

# Deuteronomy 17 Commentary

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Moses on Mt Nebo (Deuteronomy 34:1+)  
Listen to Mt Nebo as you Ponder How Moses' May Have Felt

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deut

Source: Ryrie Study Bible

## Deuteronomy

Dt 1:1-4:43	Dt 4:44-26:19		Dt 27:1-34:12	
Moses' First Discourse	Moses' Second Discourse		Moses' Third Discourse	
Historical Review	Legal Exposition		Prophetical Promises	
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Plains of Moab							
ca. 2 Months <b>Moses: Author</b> (Except Dt 34)							

**Deuteronomy 17:1 "You shall not sacrifice to the LORD your God an ox or a sheep which has a blemish or any defect, for that is a detestable thing to the LORD your God."**

- Ex 12:5 Lev 22:20-25 Mal 1:8,13,14 Heb 9:14 1Pe 1:19
- Thou shalt: De 15:21
- sheep: or, goat, any evil favouredness, Ge 41:3,4,19
- for that: De 23:18 24:4 25:16 Pr 6:16 11:1 15:8 20:10
- [Deuteronomy 17 Resources](#)

#### Related Passages:

Leviticus 22:17-25+ Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, 18 "Speak to Aaron and to his sons and to all the sons of Israel and say to them, 'Any man of the house of Israel or of the aliens in Israel who presents his offering, whether it is any of their votive or any of their freewill offerings, which they present to the LORD for a burnt offering— 19for you to be accepted—it **must be a male without defect** from the cattle, the sheep, or the goats. 20'Whatever has a defect, you shall not offer, for it will not be accepted for you. 21'When a man offers a sacrifice of peace offerings to the LORD to fulfill a special vow or for a freewill offering, of the herd or of the flock, it must be perfect to be accepted; there shall be no defect in it. 22'Those that are blind or fractured or maimed or having a running sore or eczema or scabs, you shall not offer to the LORD, nor make of them an offering by fire on the altar to the LORD. 23'In respect to an ox or a lamb which has an overgrown or stunted member, you may present it for a freewill offering, but for a vow it will not be accepted. 24'Also anything with its testicles bruised or crushed or torn or cut, you shall not offer to the LORD, or sacrifice in your land, 25nor shall you accept any such from the hand of a foreigner for offering as the food of your God; for their corruption is in them, they have a defect, they shall not be accepted for you.'"

Malachi 1:6-8+ 'A son honors his father, and a servant his master. Then if I am a father, where is My honor? And if I am a master, where is My respect?' says the LORD of hosts to you, O priests who despise My name. But you say, 'How have we despised Your name?' 7"You are presenting defiled food upon My altar. But you say, 'How have we defiled You?' In that you say, 'The table of the LORD is to be despised.' 8"But when you present the blind for sacrifice, is it not evil? And when you present the lame and sick, is it not evil? Why not offer it to your governor? Would he be pleased with you? Or would he receive you kindly?" says the LORD of hosts.

#### Outline:

- Justice Must be Administered Dt 16:18–17:13
- Principles Governing Kings Dt 17:14–20

### BLEMISH-FREE SACRIFICES

**You shall not sacrifice to the LORD your God an ox or a sheep which has a blemish**(see [mum](#):Lxx - momos) **or any defect** (Lit = "evil thing!") **for that is a detestable thing** ("an abomination") - **Defect** is literally evil word (dabar ra) meaning "evil thing" (Lxx = [rhema poneros](#)) See note on Dt 15:19-23. This would be blatant violation of the covenant. Do I offer less than the best to the Best (only) God in the Universe? If so is this not in essence holding Him in low esteem? See God's words in Malachi (above) where Yahweh says they have "despise ([bazah](#) - hold in contempt; think lightly of) My name!" Are you (am I) thinking lightly of His majestic

Name?

Deuteronomy 15:19-23+ You shall consecrate to the LORD your God all the firstborn males that are born of your herd and of your flock; you shall not work with the firstborn of your herd, nor shear the firstborn of your flock. 20 "You and your household shall eat it every year before the LORD your God in the place which the LORD chooses. 21 "But if it has any defect, such as lameness or blindness, or any serious defect, you shall not sacrifice it to the LORD your God. 22 "You shall eat it within your gates; the unclean and the clean alike may eat it, as a gazelle or a deer. 23 "Only you shall not eat its blood; you are to pour it out on the ground like water.

**Utley - "blemish or any defect"** This verse is contextually related to Dt 16:21–22 (see note), which also deals with appropriate places and types of sacrifices. In the OT "blemish" refers to any kind of physical defect (cf. Dt 15:21+; Lev. 22:20–25+). Malachi 1:6–8+ records an example of Israel giving God less than the best. ([Deuteronomy 17 Commentary](#))

**Detestable** (abomination, loathsome) ([08441](#)) **toebah** refers to an abominable custom or thing and is primarily used of things, persons or practices that are either ritually or morally offensive to the Lord. Toebah is an important word in Deuteronomy (Dt 12:31; 13:14; 14:3; 17:1, 4; 18:9, 12; 20:18; 22:5; 23:18; 24:4; 25:16; 27:15; 32:16). Abomination. Loathsome. Detestable thing. Something or someone who is loathsome and abhorrent. **Toebah** "is primarily understood in the context of the Law. It identifies unclean food (Dt. 14:3); the activity of the idolater (Isa. 41:24); the practice of child sacrifice (Dt. 12:31); intermarriage by the Israelites (Mal. 2:11); the religious activities of the wicked (Pr 21:27); and homosexual behavior (Lev. 18:22). In a broader sense, the word is used to identify anything offensive (Pr 8:7)."

**Tobebah** in Deuteronomy - Deut. 7:25; Deut. 7:26; Deut. 12:31; Deut. 13:14; Deut. 14:3; Deut. 17:1; Deut. 17:4; Deut. 18:9; Deut. 18:12; Deut. 20:18; Deut. 22:5; Deut. 23:18; Deut. 24:4; Deut. 25:16; Deut. 27:15; Deut. 32:16

Note that the [Lxx](#) translates **toebah** with [bdeugma](#) (from [bdeusso](#) = emit foul odor, turn away from something or someone on account of the "stench". A loathing or disgust, abhor in turn derived from **bdeo** = to stink; cf. [bdekluktos](#)) which describes something foul, that which is extremely hated, disgusted, detested or abhorred. The first NT use of [bdeugma](#) is in Mt 24:15+ which is fitting as it describes the "Abomination ([bdeugma](#)) of desolation" (the Antichrist) (cp Mk 13:14+). The other 4 uses of [bdeugma](#) are - Lk 16:15+, Rev 17:4, 5+, [Rev 21:27+](#).

**To the LORD your God** - "the LORD your God" This is the common (most often in Deuteronomy - see uses below) covenantal phrase using YHWH and Elohim. **Your** means "belonging to you," "associated with you." **Your** is a form of the possessive case of "you." Do believers really comprehend the depth of meaning that God is referred to as "your God" (i.e., our God)? If we did, would it affect the way we live (for **our** God or for **ourselves**)? Just wondering. If you need a little motivation, take a moment [to ponder and worship "OUR GOD" with the song by Chris Tomlin](#).

