

Manslaughter and Murder (Deut 19)

The people of Israel were greatly blessed. They had the Lord God for their King, a wonderful land for their home, and a holy law for their guide, and yet they faced some of the same problems that society today faces. Sinful human nature being what it is, nations will always have to deal with “man’s inhumanity to man”. Because the heart of every problem is still the problem of the heart, laws are necessary to bring order to society, to restrain evil, and to help control behaviour. But laws can never change the human heart. Only the grace of God can do that.

This portion of Scripture emphasizes the fact that God holds human life precious and wants us to treat people fairly, for they are made in the image of God (Gen 9:1-7). God’s desire for all nations is, “But let justice roll down like waters And righteousness like an ever-flowing stream” (Amos 5:24). His standard for us individually is, “He has told you, O man, what is good; And what does the LORD require of you But to do justice, to love kindness, And to walk humbly with your God?” (Micah 6:8)

Justice in the Land (Deut 19:1-20)

The Quaker poet John Greenleaf Whittier called justice “the hope of all who suffer, the dread of all who wrong.” That’s the ideal, but it isn’t always achieved in real life.

Without justice, society would fall apart, anarchy would take over, and it wouldn’t be safe for people to leave their homes. Israel didn’t have the elaborate police system we have today, so locating and punishing guilty criminals depended primarily on the elders and the judges. By singling out the “cities of refuge”, the Lord promoted justice in the land.

The Cities of Refuge (Deut 19:1-3)

There were already 3 cities of refuge east of the Jordan (Deut 4:42-42). It would be Joshua’s responsibility to set up the other 3 cities west of the Jordan after Israel had conquered the land (Josh 20). All these cities were easily accessible to those who needed protection. The roads had to be kept in good repair and clearly marked. Rabbinical tradition states that there were signs at all the crossroads pointing the way to the nearest city of refuge. The Lord wanted to make it easy for the innocent manslayer to escape the vengeance of angry people.

The Manslayer (Deut 19:4-6)

Modern law follows Moses in distinguishing between murder and manslaughter (Exo 21:12-14; Lev 24:17). When manslaughter occurs, the manslayer had to flee immediately or else a member of the victim’s family might chase him down and become the “avenger of blood” and kill him. Israel had no system for locating and arresting suspected criminals; it was left to the family of the victim to see that justice was done. The “avenger of blood” wasn’t given authority to act as judge, jury and executioner; he was only to hand the accused over to the proper officers.

But if the relative was angry, he might take the law into his own hands and kill an innocent man. By fleeing to the city of refuge, the manslayer was safe until the facts of the case could be examined and a verdict declared. If found innocent, he was allowed to live safely in the city of refuge until the death of the high priest. Even though he was innocent, he still paid a price for accidentally killing another human being. If he left the city of refuge, his life was in danger and the elders couldn’t protect him.

Relevance to Us Today: These cities of refuge illustrate our salvation in Jesus Christ to us who have “fled for refuge in laying hold of the hope set before us” (Heb 6:18) but they do so by contrast. The man who fled to Israel did so because he wasn’t guilty of murder, but we flee because we are guilty and deserve to be judged. Nobody has to investigate our case because we know we have sinned and deserve God’s punishment. In the case of the cities of refuge, the innocent man was allowed to live, but in our case, our Lord Jesus Christ, the Innocent One, was condemned to die.

The Israelite had to remain in the city of refuge, for if he left, he might die at the hand of the avenger. The believer can only live IF he stays in Christ, our city of refuge, for if he ever forsakes Christ or refuses to believe in Christ, then he will die (this is the sad case of the “professing” believer; see Heb 6:4-6). The Israelite had to stay until the death of the high priest. The believer in Christ can never leave our city of refuge, because our great High Priest ever lives, thus all believers live IN Christ!

There is also another way this truth is illustrated. The devil killed us by enticing us to sin and thus our Lord Jesus Christ, our Kinsman Redeemer, as the avenger of blood must do justice by destroying our murderer, i.e., the devil, AND HE DID!

