

# Deuteronomy 25 Commentary

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Moses on Mt Nebo (Deuteronomy 34:1+)  
Listen to Mt Nebo as you Ponder How Moses' May Have Felt

Deuteronomy by Irving Jensen- used by permission  
deut

Source: Ryrie Study Bible

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ca. 2 Months Moses: Author (Except Dt 34)							

**Deuteronomy 25:1 "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,**

- De 16:18-20 Dt 17:8-9 Dt 19:17-19 Ex 23:6,7 2Sa 23:3 2Ch 19:6-10 Job 29:7-17 Ps 58:1,2 82:2-4 Pr 17:15 31:8,9 Isa 1:17,23 Isa 5:23 11:4 32:1,2 Jer 21:12 Eze 44:24 Mic 3:1,2 Hab 1:4,13 Mal 3:18 Mt 3:10
- [Deuteronomy 25 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

#### Related Passages:

Deuteronomy 16:18-20+ "You shall appoint for yourself judges and officers in all your towns which the LORD your God is giving you, according to your tribes, and they shall judge the people with righteous judgment. 19" You shall not distort justice; you shall not be partial, and you shall not take a bribe, for a bribe blinds the eyes of the wise and perverts the words of the righteous. 20" Justice, and only justice, you shall pursue, that you may live and possess the land which the LORD your God is giving you.

### PERSONAL DISPUTES - CORPORAL PUNISHMENT

**If there is a dispute between men and they go to court, and the judges decide their case, and they justify the righteous** (NET = exonerate the innocent") **and condemn the wicked** (NET - "the guilty") - **NLT** simplifies it "the judges declare that one is right and the other is wrong." Other passages speak of judicial action not just by civil judges but including the presence of priests (cf Dt 17:8-9 Dt 19:17-19). **Dispute** is **rib** and the Lxx is [antilogia](#) (**anti** = against + **lego** speak) literally a word spoken against or speaking against and so talking back, face to face, in opposition against (a dispute involving opposite opinions). Our English word *dispute* describes a disagreement, a quarrel, an argument or a verbal controversy. Legal cases in Israel were meant to prevent personal revenge.

**Livingston** on **rasha** - In a case law it states that if two men are hostile regarding property, God will declare one of them guilty. In a similar law (Deut. 25:1), judges are to be just in deciding which is guilty. These have to do with ruptures in social relationships.

[IVP Bible Background Commentary](#) - **punishments meted out by courts**. In complex societies, when a legal dispute arises, it is necessary to take it to the judicial system. This system must include judges and a place for the hearing of testimony. On the village level this simply means drawing together the "elders" at the gate or threshing floor (see Deut 21:18–21; Ruth 4:1–12). In towns and cities, the judges were officials appointed by the government, who could hear appeals from village courts (Deut 17:9–10) or try cases within their own jurisdiction (2 Sam 15:3; Jer 26:10–19). Their responsibility included hearing testimony, making a judgment based on the law and officiating to insure that punishment was meted out exactly as the law decreed (in the Middle Assyrian laws the judges are expected to observe the punishment).

**Dispute** (strife) ([07379](#)) **rib** from **riyb** = to strive or contend) is a masculine noun which means a strife, contention or dispute and in other contexts refers to lawsuits. The root ריב in both verbal and nominal forms is used to describe a quarrel or strife among humans. **Riyb** - conflict between two or more parties, often with a focus on the feelings between the parties (Ge 13:7); hostility, i.e., open opposition to another, with a focus on the actions of the parties; quarreling, disputing, i.e., an express difference of opinion or perception, with a focus on hostility and strife in the exchange (Pr 15:18; Pr 17:14); legal dispute, lawsuit, grievance, i.e., a legal action taken in court as a contest between two parties for justice (Ex 23:2; 1Sa 24:16)

**Justify** [06663](#). [קָדַח](#) **tsadeq**: A verb meaning to be right, to be righteous, to be just, to be innocent, to be put

right, to justify, to declare right, to prove oneself innocent. The word is used twenty out of forty times in the simple stem. In this stem, it basically means to be right or just. God challenged His own people to show they were right in their claims (Isa. 43:26). The verb can also connote being innocent, for God's people, through the Lord, will be found innocent (Ps. 51:4[6]; Isa. 45:25). Job argued his case effectively, proving himself right and vindicated (Job 11:2; 40:8). The ordinances of God were declared right by the psalmist (Ps. 19:9). In the passive stem, it means to be put right. The verb refers to the altar in the second Temple being put right after its defilement (Dan. 8:14). In the intensive stem, the verb means to make or to declare righteous. Judah, because of her sin, made Samaria, her wicked sister, seem righteous (Ezek. 16:51, 52); the Lord asserted that northern Israel had been more just than Judah (Jer. 3:11; cf. Job 32:2). In the causative stem, the verb takes on the meaning of bringing about justice: Absalom began his conspiracy against David by declaring that he would administer justice for everyone (2 Sam. 15:4). The Lord vindicates His servant (Isa. 50:8); every person of God is to declare the rights of the poor or oppressed (Ps. 82:3). In Isaiah 53:11, it has the sense of the Servant helping other persons obtain their rights. Once in the reflexive stem, it means to justify oneself, as when Judah was at a loss as to how he and his brothers could possibly justify themselves before Pharaoh (Gen. 44:16).

**Complete Biblical Library 1 (qal) be righteous, be innocent, be vindicated**, i.e., be in a state in accordance with a standard (Ge 38:26; Job 4:17; 9:2, 15, 20; 10:15; 11:2; 13:18; 15:14; 22:3; 25:4; 33:12; 35:7; 40:8; Ps 19:10; 51:6; 143:2; Isa 43:9, 26; 45:25; Eze 16:52a), note: in context, usually God's proper standard; (piel) be righteous, innocent, clear of charges (Job 32:2; 33:32; Jer 3:11; Eze 16:51, 52b+); (hif) get justice, maintain the right, cause righteousness (2Sa 15:4; Ps 82:3; Da 12:3+); (hitp) prove innocence (Ge 44:16), **2.(hif) acquit, declare not guilty, justify, i.e., the act. of clearing one of a transgression or allegation of wrongdoing** (Ex 23:7; Dt 25:1; 1Ki 8:32; 2Ch 6:23; Job 27:5; Pr 17:15; Isa 5:23; 50:8; 53:11); **3.(nif) reconsecrated, formally, justified, i.e., pertaining to being ceremonially pure, with an implication that the impurity was also due to the violation of a moral standard** (Da 8:14)

40 verses - Gen. 38:26; Gen. 44:16; Exod. 23:7; Deut. 25:1; 2 Sam. 15:4; 1 Ki. 8:32; 2 Chr. 6:23; Job 4:17; Job 9:2; Job 9:15; Job 9:20; Job 10:15; Job 11:2; Job 13:18; Job 15:14; Job 22:3; Job 25:4; Job 27:5; Job 32:2; Job 33:12; Job 33:32; Job 34:5; Job 35:7; Job 40:8; Ps. 19:9; Ps. 51:4; Ps. 82:3; Ps. 143:2; Prov. 17:15; Isa. 5:23; Isa. 43:9; Isa. 43:26; Isa. 45:25; Isa. 50:8; Isa. 53:11; Jer. 3:11; Ezek. 16:51; Ezek. 16:52; Dan. 8:14; Dan. 12:3

**Righteous צַדִּיק (saddiq)**: 1. righteous, upright, just, i.e., pertaining to being a person in accordance with a proper standard (Ge 18:23, 24, 25, 26, 28); 2. innocent, guiltless, i.e., pertaining to not having sin or wrongdoing according to a just standard (Ex 23:7). **Vine** adds "tsaddiq (צַדִּיק, 06662), "righteous; just." This adjectival form occurs 206 times in biblical Hebrew. In Old Aramaic the adjective signifies "loyalty" of a king or high priest to his personal god, often represented by a gift to the god. Similarly in Phoenician, the noun and adjective apply to the loyal relationship of the king before the gods. The word is used of God in Exod. 9:27: "I have sinned this time: the Lord is righteous, and I and my people are wicked." Tsaddiq is used of a nation in Gen. 20:4: "... And he said, Lord, wilt thou slay also a righteous nation?"

**Condemn** (act wickedly) (07561) **rasha** from **resha** - wrong, wickedness) means to be in the wrong, to be guilty, to be wicked, to do wickedly, to condemn. In the simple stem, this verb means to be or to become guilty, to act wickedly. When God's people confessed that they acted wickedly, then the Lord forgave them (1 Kgs. 8:47; Eccl. 7:17; Dan. 9:15); to depart from the Lord is an act of wickedness (2 Sam. 22:22; Ps. 18:21).

