

BIBLE BRIEFING

“Are We There Yet?”

DEUTERONOMY 24-27

Introduction

“*Are we there yet?*” is a question that is always good for a laugh. Usually, it’s the kids asking the driver.

I can see the children of Israel wanting to ask; **but Moses just kept talking!** They were almost to the Promised Land – but the restating of God’s Law continued.

Chapter Twenty-four

Marriage has been in trouble since the fall of man in the Garden of Eden. As God’s first and finest institution, it should not come as a surprise it is a favorite target of the enemy.

Divorce and remarriage was God’s concession to human weakness, not a commandment. Divorce had become so prevalent among the Jews that it needed to be regulated. Especially, the divorced wife needed to be protected, so she would not become a social outcast, but could remarry within the boundaries Moses set.

[Deuteronomy 24:1](#) “When a man takes a wife and marries her, and it happens that she finds no favor in his eyes because he has found some uncleanness in her, and he writes her a certificate of divorce, puts *it* in her hand, and sends her out of his house,

This almost makes divorce easy; sort of no-fault. So, why permit it? When Jesus was asked that very question, He said it was permitted because of the hardness of the hearts of the people involved. Just because God permits something, it doesn’t mean it is His will for your life.

Also in His answer, Jesus made it clear that the only biblical reason for a divorce and remarriage was adultery on the part of one of the parties. Later, the apostle Paul would add that divorce and

remarriage were biblical if you were deserted by an unbelieving spouse.

Later on, in their legalism, the Jews interpreted it to apply to just about anything the husband disapproved of. They saw it as a loophole. But apart from adultery and desertion, God's will is for your marriage to remain until death do you part. Adultery, or desertion, give you permission to divorce and remarry; but they do not command it.

By the way: Jesus' comments in the Gospel of Mark indicate a woman also could divorce her husband (Mark 10:12).

Deuteronomy 24:2 when she has departed from his house, and goes and becomes another man's *wife*,
Deuteronomy 24:3 if the latter husband detests her and writes her a certificate of divorce, puts *it* in her hand, and sends her out of his house, or if the latter husband dies who took her as his wife,
Deuteronomy 24:4 *then* her former husband who divorced her must not take her back to be his wife after 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 is giving you as an inheritance.

Remarriage was allowed – just not to the original spouse. If you were going to get divorced, then you should think of it as final, with no reconciliation possible.

Deuteronomy 24:5 “When a man has taken a new wife, he shall not go out to war or be charged with any business; he shall be free at home one year, and bring happiness to his wife whom he has taken.

This establishes the priority of marriage, and the home, ahead of other business. It gives the partners time to really honeymoon and draw close together.

We have enacted laws regarding extended maternity leave; perhaps we need **marriage leave!**

Deuteronomy 24:6 “No man shall take the lower or the upper millstone in pledge, for he takes *one's* living in pledge.

You should not destroy a man's source of living, no matter what he owed you. In our case, we would say that God sees how we treat those who depend on us for their livelihood. We must treat them with respect and courtesy.

Deuteronomy 24:7 "If a man is found kidnapping any of his brethren of the children of Israel, and mistreats him or sells him, then that kidnapper shall die; and you shall put away the evil from among you.

There is a huge human slave trade in the world. A great deal of it is sexual, involving children.

Deuteronomy 24:8 "Take heed in an outbreak of leprosy, that you carefully observe and do according to all that the priests, the Levites, shall teach you; just as I commanded them, so you shall be careful to do.

Deuteronomy 24:9 Remember what the Lord your God did to Miriam on the way when you came out of Egypt!

Leprosy was serious – mostly as a symbol of purity before the Lord. Even someone as prominent as Miriam was quarantined for leprosy; so these rules were not to be taken lightly.

Verses ten through fifteen stress the dignity of human beings – even if they owe you something. I see this in law enforcement, where cops are dealing with the most unsavory people, yet treat them with dignity.

Deuteronomy 24:10 "When you lend your brother anything, you shall not go into his house to get his pledge.

Deuteronomy 24:11 You shall stand outside, and the man to whom you lend shall bring the pledge out to you.

Deuteronomy 24:12 And if the man *is* poor, you shall not keep his pledge overnight.