Three More Cities of Refuge (Deut 19:7-10)

The Lord also made arrangements for the nation to add 3 more cities of refuge if the borders of their land were expanded. He had promised Israel a large land (Gen 15:18; Ex 23:31), and if they had obeyed His Law, He would have kept His promise. It was only during the reign of David that they obtained much the territory promised in Genesis 15:18-20 (though not all). But they lost it when things fell apart during Solomon’s reign when he introduced idolatry into Israel. If we don’t obey God’s will and claim God’s promises, we can never receive all that God wants us to have.

The Murderer (Deut 19:11-13)

What about a man who deliberately killed another and then flees to the city of refuge? The elders of the man’s city had to send to the city of refuge and bring the murderer to his native city so that he could be tried and if found guilty, be executed. God expected each citizen to be concerned about seeing that justice was done in the land. It would be easy for the officers in the murderer’s home city to let the elders in the city of refuge worry about the case, but that wouldn’t promote justice or prevent the defilement of the land and the only way to cleanse the land was to punish the offender (Num 35:33).

The Thief (Deut 19:14)

After the conquest and division of the land, each tribe had their assigned territory. Each family and clan would make its own claim and mark it out with boundary stones. Everybody was expected to honor these landmarks because to move these stones was to steal their land (Prov 22:28). There were no real estate maps in those days. Unscrupulous officials could easily exploit poor widows and orphans and take away their land and their income (Prov 15:25; 23:10-11). Since God owned the land and the people were His tenants, moving the stones also meant stealing from God, and He would punish them (Hose 5:10). No wonder this crime was included among the curses announced from Mount Ebal (Deut 27:17). The punishment of the murderer reminded them that human life is precious. The punishment of the thief reminded them that personal property must be respected.

The Liar (Deut 19:15-21)

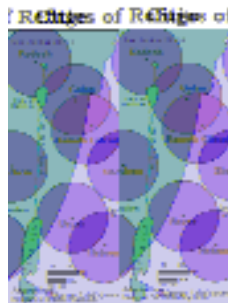
Every system of justice depends on people knowing the truth and speaking the truth. To bear false witness is to break God's commandment (Ex 20:16) and to undermine the foundation of the legal system. The person who swears to tell the truth and then tells lies is committing perjury, which itself is a serious crime.

The Jewish law required 2 or 3 witnesses to establish the guilt of an accused person (Deut 17:6; Num 35:30), and both Jesus (Matt 18:16) and Paul (2Cor 13:1; 1Tim 5:19) applied this principle to local church discipline. The fact of 2 or 3 witnesses doesn't guarantee that they are telling the truth (1Ki 21:1-14), but Moses warned that false witnesses would be punished with the same punishment they wanted for the accused.

However, there could be situations where only one witness stands up to accuse a person and he is a false witness. What then? Both the accused and the single witness would have to go to the central court at the sanctuary and present the case to the priests and the judges there (Deut 17:8-13). If the court discovers that the single witness is not telling the truth, he would receive the same sentence that would have been given to the accused if he had been guilty. This law would make liars think twice before falsely accusing an innocent person (Prov 19:5,9). Sometimes people say that fear of punishment is not a deterrent, however Deut 19:20 says otherwise. Who would you choose to believe?

Moses closed this section by reminding the people that in every case, the punishment must fit the crime (Deut 19:21; Exo 21:23-25). This is known as the *lex talionis*, which is Latin for "the law of retaliation". This judicial principle emphasizes fairness and human treatment at a time in history when punishments were terribly brutal.

When our Lord referred to the *Lex Talionis* in the Sermon on the Mount (Matt 5:38-42), He wasn't talking about the official judicial system but about how believers should deal with personal offenses and injuries. He wasn't rescinding the OT law, because He came to fulfill it (Matt 5:17-20). He was prohibiting His disciples from "paying back in kind" those who offend them or take advantage of them. If our law courts followed what our Lord meant for personal believers and applied them judicially, our country would be in the hands of criminals! Jesus meant believers to never take personal vengeance but to leave such matters to the Lord (Rom 12:17-21).



Laws of Warfare (Deut 20:1-20)

The Priest's Encouragement (Deut 20:1-4)

There is a fear that mobilizes a person, as when you hear a fire alarm go off, but there is also a fear that paralyzes a person and that's the fear that Moses was addressing. When we fear the Lord and trust Him, we need not fear the enemy. Israel had nothing to fear, for the God who drowned the entire Egyptian army would defeat the armies of Canaan.

