fear God. ¹⁹ Therefore it shall come about when the LORD your God has given you rest from all your surrounding enemies, in the land which the LORD your God gives you as an inheritance to possess, you shall blot out the memory of Amalek from under heaven; you must not forget.”* (25:17-19).

As the Nation of Israel was making their way from Egypt to Mount Sinai, when they arrived near the mountain, they were thirsty for water. Moses struck the rock, and water came forth and provided water for the nation for forty years. Just after the LORD delivers the water, Amalek arrives at the caravan's rear and attacks Israel. Here is the story found in Exodus, chapter 17, verse 8.

“Then Amalek came and fought against Israel at Rephidim. ⁹ So Moses said to Joshua, “Choose men for us and go out, fight against Amalek. Tomorrow I will station myself on the top of the hill with the staff of God in my hand.” ¹⁰ Joshua did as Moses told him, and fought against Amalek, and Moses, Aaron, and Hur went up to the top of the hill. ¹¹ So it came about when Moses held his hand up, that Israel prevailed, and when he let his hand down, Amalek prevailed. ¹² But Moses' hands were heavy. Then they took a stone and put it under him, and he sat on it; and Aaron and Hur supported his hands, one on one side and one on the other. Thus his hands were steady until the sun set. ¹³ So Joshua overwhelmed Amalek and his people with the edge of the sword. ¹⁴ Then the LORD said to Moses, “Write this in a book as a memorial and recite it to Joshua, that I will utterly blot out the memory of Amalek from under heaven.” ¹⁵ Moses built an altar and named it The LORD is My Banner; ¹⁶ and he said, “The LORD has sworn; the LORD will have war against Amalek from generation to generation.” (Exodus 17:8-16).

We do not know the origin or nationality of Amalek and his tribe. We do not know which descendant of Noah he came from, but after forty years of Amalek pestering the nation at Mount Sinai, the LORD wanted him and his tribe blotted out. Therefore, on the Plains of Moab, with the nation ready to cross the Jordan River and take the Promised Land, once the seven-year task is over and all the tribes are settled in their lands, on their own properties, an army was to be gathered and march down to the tribe of Amalek to wipe them from the face of the earth leaving no one alive. Moses ends the instruction with *“you must not forget.”* Israel forgot. At the end of King Saul's life, four-hundred and thirty-six years into the future, Amalek was still a thorn in the side of Israel. The whole story is found in 1st Samuel 30:1-20. We will read the highlights from that passage now.

“Then it happened when David and his men came to Ziklag on the third day, that the Amalekites had made a raid on the Negev and on Ziklag, and had overthrown Ziklag and burned it with fire; ² and they took captive the women and all who were in it, both small and great, without killing anyone, and carried them off and went their way. ³ When David and his men came to the city, behold, it was burned with fire, and their wives and their sons and their daughters had been taken captive. ⁴ Then David and the people who were with him lifted their voices and wept until there was no strength in them to weep. ... ¹⁰ But David pursued, he and four hundred men, for two hundred who were too exhausted to cross the brook Besor remained behind. ¹¹ Now they found an Egyptian in the field and brought him to David, and gave him bread and he ate, and they provided him water to drink. ¹² They gave him a piece of fig cake and two clusters of raisins, and he ate; then his spirit revived. For he had not eaten bread or drunk water for three days and three nights. ¹³ David said to him, ‘To whom do you belong? And

where are you from?" And he said, "I am a young man of Egypt, a servant of an Amalekite; and my master left me behind when I fell sick three days ago.¹⁴ We made a raid on the Negev of the Cherethites, and on that which belongs to Judah, and on the Negev of Caleb, and we burned Ziklag with fire."¹⁵ Then David said to him, "Will you bring me down to this band?" And he said, "Swear to me by God that you will not kill me or deliver me into the hands of my master, and I will bring you down to this band."¹⁶ When he had brought him down, behold, they were spread over all the land, eating and drinking and dancing because of all the great spoil that they had taken from the land of the Philistines and from the land of Judah.¹⁷ David slaughtered them from the twilight until the evening of the next day; and not a man of them escaped, except four hundred young men who rode on camels and fled.¹⁸ So David recovered all that the Amalekites had taken, and rescued his two wives.¹⁹ But nothing of theirs was missing, whether small or great, sons or daughters, spoil or anything that they had taken for themselves; David brought it all back.²⁰ So David had captured all the sheep and the cattle which the people drove ahead of the other livestock, and they said, "This is David's spoil." (1st Samuel 30:1–20).

Even though David, who was not king yet, killed most of the Amalekites, four-hundred men got away safe. It would have been easier if they had been destroyed as ordered four-hundred and thirty-six years earlier.