Deuteronomy 24:13 You shall in any case return the pledge to him again when the sun goes down, that he may sleep in his own garment and bless you; and it shall be righteousness to you before the Lord your God.

Deuteronomy 24:14 "You shall not oppress a hired servant *who is* poor and needy, *whether* one of your brethren or one of the aliens who *is* in your land within your gates.

Deuteronomy 24:15 Each day you shall give *him* his wages, and not let the sun go down on it, for he *is* poor and has set his heart on it; lest he cry out against you to the Lord, and it be sin to you.

The LORD hears the cry of the oppressed. James 5:4 warns the rich man who oppresses his workers: [Indeed the wages of the laborers who mowed your fields, which you kept back by fraud, cry out; and the cries of the reapers have reached the ears of the Lord of Saboath.](#)

[Deuteronomy 24:16](#) “Fathers shall not be put to death for *their* children, nor shall children be put to death for *their* fathers; a person shall be put to death for his own sin.

Bear in mind, this verse is talking about a capital offense. Parents can and should be held liable for many less than capital offenses. But you could not take the place of your children deserving of death.

[Deuteronomy 24:17](#) “You shall not pervert justice due the stranger or the fatherless, nor take a widow’s garment as a pledge.

[Deuteronomy 24:18](#) But you shall remember that you were a slave in Egypt, and the Lord your God redeemed you from there; therefore I command you to do this thing.

God had compassion on the poor. He commanded and expected hard work; it’s true that a person who refuses to work should not be fed. But sometimes otherwise industrious folks, for a variety of reasons, have needs. We should strive to meet them – first, in the family of God, then among outsiders.

[Deuteronomy 24:19](#) “When you reap your harvest in your field, and forget a sheaf in the field, you shall not go back to get it; it shall be for the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow, that the Lord your God may bless you in all the work of your hands.

[Deuteronomy 24:20](#) When you beat your olive trees, you shall not go over the boughs again; it shall be for the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow.

[Deuteronomy 24:21](#) When you gather the grapes of your vineyard, you shall not glean *it* afterward; it shall be for the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow.

[Deuteronomy 24:22](#) And you shall remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt; therefore I command you to do this thing.

These verses are about social needs; but we can apply them to spiritual needs. Twice Moses mentioned their slavery in Egypt. If you are a Christian, **you** were once a slave to sin and self. It ought to give you compassion for those still enslaved. We sometimes expect more from others than God expects from us.

Chapter Twenty-five

Whenever people exist together, there will be disputes, and some of them are criminal actions that require punishment of the offender.

Deuteronomy 25:1 “If there is a dispute between men, and they come to court, that *the judges* may judge them, and they justify the righteous and condemn the wicked,

Deuteronomy 25:2 then it shall be, if the wicked man deserves to be beaten, that the judge will cause him to lie down and be beaten in his presence, according to his guilt, with a certain number of blows.

Deuteronomy 25:3 Forty blows he may give him *and* no more, lest he should exceed this and beat him with many blows above these, and your brother be humiliated in your sight.

This was a good, old-fashioned public flogging! We see it as cruel and unusual punishment; but you see it had mercy built in to it.

Listen: According to the Bible, corporal punishment is effective. We may not see the connection; but God gave it for a reason. In the parenting series, we saw that spanking is God’s directive to drive sin and rebellion from the heart of a child. God could have given us another method, like reasoning, or time-out; but He didn’t. The rod of correction is what He commanded. Corporal punishment is not barbaric; it is merciful.

The apostle Paul was flogged no less than five times, with thirty-nine stripes each time; one short of forty, to be sure they didn’t go beyond the law.

God cares about animals:

Deuteronomy 25:4 “You shall not muzzle an ox while it treads out *the grain*.

This is applied, in the New Testament, to supporting missionaries and ministers. If it’s OK for animals to eat from the field their plowing, how much more should the spiritual field yield support for the Christian worker? In fact, 1 Corinthians 9:9-10 leads us to believe that this is the *real* point God is making in this verse, because in that passage Paul asks, *Is it oxen God is concerned about? Or does He say it altogether for our sakes?*

The next verses make you glad you don't live in a tribal society:

Deuteronomy 25:5 "If brothers dwell together, and one of them dies and has no son, the widow of the dead man shall not be *married* to a stranger outside *the family*; her husband's brother shall go in to her, take her as his wife, and perform the duty of a husband's brother to her.

