

DEUTERONOMY

Chapter 24

Laws Concerning Divorce

24 “When a man takes a wife and marries her, if then she finds no favor in his eyes because he has found some indecency in her, and he writes her a certificate of divorce and puts it in her hand and sends her out of his house, and she departs out of his house, 2 and if she goes and becomes another man's wife, 3 and the latter man hates her and writes her a certificate of divorce and puts it in her hand and sends her out of his house, or if the latter man dies, who took her to be his wife, 4 then her former husband, who sent her away, may not take her again to be his wife, after she has been defiled, for that is an abomination before the LORD. And you shall not bring sin upon the land that the LORD your God is giving you for an inheritance.

24:1–4 In the books of Moses divorce was permitted and regulated (see Lev 21:7, 14; 22:13; Nu 30:9). Jesus conditioned the law of 24:1 in the Sermon on the Mount (Mt 5:31–32) and cited the higher law of creation (Mt 19:3–9). (CSB)

24:1 *some indecency*. Lit, “nakedness”; suggests indecent exposure, not adultery, for that would be punished by death. Luther condemned this perversion: “If one took a fancy to another’s wife, he might declare any reason both to dismiss his own wife and to estrange his neighbor’s wife from him, so that he might get her in a way that appeared right. That was not considered a sin or a disgrace among them” (LC I 295). (TLSB)

writes. Israel’s leadership was likely literate, but the general population probably was not. (TLSB)

24:4 The Law prevents frivolous divorces, since the wife could not return to her first husband. (TLSB)

abomination. All forms of sexual impurity are disgusting to the Lord. (TLSB)

24:1–4 Jesus explained that Moses only allowed laws about divorce because of “hardness of heart” (Mt 19:8). Israel’s hardness of heart made it necessary for Moses to give divorce laws despite all the laws about family and morality that the Lord had already given through Moses. Yet, in all circumstances, the Lord does not simply tolerate sin but calls people to repent and to have their hearts changed by His Word of grace. • Lord, teach us to pray with David, “Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me” (Ps 51:10). Amen. (TLSB)

Miscellaneous Laws

5 “When a man is newly married, he shall not go out with the army or be liable for any other public duty. He shall be free at home one year to be happy with his wife whom he has taken. **6** “No one shall take a mill or an upper millstone in pledge, for that would be taking a life in pledge. **7** “If a man is found stealing one of his brothers of the people of Israel, and if he treats him as a slave or sells him, then that thief shall die. So you shall purge the evil from your midst. **8** “Take care, in a case of leprous disease, to be very careful to do according to all that the Levitical priests shall direct you. As I commanded them, so you shall be careful to do. **9** Remember what the LORD your God did to Miriam on the way as you came out of Egypt. **10** “When you make your neighbor a loan of any sort, you shall not go into his house to collect his pledge. **11** You shall stand outside, and the man to whom you make the loan shall bring the pledge out to you. **12** And if he is a poor man, you

shall not sleep in his pledge. 13 You shall restore to him the pledge as the sun sets, that he may sleep in his cloak and bless you. And it shall be righteousness for you before the LORD your God. 14 “You shall not oppress a hired worker who is poor and needy, whether he is one of your brothers or one of the sojourners who are in your land within your towns. 15 You shall give him his wages on the same day, before the sun sets (for he is poor and counts on it), lest he cry against you to the LORD, and you be guilty of sin. 16 “Fathers shall not be put to death because of their children, nor shall children be put to death because of their fathers. Each one shall be put to death for his own sin. 17 “You shall not pervert the justice due to the sojourner or to the fatherless, or take a widow’s garment in pledge, 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. 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 sojourner, the fatherless, and the widow, that the LORD your God may bless you in all the work of your hands. 20 When you beat your olive trees, you shall not go over them again. It shall be for the sojourner, the fatherless, and the widow. 21 When you gather the grapes of your vineyard, you shall not strip it afterward. It shall be for the sojourner, the fatherless, and the widow. 22 You shall remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt; therefore I command you to do this.

24:5 *happy*. Marital bliss was held in high regard. (CSB)

Establishment of a stable family is given priority above civic responsibilities. (TLSB)

24:6 *millstone*. Used for grinding grain for flour and daily food. (CSB)

Women usually ground meal with a mill and baked bread each day. Taking a family’s mill would threaten people’s lives. (TLSB)

pledge. Security for a loan that a lender demanded of the borrower (cf vv 10–13, 17). (TLSB)

24:7 *You must purge the evil from your midst*. Kidnapping for the purpose of selling someone into slavery was widespread in the ancient Near East. (TLSB)

24:8 *As I commanded*. Hus: “He who commands ought only to command things in agreement with the law, and the person obeying ought to the same extent to obey them and never act contrary to the will of God Almighty” (*The Church*, p 194). (TLSB)

24:10–11 Shows consideration for someone forced to borrow. The borrower has the right to select what pledge he chooses to give, not the lender. (TLSB)

24:12–13 Should a poor person offer his cloak as security for a loan, the lender was required to return it by nightfall. (TLSB)

righteousness for you. Chemnitz: “To give a pledge back to the poor is certainly a good and righteous work, and yet it is not such a work that—if measured by the rigorous standard of the Law—would merit the title of ‘righteousness.’ ... Hence, because the person has already been justified, the term ‘righteousness’ has already been assigned to him” (*LTh* 2:646). (TLSB)

24:16 *each one shall be put to death for his own sin*. Cypr: “Every one is himself held fast in his own sin; nor can one become guilty for another” (*ANF* 5:334). (TLSB)

24:17–18 When the Israelites were in trouble, the Lord helped them. Therefore they were not to take advantage of others in difficulty. (CSB)

24:18 *remember*. Motivation for showing justice and love to the unfortunate (cf v 22). (TLSB)

24:19–22 Unripe or overlooked grain, olives, and grapes were to be left behind to show compassion for those who were allowed to glean for food (cf Ru 2:1–7). Care for the poor still required the poor to work. (TLSB)