

Deuteronomy 25:13-16

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Moses commands the Israelites to use accurate weights and measures when they engage in commerce with other people.

The next law that Moses discussed concerned honest business practices. He described two applications of the law. It stated that the people were to *not have in your bag differing weights, a large and a small* (v. 13). This prohibited the Israelites from defrauding an unsuspecting person by using differing sets of weights, depending on whether they thought they could get away with it. The word translated as *weights* here is literally “stones.” In the ancient world, stones were used to designate weight values, since coined money was not available. Moses prohibited the Israelites from using *large weights* when purchasing and *small weights* when selling, for doing so would be to steal from other people. It would be abusing the trust of others for selfish gain.

In the second application, Moses forbade the Israelites to have in their *house differing measures, a large and a small* (v. 14). The term used for *measure* is literally *ephah* in the Hebrew language, a dry measure equivalent to three-fifths of a bushel used for the trading of dry and liquid products such as wine and olive oil. They were to have one weight, such that all transactions are done with justice and fairness.

Moses commanded the Israelites not to practice trickery when engaging in trade. Instead, they were to *have a full and just weight, a full and just measure* (v. 15). Obeying this principle would ensure *that your days may be prolonged in the land which the Lord your God gives you*. It was by being honest with one another that the Israelites would live a long life and be able to enjoy the fruits of their hard labor. This is, in part, a Divine promise. But it is also a practical matter. Honest societies thrive economically, as trade creates mutual benefit. Dishonesty ultimately deteriorates the society into strong men exploiting the weak. With economic strength comes military strength. By advancing a culture of honesty, Israel would prosper, and the people would be able to dwell in the land, and resist being overthrown.

A person who was honest in his business dealings demonstrated his faith that the LORD could sustain him both monetarily and physically.

On the other hand, *for everyone who does these things, everyone who acts unjustly is an abomination to the Lord your God* (v. 16). Failure to be honest and transparent in business dealings would be to commit an act that was abominable and deserving of God's judgment. Thus, anyone cheating others using inaccurate *weights and measures* would deserve God's punishment because this would be an *abomination*, a detestable act. This teaching is echoed in the book of Proverbs which says, "A false balance is an abomination to the Lord, but a just weight is His delight" (Proverbs 11:1; 20:23).

Sadly, the people of God did not live up to this regulation. Amos observed how the rich in Israel were taking advantage of the poor. They made "the bushel smaller and the shekel bigger, to cheat with dishonest scales, so as to buy the helpless for money and the needy for a pair of sandals" (Amos 8:5-6). This was one of the reasons the Suzerain God decided to send the prophet Amos to warn His people concerning His judgment. God allowed Israel to be invaded and exiled by the Assyrians. They did not have *days prolonged in the land* because they did not treat one another justly.

Biblical Text:

¹³ You shall not have in your bag differing weights, a large and a small. ¹⁴ You shall not have in your house differing measures, a large and a small. ¹⁵ You shall have a full and just weight; you shall have a full and just measure, that your days may be prolonged in the land which the Lord your God gives you. ¹⁶ For everyone who does these things, everyone who acts unjustly is an abomination to the Lord your God.