

Text: Dt 25.1-19

THEOLOGICAL OUTLINE OF DEUTERONOMY¹

1. **Consider:** a review of God's faithfulness (1.6–4.40)
2. **Covenant:** an exposition of the law (5–26)

5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	
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3. **Commence:** preparations for renewing the covenant (27.1–28.68)
4. **Commit:** an exhortation to obedience (29.2–30.20)

More Miscellanies

Deuteronomy 25

The miscellanies we saw in chapter 24 continue through this chapter, though there are several longer sections here.

Justice in Adjudicating Criminal Punishment (1-3)

The Jewish system doesn't include imprisonment. These are the options judges had before them:

1. Restitution and fines: restitution repays the debt, fines add a penalty to the debt
2. Beating as punishment
3. Execution as punishment

Some combination of the above could be the final decision. In this legislation, what is God regulating?

The severity of the beating, limiting the number of blows

Besides the beating, note also that due process (1) is required. Justice is not arbitrary. What does this teach us about God's law?

God protected the rights of the accused, both in trial and punishment

Justice for the lowly Ox (4)

Who is protected by this law?

Even the lowest creatures of creation

¹ Adapted from an outline in Lawrence O Richards, *The Bible Readers Companion*, electronic ed. (Wheaton: Victor Books, 1991), 117.

“The purpose clearly was not only to provide for the ox itself but to make the point by a *a fortiori* argument that if a mere animal was worthy of humane treatment, how much more so was a human being created as the image of God. Paul, in fact, cited this very text twice in making a plea for the support of those involved in Christian ministry (1 Cor 9:9–14; 1 Tim 5:17–18).”²

The Law of Levirate Marriage (5-10) [“levirate” from Latin *levir*, “brother-in-law”]

Notes:

“when brothers live together” (5) means living in near proximity, not necessarily in the same house.

“so that his name will not be blotted out from Israel” (6) stresses the importance in Israel of the family name and family inheritance, which men held by God’s grace. The desire was to preserve the inheritance the Lord gave.

The refusal to follow the custom was not only a social breach, it flouted God’s purpose for the nation so was an offense before God as well.

“taking off the sandal”

“The taking off of the shoe was an ancient custom in Israel, adopted, according to Ruth 4:7, in cases of redemption and exchange, for the purpose of confirming commercial transactions. The usage arose from the fact, that when any one took possession of landed property he did so by treading upon the soil, and asserting his right of possession by standing upon it in his shoes. In this way the taking off of the shoe and handing it to another became a symbol of the renunciation of a man’s position and property... But the custom was an ignominious one in such a case as this, when the shoe was publicly taken off the foot of the brother-in-law by the widow whom he refused to marry. He was thus deprived of the position which he ought to have occupied in relation to her and to his deceased

² Eugene H. Merrill, *Deuteronomy*, The New American Commentary, v. 4 (Nashville, Tenn.: Broadman & Holman, 1994), 325–26.

brother, or to his paternal house; and the disgrace involved in this was still further heightened by the fact that his sister-in-law spat in his face.”³

In the case of Boaz, the taking off the shoe by the relative represented a land transaction, the willingness of Boaz to fulfill the Levirate marriage meant Ruth had no complaint with which to call a relative into disgrace.

Law against an offending woman (11-12)

“Commentators are generally at a loss to account for the placement of the next case in its present juxtaposition. The clue seems to lie in the reference to two men and one woman in both this and the previous section (vv. 5–10) as well as in the matter of progeny and anything that might threaten it. The situation was that of two men in a brawl, the wife of one of whom comes to her husband’s assistance by attacking his foe in his “private parts” (*měbušayw ‘bôš*, “be ashamed”). Besides the shame of this, especially in the ancient Eastern world,²⁵³ there was the real possibility that the woman could effectively have emasculated her victim so as to remove any hope of his siring children. This, of course, would have rendered his plight nearly as serious as that of the brother mentioned above who died with no male heir. That this was the implication is supported by the fact that the guilty woman had to lose her offending hand as punishment (v. 12).”⁴

Law of Just Weights and Measures (13-16)

The hardest sin to detect is the sin of covetousness. It manifests itself in many ways. This law uncovers one of those ways, the use of unjust weights and measures for personal advantage.

In Canada, “The *Weights and Measures Regulations* set the rules for measuring devices (e.g., gas pumps, retail and commercial scales, petroleum refinery meters) used in measurement based financial transactions.”

“The Regulations protect Canadian businesses and consumers against loss due to inaccurate measurement by establishing minimum levels of accuracy and performance to which devices used in measurement-based financial transactions must comply.

“Device owners who do not meet the requirements of the Regulations may

³ Carl Friedrich Keil and Franz Delitzsch, *Biblical Commentary on the Old Testament: The Pentateuch*, trans. James Martin, vol. 3 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, n.d.), 423.

⁴ Merrill, *Deuteronomy*, 329.

be subject to increasingly stringent enforcement actions, including administrative monetary penalties.”⁵

Decree Against the Amalekites (17-19)

Compare Ex 17.8-16, where Amalek attacked Israel early in its wilderness wanderings, at a point of much vulnerability. Dt 25.18 reveals that this attack was from the rear, attacking the elderly and the weak among Israel.

God decreed judgement against these enemies, but delayed execution until the time of King Saul.

When Saul received God’s command, the nation was not to profit from their punishment of Amalek, all their goods were to be destroyed. This action was the judgement of God against Amalek, not for the advantage of Israel.

There are principles of justice here, but there is also a divine setting apart of the nation of Israel because of the Abrahamic covenant:

Gn 12.1-3 ¶ Now the LORD said to Abram, “Go forth from your country, And from your relatives And from your father’s house, To the land which I will show you; ² And I will make you a great nation, And I will bless you, And make your name great; And so you shall be a blessing; ³ And I will bless those who bless you, And the one who curses you I will curse. And in you all the families of the earth will be blessed.”

⁵ “Frequently Asked Questions: Weights and Measures Regulations,” Legislation and Regulations; Questions and Answers (Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada, April 12, 2017), <https://ised-isde.canada.ca/site/acts-regulations/en/interpretation-policy/frequently-asked-questions/frequently-asked-questions-weights-and-measures-regulations>.