The priest who accompanied the army would encourage the people because the wars in Canaan were holy wars. This was God's judgment on wicked nations that had rebelled against God's commandments. These nations had been given 400 years to repent (Gen 15:13,16) and they didn't. The Jews were God's people fighting God's battles and it was fitting that they hear from God's servant, a priest.

The Officers' Encouragement (Deut 20:4-9)

The priest encouraged the soldiers to face the enemy without fear, but the officers told them to go back home if they had any unfinished business. No officer wants to lead distracted soldiers whose minds and hearts are elsewhere. There were 3 occasions for temporary deferment: (1) to allow the soldier to dedicate a new house to the LORD and start living in it (v5), (2) to harvest a new vineyard whose fruit the soldier has not yet tasted (v6) and (3) to permit the engaged soldier to go home and get married (v7). These 3 exceptions suggest that God is more interested in our enjoying the common blessings of life – homes, harvests and honeymoons – than devoting ourselves only to the battles of life. He didn't want any Jewish men to use their military responsibilities as an excuse to neglect their families, their vineyards and their fiancées. What good was accomplished if their army defeated the army on the field but things were falling apart back home?

The officers presented another challenge and asked the soldiers to look within if they were too afraid to go to battle. Gideon lost 22,000 men when he issued this challenge (Judges 7:1-3). Fear and faith cannot coexist successfully in the same heart (Matt 8:26). Fear is also contagious and could discourage the other soldiers. It was fear and unbelief that caused Israel's great failure at Kadesh (Num 13-14).

War Outside the Land (Deut 20:10-15)

Upon arriving at a foreign city, they were to first offer terms of peace. If they accepted the terms, they would be spared but the city would be put under tribute to Israel. This involved paying an annual levy to Israel and making their citizens bondservants to the Israelites (see Josh 9:16-17; 16:10; 17:13). If the people refused Israel's offer of peace, then the army was permitted to besiege the city, trusting God to give them the victory. The males would be slain while the women and children would be taken as captives and the spoils would be divided among the soldiers.

War Within the Land (Deut 20:16-18)

God commanded the people to utterly destroy the people in the Canaanite cities and show them no mercy (Deut 20:16-18; 3:6; 7:1-11). Not only were they to destroy all the citizens but they were also to destroy everything connected with the wicked Canaanite religious system, including temples, idols and altars. This policy would remove dangerous temptations from the people who were always prone to follow idols.

Taking Care of Natural Resources (Deut 20:19-20)

Defeating the enemy was important but conserving natural resources was also important. God allowed Israel to wage war against rebellious people but not against His creation.

When the Lord really wanted to humble a nation, He commanded His people to destroy the good trees (2 Kgs 3:19) but this was an exception. It would take years to replace wantonly destroyed trees. War is destructive enough without adding to the ruin and waste.

[Atoning for the Land \(Deut 21:1-9\)](#)

Crime and injustice defiled the land and God didn't want His land defiled. The godless nations in Canaan so defiled the land that it vomited them out (Lev 18:24-30). So God ordained this ceremony of the red heifer which was performed by laymen to atone for the land.

The entire ritual speaks of the grace of God. The red heifer had never worked, the ground in the valley was never tilled and the elders, judges and priests had done nothing special to merit God's forgiveness for His people. The sacrifice was not even made at the sanctuary or offered by a priest.

The offering of the innocent red heifer pointed to the offering of the Son of God whose death brought cleansing, forgiveness and the annulment of God's judgment

[Taking a Wife from the Captives \(Deut 21:10-14\)](#)

Israel were not allowed to take wives from the Canaanite nations (Deut 7:3), but they were permitted to marry women from the conquered faraway cities (v14). It was expected that these women would accept the faith of Israel and enter the religious life of the nation. He had to wait a month and this would enable him to give serious consideration to what he was doing and the woman could be emotionally prepared for a new beginning, for she had to shave her head, cut her nails and put on different clothes. This would help her make the transition from her old life to her new. Shaving the head was part of the ritual for cleansed lepers (Lev 14:8-9) and the Nazirite (Num 6:18)

[The First Born Son \(Deut 21:15-17\)](#)

The original divine pattern for marriage was one man and one woman devoted to each other for life and the two exceptions – polygamy and divorce – were permitted in Israel because of the “hardness of men's hearts” (Matt 19:3-9). The first polygamist was Lamech, a rebel against God (Gen 4:19), and the men in Scripture who followed his example brought heartache and trouble into their homes. Jacob discovered that having multiple wives meant competition and friction in the home and brought a great deal of grief into the family (Gen 29:30; 31:1ff). Although God overruled the selfishness in the home and accomplished His purposes in building the nation, some of the family members paid a price.