Deuteronomy 25:6 And it shall be *that* the firstborn son which she bears will succeed to the name of his dead brother, that his name may not be blotted out of Israel.

Deuteronomy 25:7 But if the man does not want to take his brother's wife, then let his brother's wife go up to the gate to the elders, and say, 'My husband's brother refuses to raise up a name to his brother in Israel; he will not perform the duty of my husband's brother.'

Deuteronomy 25:8 Then the elders of his city shall call him and speak to him.

But *if* he stands firm and says, 'I do not want to take her,'

Deuteronomy 25:9 then his brother's wife shall come to him in the presence of the elders, remove his sandal from his foot, spit in his face, and answer and say, 'So shall it be done to the man who will not build up his brother's house.'

Deuteronomy 25:10 And his name shall be called in Israel, 'The house of him who had his sandal removed.'

This was all very important in the tribal society of Israel. (By the way: It was practiced in many ancient cultures). You and I may not think that being spit upon, and having our sandal removed, is any big deal. But, living here in our small, rural county, we can relate. Some people commit a social blunder, and then live with it the rest of their lives – identified by it wherever they go.

Deuteronomy 25:11 "If *two* men fight together, and the wife of one draws near to rescue her husband from the hand of the one attacking him, and puts out her hand and seizes him by the genitals,

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

Let's just say that preserving the ability to procreate was important in their culture, and leave it at that.

Deuteronomy 25:13 "You shall not have in your bag differing weights, a heavy and a light.

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

Deuteronomy 25:15 You shall have a perfect and just weight, a perfect and just measure, that your days may be lengthened in the land which the Lord your God is giving you.

Deuteronomy 25:16 For all who do such things, all who behave unrighteously, are an abomination to the Lord your God.

Weights and measures must be just and fair. You should do some research, if you're going to buy something.

The next verses recall the story, from Exodus 17, of Amalek's unprovoked attack against Israel as they journeyed.

Deuteronomy 25:17 "Remember what Amalek did to you on the way as you were coming out of Egypt,

Deuteronomy 25:18 how he met you on the way and attacked your rear ranks, all the stragglers at your rear, when you were tired and weary; and he did not fear God.

Deuteronomy 25:19 Therefore it shall be, when the Lord your God has given you rest from your enemies all around, in the land which the Lord your God is giving you to possess as an inheritance, that you will blot out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven. You shall not forget.

Amalek is an illustration of the flesh. As long as we are in this life, we shall never get rid of the flesh. In Exodus 17:16 you read, "Because the LORD hath sworn that the LORD will have war with Amalek from generation to generation" We cannot overcome the flesh by becoming ascetic or by trying to beat it down or by becoming super pious. That won't accomplish anything. But we do need to recognize that there is a war going on in each one of us. It is a war between the spirit and the flesh.

The only way we can overcome the flesh is by yielding to the Spirit of God. Only the Spirit of God can produce the fruits of the Spirit in our lives. The Lord says that He is going to blot out the remembrances of Amalek from under heaven. I thank God that He intends to get rid of the flesh someday!

Chapter Twenty-six describes two rituals that the Jews were to observe after entering their land. When they had reaped their first harvest, the people were to give the firstfruits of the harvest to God, to acknowledge Him as their Redeemer.

Deuteronomy 26:1 "And it shall be, when you come into the land which the Lord your God is giving you as an inheritance, and you possess it and dwell in it,
Deuteronomy 26:2 that you shall take some of the first of all the produce of the ground, which you shall bring from your land that the Lord your God is giving you,

and put *it* in a basket and go to the place where the Lord your God chooses to make His name abide.

Deuteronomy 26:3 And you shall go to the one who is priest in those days, and say to him, 'I declare today to the Lord your God that I have come to the country which the Lord swore to our fathers to give us.'

Deuteronomy 26:4 "Then the priest shall take the basket out of your hand and set it down before the altar of the Lord your God.

Deuteronomy 26:5 And you shall answer and say before the Lord your God: 'My father was a Syrian, about to perish, and he went down to Egypt and dwelt there, few in number; and there he became a nation, great, mighty, and populous.

Deuteronomy 26:6 But the Egyptians mistreated us, afflicted us, and laid hard bondage on us.