**Deuteronomy 25:2 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.**

- Mt 10:17 27:26 Lu 12:47,48 Ac 5:40 16:22-24 1Pe 2:20,24
- [Deuteronomy 25 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## GUILTY TO BE BEATEN

**then** - Marks progression. In this context almost function as a conclusion (of the preceding trial).

**it shall be if the wicked man deserves to be beaten- NET** = "Then, if the guilty person is sentenced to a beating."

**the judge shall then make him lie down and be beaten in his presence with the number of stripes according to his**

**guilt. NET** = "the judge shall force him to lie down and be beaten in his presence with the number of blows his wicked behavior deserves." The judge watches (literally = before his face) the dispensation of his verdict! This would tend to make the judge be absolutely confident that he was rendering the correct verdict lest an innocent man be beaten. **Number of stripes according to his guilt** means the punishment would need to fit the crime.

**Utey** - Later Judaism required three witnesses to a beating. The beater, the counter, and the reader of the Scriptural requirement. ([Deuteronomy 25 Commentary](#))

**Guzik** - We seem to have a justice system today that considers itself more compassionate and kind than God Himself, yet we can't say that we live in a more just or safe society. ([Commentary](#))

**John Trapp** - Among the Mohammedans there are very few law-suits, and the reason is given . . . because they that sue others without just cause are to be whipped publicly."

**Deuteronomy 25:3 "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.**

- **no more:** 2Co 11:24-25
- **degraded in your eyes.** Job 18:3 Lu 15:30 18:9-12 Jas 2:2,3
- [Deuteronomy 25 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

#### Related Passages:

2 Corinthians 11:24-25 Five times I received from the Jews thirty-nine lashes. 25 Three times I was beaten with rods, once I was stoned, three times I was shipwrecked, a night and a day I have spent in the deep.

**Comment** - Paul did not receive 40 blows, as according to Deuteronomy 25:3 because as a common practice, the Jews only allowed 39 blows to be administered. This was to both show mercy and to scrupulously keep the law – one blow was left off to protect against a miscount. (Guzik [Commentary](#))

### BEATEN NO MORE THAN 40 STRIPES

**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** (Israelite kin) **is not degraded in your eyes** (NET = "you might view your fellow Israelite with contempt" NLT = "publicly humiliate your neighbor") This is God's rule to avoid excessive punishment. He is not likely the judge actually giving the blows because in verse 2 it says the condemned was to **be beaten in his presence**. Forty was the maximum number but as alluded to in the previous passage the punishment was meted proportionate to the crime so the number of strokes could be less than 40.

**Utey- forty times**" This was the maximum number of strokes with either a rod (cf. Ex 21:20; Middle Assyrian Laws, A18) or a whip made of leather. By NT times thirty-nine stripes were the maximum (cf. Mishnah Makkoth, III, 13–14; 2 Cor. 11:24). **"your brother be degraded in your eyes"** Even in punishment a humanitarian spirit prevails. Restoration and changed character are always the goal. ([Deuteronomy 25 Commentary](#))

**Kline** - and not applied at random, as to an animal, or with the abandon of anger, unmindful that the judgment was the Lord's. The severity of the scourging was to be proportionate to the gravity of the offense, yet in no case to exceed forty stripes. ([Wycliffe Bible Commentary on Deuteronomy](#))

**TSK** - That is, be beaten so cruelly, that, by retaining the marks, he become contemptible in the eyes of his brethren. Amendment, and not this, was the object of the punishment. We should hate and despise the sin, but not the sinner.

**Deuteronomy 25:4 "You shall not muzzle the ox while he is threshing.**

- **not muzzle:** Pr 12:10 1Co 9:9,10 1Ti 5:17,18
- **threshing** Isa 28:27 Ho 10:11
- [Deuteronomy 25 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## Related Passages:

Proverbs 12:10 A righteous man has regard for the life of his animal, But even the compassion of the wicked is cruel.

1 Corinthians 9:9; 10 For it is written in the Law of Moses, "YOU SHALL NOT MUZZLE THE OX WHILE HE IS THRESHING." God is not concerned about oxen, is He? 10 Or is He speaking altogether for our sake? Yes, for our sake it was written, because the plowman ought to plow in hope, and the thresher to thresh in hope of sharing the crops.

1 Timothy 5:17; 18 The elders who rule well are to be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who work hard at preaching and teaching. 18 For the Scripture says, "YOU SHALL NOT MUZZLE THE OX WHILE HE IS THRESHING," and "The laborer is worthy of his wages."

## DON'T MUZZLE THE TREADING OX

**You shall not muzzle the ox while he is threshing**- In this way he would be allowed to eat if he was hungry and this would in turn strengthen him for his labors. To paraphrase Paul "the ox is worthy of his straw."

**Uttley** - "you shall not muzzle the ox" This shows kindness to animals (cf. 22:6–7; Pro. 12:10). This was used by Paul in the NT to support wages for Christian leaders (cf. 1 Cor. 9:9; 1 Tim. 5:18). Paul is using (1) Jesus' words in Luke 10:7 (cf. 1 Tim. 5:18) and (2) a rabbinical method of interpretation and application called "lesser to greater." If this statement is true for oxen, surely it is true for human workers. ([Deuteronomy 25 Commentary](#))

**Kline on not muzzle the ox** - The positive counterpart to the prohibition of dishonoring a man in spite of his evil works is the requirement that he receive all proper honor for his good works. This verse, probably a proverbial expression, seems even here to have the force given it by Paul in 1 Cor 9:9 and 1 Tim 5:18. ([Wycliffe Bible Commentary on Deuteronomy](#))

**Morris** - Animals should be treated with due consideration and kindness, as God's creatures (Proverbs 12:10). The Apostle Paul also used this verse to show that every laborer is worthy of his hire, especially those in God's service (1 Corinthians 9:9,10; 1 Timothy 5:18).

[IVP Bible Background Commentary](#) - role of oxen in grain processing. Oxen were used to plow fields and to pull threshing sleds to crush the stocks of grain once they were harvested. At the threshing floor, the grain would be laid in such a way that a heavy sled could be driven over it. The hooves of the oxen would also aid in the processing of the grain. The injunction that the ox not be muzzled follows the humanitarian pattern of previous laws and allows the animal to eat a portion of the grain as its wage. Since few farmers owned their own team of oxen, they were provided by government officials (observed in Mari texts) or hired from wealthier farmers or even other villages (as in Lipit-Ishtar laws and Hammurabi, which include statutes regarding the hire and liability for oxen).

**Deuteronomy 25:5** "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.

- brethren: Mt 22:24 Mk 12:19 Lu 20:28
- husband's brother: or, next kinsman, Ge 38:8,9 Ru 1:12,13 3:9 4:5
- [Deuteronomy 25 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## LEVIRATE LAW Dt 25:5-10

**Levirate** is from the Latin term for brother-in-law.

**Thompson** - "The practice of levirate marriage . . . was not peculiar to Israel, for it was practiced among the Hittites and Assyrians as well as in countries such as India, Africa and South America."

**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** - Note the first condition was the brother lived **together** and **NLT** adds "are living together on the same property." **Go into her** is a euphemism for sexual relations. His dead brother's widow was to be taken as his **wife**. As we see from the following passages, this was not an absolute command, but involved the brother-in-law's freedom of choice to agree or refuse (albeit not without some adverse consequences as noted below).