Deut. 1:10; Deut. 1:21; Deut. 1:26; Deut. 1:30; Deut. 1:31; Deut. 1:32; Deut. 2:7; Deut. 2:30; Deut. 3:18; Deut. 3:20; Deut. 3:21; Deut. 3:22; Deut. 4:2; Deut. 4:3; Deut. 4:4; Deut. 4:10; Deut. 4:19; Deut. 4:21; Deut. 4:23; Deut. 4:24; Deut. 4:25; Deut. 4:29; Deut. 4:30; Deut. 4:31; Deut. 4:34; Deut. 4:40; Deut. 5:6; Deut. 5:9; Deut. 5:11; Deut. 5:12; Deut. 5:14; Deut. 5:15; Deut. 5:16; Deut. 5:32; Deut. 5:33; Deut. 6:1; Deut. 6:2; Deut. 6:5; Deut. 6:10; Deut. 6:13; Deut. 6:15; Deut. 6:16; Deut. 6:17; Deut. 7:1; Deut. 7:2; Deut. 7:6; Deut. 7:9; Deut. 7:12; Deut. 7:16; Deut. 7:18; Deut. 7:19; Deut. 7:20; Deut. 7:21; Deut. 7:22; Deut. 7:23; Deut. 7:25; Deut. 8:2; Deut. 8:5; Deut. 8:6; Deut. 8:7; Deut. 8:10; Deut. 8:11; Deut. 8:14; Deut. 8:18; Deut. 8:19; Deut. 8:20; Deut. 9:3; Deut. 9:4; Deut. 9:5; Deut. 9:6; Deut. 9:7; Deut. 9:16; Deut. 9:23; Deut. 10:9; Deut. 10:12; Deut. 10:14; Deut. 10:17; Deut. 10:20; Deut. 10:22; Deut. 11:1; Deut. 11:2; Deut. 11:12; Deut. 11:13; Deut. 11:22; Deut. 11:25; Deut. 11:27; Deut. 11:28; Deut. 11:29; Deut. 11:31; Deut. 12:4; Deut. 12:5; Deut. 12:7; Deut. 12:9; Deut. 12:10; Deut. 12:11; Deut. 12:12; Deut. 12:15; Deut. 12:18; Deut. 12:20; Deut. 12:21; Deut. 12:27; Deut. 12:28; Deut. 12:29; Deut. 12:31; Deut. 13:3; Deut. 13:4; Deut. 13:5; Deut. 13:10; Deut. 13:12; Deut. 13:16; Deut. 13:18; Deut. 14:1; Deut. 14:2; Deut. 14:21; Deut. 14:23; Deut. 14:24; Deut. 14:25; Deut. 14:26; Deut. 14:29; Deut. 15:4; Deut. 15:5; Deut. 15:6; Deut. 15:7; Deut. 15:10; Deut. 15:14; Deut. 15:15; Deut. 15:18; Deut. 15:19; Deut. 15:20; Deut. 15:21; Deut. 16:1; Deut. 16:2; Deut. 16:5; Deut. 16:6; Deut. 16:7; Deut. 16:8; Deut. 16:10; Deut. 16:11; Deut. 16:15; Deut. 16:16; Deut. 16:17; Deut. 16:18; Deut. 16:20; Deut. 16:21; Deut. 16:22; Deut. 17:1; Deut. 17:2; Deut. 17:8; Deut. 17:12; Deut. 17:14; Deut. 17:15; Deut. 18:5; Deut. 18:9; Deut. 18:12; Deut. 18:13; Deut. 18:14; Deut. 18:15; Deut. 18:16; Deut. 19:1; Deut. 19:2; Deut. 19:3; Deut. 19:8; Deut. 19:9; Deut. 19:10; Deut. 19:14; Deut. 20:1; Deut. 20:4; Deut. 20:13; Deut. 20:14; Deut. 20:16; Deut. 20:17; Deut. 20:18; Deut. 21:1; Deut. 21:5; Deut. 21:10; Deut. 21:23; Deut. 22:5; Deut. 23:5; Deut. 23:14;

Deut. 23:18; Deut. 23:20; Deut. 23:21; Deut. 23:23; Deut. 24:4; Deut. 24:9; Deut. 24:13; Deut. 24:18; Deut. 24:19; Deut. 25:15; Deut. 25:16; Deut. 25:19; Deut. 26:1; Deut. 26:2; Deut. 26:4; Deut. 26:5; Deut. 26:10; Deut. 26:11; Deut. 26:13; Deut. 26:16; Deut. 26:19; Deut. 27:2; Deut. 27:3; Deut. 27:5; Deut. 27:6; Deut. 27:7; Deut. 27:9; Deut. 27:10; Deut. 28:1; Deut. 28:2; Deut. 28:8; Deut. 28:9; Deut. 28:13; Deut. 28:15; Deut. 28:45; Deut. 28:47; Deut. 28:52; Deut. 28:53; Deut. 28:58; Deut. 28:62; Deut. 29:6; Deut. 29:10; Deut. 29:12; Deut. 30:1; Deut. 30:2; Deut. 30:3; Deut. 30:4; Deut. 30:5; Deut. 30:6; Deut. 30:7; Deut. 30:9; Deut. 30:10; Deut. 30:16; Deut. 30:20; Deut. 31:3; Deut. 31:6; Deut. 31:11; Deut. 31:12; Deut. 31:13; Deut. 31:26

**Guzik** - God did not recognize the giving of cast-off, worthless items, as a true sacrifice unto Him. We have a tendency to always want to give God second best—if not third or fourth best. But God will not receive such a sacrifice.. There are countless jokes illustrating this point. One common one describes a farmer whose cow gave birth to twins, and he swore he would give one of the calves to God. He didn't decide which one to give to God, until one day one of the calves died. He said to his wife: "Guess what? God's calf died today!". Israel did not always live up to this standard: And when you offer the blind as a sacrifice, is it not evil? And when you offer the lame and sick, is it not evil? Offer it then to your governor! Would he be pleased with you? Would he accept you favorably?" Says the LORD of hosts. (Malachi 1:8)i. David powerfully illustrated the idea behind this commandment when he refused to accept the threshing floor of Araunah as a gift, which David was going to give to the LORD as the place to build the temple. David said, nor will I offer burnt offerings to the LORD my God with that which costs me nothing (2 Samuel 24:24). David understood that if it didn't cost something, it wasn't a sacrifice. ([Enduring Word Commentary - Deut 17](#))

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### **Detestable Things - Utley SPECIAL TOPIC: ABOMINATIONS**

"Abominations" (BDB 1072) can refer to several things:

- 1. things related to Egyptians:**
  - a. they loathe eating with Hebrews, Gen. 43:32
  - b. they loathe shepherds, Gen. 46:34
  - c. they loathe Hebrew sacrifices, Exod. 8:26
- 2. things related to YHWH's feelings toward Israel's actions:**
  - a. unclean food, Deut. 14:2
  - b. idols, Deut. 7:25; 18:9, 12; 27:15
  - c. pagan spiritists, Deut. 18:9, 12
  - d. burning children to Molech, Lev. 18:21–22; 20:2–5; Deut. 12:31; 18:9, 12; 2 Kgs. 16:3; 17:17–18; 21:6; Jer. 32:35
  - e. Canaanite idolatry, Deut. 13:14; 17:4; 20:17–18; 32:16; Isa. 44:19; Jer. 16:18; Ezek. 5:11; 6:9; 11:18, 21; 14:6; 16:50; 18:12
  - f. sacrificing blemished animals, Deut. 17:1 (cf. 15:19–23; Mal. 1:12–13)
  - g. sacrificing to idols, Jer. 44:4–5
  - h. remarrying a woman whom you had previously divorced, Deut. 24:2
  - i. women wearing man's clothes (possibly Canaan worship), Deut. 22:5
  - j. money from cultic prostitution (Canaanite worship), Deut. 23:18
  - k. Israel's idolatry, Jer. 2:7
  - l. homosexuality (possibly Canaanite worship), Lev. 18:22; 20:13
  - m. use of false weights, Det. 25:16; Pro. 11:1; 20:23
  - n. food laws violated (possibly Canaanite worship), Deut. 14:3
- 3. Examples in Wisdom Literature:**
  - a. Proverbs 3:32; 6:16–19; 11:1, 20; 12:22; 15:8, 9, 26; 16:5; 17:15; 20:10, 23; 21:27; 28:9
  - b. Psalms 88:8
  - c. Job 30:10
- 4. There is a recurrent eschatological phrase "abomination of desolation," which is used in Daniel (cf. Da 9:7; 11:31; 12:11). It seems to refer to three different occasions (multiple fulfillment prophecy):**
  - a. Antiochus IV Epiphanes of the interbiblical Maccabean period (cf. 1 Macc. 1:54, 59; 2 Macc. 6:1–2)
  - b. the Roman general (later Emperor), Titus, who sacked Jerusalem and destroyed the temple in A.D. 70 (cf. Matt. 24:15; Mark 13:14+; Luke 21:20+)
  - c. an end-time world leader called "the man of lawlessness" (cf. 2 Thess. 2:3–4) or "the Antichrist" (cf. 1 John 2:18; 4:3; Revelation 13)

**ED NOTE: I STRONGLY DISAGREE WITH UTLEY'S INTERPRETATION OF Mt 24:15+ as the Roman General Titus** -- it does not even make good common sense in the context (remember context is the key for accurate interpretation) for Jesus Himself says that this "marker" (the **"abomination of desolation"**) is like an eschatological stopwatch being started -- it begins the time Jesus refers to as the **Great**

**Tribulation** and this time is further described by Jesus as a time that "has not occurred since the beginning of the world until now, nor ever will." (IN OTHER WORDS A ONCE IN A LIFETIME EVENT) (Mt 24:21+). I submit that the **desolation** that occurred in 70 AD pales in comparison to the [Nazi Holocaust](#) when was a time far worse than that inflicted by the Roman General Titus. But even the holocaust pales in comparison to the time of **Jacob's Distress** in the last 3.5 years of this present evil age in which 2/3's of the Jews will be exterminated (Zech 13:8-9+). In short the Abomination of Desolation in Mt 24:15+ is certainly the appearance of the **Antichrist** taking his place in the rebuilt holy temple in Jerusalem (read 2 Th 2:3-4+). If you are alive when this occurs dear reader, you need to get right with God immediately! Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ (Acts 16:31+), His death on the cross for you, His three days in the grave and then His resurrection from the grave. (Ro 10:9-10+).

**Deuteronomy 17:2 "If there is found in your midst, in any of your towns, which the LORD your God is giving you, a man or a woman who does what is evil in the sight of the LORD your God, by transgressing His covenant,**

- **in any of your towns** - within any of thy gates: The expression, "within any of thy gates," denoted all residing in the cities, and all who went in and came out at the gates of them; so that it included the inhabitants of the whole land.
- **man:** De 17:5 13:6-18 29:18
- **transgressing:** De 4:23 Dt 29:25 Dt 31:20 Lev 26:15,25 Jos 7:11,15 23:16 Jud 2:20 2Ki 18:12 Jer 31:32 Eze 16:38 Ho 6:7 8:1 Heb 8:9,10
- [Deuteronomy 17 Resources](#)

## HIGH TREASON TRANSGRESSING COVENANT

**Summary** - Dt 17:2–13 deal with administrative justice. Dt 17:2–7 deal with idolatry and legal witnesses. Dt 17:8–13 deal with the practical setup of the courts.

**If there is found in your midst, in any of your towns**(lit - gates), **which the LORD your God is giving you, a man or a woman who does what is evil** ([ra](#); Lxx = [poneros](#)) **in the sight of** (lit - eyes of) **the LORD your God** - How? (1) "transgressing (literally "passing over") His covenant," and (2) "has gone and served other gods and worshiped them," (Dt 17:3) In short by committing idolatry (recall Moses has just mentioned the Asherah and the sacred pillars both associated with idolatry in Dt 16:21-22+).

**Towns (gates)** ([08179](#))([shaar](#)) Basically, this word represents a structure closing and enclosing a large opening through a wall, or a barrier through which people and things pass to an enclosed area. The "gate" of a city often was a fortified structure deeper than the wall. This is especially true of strong, well-fortified cities

**by transgressing His covenant** ([beriyth](#); Lxx = [diatheke](#)) - **Transgressing** means to cross the line, God's mosaic covenant being the line, and to cross over this line is presumptuous sin. When God says "Here's the line. Don't cross over," we must obey. What is sad, it that the first generation said they would obey, because when Moses inaugurated the first covenant (Mosaic) with blood in **Exodus 24:1-18** (cf Heb 9:18-22+), the entire nation of Israel vowed solemnly to keep the covenant (they said **'we will do'** in essence speaking to their "Husband" ([ba'al](#)) Yahweh (Jer 31:32+, Isa 54:5), their marriage vows much as we do today when we say "I do!"

Exodus 24:3; 7+ Then Moses came and recounted to the people all the words of the LORD and all the ordinances; and all the people answered with one voice and said, **"All the words which the LORD has spoken we will do!"** (24:7) Then he took the book of the covenant and read it in the hearing of the people; and they said, **"All that the LORD has spoken we will do, and we will be obedient!"**

**Transgressing** ([05674](#))([abar](#)) qal. pass through; niphal be forded; piel. cause to pass through or over; hiphil. make pass through. The main idea of this verb is that of movement; as a rule it is the movement of one thing in relation to some other object which is stationary, moving, or motivating. Some have said that the simplest translation of 'ābar is "to pass," but this does not really cover the various nuances that 'ābar may carry with it. It is used about 550 times.

**Utley** - **"by transgressing His covenant"** This VERB ([abar](#)) basically means "to pass over" or "pass through." It is most often used in a literal sense, but sometimes in a theological sense. Originally it may have referred to the act of halving an animal as a covenant act and walking between the parts (e.g., Ge 15:17+). Violation of the covenant resulted in death or destruction (i.e., like the halved animal). It denoted the violation of clearly

defined actions (i.e., covenant stipulations, cf. Dt 26:13; Josh. 7:11, 15; Jdgs. 2:20; 2 Kgs. 18:12; Jer. 34:18–19; Hos. 6:7; 8:1)." ([Deuteronomy 17 Commentary](#))

**TWOT** - It is impossible to discuss all the shades of meaning, but there are four general usages.

1. The concept of movement may be used in a simple sense: 'ābar is go beyond or further; thus Abraham says to his heavenly visitors that they could go on (RSV pass on) after they had eaten (Gen 18:5). 'ābar means "go" when the emphasis is specifically on movement without specific reference to another object (Ex 38:26; Deut 2:14; Job 13:13).

2. 'ābar may be used to express the fact that there is some movement between two specific places. In this category one finds numerous references to Israel's passing over the Jordan to enter (or pass into) the promised land (Deut 27:3). Moses used this phrase often to indicate how the hindrance or barrier was to be overcome by Israel, in realizing the fulfillment of the covenant promise concerning the land. This same emphasis is found in Josh 1:2. The idea of passing over appears also in Gen 31:21, where Jacob crosses the river Euphrates as he begins his flight from Laban.