Deuteronomy 26:7 Then we cried out to the Lord God of our fathers, and the Lord heard our voice and looked on our affliction and our labor and our oppression.

Deuteronomy 26:8 So the Lord brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand and with an outstretched arm, with great terror and with signs and wonders.

Deuteronomy 26:9 He has brought us to this place and has given us this land, "a land flowing with milk and honey";

Deuteronomy 26:10 and now, behold, I have brought the firstfruits of the land which you, O Lord, have given me.'

"Then you shall set it before the Lord your God, and worship before the Lord your God.

As he presented his offering of firstfruits to the Lord, he was to review God's gracious dealings with his people in delivering them from oppression in Egypt and in bringing them to the bountiful land He had promised them.

The Israelite would confess, [A Syrian ready to perish was my father](#). Was Abraham an Israelite? No, he actually was not. What about Isaac? Well, he was not either. What about Jacob? Technically, Jacob was not an Israelite. The crowd that went down to Egypt were Syrians. Abraham was no more an Israelite than he was an Ishmaelite—since both peoples descended from him. Abraham was a Syrian as to nationality.

To us, Thanksgiving is a holiday in which we enjoy the plenty of the harvest. That's OK! But real, spiritual thanksgiving is giving back to God from the firstfruits.

Israel was also to present the third-year tithe to help support the Levites and the poor.

Deuteronomy 26:11 So you shall rejoice in every good *thing* which the Lord your God has given to you and your house, you and the Levite and the stranger who *is* among you.

Deuteronomy 26:12 “When you have finished laying aside all the tithe of your increase in the third year - the year of tithing - and have given *it* to the Levite, the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow, so that they may eat within your gates and be filled,

Deuteronomy 26:13 then you shall say before the Lord your God: ‘I have removed the holy *tithe* from *my* house, and also have given them to the Levite, the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow, according to all Your commandments which You have commanded me; I have not transgressed Your commandments, nor have I forgotten *them*.

Deuteronomy 26:14 I have not eaten any of it when in mourning, nor have I removed *any* of it for an unclean *use*, nor given *any* of it for the dead. I have obeyed the voice of the Lord my God, and have done according to all that You have commanded me.

Deuteronomy 26:15 Look down from Your holy habitation, from heaven, and bless Your people Israel and the land which You have given us, just as You swore to our fathers, “a land flowing with milk and honey.”

Deuteronomy 26:16 “This day the Lord your God commands you to observe these statutes and judgments; therefore you shall be careful to observe them with all your heart and with all your soul.

Deuteronomy 26:17 Today you have proclaimed the Lord to be your God, and that you will walk in His ways and keep His statutes, His commandments, and His judgments, and that you will obey His voice.

Deuteronomy 26:18 Also today the Lord has proclaimed you to be His special people, just as He promised you, that *you* should keep all His commandments, Deuteronomy 26:19 and that He will set you high above all nations which He has made, in praise, in name, and in honor, and that you may be a holy people to the Lord your God, just as He has spoken.”

I always like to bust people who talk legalistically about tithing, because Israel gave about 23% to the Lord. In fairness, it was to support the government as well as the Tabernacle, and it was for welfare.

The two rituals in this chapter are a concrete way of remembering the two greatest commandments, to love God first, and then love your neighbor. Even though rituals, they were to be performed with zeal, from the heart, as worship.

Chapter Twenty-seven records another ritual – performed only once after they entered the land and began to conquer. It was a solemn reminder that obedience to God was the secret to success.

Deuteronomy 27:1 Now Moses, with the elders of Israel, commanded the people, saying: "Keep all the commandments which I command you today.

Deuteronomy 27:2 And it shall be, on the day when you cross over the Jordan to the land which the Lord your God is giving you, that you shall set up for yourselves large stones, and whitewash them with lime.

Deuteronomy 27:3 You shall write on them all the words of this law, when you have crossed over, that you may enter the land which the Lord your God is giving you, 'a land flowing with milk and honey,' just as the Lord God of your fathers promised you.

Deuteronomy 27:4 Therefore it shall be, when you have crossed over the Jordan, *that* on Mount Ebal you shall set up these stones, which I command you today, and you shall whitewash them with lime.