**Utley** - The whole purpose of this legislation is to keep the inheritance within the family. If there is no one in the family who wants to marry the widow then the brother shall raise up an heir for him (cf. Matt. 22:24; Mark 12:19; Luke 20:28). ([Deuteronomy 25 Commentary](#))

**Kline** - This requirement constituted an exception to the prohibition in Lev 18:16; 20:21. For Biblical examples of this or similar practice, see Genesis 38 and the Book of Ruth. The levirate duty is limited in Deuteronomy to situations in which brothers shared the same estate (25:5a), and even then it was not compulsory. Failure to comply, however, betrayed a want of fraternal affection and was publicly stigmatized (vv. 8-10). On the transfer of the sandal for confirming legal transfer of right or property, see Ruth 4:7. In view of the provision of Num 27:4 ff., there would be no need for the levirate marriage if the deceased had daughters. Hence the av seems preferable to the rsv in rendering in Deut 25:5—no child rather than no son. ([Wycliffe Bible Commentary on Deuteronomy](#))

**NET NOTE** - This is the so-called "levirate" custom (from the Latin term *levir*, "brother-in-law"), an ancient provision whereby a man who died without male descendants to carry on his name could have a son by proxy, that is, through a surviving brother who would marry his widow and whose first son would then be attributed to the brother who had died. This is the only reference to this practice in an OT legal text but it is illustrated in the story of Judah and his sons (Gen 38) and possibly in the account of Ruth and Boaz (Ruth 2:8; 3:12; 4:6). ([Deuteronomy 25](#))

**Believer's Study Bible** - (Dt 25:5-10) The law concerning "**levirate marriage**" is presented here (vv. 5, 6), along with the procedure to be followed if someone refused to fulfill his responsibility of taking the childless widow of his deceased brother as his wife (vv. 7-10; cf. Gen. 38; Ruth 2:20). There are two prerequisites which must be met: (1) the two brothers must be living together and sharing responsibilities as one large family unit; and (2) the widow was to be without a son, who would be the legal inheritor of his father's estate, and who would represent his father's name. It was this provision of posterity which was part of the nature of the divine covenant (cf. Gen. 17:7-9). The brother-in-law could refuse his responsibility, though he would certainly incur the wrath of the community. In a public ceremony, the rejected widow could humiliate the man by removing his sandal, thereby indicating the relative had abandoned his responsibility, and by spitting in his face, symbolizing the shame of such negligence. The motive of such a refusal is assumed to have been selfishness, in that the living brother himself might inherit the property of his deceased brother in the absence of a male heir (cf. Num. 27:9). Such an act would deserve extreme reprobation.

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#### QUESTION - [What is a levirate marriage?](#)

**ANSWER** - A levirate marriage is literally a "marriage with a brother-in-law." The word *levirate*, which has nothing to do with the tribe of Levi, comes from the Latin word *levir*, "a husband's brother." In ancient times, if a man died without a child, it was common for the man's unmarried brother to marry the widow in order to provide an heir for the deceased. A widow would marry a brother-in-law, and the first son produced in that union was considered the legal descendant of her dead husband.

We see a couple of examples in the Bible of levirate marriage. The first is the story of Tamar and Onan in Genesis 38. Tamar had been married to Er, a son of Judah. Er died, leaving Tamar childless (Genesis 38:6–7). Judah's solution was to follow the standard procedure of levirate marriage: he told Er's brother Onan, "Sleep with your brother's wife and fulfill your duty to her as a brother-in-law to raise up offspring for your brother" (verse 8). Onan was more than willing to sleep with Tamar, but, unfortunately, he had no desire to have a child with her: "Onan knew that the child would not be his; so whenever he slept with his brother's wife, he spilled his semen on the ground to keep from providing offspring for his brother" (verse 9). In other words, Onan was taking selfish advantage of levirate marriage. He wanted sex with his sister-in-law, but he purposefully avoided impregnating her. God called Onan's actions "wicked" and killed him (verse 10).

Levirate marriage became part of the Law in Deuteronomy 25:5–6. There, the Israelites are commanded to care for women whose husbands died before they had children. An unmarried brother of the deceased man bore a responsibility to marry his sister-in-law: God called it "the duty of a brother-in-law" (Deuteronomy 25:5). God's purpose for levirate marriage is stated: "The first son she bears shall carry on the name of the dead brother so that his name will not be blotted out from Israel" (verse 6). In ancient Israel the passing on of the family name and the inheritance within a tribe were vitally important (see Numbers 36:7 and 1 Kings 21:3).

Another example of levirate marriage in the Bible is the story of [Ruth and Boaz](#). Ruth's first husband died without leaving a child (Ruth 1:1–5). Later, Ruth met a rich landowner named Boaz in Bethlehem, and he happened to be a relative of Ruth's late husband (Ruth 2:20). Ruth asked Boaz to be her "[kinsman-redeemer](#)"; that is, to marry her and preserve the land her husband had owned (Ruth 3:9). Boaz agreed but informed Ruth that there was one other relative of nearer kin; the obligation to marry Ruth and redeem



her land fell on him first (verse 12). As it turned out, the nearer relative officially transferred his right of redemption to Boaz, clearing the way for Boaz to marry Ruth and “maintain the name of the dead with his property” (Ruth 4:5).

In Matthew 22, Jesus is confronted by the Sadducees with a convoluted question based on the Law's requirement of levirate marriage: “Moses told us that if a man dies without having children, his brother must marry the widow and raise up offspring for him. Now there were seven brothers among us. The first one married and died, and since he had no children, he left his wife to his brother. The same thing happened to the second and third brother, right on down to the seventh. Finally, the woman died. Now then, at the resurrection, whose wife will she be of the seven, since all of them were married to her?” (Matthew 22:24–28). Jesus cuts through the hypothetical and teaches the reality of the resurrection (verses 29–32).

Levirate marriage has fallen out of favor in modern Judaism and is more or less an extinct practice today. But its existence among the ancient Israelites, even before the Law of Moses, shows the importance placed on continuing the family line and preserving one's divinely appointed inheritance.

**Deuteronomy 25:6 "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."**

- **the firstborn:** Ge 28:8-10
- **his name:** De 9:14 29:20 Ru 4:10-12 Ps 9:5 109:13, brother's wife, or, next kinsman's wife, go up, De 21:19 Ru 4:1-7
- [Deuteronomy 25 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## DEAD BROTHER'S LINEAGE WOULD CONTINUE

**It shall be that the firstborn whom she bears shall assume the name of his dead brother** -The **firstborn** son (the oldest male child) would inherit the dead brother's property (cf. Nu 27:6–11+).

**So that** (purpose clause) **his name will not be blotted out from Israel** - NET = "thus preventing his name from being blotted out of Israel." NLT = "so that his name will not be forgotten in Israel."

**Blotted out** (04229). מָחָה [machah](#) meaning to wipe, to wipe out. qal = wipe off; wipe out, destroy, blot out; niphal = be wiped out, be destroyed; hiphil = be blotted out. This term is often connected with divine judgment. It is used of God wiping out all life in the flood (Ge 7:23); destroying Jerusalem (2 Ki 21:13); and threatening to wipe out Israel's name (Dt. 9:14). God also wipes out sin (Ps. 51:1; Isa. 43:25); and wipes away tears (Isa. 25:8). Humans also act as the subject of this verb; the Israelites nearly wiped out the Benjamites (Jdg. 21:17); and a prostitute wipes her mouth after eating (Prov. 30:20).

**NIDOTTE** - It is used to describe actions like wiping the mouth clean after eating (Pr 30:20) and wiping a dish (2 Ki 21:13). It also occurs for the priest's washing off (q. מָחָה) the curses from the scroll into the bitter water that the woman suspected of adultery is to drink (Nu5:23). Erasing writing from a scroll was normally effected by washing, and this action appears to be a basic meaning of מָחָה. Since wiping off or out implies the complete removal of whatever is in view, מָחָה is often used with great effect for both Yahweh's judgment and salvation. In terms of judgment, the vb. is employed to describe the complete removal (and thus destruction) of life by the Flood (q., Ge 7:4; ni., Ge 7:23), the complete obliteration of the memory of Amalek (Ex 17:14), and the total removal of the name of the wicked generally (Ps 9:5). When God's wrath threatened, Moses offered to have his name wiped out from the book instead of the people's, but God refused (Ex 32:32–33). In reciting the covenant curses, God made it clear that he would expunge the name of the unrepentant from under heaven (q., Deut 29:20 [19]). Jerusalem would be wiped as a dish in judgment (2 Kgs 21:13), but God would never completely blot out his people (cf. on the northern tribes, 2 Ki 14:27). The great importance of preventing the obliteration of the name is evident in the levirate marriage (ni., Deut 25:6) and in the desire to retain Benjamin's name in Israel (ni., Jdg 21:17). In terms of salvation, מָחָה is used in the promise of God's wiping away tears from all faces (Isa 25:8) and the assurance that sins have been wiped out (Isa 44:22; Isa 43:25; cf. Ps 51:1, 9).

30v - Gen. 6:7; Gen. 7:4; Gen. 7:23; Exod. 17:14; Exod. 32:32; Exod. 32:33; Num. 5:23; Deut. 9:14; Deut. 25:6; Deut. 25:19; Deut. 29:20; Jdg. 21:17; 2 Ki. 14:27; 2 Ki. 21:13; Neh. 4:5; Neh. 13:14; Ps. 9:5; Ps. 51:1; Ps. 51:9; Ps. 69:28; Ps. 109:13; Ps. 109:14; Prov. 6:33; Prov. 30:20; Prov. 31:3; Isa. 25:8; Isa. 43:25; Isa. 44:22; Jer. 18:23; Ezek. 6:6

**Deuteronomy 25:7** "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.'

- [Deuteronomy 25 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

### **BROTHER-IN-LAW DOES NOT DELIGHT TO FULFILL HIS DUTY**

**But if the man does not desire** ([chaphets](#) - delight) **to take his brother's wife** - The text gives no motive for his not desiring to take his brother's wife. Some suggest greed because she would be another "mouth to feed."