'ābar is used also to indicate the thought of passing through or traversing a land. Moses asked the Amorite king Sihon to permit Israel to march through his land (Num 21:22). Micah speaks of the remnant of Israel passing through foreign lands as a lion goes through a forest (Mic 5:8).

The Hiphil form of the verb very often appears to express the thought that one person causes or motivates another to move (Gen 8:1; 32:24; Num 32:5, etc.).

The term is used in Deut 18:10 and elsewhere to indicate the idea of compelling an infant to pass through sacrificial fire to his death.

3. The concept of movement may be used in a metaphorical sense. Solomon's wealth exceeded (passed beyond) that of all others. The wickedness of Judah and Israel knew no bounds (RSV) in that it passed beyond that of others (Jer 5:28).

Other metaphorical uses can be mentioned. When men die they pass away from this life (Job 30:15; Prov 22:3). Something comes between husband and wife and they are alienated (Jer 6:8). The money passed around is the current, the standard shekel (Gen 13:16). Men do business, exchange wares (Ezk 27:9). The bulls gender (Piel of 'ābar "breed," RSV), i.e. are fruitful (Job 21:10).

4. Finally, the term indicates a specific spiritual concept. Men transgress the covenant or the law, i.e. move outside or beyond the requirements of the covenant or law by committing adultery and practicing idolatry (Deut 17:2) or other sin. But on a more positive level Moses also spoke of Israel as entering or passing into a covenant that God was making with them (Deut 29:12 [H 11]). Balaam gave expression to another spiritual meaning of 'ābar when he said, "I cannot pass beyond the Word of the Lord" (Num 22:18).

**Vine - 'abar (5674, עָבַר), "to pass away, pass over."** This verb occurs in all Semitic languages and at all periods of those languages, including biblical Hebrew and Aramaic. The Bible attests about 550 uses of this verb in Hebrew.

The verb refers primarily to spatial movement, to "moving over, through, or away from." This basic meaning can be used of "going over or through" a particular location to get to the other side, as when Jacob "crossed over" the Euphrates to escape Laban (Gen. 31:21). Another specific use of this general meaning is to pass through something; Ps. 8:8 speaks of whatever "passes through" the sea as being under Adam's control. 'Abar can also merely mean "to go as far as"—Amos tells his audience not to "cross over" to Beer-sheba (Amos 5:5). "To go as far as" an individual is to overtake him (2 Sam. 18:23). Abram "passed through" Canaan as far as Mamre; he did not go out of the land (cf. Gen. 12:6). The word can also be used of "passing by" something; Abraham begged the three men not "to pass by" him but to stop and refresh themselves (Gen. 18:3). 'Abar is sometimes used of "passing over" a law, order, or covenant as if it were not binding. When the people decided to enter Palestine against the command of God, Moses said, "Wherefore now do ye transgress the commandment of the Lord?" (Num. 14:41).

This verb first occurs in Gen. 8:1 where it means "pass over on top of." God caused the wind "to pass over" the flood waters and to carry them away.

The word can also mean "to pass away," to cease to be, as in Gen. 50:4 where the days of mourning over Jacob "were past."

A number of technical phrases where this root has a regular and specialized meaning appear. For example, one who "passes over" the sea is a seafarer or sailor (Isa. 23:2—a similar technical usage appears in Akkadian). 'Abar is used in business affairs with silver or money in the sense of reckoning money according to



the “going” (passing) rate (Gen. 23:16ff.). In Song of Sol. 5:5 (RSV) the verb is used to mean “flow” as what a liquid does (“flowing” or “liquid” myrrh). The phrase “pass over to be numbered” is a phrase meaning to move from one status to another (to move into the ranks of the militia) in Exod. 30:13–14.

The intensive stem of *abar* is used in two special senses: of “overlaying” with precious metals (1 Kings 6:21) and of the ox’s act of making a cow pregnant (Job 21:10). The verb also has special meanings in the causative stem: “to devote” the firstborn to the Lord (Exod. 13:12); “to offer” a child by burning him in fire (Deut. 18:10); “to make” a sound “come forth” (Lev. 25:9); “to sovereignly transfer” a kingdom or cause it to pass over to another’s leadership (2 Sam. 3:10); “to put away or cause to cease” (1 Kings 15:12); and “to turn” something “away” (Ps. 119:37). ([Vine's Expository Dictionary of Old Testament and New Testament Words](#))

