

Deuteronomy 24:6

<https://thebiblesays.com/commentary/deut/deut-24/deuteronomy-246/>

Moses told the Israelites that they could not take a handmill or an upper millstone as collateral for a loan.

The law here in v. 6 states that *no one shall take a handmill or an upper millstone in pledge* (v. 6). A *handmill* was a device that consisted of two stone slabs: an *upper millstone* and a lower stone. It was used for grinding grain between the two stones to make flour, with which to bake bread. The grain was normally placed upon the bottom stone, and the grinder moved the upper stone back and forth over the fixed horizontal stone. Grinding grain for bread was essential in ancient Israel because it was a source of the man's daily food and also his livelihood. Thus, to take and hold a man's *handmill* or even an *upper millstone* as a *pledge* (or collateral) against the payment of a debt would be to deprive his family of the means of making flour for bread. To do so would be tantamount to *taking a life in pledge*.

This law was designed to protect the poor in Israel, ensuring that they were able to meet their basic needs. This was important for the welfare of the Israelite community. God's covenant law was a structure that encouraged self-governance, and care and love for others (Leviticus 19:18). God called Israel to stand apart, be sanctified, and not copy the pagan nations' culture where the strong exploited the weak. This law outlawed such exploitation.

In application it emphasizes the principle that human beings are more important than money or material possessions. Accordingly, the law allowed a lender to hold an object from the borrower as collateral until he paid his debt, but without abusing him or making his situation worse by depriving him of an item necessary for his survival.

Later in the history of Israel, the prophet Jeremiah foretold that during the Babylonian captivity (which occurred in 586 BC), there would no longer be "the sound of the millstones and the light of the lamp" (Jeremiah 25:10). That means bread and light – two of the most important necessities for survival— would be lacking.

Taking these implements (the *handmill* and the *millstone*) would be taking away a person's means to supply his daily needs as well as his way to make a living. In doing this it would eliminate his ability to provide for himself, and rob him of human dignity.

Biblical Text:

‘No one shall take a handmill or an upper millstone in pledge, for he would be taking a life in pledge.