**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** - The gate was the site of the local court in ancient Israel, where the city elders would meet to decide cases (cf Dt 16:18–20; 19:12; 21:1–9, 19; 22:15).

[IVP Bible Background Commentary](#) - **elders at town gate.** Because of the constant traffic at the gate as people went to and from the fields, it became the place of judgment and business transaction in ancient Near Eastern towns. Merchants would set up collapsible booths or simply sit under an umbrella while their customers came to them (see Lot in Gen 19:1). When a legal matter came up, a group of the town elders either could be found sitting in the gate (Prov 31:23) or could be gathered from those passing by (Ruth 4:1–2).

**Deuteronomy 25:8** "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,'

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#### **Related Passage:**

Ruth 4:6 The closest relative said, "I cannot redeem it for myself, because I would jeopardize my own inheritance. Redeem it for yourself; you may have my right of redemption, for I cannot redeem it."

### **BROTHER IN LAW REPEATS HE HAS NO DESIRE FOR BROTHER'S WIFE**

**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,'** If the brother either would not or could not fulfill this responsibility as in this passage, the right and responsibility passed to the nearest kinsman (Ruth 2:20; Ruth 4:1-10). In the beautiful book of Ruth the nearest kinsman was **Boaz**...

Naomi said to her daughter-in-law (RUTH), "May he be blessed of the LORD who has not withdrawn his kindness to the living and to the dead." Again Naomi said to her, "The man is our relative, he is one of our closest relatives." (Ruth 2:20+)

**Deuteronomy 25:9** 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.'

- **sandal** . Ru 4:7-8 Isa 20:2 Mk 1:7 Joh 1:27
- **spit**: Nu 12:14 Job 30:10 Isa 50:6 Mt 26:67 27:30 Mk 10:34
- **shall**: Ge 38:8-10 Ru 4:10,11 1Sa 2:30
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#### **Related Passages:**

Ruth 4:7-8+ Now this was the custom in former times in Israel concerning the redemption and the exchange of land to confirm any matter: a man removed his sandal and gave it to another; and this was the manner of



attestation in Israel. 8 So the closest relative said to Boaz, "Buy it for yourself." And he removed his sandal.

## ULTIMATE HUMILIATION

**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.'** - The usage of the **sandal** in this ritual 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 (cf Ruth 4:7-8+) This sandal ritual was a symbol common among the Indians and the ancient Germans. But the custom was an ignominious one in this case for 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 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.

**Utley "spit in his face"** - This was a symbolic act of humiliation (cf. Num. 12:14+). It made one ceremonially unclean (cf. Lev. 15:8). ([Deuteronomy 25 Commentary](#))

**Thus it is done to the man who does not build up his brother's house-** These paraphrases pick up the idea = TEV "refuses to give his brother a descendant"; NLT "refuses to raise up a son for his brother."

**NET NOTE** - The removal of the sandal was likely symbolic of the relinquishment by the man of any claim to his dead brother's estate since the sandal was associated with the soil or land (cf. Ruth 4:7-8). Spitting in the face was a sign of utmost disgust or disdain, an emotion the rejected widow would feel toward her uncooperative brother-in-law (cf. Num 12:14; Lev 15:8). ([Deuteronomy 25](#))

**IVP Bible Background Commentary - removing sandal.** Sandals were the ordinary footwear in the ancient Near East, but they were also a symbolic item of clothing, especially in the relationship between the widow and her legal guardian or levir. This is due to the fact that land was purchased based on whatever size triangle of land one could walk off in an hour, a day, a week or a month (1 Ki 21:16-17). Land was surveyed in triangles, and a benchmark was constructed of fieldstones to serve as a boundary marker (Dt 19:14). **Since they walked on the land in sandals, the sandals became the movable title to that land.** By removing the sandals of her guardian (Ru 4:7), a widow removed his authorization to administer the land of her household.

**Deuteronomy 25:10 "In Israel his name shall be called, 'The house of him whose sandal is removed.'**

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## THE FAMILY OF THE UNSANDALED

**In Israel his name shall be called, 'The house of him whose sandal is removed.'** -In addition to suffering spitting in the face, the unwilling brother-in-law was to receive a name of ridicule in Israel: **"House of the shoe taken off"** i.e., of the barefooted man, equivalent to "the miserable fellow;" for it was only in miserable circumstances that the Hebrews went barefoot (Isa. 20:2-3; Micah 1:8; 2Sa 15:30). The NCV paraphrases it "The Family of the Unsandaled." Today we would say "Not cool!"

**Deuteronomy 25:11 "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,**

- **deliver:** Ro 3:8 1Ti 2:9
- [Deuteronomy 25 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## HANDS OFF THE PRIVATE PARTS!

**If two men, a man and his countryman (Israelite brother), 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 = NLT** - "If two Israelite men get into a fight and the wife of one tries to rescue her husband by grabbing the testicles of the other man" Just spoken of levirate law to make sure one has an heir for his name. Damaged testicles would prevent that from happening!

**John Currid** - Commentators are generally at a loss regarding the placement of these verses in this particular context. Merrill properly says, '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 case is the only example of punitive mutilation in Hebrew law. And it is an example of *lex talionis*: she seizes by the hand and, consequently, she loses her hand. This type of penal mutilation is common in other ancient Near-Eastern law codes, such as that of Hammurabi and the Middle Assyrian laws. Eslinger argues that the Hebrew word used for the woman's hand that is severed may actually refer to her genitalia. If that is true, then the concept of *lex talionis* would be clearly in evidence. What is objectionable in the woman's activity is not the fact that she is helping her husband, but how she goes about doing it. The action is perhaps problematic on any number of grounds. First, it is indecent and reflects immodesty on the part of the woman. Secondly, it certainly disgraces the man and could easily leave him permanently injured. It could rob him of his ability to procreate. The entire episode is undignified. As Kline states, 'Verses 11, 12 are also concerned with the dignity of the individual and indeed precisely with his dignity as God's covenant servant who in his circumcision bears in his body the sign of the covenant.' ([EPSC-DT](#))

**Kline** - Verses 11, 12, also are concerned with the dignity of the individual and indeed precisely with his dignity as God's covenant servant, who in his circumcision bears in his body the sign of the covenant. The reference to the organ of reproduction might account for the immediate conjunction of this prohibition with the law of levirate marriage. That the act forbidden includes contempt for the covenant sign and not just indecency is suggested by the apparent similarity in the nature of the punishment and the sign, both involving a mutilation of the body. Weight is added to this interpretation by the fact that apart from this case, only the *lex talionis* (19:21) calls for such penal mutilation. ([Wycliffe Bible Commentary on Deuteronomy](#))

**NET NOTE on genitals** - Heb "shameful parts." Besides the inherent indelicacy of what she has done, the woman has also threatened the procreative capacity of the injured man. The level of specificity given this term in modern translations varies: "private parts" (NAB, NIV, CEV); "genitals" (NASB, NRSV, TEV); "sex organs" (NCV); "testicles" (NLT). ([Deuteronomy 25](#))

**Utley** - "his genitals" - Again, this shows the significance of inheritance rights in ancient Israel! ([Deuteronomy 25 Commentary](#))

**Struggling** . נָאֶ (nā-ṣā(h)) 05327; 1. (nif) fight, i.e., be in a state of hostility and quarreling that can come to physical blows and struggle (Ex 2:13; 21:22; Lev 24:10; Dt 25:11; 2Sa 14:6); 2. (hif) rebel, engage in a struggle which is in open defiance to an authority (Nu 26:9); 3. LN 55.2–55.6 (hif) fight, i.e., engage in a military struggle (Ps 60:2) (James Swanson)

**NIDOTTE** - 1. The five uses of the ni. all refer to physical altercations between two persons. Two of the occurrences (Exod 21:22; Deut 25:11) are in legal codes; two others are in narratives, in which there is adjudication of a quarrel by a third party (Lev 24:10; 2 Sam 14:6). In Exod 2:13, which concerns Moses' authority, Moses intervenes in a fight between two Hebrews in Egypt.

2. The hi. occurrences refer to the conflicts between groups: a rebellion among the clan of Reuben against Moses, Aaron, and the Lord (Num 26:9), and in the heading of Ps 60, referring to David's war with Aram.