accompanied(1), alienate(1), all\*(1), avert(1), beyond\*(1), blows away(1), bring(2), bring across(1), bring over(1), brought(1), brought over(1), came(2), carried over(1), carry over(1), charged(1), circulate(1), circulated(2), circulating(1), come(2), come around(1), come over(3), comes(3), continue(2), continued(13), continued through(1), contrary(2), cross(29), cross over(31), crossed(31), crossed over(17), crossing(5), crossing over(5), current(1), devote(1), drew across(1), drifting(1), enter(1), escapes the notice(1), ever bring(1), ever bring...over(1), excel(1), fail(2), flood(1), ford(1), forded(1), forth(1), freed(1), go(9), go on your way(1), go across(1), go along(1), go forward(1), go over(3), go through(3), go\*(1), goes(1), going(2), going over(3), gone(1), gone over(1), gone through(1), laid aside(1), led across(1), led through(3), left(1), liquid(2), made(1), mates(1), means cross over(1), offer(1), over(4), overcome(1), overflow(1), overflowing(1), overlook(1), pass(72), pass along(2), pass away(5), pass over(7), pass through(29), passed(48), passed along(1), passed away(2), passed beyond(1), passed over(9), passed through(6), passed throughout(1), passer-by(2), passers-by(1), passes(18), passes through(7), passing(13), passing over(1), passing through(2), past(6), perish(1), proceed(1), proceeded(1), proceeding(2), put away(2), remove(1), removed(2), repealed(1), rolled(1), run riot(1), runs its course(1), send through(1), sent(2), sent across(2), sound(2), spare(2), spread beyond(1), standard(1), stretched across(1), survey(1), swept(3), take across(1), take away(5), taken away(2), through(1), through...we have gone(1), through...you passed(1), took(1), transfer(3), transgress(4), transgressed(11), transgressing(3), travel(1), traveler(1), turn away(2), use(2), vanish(1), visited(1), walk over(2), wayfaring(1), went(5), went away(1), went back(1), went forward(1), went over(1), went through(3). Gen. 8:1; Gen. 12:6; Gen. 15:17; Gen. 18:3; Gen. 18:5; Gen. 23:16; Gen. 30:32; Gen. 31:21; Gen. 31:52; Gen. 32:10; Gen. 32:16; Gen. 32:21; Gen. 32:22; Gen. 32:23; Gen. 32:31; Gen. 33:3; Gen. 33:14; Gen. 37:28; Deut. 41:46; Gen. 47:21; Gen. 50:4; Exod. 12:12; Exod. 12:23; Exod. 13:12; Exod. 15:16; Exod. 17:5; Exod. 32:27; Exod. 33:19; Exod. 33:22; Exod. 34:6; Exod. 36:6; Exod. 38:26; Lev. 18:21; Lev. 25:9; Lev. 26:6; Lev. 27:32; Num. 5:14; Num. 5:30; Num. 6:5; Num. 8:7; Num. 13:32; Num. 14:7; Num. 14:41; Num. 20:17; Num. 20:18; Num. 20:19; Num. 20:20; Num. 20:21; Num. 21:22; Num. 21:23; Num. 22:18; Num. 22:26; Num. 24:13; Num. 27:7; Num. 27:8; Num. 31:23; Num. 32:5; Num. 32:7; Num. 32:27; Num. 32:29; Num. 32:30; Num. 32:39; Num. 33:2; Num. 33:51; Num. 34:4; Num. 35:10; Deut. 2:4; Deut. 2:8; Deut. 2:13; Deut. 2:14; Deut. 2:18; Deut. 2:24; Deut. 2:27; Deut. 2:28; Deut. 2:29; Deut. 2:30; Deut. 3:18; Deut. 3:21; Deut. 3:25; Deut. 3:27; Deut. 3:28; Deut. 4:14; Deut. 4:21; Deut. 4:22; Deut. 4:26; Deut. 6:1; Deut. 9:1; Deut. 9:3; Deut. 11:8; Deut. 11:11; Deut. 11:31; Deut. 12:10; Deut. 17:2; Deut. 18:10; Deut. 24:5; Deut. 26:13; Deut. 27:2; Deut. 27:3; Deut. 27:4; Deut. 27:12; Deut. 29:12; Deut. 29:16; Deut. 30:13; Deut. 30:18; Deut. 31:2; Deut. 31:3; Deut. 31:13; Deut. 32:47; Deut. 34:4; Jos. 1:2; Jos. 1:11; Jos. 1:14; Jos. 2:23; Jos. 3:1; Jos. 3:2; Jos. 3:4; Jos. 3:6; Jos. 3:11; Jos. 3:14; Jos. 3:16; Jos. 3:17; Jos. 4:1; Jos. 4:3; Jos. 4:5; Jos. 4:8; Jos. 4:10; Jos. 4:11; Jos. 4:12; Jos. 4:13; Jos. 4:22; Num. 4:23; Jos. 5:1; Jos. 6:7; Jos. 6:8; Jos. 7:7; Jos. 7:11; Jos. 7:15; Jos. 10:29; Jos. 10:31; Jos. 10:34; Jos. 15:3; Jos. 15:4; Jos. 15:6; Jos. 15:7; Jos. 15:10; Jos. 15:11; Jos. 16:2; Jos. 16:6; Jos. 18:9; Jos. 18:13; Jos. 18:18; Jos. 18:19; Jos. 19:13; Jos. 19:19; Jos. 23:16; Jos. 24:11; Jos. 24:17; Jdg. 2:20; Jdg. 3:26; Jdg. 3:28; Jdg. 6:33; Jdg. 8:4; Jdg. 9:25; Jdg. 9:26; Jdg. 10:9; Jdg. 11:17; Jdg. 11:19; Jdg. 11:20; Jdg. 11:29; Jdg. 11:32; Jdg. 12:1; Jdg. 12:3; Jdg. 12:5; Jdg. 18:13; Jdg. 19:12; Jdg. 19:14; Jdg. 19:18; Ruth 2:8; Ruth 4:1; 1 Sam. 2:24; 1 Sam. 9:4; 1 Sam. 9:27; 1 Sam. 13:7; 1 Sam. 14:1; 1 Sam. 14:4; 1 Sam. 14:6; 1 Sam. 14:8; 1 Sam. 14:23; 1 Sam. 15:12; 1 Sam. 15:24; 1 Sam. 16:8; 1 Sam. 16:9; 1 Sam. 16:10; 1 Sam. 20:36; 1 Sam. 25:19; 1 Sam. 26:13; 1 Sam. 26:22; 1 Sam. 27:2; 1 Sam. 29:2; 1 Sam. 30:10; 2 Sam. 2:8; 2 Sam. 2:15; 2 Sam. 2:29; 2 Sam. 3:10; 2 Sam. 10:17; 2 Sam. 11:27; 2 Sam. 12:13; 2 Sam. 12:31; 2 Sam. 15:18; 2 Sam. 15:22; 2 Sam. 15:23; 2 Sam. 15:24; 2 Sam. 15:33; 2 Sam. 16:1; 2 Sam. 16:9; 2 Sam. 17:16; 2 Sam. 17:20; 2 Sam. 17:21; 2 Sam. 17:22; 2 Sam. 17:24; 2 Sam. 18:9; 2 Sam. 18:23; 2 Sam. 19:15; 2 Sam. 19:18; 2 Sam. 19:31; 2 Sam. 19:33; 2 Sam. 19:36; 2 Sam. 19:37; 2 Sam. 19:38; 2 Sam. 19:39; 2 Sam. 19:40; 2 Sam. 19:41; 2 Sam. 20:13; 2 Sam. 20:14; 2 Sam. 24:5; 2 Sam. 24:10; 2 Sam. 24:20; 1 Ki. 2:37; 1 Ki. 6:21; 1 Ki. 9:8; 1 Ki. 13:25; 1 Ki. 15:12; 1 Ki. 18:6; 1 Ki. 18:29; 1 Ki. 19:11; 1 Ki. 19:19; 1 Ki. 20:39; 1 Ki. 22:24; 1 Ki. 22:36; 2 Ki. 2:8; 2 Ki. 2:9; 2 Ki. 2:14; 2 Ki. 4:8; 2 Ki. 4:9; 2 Ki. 4:31; 2 Ki. 6:9; 2 Ki. 6:26; 2 Ki. 6:30; 2 Ki. 8:21; 2 Ki. 12:4; 2 Ki. 14:9; 2 Ki. 16:3; 2 Ki. 17:17; 2 Ki. 18:12; 2 Ki. 21:6; 2 Ki. 23:10; 1 Chr. 12:15; 1 Chr. 19:17; 1 Chr. 21:8; 1 Chr. 29:30; 2 Chr. 7:21; 2 Chr. 15:8; 2 Chr. 18:23; 2 Chr. 21:9; 2 Chr. 24:20; 2 Chr. 25:18; 2 Chr. 30:5; 2 Chr. 30:10; 2 Chr. 33:6; 2 Chr. 35:23; 2 Chr. 35:24; 2 Chr. 36:22; Ezr. 1:1; Ezr. 10:7; Neh. 2:7; Neh. 2:14; Neh. 8:15; Neh. 9:11; Est. 1:19; Est. 3:3; Est. 4:17; Est. 8:2; Est. 8:3; Est. 9:27; Est. 9:28; Job 6:15; Job 7:21; Job 9:11; Job 11:16; Job 13:13; Job 14:5; Job 15:19; Job 17:11; Job 19:8; Job 21:10; Job 21:29; Job 30:15; Job 33:18; Job 33:28; Job 34:20; Job 36:12; Job 37:21; Ps. 8:8; Ps. 17:3; Ps. 18:12; Ps. 37:36; Ps. 38:4; Ps. 42:4; Ps. 42:7; Ps. 48:4; Ps. 57:1; Ps. 66:6; Ps. 73:7; Ps. 78:13; Ps. 80:12; Ps. 81:6; Ps. 84:6; Ps. 88:16; Ps. 89:41; Ps. 90:4; Ps. 103:16; Ps. 104:9; Ps. 119:37; Ps. 119:39; Ps. 124:4; Ps. 124:5; Ps. 129:8; Ps. 136:14; Ps. 141:10; Ps. 144:4; Ps. 148:6; Prov. 4:15; Prov. 7:8; Prov. 8:29; Prov. 9:15; Prov. 10:25; Prov. 19:11; Prov. 22:3; Prov. 24:30; Prov. 26:10; Prov. 26:17; Prov. 27:12; Eccl. 11:10; Cant. 2:11; Cant. 3:4; Cant. 5:5; Cant. 5:6; Cant. 5:13; Isa. 8:8; Isa. 8:21; Isa. 10:28; Isa. 10:29; Isa. 16:8; Isa. 23:2; Isa. 23:6; Isa. 23:10; Isa. 23:12; Isa. 24:5; Isa. 26:20; Isa. 28:15; Isa. 28:18; Isa. 28:19; Isa. 29:5; Isa. 31:9; Isa. 33:8; Isa. 33:21; Isa. 34:10; Isa. 35:8; Isa. 40:27; Isa. 41:3; Isa. 43:2; Isa. 45:14; Isa. 47:2; Isa. 51:10; Isa. 51:23; Isa. 54:9; Isa. 60:15; Isa. 62:10; Jer. 2:6; Jer. 2:10; Jer. 5:22; Jer. 5:28; Jer. 8:13; Jer. 8:20; Jer. 9:10; Jer. 9:12; Jer. 11:15; Jer. 13:24; Jer. 15:14; Jer. 18:16; Jer. 19:8; Jer. 22:8; Jer. 23:9; Jer. 32:35; Jer. 33:13; Jer. 34:18; Jer. 34:19; Jer. 41:10; Jer. 46:17; Jer. 48:32; Jer. 49:17; Jer. 50:13; Jer. 51:43; Lam. 1:12; Lam. 2:15; Lam. 3:44; Lam. 4:21; Ezek. 5:1; Ezek. 5:14; Ezek. 5:17; Ezek. 9:4; Ezek. 9:5; Ezek. 14:15; Ezek. 14:17; Ezek. 16:6; Ezek. 16:8; Ezek. 16:15; Ezek. 16:21; Ezek. 16:25; Ezek. 20:26; Ezek. 20:31; Ezek. 20:37; Ezek. 23:37; Ezek. 29:11; Ezek. 33:28; Ezek. 35:7; Ezek. 36:34; Ezek. 37:2; Ezek. 39:11; Ezek. 39:14; Ezek. 39:15; Ezek. 46:21; Ezek. 47:3; Ezek. 47:4; Ezek. 47:5; Ezek. 48:14; Dan. 9:11; Dan. 11:10; Dan. 11:40; Hos. 6:7; Hos. 8:1; Hos. 10:11; Joel 3:17; Amos 5:5; Amos 5:17; Amos 6:2; Amos 7:8; Amos 8:2; Amos 8:5; Jon. 2:3; Jon. 3:6; Mic. 1:11; Mic. 2:8; Mic. 2:13; Mic. 5:8; Mic. 7:18; Nah. 1:8; Nah. 1:12; Nah. 1:15; Nah. 3:19; Hab. 1:11; Hab. 3:10; Zeph. 2:2; Zeph. 2:15; Zeph. 3:6; Zech. 3:4; Zech. 7:14; Zech. 9:8; Zech. 10:11; Zech. 13:2

