

Deuteronomy 24:1-4 is clearly a conditional. The difference in translation between the A.V. on the one hand and the NASB and NIV on the other hand lies in the placement of the beginning of the conclusion (the apodosis), which is signalled by the word "then." In the NASB and the NIV the conclusion comes in verse 4, whereas in the A.V. the conclusion comes in verse 1 (as is indicated in the versions by underlining). In the Hebrew the clauses of the protasis (the conditions) are so closely joined by conjunctions that there is no good place for the apodosis (the conclusion) until verse 4 where the negative LO ("not") appears. The protasis includes various possible situations to which the apodosis of verse 4 applies. The protasis says that if a man marries, and something happens between them, and he divorces his wife, and she marries another and the second husband divorces her or dies; then she may not return to the first husband. (Incidentally, the Septuagint [an important translation of the Hebrew O.T. into Greek, made about 250-200 B.C.] supports this rendering of the Hebrew text.

R. Laird Harris, in his monograph, "The Sermon on the Mount and Verbal Inspiration," states:

According to this, it is not an allowance of divorce, but a forbidding of "wife trading." The Septuagint translation of these verses supports this rendering of the Hebrew and it is followed in the Revised Standard Version [of 1899]. Actually the propriety or impropriety of divorce is not taken up in Dt. 24 according to this interpretation. Divorce is just accepted as a regular social custom, but its grosser evils are regulated. Careful attention to the Hebrew of Dt. 24:1-4 gives a similar interpretation. There is here no blanket approval of divorce for indiscriminate causes.

But the Pharisees in tempting Jesus tried to get him to side with either Hillel or Shammal and thus secure the hatred of the other side (Matt. 19:3-9). Christ answered them with reference to the institution of marriage at Creation. The Pharisees answered Why then did Moses "command" to give a writ of divorce? Jesus answers that Moses "suffered" divorce for unspecified causes, but this was not God's moral law and did not have divine approval. The civil legislation of Moses winked at various sins like polygamy, slavery, etc., without giving them divine approval. The civil legislation was based on moral law, yet it was a practical regulation of the people. It did not deal with all possible matters. Moses' lack of prohibition of these things does not make these things right as is clearly seen by other passages in the Old Testament (Mal. 2:16). Actually the Pharisaic mistranslation of Dt. 24:1-4 would have been avoided if they had used good principles of translation. Jesus' translation is accurate and in full accord with the Old Testament itself. That divorce does have one proper ground, fornication, Jesus makes clear in His additional statement (Matt. 5:32).

MAT 5:33 "Again, you have heard that the ancients were told, 'You shall not make false vows, but shall fulfill your vows to the Lord.'

MAT 5:34 "But I say to you, make no oath at all, either by heaven, for it is the throne of God,

MAT 5:35 or by the earth, for it is the footstool of His feet, or by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great King.