3. The nom. form מִצָּח occurs 3× in the OT, each time indicating conflict within Israel of which the text is critical: Prov 13:10; 17:19; Isa 58:4.

4. The nom. מִצָּח occurs only in Isa 41:12 as part of an assurance of God's salvation for Israel: "those who wage war against you (אֲנֹכִי מִצָּח) will be as nothing at all

10 verses - Exod. 2:13; Exod. 21:22; Lev. 24:10; Num. 26:9; Deut. 25:11; 2 Sam. 14:6; 2 Ki. 19:25; Ps. 60:1; Isa. 37:26; Jer. 4:7

**Deuteronomy 25:12 then you shall cut off her hand; you shall not show pity.**

- De 19:13,21
- [Deuteronomy 25 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

**DO NOT SHOW  
COMPASSION**

**then you shall cut off her hand; you shall not show pity** - This is the only mention of this type of punishment in the Pentateuch. Obviously one could not practice classic "*lex talionis*" (an "eye for an eye") as she was a female.

**Matthew Poole** on why no pity - Partly because of the great mischief she did to him, both to his person and posterity, and partly to deter all women from immodest and impudent carriages, and to secure that modesty which is indeed the guardian of all the virtues, as immodesty is an inlet to all vices, as the sad experience of this degenerate age shows; and therefore it is not strange that it is so severely restrained and punished."

**Utleigh** on **cut off** - Later Judaism interpreted this as "give restitution for," which they applied to many Mosaic texts. **"you shall not show pity"** God's law, not human emotion, must be carried out. ([Deuteronomy 25 Commentary](#))

Five times in Deuteronomy they are told not to show **pity** - Deu 7:16 Deu 13:8 Deu 19:13 Deu 19:21 Deu 25:12

**Show pity** (have compassion)([02347](#)) **chus** o pity, look upon with compassion, have compassion, spare. The idea is to show mercy, have compassion, with a focus on sparing or delivering one from a great punishment. Moses tells Israel she is not to spare or look with pity on her enemies in the Promised Land (because they are intractably evil and debauched!) (Dt 7:16, 13:8, 19:13, 19:21, 25:12).

#### Deuteronomy 25:13 "You shall not have in your bag differing weights, a large and a small.

- **bag**: Lev 19:35,36 Pr 11:1 16:11 20:10 Eze 45:10,11 Am 8:5 Mic 6:11,12
- [Deuteronomy 25 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

#### Related Passages:

Leviticus 19:35-36+ 'You shall do no wrong in judgment, in measurement of weight, or capacity. 36 'You shall have just balances, just weights, a just ephah, and a just hin; I am the LORD your God, who brought you out from the land of Egypt.

### CONDEMNATION OF USING VARYING WEIGHTS

**You shall not have in your bag differing weights, a large and a small-** **differing weights** is the Hebrew phrase "a stone and a stone." NET NOTE says that "The repetition of the singular noun here expresses diversity, as the following phrase indicates."

Ancient weights were determined by stones. Hence the expression, a stone weight, which is still in use, though it is made now of lead or iron. See Wikipedia article on [stone/stone weight](#).

**Kline** (on vv13-19) - Neighbor must be loved as self (vv. 13-16); therefore, business with one's neighbor was not to be conducted with two sets of measuring standards, the large for receiving, the small for dispensing (cf. Amos 8:5). This law somewhat expands Lev 19:35-36+, especially by the appended blessings and curses of the covenant. While this law of love sums up the requirements for inter-theocratic relationships dealt with in the immediately preceding sections of stipulations, no repudiation of the mandate of conquest (cf. Deut 7; 20:16, 17) is intended (Dt 25:17-19). Nor is there any contradiction between the two. For though God requires love of neighbor, those who set themselves to destroy the people of the typical OT theocratic kingdom removed themselves from the neighbor category, just as those doomed with Satan in eternal perdition are not the neighbors of the inhabitants of the heavenly theocracy. On the charge to exterminate Amalek, see Ex 17:8-16. Taken together, the laws of love and hate amount to the single requirement to love God, and consequently to love whom he loves and hate whom he hates. ([Wycliffe Bible Commentary on Deuteronomy](#))

[IVP Bible Background Commentary](#) - **weights** - Commerce in a society without coined money is dependent on standard weights and measures. Examples of stone and metal weights, marked with specific symbols designating weight values, have been found in Egyptian tombs as well as at several sites in Israel and Mesopotamia (stylized lion-weights were found in eighth-century B.C. levels of Nimrud in Assyria). **The merchant who used a heavier weight to buy than to sell defrauded his suppliers and customers** (Pr 11:1; 20:23; Amos 8:5). Although this was condemned as an abhorrent practice, it was common enough in the ancient world. A good example is in the Egyptian Tale of the Eloquent Peasant, which accuses government officials and grain distributors of "shorting" the people.

[Third Millennium](#) - See Leviticus 19:35-36 for the same law. Deuteronomy notes the divine displeasure at dishonest dealings in business (see Prov 11:1; 16:21; 20:10, 23; Mic 6:11). Hughes says: Over the centuries people in every society have tried to cheat others for economic gain. Deut 25:13-16 tackle the problem of dishonesty. Moses says, "You shall not have in your bag two kinds of weights, a large and a small. You shall not have in your house two kinds of measures, a large and a small. A full and fair weight you

shall have, a full and fair measure you shall have . . . " (Deut 25:13-15a). Unscrupulous traders had two kinds of "weights" (literally, "stones") and "measures" (literally, "ephahs") - large ones for buying and small ones for selling. The Hebrew word (*tsedeq*) translated "fair" in the ESV ("honest," TNIV) for the weights and measures one should have is a common word usually translated "righteousness" or "justice." Honesty in all our business dealings is an essential feature of our walk with God and is a requirement for a right relationship with him. We sometimes meet people in the business world who testify to God's goodness in life while continuing unethical business practices. This is a contradiction and, as we shall see, a huge insult to God. In spite of the strong prohibition of dishonest trade here and in Leviticus 19:35-37, this continued to be a problem in Israel. It is mentioned in Proverbs 11:1; 16:11 and by the prophets (Amos 8:5; Micah 6:11). The tendency to be dishonest, especially when everyone else around us is, is so strong that it can silence the voice of conscience. In many cultures with a so-called shame and honor orientation, people view being shamed as being the biggest evil that can happen to a person. So when one gives into the natural tendency to dishonesty there is no inclination to own up to it when confronted because the shame of being called a liar or a thief is viewed as a greater evil than being a liar or a thief. Parents, therefore, will defend their children to school authorities when they are accused, without determining whether or not the accusation is true. They feel they must not permit their children to be shamed. By doing this they help entrench dishonesty in their children's personalities.

#### Related Resource:

- Bob Utley's Special Topic - [Ancient Near East Weights and Volumes](#)

#### Deuteronomy 25:14 "You shall not have in your house differing measures, a large and a small.

- [Deuteronomy 25 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

### USE HONEST MEASURES

**You shall not have in your house differing measures, a large and a small-** Here **differing measures** in Hebrew is "an ephah and an ephah." NET = "You must not have in your house different measuring containers, a large and a small one." NLT = "you must use full and honest measures."

**NET NOTE** - Heb "an ephah and an ephah." An ephah refers to a unit of dry measure roughly equivalent to five U.S. gallons (just under 20 liters). On the repetition of the term to indicate diversity, see IBHS 116 §7.2.3c (Here is that note IBHS 116 §7.2.3c = "A singular noun may be repeated syndetically to form a phrase indicating diversity"). ([Deuteronomy 25](#))

**TSK** on "an ephah and an ephah" - This was the most common measure among the Israelites, by which all the others were made and adjusted. They are not only forbidden to use diverse weights and measures, one large or heavy to buy with, and another small and light to sell with, but they were not even allowed to keep such in the house. It is observable also, that these too common but dishonest actions are branded as "an abomination to the Lord," equally with idolatry, and other scandalous crimes

**Measures** - **0374. אֵפָה 'ēpāh, אֶפָה 'ephah:** A feminine noun of measurement transliterated as ephah. An ephah was a dry measurement and equaled ten omers (Ex. 16:36). The ephah equaled three-fifths of a bushel or in metric measure, twenty-two liters. The omer was two quarts or about two liters. The ephah was a measure used often when preparing sacrificial offerings or foods (Lev. 5:11; 6:20[13]; Num. 5:15; 28:5; Judg. 6:19; 1 Sam. 17:17). It is especially prominent in the sacrificial practices of the new temple vision of Ezekiel (45:10, 11, 13, 24; 46:5, 7, 11, 14). Israel was to keep honest measures as a part of her righteousness. Micah observes that in her rebellious and unrighteous practices, Israel had shortened her ephah (Mic. 6:10). The business practices of God's people were to be based on true weights and measures in the marketplace.