Deuteronomy 17:3 and has gone and served other gods and worshiped them, or the sun or the moon or any of the heavenly host, which I have not commanded,

- the sun: De 4:19 2Ki 21:3 Job 31:26,27 Jer 8:2 Eze 8:16
- which: Jer 7:22,23,31 19:5 32:35
- [Deuteronomy 17 Resources](#)

#### Related Passages:

Deuteronomy 4:19+ “And beware not to lift up your eyes to heaven and **see** the sun and the moon and the stars, all the host of heaven, and **be drawn away** (impelled, passive sense - as from an outside force), and **worship** them and **serve** them, those which the LORD your God has allotted to all the peoples under the whole heaven.

2 Kings 21:3 For he (Manasseh) rebuilt the high places which Hezekiah his father had destroyed; and he erected altars for Baal and made an Asherah, as Ahab king of Israel had done, and **worshiped all the host of heaven and served them.**

**SPIRITUAL**

## ADULTERY

As alluded to above Yahweh was Israel's husband (Jer 31:32+, Isa 54:5) having in effect said "I do" at the time of inauguration of the first covenant (Ex 24:3,7+). It was at that time Israel made the solemn, binding agreement of covenant just like a husband and wife do when they are married. So for Israel as a nation or individual Israelites to "**go a whoring**" (cf Ex 34:15-16KJV+) was tantamount to being unfaithful to their Husband, Jehovah. And the danger of individual Israelites in engaging in spiritual adultery was that it could spread the sin of idolatry like leaven through the entire town, tribe or nation. Sin is pleasurable (Heb 11:25+) and infectious and the sin of idolatry us both! The idolator had to be quickly and completely exterminated much like we do when we perform radical surgery to remove the cancerous lesion and prevent it from spreading.

**And has gone and served other gods and worshiped them, or the sun or the moon or any of the heavenly host, which I have not commanded** - Moses has previously warned against this sin of worship of creation (cf Ro 1:25-) - "And beware not to lift up your eyes to heaven and see the sun and the moon and the stars, all the host of heaven, and be drawn away and worship them and serve them, those which the LORD your God has allotted to all the peoples under the whole heaven." (De 4:19+)

**Bob Dylan** was theologically "spot on" when he sang "[You Gotta Serve Somebody](#)" and if we don't serve God, we will serve idols! (cp Mt 6:24-[note](#))

**Utley** - "**the sun or the moon or any of the heavenly host**" The ancient Babylonians were the first, but not the last, to see the heavenly bodies as representatives of gods and goddesses (cf. 4:19; 2 Kgs. 17:16; 21:3, 5; 23:4-5; 2 Chr. 33:3, 5; Jer. 8:2; 19:13). They felt that the lights of the sky controlled mankind's destiny (physically and spiritually). ([Deuteronomy 17 Commentary](#))

**Astral worship.** (note on Dt 17:3) The worship of the celestial bodies (sun, moon, planets, stars) was common throughout the ancient Near East. One of the principal gods of Assyria and Babylonia was a sun god ([Shamash](#)), and a moon god ([Thoth](#) in Egypt; Sin in Mesopotamia; Yarah in Canaanite religion) was widely worshiped. During most of their history the Israelites would have been familiar with and heavily influenced by Assyrian culture and religion (see Deut 4:19; 2Ki 21:1-7; 2Ki 23:4-5). These forbidden practices continued to be a source of condemnation during the Neo-Babylonian period, as Israelites burned incense on altars placed on the roofs of their houses to the "starry hosts" (Jer 19:13). Because worship of the elements of nature diminished Yahweh's position as the sole power in creation, they were outlawed. However, the popular nature of this type of worship continues to appear in prophetic literature and in Job (see Job 31:26-28; 38:7). (From Note on Dt 4:19) - The celestial gods (sun god, moon god and Venus particularly; in Babylonia, Shamash, Sin and Ishtar respectively) were primary in most ancient religions. **Controlling calendar and time, seasons and weather, they were viewed as the most powerful of the gods.** They provided signs by which omens were read, and they looked down on all. Yahweh has now warned the Israelites against fertility worship (Dt 4:3), magic and manipulation (idolatry, Dt 4:16-18), and omens and linking deities to cosmic phenomena (Dt 4:19), all the major characteristics of the pagan polytheism of the ancient world. ([IVP Bible Background Commentary](#))

**Deuteronomy 17:4 and if it is told you and you have heard of it, then you shall inquire thoroughly. Behold, if it is true and the thing certain that this detestable thing has been done in Israel,**

- **inquire:** De 13:12-14 19:18 Pr 25:2 Joh 7:51
- [Deuteronomy 17 Resources](#)

## INVESTIGATIVE REPORTING

**and if it is told you and you have heard of it, then you shall inquire thoroughly** - They were to do as they did with the worthless men in Dt 13:12-14+. Because the penalty is death by stoning, the matter had to be carefully, accurately investigated. In Dt 13:12-18 the worthless men of the city had enticed it to idolatry and here it is an individual who is enticed to idolatry.