They were told that when they crossed over into the land, the Ten Commandments were to be written in stone and displayed. Their tenure in the land, their dwelling there, would be determined by their obedience to God. That was a conditional arrangement. But the *land* was given to them with no conditions attached whatsoever. God has given that land to Israel, and that is an unconditional covenant. God will bring Israel back into that land because it belongs to them. That is something very important for us to realize at the present time.

Deuteronomy 27:5 And there you shall build an altar to the Lord your God, an altar of stones; you shall not use an iron *tool* on them.

Deuteronomy 27:6 You shall build with whole stones the altar of the Lord your God, and offer burnt offerings on it to the Lord your God.

Deuteronomy 27:7 You shall offer peace offerings, and shall eat there, and rejoice before the Lord your God.

Take note that God was not interested in the builder of the altar getting any glory for craftsmanship. It was all about what God did for man, not what man could do for God.

Deuteronomy 27:8 And you shall write very plainly on the stones all the words of this law."

God's law was to be prominently displayed. In fact, it was to be put in front of them wherever they went - even on the doorposts of their homes.

Plain teaching of God's Word is important.

Now a list of the curses is given. There are twelve curses given here, and I am not going into detail about them as they are self-explanatory.

Deuteronomy 27:9 Then Moses and the priests, the Levites, spoke to all Israel, saying, "Take heed and listen, O Israel: This day you have become the people of the Lord your God.

Deuteronomy 27:10 Therefore you shall obey the voice of the Lord your God, and observe His commandments and His statutes which I command you today."

Deuteronomy 27:11 And Moses commanded the people on the same day, saying,

Deuteronomy 27:12 "These shall stand on Mount Gerizim to bless the people, when you have crossed over the Jordan: Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar, Joseph, and Benjamin;

Deuteronomy 27:13 and these shall stand on Mount Ebal to curse: Reuben, Gad, Asher, Zebulun, Dan, and Naphtali.

Deuteronomy 27:14 "And the Levites shall speak with a loud voice and say to all the men of Israel:

Deuteronomy 27:15 'Cursed *is* the one who makes a carved or molded 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 27:16 'Cursed *is* the one who treats his father or his mother with contempt.'

"And all the people shall say, 'Amen!'

Deuteronomy 27:17 'Cursed *is* the one who moves his neighbor's landmark.'

"And all the people shall say, 'Amen!'

Deuteronomy 27:18 'Cursed *is* the one who makes the blind to wander off the road.'

"And all the people shall say, 'Amen!'

Deuteronomy 27:19 'Cursed *is* the one who perverts the justice due the stranger, the fatherless, and widow.'

"And all the people shall say, 'Amen!'

Deuteronomy 27:20 'Cursed *is* the one who lies with his father's wife, because he has uncovered his father's bed.'

"And all the people shall say, 'Amen!'

Deuteronomy 27:21 'Cursed *is* the one who lies with any kind of animal.'

"And all the people shall say, 'Amen!'

Deuteronomy 27:22 'Cursed *is* the one who lies with his sister, the daughter of his father or the daughter of his mother.'

"And all the people shall say, 'Amen!'

Deuteronomy 27:23 'Cursed *is* the one who lies with his mother-in-law.'

"And all the people shall say, 'Amen!'

Deuteronomy 27:24 'Cursed *is* the one who attacks his neighbor secretly.'

"And all the people shall say, 'Amen!'

Deuteronomy 27:25 'Cursed *is* the one who takes a bribe to slay an innocent person.'

"And all the people shall say, 'Amen!'"

Deuteronomy 27:26 'Cursed *is* the one who does not confirm *all* the words of this law.'

"And all the people shall say, 'Amen!'"

All these deal, one way or another, with breaking the Ten Commandments. None of us can wholly keep or fulfill God's Law. Jesus pointed out that the law was really a matter of the heart; and our hearts are desperately wicked. So, while we live outwardly according to law, we cannot keep it internally.

Conclusion

We expect to be blessed, not because of our obedience, but because of our position in Jesus. The curse we deserved was laid upon Him (Galatians 3:10-14). Though there may be an inherent curse of consequences in our disobedience, or even the correcting hand of God, under the New Covenant, He does not punish us or curse us - because all that we deserved, past, present, and future, was poured out upon Jesus.