**Swanson** - **ephah**, i.e., a dry grain measurement, variously reckoned, but usually about 22 liters of volume (Ex 16:36; Lev 5:11; 6:13; 19:36; Nu 5:15; 28:5; Dt 25:14,15; Jdg 6:19; Ru 2:17; 1Sa 1:24; 17:17; Pr 20:10; Isa 5:10; Eze 45:10–46:14 passim; Am 8:5; Mic 6:10); 2. basket, i.e., a large basket which could contain a large volume (Zec 5:6, 7, 8, 9, 10+), note: apparently in these contexts the precise standardized unit is not meant; 3. אֵפָה אֶפָה (ʾē-ṣā(h) w- ʾē-ṣā(h)) two differing measures, formally, ephah and ephah, i.e., a measure which is not standardized and has a weight or volume which favors one party over another (Dt 25:14; Pr 20:10+) ([Dictionary of Semantic Domains - Hebrew](#))

**NIDOTTE** - Understanding of biblical measures has increased greatly over the last two hundred years; yet one should still exercise much caution. The ancients themselves were probably not excessively precise in their

measures as compared to modern practices. Moreover, ancient societies had various measuring norms, probably reflecting local customs (cf. the American gallon and the British imperial gallon; the land mile and the nautical mile). Indeed, caution should not only be exercised in determining the capacity or length of a measure, but also in using the mention of a particular measure in a passage to draw certain literary conclusions (e.g., the existence of a redactor or some perceived source) or to conclude other factors (e.g., the date or provenance of the passage).

**Ephah** - bushel(1), differing measures(2), ephah(33), measure(2). Exod. 16:36; Lev. 5:11; Lev. 6:20; Lev. 19:36; Num. 5:15; Num. 28:5; Deut. 25:14; Deut. 25:15; Jdg. 6:19; Ruth 2:17; 1 Sam. 1:24; 1 Sam. 17:17; Prov. 20:10; Isa. 5:10; Ezek. 45:10; Ezek. 45:11; Ezek. 45:13; Ezek. 45:24; Ezek. 46:5; Ezek. 46:7; Ezek. 46:11; Ezek. 46:14; Amos 8:5; Mic. 6:10; Zech. 5:6; Zech. 5:7; Zech. 5:8; Zech. 5:9; Zech. 5:10

**Deuteronomy 25:15** "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.

- that thy days: De 4:40 5:16,33 6:18 11:9 17:20 Ex 20:12 Ps 34:12 Eph 6:3 1Pe 3:10
- [Deuteronomy 25 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## HONESTY IS THE BEST POLICY!

**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** = NET = You must have an accurate and correct stone weight and an accurate and correct measuring container, so that your life may be extended in the land the LORD your God is about to give you." NLT = "Yes, always use honest weights and measures, so that you may enjoy a long life in the land the LORD your God is giving you." Honesty is truly the best policy because it prolongs one's days. The corollary is that dishonesty generally shortens one's days (either in jail or death).

**THOUGHT** - This passage makes me think of [Bernie Madoff](#) (April 29, 1938 – April 14, 2021) an American fraudster and financier who ran the largest Ponzi scheme in history, worth about \$64.8 billion. He was at one time chairman of the NASDAQ stock exchange. He advanced the proliferation of electronic trading platforms and the concept of payment for order flow, which has been described as a "legal kickback". Yes he lived a "long" life but it was effectively "shortened" for he spent his last 12 years behind bars where he eventually died.

**Utley** - "that your days may be prolonged in the land" This is a societal promise of longevity (cf. 4:40; 5:16, 33; 6:2; 11:9; 22:7; 25:15; 30:18; 32:47) ([Deuteronomy 25 Commentary](#))

**Prolonged** (long)([0748](#)) **arak** means to be long, make long, prolong, draw out, postpone. Arak is found most frequently in Deuteronomy, eleven times, mostly in the formula, "That (it may be well with you and that) you may 'prolong' your days in the land." Most commonly in the Hiphil stem it conveys a causative sense such as to prolong one's days (Dt. 5:16); to show continuance (Ex. 20:12); linger (Nu 9:19); elders who survived Joshua (Josh. 24:31); God delays His wrath (Isa. 48:9). Used literally, it describes the growth of branches (Ezek. 31:5); and as a command, to lengthen one's cords (Isa. 54:2).

To prolong, or lengthen as in Dt. 4:40 = "that you may **live long** on the land."

- Dt. 4:26 = You shall **not** live **long** on it." (DISOBEDIENCE = IDOLATRY)
- Dt 4:40 = "that you may live long on the land which the LORD your God is giving you for all time."  
(OBEDIENCE)
- Dt. 5:16 = "that your days **may be prolonged** (HONOR PARENTS)
- Dt. 5:33 = that **you may prolong** your days in the land which you will possess. (WALK IN OBEDIENCE)
- Dt. 6:2 that your days **may be prolonged**. (OBEDIENCE)
- Dt. 11:9 = **so that you may prolong your days** on the land (OBEDIENCE)
- Dt. 17:20 = "so that he and his sons **may continue long** in his kingdom (OBEDIENCE OF KING)
- Dt. 22:7 = and that you may **prolong** your days. (OBEDIENCE IN THE SMALLEST MATTERS)
- Dt. 25:15 = that your days may be **prolonged** in the land which the LORD your God gives you.  
(HONESTY)

- Dt. 30:18 = You will **not prolong** your days in the land where you are crossing the Jordan to enter and possess it. (DISOBEDIENCE)
- Dt. 32:47 = by this word you will **prolong** your days in the land, which you are about to cross the Jordan to possess." (OBEDIENCE)

The **assurance of blessing**, as we see in these uses in Deuteronomy, is directly related to **obedience**. Only as God's people live in accordance with the Torah can they realize security and length of days.

**Deuteronomy 25:16 "For everyone who does these things, everyone who acts unjustly is an abomination to the LORD your God.**

- all that do: De 18:12 22:5 Pr 11:1 20:23 Am 8:5-7 1Co 6:9-11 1Th 4:6 Rev 21:27
- [Deuteronomy 25 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## WARNING AGAINST DISHONEST WEIGHTS

**For everyone who does these things, everyone who acts unjustly is an abomination to the LORD your God**- Unfairness and dishonesty "stink" to God (see the derivation of the Greek word [bdelugma](#) below)! Ponder this a moment. The context here is not idolatry or flagrant disobedience but relates to weights and measures, and yet the real issue is much deeper. It reflects one's heart attitude. The heart of this problem is the problem of the heart!

**THOUGHT-** Do I seek to obey and please Him in these seemingly small matters (cf irregular tax return, butcher putting his little finger on the scale weighing out the meat, etc, etc) that one might think is little import to Him? **Abomination** is a strong term and indicates God is deadly serious about the "small things" for ultimately they speak about the character of one's heart. **Reputation** is what other people think about you. **Character** is what God knows is true about you! Is it tending toward holiness or unholiness? God is looking for a holy people to be different than the society that regularly uses "differing weights and measures!"

**NET NOTE on abomination** - The Hebrew term translated here "abhorrent" (תועבה, to'evah) speaks of attitudes and/or behaviors so vile as to be reprehensible to a holy God. ([Deuteronomy 25](#))

**Abomination** (detestable, loathsome) ([08441](#)) [toebah](#) refers to an abominable custom or thing. Abomination. Loathsome. Detestable thing. Something or someone who is loathsome and abhorrent. Here in Dt 25:16 [Lxx](#) translates [toebah](#) with [bdelugma](#) (from [bdelusso](#) = emit foul odor, turn away from something or someone on account of the "stench". A loathing or disgust, abhor in turn derived from [bdeo](#) = to stink; cf [bdekluktos](#)) which describes something foul, that which is extremely hated, disgusted, detested or abhorred. The first NT use of [bdelugma](#) is in Mt 24:15<sup>+</sup> which is fitting as it describes the "**Abomination** ([bdelugma](#)) of desolation" (the Antichrist) (cp Mk 13:14<sup>+</sup>). The other 4 uses of [bdelugma](#) are - Lk 16:15<sup>+</sup>, Rev 17:4, 5<sup>+</sup>, Rev 21:27<sup>+</sup>.

**Uses of Toebah in Deuteronomy** - these are worth looking over and pondering lest we find ourselves falling into any of the situations which are an abomination to the Holy One of Israel!

Deuteronomy 7:25 "The graven images of their gods you are to burn with fire; you shall not covet the silver or the gold that is on them, nor take it for yourselves, or you will be snared by it, for it is an **abomination** to the LORD your God.