**Behold, if it is true** - NASB, TEV "if it is true" NKJV "if it is indeed true" NRSV "the charge is proved true" NJB "it is found true and confirmed" This Hebrew idiom is repeated three times in Deuteronomy (i.e., Dt 13:14; 17:4; 22:20).

**and the thing certain that this detestable thing has been done in Israel** - This detestable thing is used in Dt 17:1 referring to a blemished sacrifice and here to idol worship ("host of heaven").

**Utley** - This verse is similar to 13:14. The VERB "you shall inquire thoroughly" (BDB 205, KB 233, Qal PERFECT) implies a complete investigation (cf. 13:14; 17:4, 9; 19:18; Lev. 10:16; Jdgs. 6:29). Accusations and second-hand knowledge were not enough to convict. Israel's judicial system was harsh ("stoned to death," v. 5), but thorough. ([Deuteronomy 17 Commentary](#))



**Detestable** (abomination, loathsome) ([08441](#)) **toebah** refers to an abominable custom or thing and is primarily used of things, persons or practices that are either ritually or morally offensive to the Lord. Toebah is an important word in Deuteronomy (Dt 12:31; 13:14; 14:3; 17:1, 4; 18:9, 12; 20:18; 22:5; 23:18; 24:4; 25:16; 27:15; 32:16). Abomination. Loathsome. Detestable thing. Something or someone who is loathsome and abhorrent. **Toebah** "is primarily understood in the context of the Law. It identifies unclean food (Dt. 14:3); the activity of the idolater (Isa. 41:24); the practice of child sacrifice (Dt. 12:31); intermarriage by the Israelites (Mal. 2:11); the religious activities of the wicked (Pr 21:27); and homosexual behavior (Lev. 18:22). In a broader sense, the word is used to identify anything offensive (Pr 8:7)." Tobebah in Deuteronomy - Deut. 7:25; Deut. 7:26; Deut. 12:31; Deut. 13:14; Deut. 14:3; Deut. 17:1; Deut. 17:4; Deut. 18:9; Deut. 18:12; Deut. 20:18; Deut. 22:5; Deut. 23:18; Deut. 24:4; Deut. 25:16; Deut. 27:15; Deut. 32:16

**Deuteronomy 17:5 then you shall bring out that man or that woman who has done this evil deed to your gates, that is, the man or the woman, and you shall stone them to death.**

- **stone:** De 13:10,11 21:21 22:21,24 Lev 24:14,16 Jos 7:25
- [Deuteronomy 17 Resources](#)

### **IDOLATRY WAS A CANCER THAT MUST BE EXCISED!**

**then you shall bring out that man or that woman who has done this evil deed to your gates**(to your local court) - The elders sat at the gates of the cities.

**ESVSB** - Capital punishment, as in the case of Jesus' crucifixion, was usually outside the walls or camp (Lev. 24:14; Num. 15:35; Heb. 13:11–13).

**that is, the man or the woman, and you shall stone them to death** -Literally "stone them with stones so that they die" This is probably the law used maliciously against Naboth in 1 Ki 21.

**Utley** - Covenant violations carried severe consequences (cf. Deuteronomy 27–29)! Evil within the community must be eradicated. ([Deuteronomy 17 Commentary](#))

**Stoning as capital punishment.** Aside from the ready availability of stones in Israel, stoning was chosen as a form of execution because it was **communal**. No one person was responsible for the death of the condemned criminal, but in the case of public offenses (apostasy, blasphemy, sorcery, stealing from the herem) every citizen was required to take a hand in purging the community of evil (see Deut 17:5; Lev 20:27; 24:14; Josh 7:25). Familial offenses such as adultery and recurrent disobedience also were punishable by stoning, and again the entire community was involved (Deut 21:21; 22:21). **Stoning is not mentioned as a form of capital punishment outside the Bible. Ancient Near Eastern law codes list only drowning, burning, impalement and beheading, and in each case it is an official body, not the community at large, that is charged with carrying out the punishment.** ([IVP Bible Background Commentary](#))

If the allegation proves true (Dt 13:14) on testimony of two or three witnesses--one witness being insufficient (v6)--the guilty party is to be stoned to death (v5), the witnesses being the first to throw stones (v7). The seriousness of this defection and the purpose of the punishment are seen in the declaration, "You must purge the evil from among you (Israel)" (v7, 12). The hands of the witnesses were to be the first to administer punishment (cf. Jn8:7). See 13:6-11.

**Gates** ([08179](#))(shaar) Basically, this word represents a structure closing and enclosing a large opening through a wall, or a barrier through which people and things pass to an enclosed area. The "gate" of a city often was a fortified structure deeper than the wall. This is especially true of strong, well-fortified cities, as in the case of the first biblical appearance of the word: "And there came two angels to Sodom at even; and Lot sat in the gate of Sodom..." (Gen. 19:1). Within major cities there were usually strongly fortified citadels with "gates" (Neh. 2:8). Certain "gates" were only the thickness of a curtain: "And for the gate of the court [of the tabernacle] shall be a hanging of twenty cubits ..." (Exod. 27:16). Later, the temple had large openings between its various courts: "Stand in the gate of the Lord's house, and proclaim there this word, and say, Hear the word of the Lord, all ye of Judah, that enter in at these gates to worship the Lord" (Jer. 7:2).

Exod. 32:26 speaks of an opening ("gate") in the barrier surrounding Israel's temporary camp at the foot of Sinai. Such camps often were enclosed with barriers of earth and/or rock. Ancient fortified cities had to find a

source of water for periods of siege, and sometimes dams were built. Nah. 2:6 apparently refers to such a dam when it says: "The gates of the rivers shall be opened, and the palace shall be dissolved" (i.e., swept away). Both the underworld (Job 38:17) and heaven, the domain of God (Gen. 28:17), are pictured as cities with "gates."

The "gates" of ancient cities sometimes enclosed city squares or were immediately in front of squares (2 Chron. 32:6). The entry way (2 Chron. 23:15) could be secured with heavy doors that were attached to firmly embedded pillars and reinforced by bars (Judg. 16:3; cf. Ps. 147:13; Neh. 3:3). Palaces could be citadels with strongly fortified "gates" large enough to have rooms over them. During siege, such rooms housed warriors. It was such a room into which David climbed and wept over the death of his son Absalom (2 Sam. 18:33). "Gates" had rooms to house guards (Ezek. 40:7). The rooms bordering the "gates" could also be used to store siege supplies (Neh. 12:25).