[The Rebellious Son \(Deut 21:18-21\)](#)

This was more than a family concern, for it involved the peace and reputation of the community. The solidarity of Israel was an important element in their civil, social and religious life, for the sin of a single person, family, city or tribe could affect the whole nation (see Deut 13; Josh 7:1-15).

This is also true of the church, for the members are all members of one body, and we belong to each other and what we do affect one other.

The Lord and Moses believed that the public punishment of offenders was a deterrent to others sinning. Also the future of that family was at stake if this son was allowed to continue in his sins.

[Humiliating Criminals \(Deut 21:22-23\)](#)

A criminal found guilty of committing a capital crime was stoned to death, and if the officials wanted to make the judgment even more solemn, they could order the body hanged from a tree until sundown.

Paul applied this truth to our Lord's death on the cross (Gal 3:13)

[Helping your Countryman \(Deut 22:1-4\)](#)

Since there were few fences and walls in Israel, it would be easy for livestock to wander away. Farm animals were both expensive and essential and neither the farm family nor the nation could survive without them. The Lord is concerned that people find and restore lost animals, but He is also greatly concerned that we find the lost sinners who have strayed away (Luke 15:1-7; James 5:19-20). Certainly a human being made in the image of God is of more value than an animal! (Matt 12:12).

[Clothing \(Deut 22:5\)](#)

Literally, it says, “There shall not be man's things upon a woman, and a man shall not put on a woman's clothes.” Semitic men wore earrings and other gold jewelry. What is clear is that God made men and women to be distinct and He wanted the distinction maintained. The principle behind this law is of recognition of God's order for men and women. Some commentators believe that this might have something to do with the idolatry of the land.

[Concern for Birds \(Deut 22:6-7\)](#)

Concern for fallen animals (v4) leads to concern for defenseless birds. The Lord is concerned for the natural resources He put on the earth, not only birds but also trees (Deut 20:19-20), donkeys (Deut 22:4) and hungry oxen (Deut 25:4). God preserves both man and beast (Ps 36:6; 104:10-30) and He expects His people to assist Him in this important work. God provides food for mankind but the greed of a few can destroy the supply for the many. The Lord promised that it would go well with the nation if they showed concern for helpless creatures (Deut 22:7)

[Safety \(Deut 22:8\)](#)

The flat roof of a house in Israel was living space for the family, especially during the hot season when they slept on the roof where it was cooler. It wasn't enough to put a sign to warn people of danger, the owner had to build a parapet to help protect people.

[Maintaining Distinctions \(Deut 22:9-12\)](#)

Maintaining distinctions even in sowing and plowing and clothing is part of recognizing God's order in nature. There was also the matter of separation, for the ox was a clean animal while the donkey was an unclean one. Israel was God's people and therefore a separated one and they showed it by putting tassels on their garments.

[The Slandered Wife \(Deut 22:13-21\)](#)

The legitimacy of a man's sons guaranteed the protection and perpetuation of the family name and of the family property. The issue here isn't just personal morality so much as family legitimacy, the preventing of an illegitimate son from entering the family. No faithful woman would want her reputation blemished or her future destroyed just because of a hateful man's lie. When found to be unjustly accused, her husband would be beaten and fined twice the bride price (v19,29), the equivalent of 10 years' wages and he could never divorce her. But if the accusation was proven true, the woman would be stoned to death in front of her father's house. If her parents knew that she wasn't a virgin, this would then be a reminder to them of their part in this deception.

[Adultery \(Deut 22:22-24\)](#)

Adultery is one of the crimes that is punishable by death and this is how God protects the family. An engaged virgin was considered a man's wife and if found indulging in adultery in the city, was to be stoned to death.