Chapter 26

C. Laws for the First Offerings

1. The First Offering After Entering the Promised Land

As we enter chapter 26, Moses gives a law for the first offering after entering the Promised Land. It is a one-time offering and not a perpetual law. Chapter 26, verse 1. *"Then it shall be, when you enter the land which the LORD your God gives you as an inheritance, and you possess it and live in it,² that you shall take some of the first of all the produce of the ground which you bring in from your land that the LORD your God gives you, and you shall put it in a basket and go to the place where the LORD your God chooses to establish His name.³ You shall go to the priest who is in office at that time and say to him, 'I declare this day to the LORD my God that I have entered the land which the LORD swore to our fathers to give us.'⁴ Then the priest shall take the basket from your hand and set it down before the altar of the LORD your God.⁵ You shall answer and say before the LORD your God, 'My father was a wandering Aramean, and he went down to Egypt and sojourned there, few in number; but there he became a great, mighty and populous nation.⁶ And the Egyptians treated us harshly and afflicted us, and imposed hard labor on us.⁷ Then we cried to the LORD, the God of our fathers, and the LORD heard our voice and saw our affliction and our toil and our oppression;⁸ and the LORD brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm and with great terror and with signs and wonders;⁹ and He has brought us to this place and has given us this land, a land flowing with milk and honey.¹⁰ Now behold, I have brought the first of the produce of the ground which You, O LORD have given me.¹¹ And you shall set it down before the LORD your God, and worship before the LORD your God;¹¹ and you and the Levite and the alien who is among you shall rejoice in all the good which the LORD your God has given you and your household."* (26: -11).

This offering will not occur until all the Promised Land is taken and deeded to each family. Then, upon the harvest of the following year, a basket of the land's produce is to be taken to one of the forty-eight holy places in the twelve tribal areas where the Levites live and work. Each man is to tell the same story as we have heard in verses 5 through 11. This offering will occur in the eighth year because the seventh year is a rest year for the land, and no crops will be planted. The land is left to grow wild.

2. The Third Year Tithe After Entering the Promised Land

Now we come to a difficult passage, the third-year tithe after entering the Promised Land. Verse 12. *"When you have finished paying all the tithe of your increase in the third year, the year of tithing, then you shall give it to the Levite, to the stranger, to the orphan and to the widow, that they may eat in your towns and be satisfied.¹³ You shall say before the LORD your God, 'I have removed the sacred portion from my house, and also have given it*

to the Levite and the alien, the orphan and the widow, according to all Your commandments which You have commanded me; I have not transgressed or forgotten any of Your commandments. ¹⁴ I have not eaten of it while mourning, nor have I removed any of it while I was unclean, nor offered any of it to the dead. I have listened to the voice of the LORD my God; I have done according to all that You have commanded me. ¹⁵ Look down from Your holy habitation, from heaven, and bless Your people Israel, and the ground which You have given us, a land flowing with milk and honey, as You swore to our fathers.” (26:12-15).

This passage is difficult because of the wording, “tithe of your increase in the third year, the year of tithing.” What does that mean? It took Joshua seven years to conquer the Promised Land and seven years to settle into the Promised Land with all the families building their homes and establishing their fields, vineyards, herds, and flocks. The third year of the second seven years was to be a year of required tithing of the increase of the past three years. This was the start of the yearly tithe on the increase. This was a one-time three-year tithe once the nation took the Promised Land. Three-year tithes were not required after this first time. Going forward, the tithe was required as the increase came with the different crops and the increase in herds and flocks.

Where did the tithes go? After entering, there was not a single place for tithes to go; instead, the LORD established forty-eight cities, four in each tribal area, for the tithes to be delivered. From there, the tithes would be managed by the Levites to feed their families, the stranger, the orphan, and the widow. Keeping this required law once it starts will bring the blessing of the LORD upon the nation. At the end of the Old Testament, through Malachi, the LORD will chastise the nation and make her an offer.

“Will a man rob God? Yet you are robbing Me! But you say, ‘How have we robbed You?’ In tithes and offerings. ⁹ You are cursed with a curse, for you are robbing Me, the whole nation of you! ¹⁰ Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, so that there may be food in My house, and test Me now in this,” says the LORD of hosts, “if I will not open for you the windows of heaven and pour out for you a blessing until it overflows. ¹¹ Then I will rebuke the devourer for you, so that it will not destroy the fruits of the ground; nor will your vine in the field cast its grapes,” says the LORD of hosts. ¹² “All the nations will call you blessed, for you shall be a delightful land,” says the LORD of hosts. (Malachi 3:8-12).

Malachi gives this dreadful and yet hopeful message to the nation of Israel about one-thousand and forty-eight years after Moses gave this law in the Plains of Moab. Clearly, Israel will not keep the law of Moses.

3. The Statutes and Ordinances for After Entering the Promised Land

Now, in the last passage of chapter 26, Moses summarizes eth statutes and ordinances for after entering the Promised Land in one swoop. Verse 16. *“This day the LORD your God commands you to do these statutes and ordinances. You shall therefore be careful to do them with all your heart and with all your soul. ¹⁷ You have today declared the LORD to be your God, and that you would walk in His ways and keep His statutes, His commandments and His ordinances, and listen to His voice. ¹⁸ The LORD has today declared you to be His people, a treasured possession, as He promised you, and that you should keep all His commandments; ¹⁹ and that He will set you high above all nations which He has made, for praise, fame, and honor; and that you shall be a consecrated people to the LORD your God, as He has spoken.”* (26:16-19).

What a promise! The second generation of Israelites, after coming from Egypt, is ready to enter the Promised Land. They have declared their loyalty to the LORD, and He has declared His loyalty to them and given them everything they need to be a holy and godly people in their new land.

Now, Moses will give instructions for a special ceremony when the nation crosses the Jordan. Then the whole family of Israel will have a time of singing and joy before the transfer of leadership to Joshua and Moses's death and burial.