Deuteronomy 25:4

https://thebiblesays.com/commentary/deut/deut-25/deuteronomy-254/

Moses's concern for compassion moves to the treatment of domestic animals. He now commands Israel not to muzzle the ox while he is threshing.

Having provided the proper punishment to be given to a guilty person (vv. 1 – 3), Moses then turned to proper treatment of animals. The people were to *not muzzle the ox while he is threshing* (v. 4). The *ox* was a large, domesticated animal ideally suited for farm work such as plowing (Deuteronomy 14:4; 22:10) and threshing grain—the process of removing the grain from the stem of the plant. That means, the people of God were prohibited to place some kind of object over the mouth of the *ox* to prevent him from eating the grain while he worked. The ox should be entitled to eat as much grain as he wants while he was working to thresh the grain.

This verse might seem surprising in this context of providing justice for humans. Moses might have added this law here (after the law concerning fair treatment of guilty criminals) to emphasize the concept that if an animal was worthy of compassionate treatment, a human being who was created as God's image was worthy of much more. The previous passage placed a limitation on punishment, limiting strikes with a rod not to exceed forty.

The apostle Paul makes it clear that the primary application of this verse should be for humans. After quoting the Deuteronomy 25:4 prohibition regarding muzzling the ox, Paul says "God is not concerned about oxen, is He? Or is He speaking altogether for our sake? Yes, for our sake it was written" (1 Corinthians 9:9b-10a).

In the New Testament, the apostle Paul quotes this verse in two places to apply the principle that those who minister to the church should be supported materially (1 Timothy 5:18; 1 Corinthians 9:9–14). Paul told his readers that the "Lord directed those who proclaim the gospel to get their living from the gospel" (1 Corinthians 9:14). It could also be that Moses placed this verse prohibiting the muzzling of the ox here to advance the principle that judges ought to be paid for their work in administering justice in Israel.

Biblical Text:

4 You shall not muzzle the ox while he is threshing.