[Rape \(Deut 22:25-30\)](#)

If rape occurred in the country where no one can hear her cries, the man dies while the girl is spared. Nothing is stated of her future and perhaps she remained unmarried all her life if no man was willing to marry her. But a man who raped a girl who was not engaged, he had to marry her, pay the bride price of 50 shekels to her father and not be allowed to divorce her. Again the law punished the man but protected the woman.

[Incest \(Deut 22:30\)](#)

The woman here is the stepmother to the man committing the sin and not his mother (see Lev 18:7-8). Leviticus 20:11 condemns them both to death. This sin was among those condemned on Mount Ebal (Deut 27:20). Apparently this was the sin of the man in the Corinthian church who needed to be disciplined (1 Cor 5).

[Entering the Assembly \(Deut 23:1-8\)](#)

It was a privilege to be a member of the Jewish nation and share in the blessing of God's covenant. Thus any emasculated male (eunuch) was rejected (v1) and priests who had similar defects were prohibited from serving at the altar although they could eat of the holy food (Lev 21:16-23). Israel was to be a kingdom of priests (Ex 19:5-6) therefore the men had to be free from these defects. Isaiah looks forward to the day when eunuchs would be welcomed into the kingdom and be blessed of God (Isa 56:3-5).

We can rejoice today that physical blemishes and limitations are not a barrier to faith in Jesus Christ and participation in the blessings of the New Covenant (Acts 8:26-39)

The Ammonites and Moabites were descended from Lot (Gen 19:30-38) but they didn't show kindness to their relatives. Their punishment was exclusion from Israel's national blessings forever. However, Ruth a Moabitess married Boaz and became an ancestress of Jesus Christ (Matt 1:3-7). She put her faith in the Lord and He accepted her.

The Edomites and Egyptians could enter the nation in the 3rd generation because Edom descended from Jacob's brother Esau (Gen 25:24-26) and the Egyptians received Jacob and his family in their land and cared for them (Gen 46-47).

[Sanctifying the Army Camp \(Deut 23:9-14\)](#)

The basic principle was that they treat the camp as they would their land at home, for the Lord was with them even on the battlefield, walking in their midst. The idol-worshipping nations believed that they left their gods behind when they went to another country, but Israel's God was always with them, for He is the God of all the earth. No matter where we go, God goes with us and we must not think that we can disobey Him and get away with it.

[Protecting an Escaping Slave \(Deut 23:15-16\)](#)

This would be an opportunity for Israel to show kindness to foreigners.

[No Cult Prostitute \(Deut 23:17-18\)](#)

No male and female prostitutes of Israelitish descent were not to be tolerated; i.e., it was not to be allowed, that either a male or female among the Israelites should give himself up to prostitution as an act of religious worship. The exclusion of foreign prostitutes was involved in the command to root out the Canaanites.

"The hire of a whore" is what the kedeshah was paid for giving herself up.

"The price of a dog" is not the price paid for the sale of a dog (Bochart, Spencer, Iken, Baumgarten, etc.), but is a figurative expression used to denote the gains of the kadesh, who was called "kinaidos" by the Greeks, and received his name from the dog-like manner in which the male kadesh debased himself (see Rev_22:15, where the unclean are distinctly called "dogs").

[Charging Interest \(Deut 23:19-20\)](#)

Jews were not permitted to charge interest when they loaned money or produce to their brothers, but they could charge foreigners (Deut 23:19-20; Ex 22:25-27; Lev 25:35-37). The blessings that God would send the lender would far surpass the interest he would make on the loan to his fellow countryman.

[Concerning Vows \(Deut 23:21-23\)](#)

A Jew could make a vow to give the Lord something or do something for Him in return for a special blessing. Vows were purely voluntary (Deut 23:33) and they had to be declared openly and fulfilled obediently. An example of a vow would be the marriage vow.

[Generosity \(Deut 23:24-25\)](#)

The land belonged to the Lord and the harvests were His reward for His people's faithful work and their obedience to His law. Therefore He had every right to share His harvest with those who needed it. This law didn't give people the right to take food from their neighbor's fields, vineyards, and orchards any time they wanted a snack. The privilege was reserved for the truly hungry and especially farm laborers, strangers and the poor. The law especially helped travelers passing through the land. The law gave people the privilege of meeting their need but not satisfying their greed.