Deuteronomy 7:26 "You shall not bring an **abomination** into your house, and like it come under the ban; you shall utterly detest it and you shall utterly abhor it, for it is something banned.

Deuteronomy 12:31 "You shall not behave thus toward the LORD your God, for every **abominable** act which the LORD hates they have done for their gods; for they even burn their sons and daughters in the fire to their gods.

Deuteronomy 13:14 then you shall investigate and search out and inquire thoroughly. If it is true and the matter established that this **abomination** has been done among you,

Deuteronomy 14:3 "You shall not eat any **detestable** thing.

Deuteronomy 17:1 "You shall not sacrifice to the LORD your God an ox or a sheep which has a blemish or any defect, for that is a **detestable** thing to the LORD your God.



Deuteronomy 17:4 and if it is told you and you have heard of it, then you shall inquire thoroughly. Behold, if it is true and the thing certain that this **detestable** thing has been done in Israel,

Deuteronomy 18:9 “When you enter the land which the LORD your God gives you, you shall not learn to imitate the **detestable** things of those nations.

Deuteronomy 18:12 “For whoever does these things is **detestable** to the LORD; and because of these **detestable** things the LORD your God will drive them out before you.

Deuteronomy 20:18 so that they may not teach you to do according to all their **detestable** things which they have done for their gods, so that you would sin against the LORD your God.

Deuteronomy 22:5 “A woman shall not wear man’s clothing, nor shall a man put on a woman’s clothing; for whoever does these things is an **abomination** to the LORD your God.

Deuteronomy 23:18 “You shall not bring the hire of a harlot or the wages of a dog into the house of the LORD your God for any votive offering, for both of these are an **abomination** to the LORD your God.

Deuteronomy 24:4 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.

Deuteronomy 25:16 “For everyone who does these things, everyone who acts unjustly is an abomination to the LORD your God.

Deuteronomy 27:15 ‘Cursed is the man who makes an idol or a molten image, an **abomination** to the LORD, the work of the hands of the craftsman, and sets it up in secret.’ And all the people shall answer and say, ‘Amen.’

Deuteronomy 32:16 “They made Him jealous with strange gods; With **abominations** they provoked Him to anger.

#### Related Resource:

- Bob Utley’s Special Topic - [Abomination in the Old Testament](#)

#### Deuteronomy 25:17 "Remember what Amalek did to you along the way when you came out from Egypt,

- Ex 17:8-16 Nu 24:20 Nu 25:17-18
- [Deuteronomy 25 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

#### Related Passages:

Exodus 17:8-16+ 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.”

### REMEMBER THE RAID BY THE AMALEKITES

**Bob Utley** introduces this last section pointing out that "Deuteronomy has several passages related to how Israel should conduct "holy war" (cf. Dt 7:1–26; 20:1–10; 21:10–14; 25:17–19). Holy War was YHWH’s war. It had special rules and procedures! ([Deuteronomy 25 Commentary](#))

**Remember what Amalek did to you along the way when you came out from Egypt** -The tribe of Amalek, descendants of Esau's grandson (cf. Ge. 36:12), attacked Israel from the rear, assaulting the stragglers (see Dt. 25:17-18). The Amalekites were perhaps the most savage and inhumane of the Canaanites.

**NET Note** - Heb "what Amalek" (so NAB, NRSV). Here the individual ancestor, the namesake of the tribe, is cited as representative of the entire tribe at the time Israel was entering Canaan. Consistent with this, singular pronouns are used in v. 18 and the singular name appears again in v. 19. Since readers unfamiliar with the tribe of Amalekites might think this refers to an individual, the term "Amalekites" and the corresponding plural pronouns have been used throughout these verses (cf. NIV, NCV, TEV, CEV, NLT). ([Deuteronomy 25](#))

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#### **QUESTION - [Who were the Amalekites?](#)**

**ANSWER** - The Amalekites were a formidable tribe of nomads living in the area south of Canaan, between [Mount Seir](#) and the Egyptian border. The Amalekites are not listed in the table of nations in Genesis 10, as they did not originate until after Esau's time. In Numbers 24:20 Balaam refers to the Amalekites as "first among the nations," but he most likely meant only that the Amalekites were the first ones to attack the Israelites upon their exodus from Egypt or that the Amalekites were "first" in power at that time. Genesis 36 refers to the descendants of Amalek, the son of Eliphaz and grandson of Esau, as Amalekites (verses 12 and 16). So, the Amalekites were somehow related to, but distinct from, the [Edomites](#).

Scripture records the long-lasting feud between the Amalekites and the Israelites and God's direction to wipe the Amalekites off the face of the earth (Exodus 17:8–13; 1 Samuel 15:2; Deuteronomy 25:17). Why God would call His people to exterminate an entire tribe is a difficult question, but a look at history may give some insight.

Like many desert tribes, the Amalekites were nomadic. Numbers 13:29 places them as native to the [Negev](#), the desert between Egypt and Canaan. The Babylonians called them the Sute, Egyptians the Sittiu, and the Amarna tablets refer to them as the Khabbati, or "plunderers."

The Amalekites' unrelenting brutality toward the Israelites began with an attack at Rephidim (Exodus 17:8–13). This is recounted in Deuteronomy 25:17–19 with this admonition:

"Remember what the Amalekites did to you along the way when you came out of Egypt. When you were weary and worn out, they met you on your journey and attacked all who were lagging behind [typically women and children]: they had no fear of God. When the LORD your God gives you rest from all the enemies around you in the land he is giving you to possess as an inheritance, you shall blot out the name of Amalek from under heaven. Do not forget!"

The Amalekites later joined with the Canaanites and attacked the Israelites at Hormah (Numbers 14:45). In Judges they banded with the Moabites (Judges 3:13) and the Midianites (Judges 6:3) to wage war on the Israelites. They were responsible for the repeated destruction of the Israelites' land and food supply.

In 1 Samuel 15:2–3, God tells King Saul,

"I will punish the **Amalekites** for what they did to Israel when they waylaid them as they came up from Egypt. Now go, attack the Amalekites and totally destroy everything that belongs to them. Do not spare them, put to death men and women, children and infants, cattle and sheep, camels and donkeys."

In response, King Saul first warns the Kenites, friends of Israel, to leave the area. He then attacks the Amalekites but does not complete the task. He allows the Amalekite King [Agag](#) to live, takes plunder for himself and his army, and lies about the reason for doing so. [Saul's rebellion](#) against God and His commands is so serious that he is rejected by God as king (1 Samuel 15:23).

**The escaped Amalekites continued to harass and plunder the Israelites in successive generations that spanned hundreds of years.** First Samuel 30:1–18 reports an Amalekite raid on [Ziklag](#), a Judean village where David held property. The Amalekites burned the village and took captive all the women and children, including two of David's wives. David and his men defeated the Amalekites and rescued all the hostages. A few hundred Amalekites escaped, however. Much later, during the reign of King Hezekiah, a group of Simeonites "killed the remaining Amalekites" who had been living in the hill country of Seir (1 Chronicles 4:42–43).

**The last mention of the Amalekites is found in the book of Esther** where [Haman the Agagite](#), a descendant of the Amalekite king Agag, connives to have all the Jews in Persia annihilated by order of King Xerxes. God saved the Jews in Persia, however, and Haman, his sons, and the rest of Israel's enemies were destroyed instead (Esther 9:5–10).

