

FPFWC Christian Development



God The Source of Justice

January 2022

Winter Quarter

January 29, 2022

Lesson #4 – Justice and the Marginalized

SCRIPTURE TEXT –Deuteronomy 24:10-21

Key Verse - Thou shalt remember that thou wast a bondman in Egypt, and the LORD thy God redeemed thee thence: therefore I command thee to do this thing.—Deuteronomy 24:18

ICE BREAKERS –

1. *How can we keep from taking advantage of others?*
2. *Why is it important to remember how the Lord treated us when treating others?*

LESSON BACKGROUND

Previous lessons from this quarter focused on other aspects of God’s law: His covenant with Israel (lesson 1), which served as the foundation for the law, and those individuals tasked with ruling on God’s law (lesson 8). This lesson turns to the details of God’s law for Israel. These laws make up the bulk of Deuteronomy’s content and are a central theme of the Torah, the first five books of the Old Testament. The Hebrew word *torah* can mean “teaching” or “law,” specifically God’s laws for ancient Israel. These laws depicted how the Israelites were to live rightly with each other, with their neighboring peoples, and with their God.

Today’s Scripture text comes from Moses’ second address in Deuteronomy to the people of Israel, with the detailed covenant stipulations that God required for His people (Deuteronomy 12:1–26:19). Moses’ address began with a detailed description of proper worship of God (12:1–16:17) and continued with descriptions of proper justice in law (16:18–20; 17:8–13), regulations regarding the handling of violent acts (19:1–21:23), and issues of marriage (22:13–30), among other things, as God provided an ordered description of a new society.

For Israel, part of being God’s covenant people was the just and proper treatment of poor and otherwise marginalized individuals. Previously, Moses had reminded the Israelites that poor people would always be part of the population (Deuteronomy 15:11; compare John 12:18). As a result, Moses commanded an openhanded policy toward these individuals, requiring generous giving without resentment (Deuteronomy 15:10). Today’s Scripture expands on this theme.

LESSON COMMENTARY

24:10–13. The issue of pledges had already been mentioned (v. 6), but now the topic is expanded, especially in relation to treating debtors with dignity. Creditors were prohibited from entering a debtor’s **house**, thus maintaining dignity and the privacy of his own home. If the debtor is destitute, the creditor must not take as

collateral anything the debtor needs to secure a good night's sleep. For instance a cloak, an outer garment used not only by day but also as a covering at night from the chilly air, could not be used as a **pledge**. If Israel was obedient in the land, then the Lord would bless creditors with **righteousness** because of their compassion on the poor.

24:14–15. Similar to the previous legislation, employers were to pay laborers each day before the workers went home. This way the **poor** had funds necessary to provide for their families who were living hand-to-mouth. If employers did not implement this policy, then the workers could cry out to the **LORD**, who would reckon the employer's merciless action as **sin**.

24:16. Many previous law violations stipulated capital punishment. This particular legislation seeks to provide further guidance for its implementation. The law made no provision for voluntary substitutionary death for criminal acts. **Fathers** were not to **be put to death** for their sons' behavior, and vice versa. This does not negate what was said earlier (5:9). There the context was dealing with a father's sinful actions in the spiritual realm (not criminal realm) that had long-range consequences for his offspring. Contextually, this law in 24:16 is centrally located in this section and helps heighten the importance of individual responsibility.

24:17–18. Aliens, orphans, and widows were often easy targets for judicial and economic abuse and mistreatment. Israelites were not to **pervert ... justice** at their expense or to use as collateral what little the underprivileged had and needed. The basis for compassionate behavior toward them was that Israel knew what it was like to be in that situation while they were enslaved in **Egypt**.

24:19–22. In continuing legislation that relates to the poor, further laws were stipulated about gleaning and reaping. Landowners were to leave some grain, olives, and grapes during the harvest for the **alien, orphan, and widow** (v. 19) to glean. This gave them direct involvement in a dignified way of providing for the poor. An example of this law in practice is in Ru 2. By following these laws for the poor they were modeling God's gracious acts toward them while they were enslaved in Egypt (cf. Dt 24:18).

LESSON NUGGET – God had special concern for the poor, and He depended on the generosity of His people to meet their needs. He promised to bless all who showed compassion to aliens, widows, and orphans. We should ask ourselves where we would be if others helped us to the same degree that we help others.

Sources: *Moody Bible Commentary, Standard Lesson Commentary, The Essential Everyday Bible Commentary and The Word for Today Bible.*