[Concerning Divorce, Remarriage \(Deut 24:1-4\)](#)

The Mosaic law of divorce was a concession and not a command. God permitted it because of the hardness of the human heart. It was also an ordinance given to protect the innocent party. The bill of divorcement was an official document that protect the women from slander and abuse and also give her the privilege of a second marriage. The time required to secure this document would give the husband opportunity to think the matter through and possibly reconsider.

[Deferment \(Deut 24:5\)](#)

Any able-bodied man could take the new husband's place in the army but nobody could take his place at home. His wife would suffer the pain of separation from her beloved and, if he died in battle, the sorrow of bereavement. This law shows the high value God puts on human love and the responsibilities of marriage.

[Concerning Pledges, Kidnapping and Leprosy \(Deut 24:6-13\)](#)

Neither the whole mill nor the upper millstone was to be asked for as a pledge, by which the mill would be rendered useless, since the handmill was indispensable for preparing the daily food for the house; so that whoever took them away injured life itself, by withdrawing what was indispensable to the preservation of life. The mill is mentioned as one specimen of articles of this kind, like the clothing in Ex 22:25-26, which served the poor man as bed-clothes also. Breaches of this commandment are reproved in Amos 2:8; Job 22:6; Pro 20:16; 22:27; 27:13.

Kidnapping was prohibited and was a capital crime (Ex 21:16). To kidnap people and sell them is to treat them like merchandise and not like people created in the image of God.

[Concerning Leprosy \(Deut 24:8-9\)](#)

The plague of leprosy being usually a particular mark of God's displeasure for sin, he in whom the signs of it did appear ought not to conceal it, nor cut out the signs of it, nor apply to the physician for relief; but he must go to the priest, and follow his directions. The particular case of Miriam, who was smitten with leprosy for questioning Moses' leadership, must not be forgotten. They were to remember Miriam's leprosy which came upon her because she spoke evil of Moses. They were also to remember that Miriam herself, though a prophetess and the sister of Moses, was not exempted from God's judgment.

Concerning Pledges (Deut 24:10-13)

This teaches us to consult the comfort and subsistence of others as well. That creditor who cares not though his debtor and his family starve, nor is at all concerned what become of them, so he may but get his money or secure it, goes contrary to the law of Christ and of Moses too. They must not go into the borrower's house to fetch the pledge, but must stand without, and he must bring it. A man's house is his castle, even the poor man's house is so, and is here taken under the protection of the law. A poor man's bed-clothes should never be taken for a pledge, Deu_24:12, Deut 24:13. If they were taken in the morning, they must be brought back again at night, which is in effect to say that they must not be taken at all.

Note: Poor debtors ought to be sensible of the goodness of those creditors that do not take all the advantage of the law against them, and to repay their kindnesses by their prayers for them, when they are not in a capacity to repay it in any other way.

Concerning Servants (Deut 24:14-15)

Masters must not oppress their servants by overloading them with work, by giving them undue and unreasonable rebukes, or by withholding from them proper maintenance. A compassionate master would be faithful and punctual in paying them their wages or it will be grief to the servant, for the poor man depends upon it as the gift of God's providence for the maintenance of his family. Worse still, it will be guilt to the master for the injured servant will cry to the Lord; since he has no one else to appeal to, he will lodge his appeal in the court of heaven, and it will be sin to you. Or, if he do not complain, the cause will speak for itself. James 5:4 says, "the pay of the laborers who mowed your fields, and which has been withheld by you, cries out against you; and the outcry of those who did the harvesting has reached the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth."

Concerning Capital Punishment and Justice (Deut 24:16-18)

If the children make themselves obnoxious to the law, let them suffer for it, but let not the parents suffer either for them or with them; it is grief enough to them to see their children suffer: if the parents be guilty, let them die for their own sin; but though God, the sovereign Lord of life, sometimes visits the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, especially the sin of idolatry, and when He deals with nations in their national capacity, yet he does not allow men to do so.