**The Amalekites' hatred of the Jews and their repeated attempts to destroy God's people led to their ultimate doom. Their fate should be a warning to all who would attempt to thwart God's plan or who would curse what God has blessed** (see Genesis 12:3). [GotQuestions.org](http://GotQuestions.org)

**Third Millennium** - **Block** comments upon this pericope saying: Inserted at the end of fourteen chapters of appeals to righteousness and covenantal fidelity demonstrated in total devotion to Yahweh and compassionate commitment to others, verses Deut 25:17-19 seem out of place. What has this note to do with the preceding? At best, the reference to Amalekites links this text to Deut 23:3, which bars Ammonites and Moabites from the assembly of Yahweh for ten generations because they had hired Balaam to curse them. But now Moses reaches back even further to the Israelites' pre-Sinai encounter with the Amalekites with a seemingly ruthless charge to blot out every memory of them (cf. Exod. 17:14-16). . . . Here Moses admonishes the people to take care of some unfinished business. . . . The opening appeal to "remember" Amalek is characteristic of Moses' rhetorical style. He cites three actions by the Amalekites against Israel that demand response. (1) They opportunistically "cut off" the Israelites along the way when they came out of Egypt. The attack signified unprovoked and malicious intervention in Israel's pilgrimage to Horeb for their appointment with Yahweh. (2) The Amalekites committed barbaric and cowardly atrocities. Fearing to engage the Israelites in a frontal attack, they let the Israelites pass by; then, when they were famished and weary, they attacked powerless stragglers at the rear. These probably involved the weak and the sick, who could not keep up with the main camp and proved easy targets for marauders. (3) The Amalekites did not fear God. Although "to fear God" sometimes bears an ethical sense, the expression should not be limited to the ethical sphere. Moses would never speak of the Amalekites fearing Yahweh, but with this comment he suggests the Amalekite attack involved direct interference in the plan of God. This interpretation may explain Moses' second charge in Deut 25:19. They are to fulfill this charge when Yahweh has given Israel rest from all their enemies and delivered into their hands the land promised them as their grant. When the Canaanites no longer threaten and they live securely in the land, they must wipe out every vestige of Amalekites. The charge adapts a declaration Moses had heard Yahweh himself issue forty years ago (Exod. 17:12-14). However, he transforms the original divine declaration of purpose into a duty: the people are to "to blot out" the "memory" of the Amalekites. The paragraph ends with a final appeal to the Israelites: "Do not forget!" But the statement is cryptic: Forget what? Grammatically it could refer to what the Amalekites have done to them and what they will eventually do to the Amalekites - though it conflicts with the command to wipe out the memory of this people. It seems best, therefore, to see this command as answering the "remember" at the beginning of the paragraph, in which case the object of "do not forget" is the preceding command to blot out the Amalekites.

**Deuteronomy 25:18 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.**

- **fear:** Ne 5:9,15 Ps 36:1 Pr 16:6 Ro 3:18
- [Deuteronomy 25 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

### **RATIONALE FOR REMOVING AMALEKITES FROM MEMORY**

**How he met you along the way and attacked among you all the stragglers at your rear**(see [below](#)) **when you were faint and weary; and he did not fear God** - Note 3 things that contributed to God's call to obliterate the Amalekites - (1) attacked the stragglers (2) attacked the weary and feeble and (3) had no fear of God. This latter statement is surprising because the pagan nations had heard of how God had delivered Israel from the most powerful nation on earth. This shows how hard their hearts were that even in this setting they still had no fear of God (Bad Move!). They remind us of Paul's summation of sinners in Romans 3:18+ "THERE IS NO FEAR OF GOD BEFORE THEIR EYES."

**THOUGHT** - For us today this reminds of Jesus' warning in Mt 26:41+ to "Keep watching and praying that you may not enter into temptation; the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak." It also recalls Peter's admonition "e of sober spirit, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. 9But resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same experiences of suffering are being accomplished by your brethren who are in the world." (1Pe 5:8-9)

**Spurgeon:** Israel was assailed in a quarter which was unguarded because unlikely to be attacked. In this we find that Amalek fell upon the rear of the host. The hindmost must have seemed to themselves to be the most secure, for Pharaoh's host had been destroyed, and what further was there to fear? The weak and feeble came slowly on, at perfect ease, never so much as suspecting the existence of a foe; the van (at the front of the entourage), I have no doubt, they kept well protected, for they knew not what hands might interrupt their onward march, but the rear they thought might be left exposed, and there it was the foe attacked them.

Christian man, wherever thou dost diminish thy caution, there, will the foe be upon thee. When thou sayest to thyself, "My mountain standeth firm;" I shall never be moved," concerning such and such a thing, it is there that thou art most likely to fall. We are strongest usually when we fancy ourselves weakest because we take the matter to God, and weakest where we dream that we are strongest because we refrain from prayer. It will be observed, I think, in most Christians' experience that God has left them to see their weakness, where they themselves reckoned that no Weakness could have been perceptible. Let us then set a watch all around, and ask the Lord to be a wall of fire (like the "firewall" to keep intruders from unknowingly entering into your computer!) around us, and a glory in the midst.

**Attacked 02179.** **זָנַב** **zānab**: A verb indicating to **attack the rear, to cut off stragglers** to destroy the rearguard. It refers to Amalek's action in cutting off or destroying the Israelites in the rear during their trek out of Egypt (Deut. 25:18). At Joshua's command, Israel used this guerrilla warfare tactic to attack the armies of five great kings (Josh. 10:19).

**Stragglers 02826.** **הָשָׁל** **hāśal**: A verb meaning to be faint or feeble. It describes the Israelites' weakened state when Amalek attacked them from the rear in their desert wanderings, lagging behind, worn out, straggling along at a walking pace, and therefore separated another from the main group.

**Faint 05889.** **אָיֵפָה** **'āyēpā**: An adjective meaning faint, weary, exhausted. It describes a person becoming weak from hard work and needing nourishment (Gen. 25:29, 30); or from exhausting travels, escapees (Deut. 25:18). It is used of a weary soul, life, needing good news (Prov. 25:25). It is used figuratively of the nations who fought against Israel being weary like a man faint from thirst (Isa. 29:8). When used of a land suffering from drought, it means parched, dried-out land (Isa. 32:2). It describes an exhausted beast or animal that must carry heavy loads (Isa. 46:1). God refreshes the weary, both physically and spiritually (Jer. 31:25).

**Weary 03023.** **יָגַע** **yāgēa'**: An adjective meaning weary, tired. It refers to a state of weakness or exhaustion from physical exertion and oppression (Deut. 25:18; 2 Sam. 17:2). It refers in general to the weariness, exhaustion, and monotony of the endless cycle of repetitiveness in the world (Eccl. 1:8).

**Rear 0310.** **אַחֲרָי** **'aḥar**: A preposition meaning behind, after, afterwards. The usage is quite uniform, varying slightly according to context. Used more adverbally, it can mean such things as behind someone or something (Gen. 22:13); afterwards or after that (an event) (Gen. 18:5). Used more specifically as a preposition, it means behind (Gen. 37:17); after, such as to pursue something literally or figuratively (Job 39:8); after in a temporal sense, such as when clouds return after the rain (Eccl. 12:2); or after talking ceases (Job 42:7).

**Fear, be afraid (03372)** **יָרָא** **yare** meaning to fear, to respect, to reverence, to be afraid, to be awesome, be frightened, i.e., be in a state of feeling great distress, and deep concern of pain or unfavorable circumstance - THE AMALEKITES DID NOT EXPERIENCE THESE REACTIONS!

**Deuteronomy 25:19** "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.

- **when** : Jos 23:1
- **you shall blot out the memory.** De 9:14 Ex 17:14,16 Jos 6:3 7:12,22-25 1Sa 14:48 15:1-35 27:8 1Sa 30:1-7 1Ch 4:43 Es 3:1 7:10 9:7-10 Ps 83:7-17
- [Deuteronomy 25 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

#### Related Passage:

Joshua 23:1 Now it came about after many days, **when the LORD had given rest to Israel from all their enemies on every side**, and Joshua was old, advanced in years,

## BLOT OUT THE AMALEKITES

**Therefore** - Term of conclusion. Based on the previous facts about the Amalekites.

**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 ([yarash](#)), you shall blot out (see study of [machah](#) above) the memory**

**of Amalek from under heaven** - God somewhat ironically calls Israel to take action when they receive His gift of **rest**. It is as if He is saying now that I have given you rest from your enemies, I want you to not rest until you obliterate this enemy. **Under heaven** in Hebrew is literally "from beneath the sky!"

**Guzik** - Because of God's strong command to battle against Amalek until they were completely conquered, many see the Amalekites as a picture of our flesh – which constantly battles against the spirit and must be struggled against until completely conquered (Galatians 5:17+). ([Commentary](#))

**Utley** points out the irony that ""In Dt 25:5–10 the loss of a brother with no descendants is discussed ("so that his name will not be blotted out from Israel."). **Here the loss (BLOTTING OUT) of descendants is commanded!** They did not fear God (v. 18); they attacked Israel's most vulnerable; they must die (cf. Ex 17:14; 1 Sa 15:2–4; 30:16–20; 1 Chr. 4:43)! ([Deuteronomy 25 Commentary](#))

**Inheritance** (gift, heritage) ([05159](#)) [nachalah](#) from **nāḥal** = signifies giving or receiving property which is part of a permanent possession and as a result of succession) means Inheritance, heritage, possession. A possession is any piece of property that passes by law to an heir on the death of the owner. It also speaks of God's promises to His people, such as the promise of the land to national (redeemed [remnant](#)) Israel.

**You must not forget** - Moses begins with a call to remember and doubles down with a call not to forget the Amalekites.

#### **Related Resource:**

- Rest in the Bible