Accordingly, we find Amaziah sparing the children, even when the fathers were put to death for killing the king (2Kings 14:6) It was in an extraordinary case, and no doubt by special direction from heaven, that Saul's sons were put to death for his offence, and they died rather as sacrifices than as malefactors (2 Sam 21:9,14).

Provision for the Poor (Deut 24:19-22)

Directions to allow strangers, widows, and orphans to glean in time of harvest (as in Lev 19:9-10; 23:22. The reason is given in Deut 24:22, viz., the same as in Deut 24:18 and 15:15). This is God's provision for the poor, something that Naomi made use of when she returned to Bethlehem after the death of her husband and 2 sons.

The Punishment of the 39 Stripes (Deut 25:1-3)

The Law restricted it to 40 but the Jews later made it 39 so as to not accidentally going over the legal number. The punishment must fit the offence and not demean the offender.

Not Muzzling the Ox which threshes (Deut 25:4)

The command not to put a muzzle upon the ox when threshing, is no doubt proverbial in its nature, and even in the context before us is not intended to apply merely literally to an ox employed in threshing, but to be understood in the general sense in which the Apostle Paul uses it in 1Cor 9:9 and 1 Tim 5:18, viz., that a labourer was not to be deprived of his wages.

The Levirate Marriage (Deut 25:5-10)

There are some special conditions to observe: (1) they had to be living near each other, i.e., the wife would not be a total stranger, (2) the couple had to be childless (it was against the law for the brother to marry his sister in law if they had children, Lev 18:16) and (3w) the brother-in-law had to be willing to marry her. If he refused even before the elders, then his brother's wife was allowed to humiliate him publicly and if he married, his house would be known as 'the house of the barefooted one.' Only the poor, mourners, and prisoners of war went barefoot (Is 20:2-4; Micah 1:8; Luke 15:22) but to get your shoes back was to be reinstated in society (2Ch 28:15; Luke 15:22)

Concerning Fights (Deut 25:11-12)

Two men fighting is an invitation for more trouble; better they should seek help and settle their dispute in a more constructive way. It's understandable that the wife would want her husband to win, but her method of assistance was shameful, unfair, and grossly offensive. In describing this scenario, Moses prohibited all indecent methods of combat by either men or women. The penalty would certainly restrain anybody from doing such a thing.

Honest Weights and Measures (Deut 25:13-16)

Honest weights and measures were essential to the public good (Lev 19:35-37). The prophets denounced dishonest weights and measures because their use made the poor poorer and the rich richer (Amos 8:5; Micah 6:10-11).

Once again, Moses reminded the people that their future security and blessing in the land depended on their obedience to God's Law. When they cheated others, they only cheated themselves.

Concerning Amalek (Deut 25:17-19)

The Amalekites were rejected by the Lord and Israel was not to forget their evil deeds (Ex 17:8-13). It wasn't until the time of Hezekiah that the Amalekites finally disappeared from the scene (1 Ch 4:41-43).

Presenting your Firstfruits to the LORD (Deut 26:1-11)

With this chapter Moses concludes the particular statutes which he thought fit to give Israel in charge at his parting with them. Moses gives them a form of confession to be made by him that offered the basket of his first-fruits (v1-11). (1) The offerer must begin with a receipt in full for the good land which God had given them. (2) He must remember and own the mean origin of that nation of which he was a member. (3) He must thankfully acknowledge God's great goodness, not only to himself in particular, but to Israel in general, in bringing them out of Egypt and in settling them in Canaan. (4) He must offer to God his basket of first-fruits. When he has finished the service, the offer must give glory to God and then go home and rejoice with his family, the Levite and the alien in the Lord.

Paying the Welfare Tithe (Deut 26:12-15)

It is fitting that God, who by His providence gives us all we have, should by His law direct the using of it. Then we may take the comfort of our enjoyments, when God has thus had his dues out of them. They were to testify that they had been faithfully with this tithe. To this solemn protestation they must add a solemn prayer for God's people Israel; for in the common peace and prosperity every particular person prospers and has peace.

Concluding Exhortation (Deut 26:16-19)

At the close of his discourse, Moses sums up his whole discourse in earnestly admonishing Israel to give the Lord their God occasion to fulfill His promises to them, by their keeping His commandments with all their heart and soul.