The "gates" were the place where local courts convened: "And if the man like not to take his brother's wife, then let his brother's wife go up to the gate unto the elders, and say, My husband's brother refuseth ..." (Deut. 25:7). The sentence sometimes was executed at the city "gates": "And I will fan them with a fan in the gates of the land; I will bereave them of children, I will destroy my people ..." (Jer. 15:7). In this passage, all of the land of Israel is envisioned as a city at whose "gates" God gathers the offenders for trial, judgment, sentence, and punishment. The phrase, "within the gates," means "within the area enclosed." Thus the sojourner who is "in your gates" is the foreigner who permanently lives in one of Israel's towns (Exod. 20:10). In passages such as Deut. 12:15, this phrase means "wherever you live": "Notwithstanding thou mayest kill and eat flesh in all thy gates...." ([Vine's Expository Dictionary of Old Testament and New Testament Words](#))

**Shaar** - cities(2), city(2), court(2), courts(1), each gate(1), every gate(1), every gate(1), Gate(49), gate(195), gatekeepers\*(1), gates(88), gateway(4), gateway\*(2), town(6), towns(13). Gen. 19:1; Gen. 22:17; Gen. 23:10; Gen. 23:18; Gen. 24:60; Gen. 28:17; Gen. 34:20; Gen. 34:24; Exod. 27:16; Exod. 32:26; Exod. 32:27; Exod. 35:17; Exod. 38:15; Exod. 38:18; Exod. 38:31; Exod. 39:40; Exod. 40:8; Exod. 40:33; Num. 4:26; Deut. 6:9; Deut. 11:20; Deut. 12:12; Deut. 12:15; Deut. 12:17; Deut. 12:18; Deut. 12:21; Deut. 14:21; Deut. 14:27; Deut. 14:28; Deut. 14:29; Deut. 15:7; Deut. 15:22; Deut. 16:5; Deut. 16:11; Deut. 16:14; Deut. 16:18; Deut. 17:2; Deut. 17:5; Deut. 17:8; Deut. 18:6; Deut. 21:19; Deut. 22:15; Deut. 22:24; Deut. 23:16; Deut. 24:14; Deut. 25:7; Deut. 26:12; Deut. 28:52; Deut. 28:55; Deut. 28:57; Deut. 31:12; Jos. 2:5; Jos. 2:7; Jos. 7:5; Jos. 8:29; Jos. 20:4; Jdg. 5:8; Jdg. 5:11; Jdg. 9:35; Jdg. 9:40; Jdg. 9:44; Jdg. 16:2; Jdg. 16:3; Jdg. 18:16; Jdg. 18:17; Ruth 3:11; Ruth 4:1; Ruth 4:10; Ruth 4:11; 1 Sam. 4:18; 1 Sam. 9:18; 1 Sam. 17:52; 1 Sam. 21:13; 2 Sam. 3:27; 2 Sam. 10:8; 2 Sam. 11:23; 2 Sam. 15:2; 2 Sam. 18:4; 2 Sam. 18:24; 2 Sam. 18:33; 2 Sam. 19:8; 2 Sam. 23:15; 2 Sam. 23:16; 1 Ki. 8:37; 1 Ki. 22:10; 2 Ki. 7:1; 2 Ki. 7:3; 2 Ki. 7:17; 2 Ki. 7:18; 2 Ki. 7:20; 2 Ki. 9:31; 2 Ki. 10:8; 2 Ki. 11:6; 2 Ki. 11:19; 2 Ki. 14:13; 2 Ki. 15:35; 2 Ki. 23:8; 2 Ki. 25:4; 1 Chr. 9:18; 1 Chr. 9:23; 1 Chr. 11:17; 1 Chr. 11:18; 1 Chr. 16:42; 1 Chr. 22:3; 1 Chr. 26:13; 1 Chr. 26:16; 2 Chr. 6:28; 2 Chr. 8:14; 2 Chr. 18:9; 2 Chr. 23:5; 2 Chr. 23:15; 2 Chr. 23:20; 2 Chr. 24:8; 2 Chr. 25:23; 2 Chr. 26:9; 2 Chr. 27:3; 2 Chr. 31:2; 2 Chr. 32:6; 2 Chr. 33:14; 2 Chr. 35:15; Neh. 1:3; Neh. 2:3; Neh. 2:8; Neh. 2:13; Neh. 2:14; Neh. 2:15; Neh. 2:17; Neh. 3:1; Neh. 3:3; Neh. 3:6; Neh. 3:13; Neh. 3:14; Neh. 3:15; Neh. 3:26; Neh. 3:28; Neh. 3:29; Neh. 3:31; Neh. 3:32; Neh. 6:1; Neh. 7:3; Neh. 8:1; Neh. 8:3; Neh. 8:16; Neh. 11:19; Neh. 12:25; Neh. 12:30; Neh. 12:31; Neh. 12:37; Neh. 12:39; Neh. 13:19; Neh. 13:22; Est. 2:19; Est. 2:21; Est. 3:2; Est. 3:3; Est. 4:2; Est. 4:6; Est. 5:9; Est. 5:13; Est. 6:10; Est. 6:12; Job 5:4; Job 29:7; Job 31:21; Job 38:17; Ps. 9:13; Ps. 9:14; Ps. 24:7; Ps. 24:9; Ps. 69:12; Ps. 87:2; Ps. 100:4; Ps. 107:18; Ps. 118:19; Ps. 118:20; Ps. 122:2; Ps. 127:5; Ps. 147:13; Prov. 1:21; Prov. 8:3; Prov. 14:19; Prov. 22:22; Prov. 24:7; Prov. 31:23; Prov. 31:31; Cant. 7:4; Isa. 14:31; Isa. 22:7; Isa. 24:12; Isa. 26:2; Isa. 28:6; Isa. 29:21; Isa. 38:10; Isa. 45:1; Isa. 54:12; Isa. 60:11; Isa. 60:18; Isa. 62:10; Jer. 1:15; Jer. 7:2; Jer. 14:2; Jer. 15:7; Jer. 17:19; Jer. 17:20; Jer. 17:21; Jer. 17:24; Jer. 17:25; Jer. 17:27; Jer. 19:2; Jer. 20:2; Jer. 22:2; Jer. 22:4; Jer. 22:19; Jer. 26:10; Jer. 31:38; Jer. 31:40; Jer. 36:10; Jer. 37:13; Jer. 38:7; Jer. 39:3; Jer. 39:4; Jer. 51:58; Jer. 52:7; Lam. 1:4; Lam. 2:9; Lam. 4:12; Lam. 5:14; Ezek. 8:3; Ezek. 8:5; Ezek. 8:14; Ezek. 9:2; Ezek. 10:19; Ezek. 11:1; Ezek. 21:15; Ezek. 21:22; Ezek. 26:10; Ezek. 40:3; Ezek. 40:6; Ezek. 40:7; Ezek. 40:8; Ezek. 40:9; Ezek. 40:10; Ezek. 40:11; Ezek. 40:13; Ezek. 40:14; Ezek. 40:15; Ezek. 40:16; Ezek. 40:18; Ezek. 40:19; Ezek. 40:20; Ezek. 40:21; Ezek. 40:22; Ezek. 40:23; Ezek. 40:24; Ezek. 40:27; Ezek. 40:28; Ezek. 40:32; Ezek. 40:35; Ezek. 40:38; Ezek. 40:39; Ezek. 40:40; Ezek. 40:41; Ezek. 40:44; Ezek. 40:48; Ezek. 42:15; Ezek. 43:1; Ezek. 43:4; Ezek. 44:1; Ezek. 44:2; Ezek. 44:3; Ezek. 44:4; Ezek. 44:11; Ezek. 44:17; Ezek. 45:19; Ezek. 46:1; Ezek. 46:2; Ezek. 46:3; Ezek. 46:8; Ezek. 46:9; Ezek. 46:12; Ezek. 46:19; Ezek. 47:2; Ezek. 48:31; Ezek. 48:32; Ezek. 48:33; Ezek. 48:34; Amos 5:10; Amos 5:12; Amos 5:15; Obad. 1:11; Obad. 1:13; Mic. 1:9; Mic. 1:12; Mic. 2:13; Nah. 2:6; Nah. 3:13; Zeph. 1:10; Zech. 8:16; Zech. 14:10

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#### **QUESTION - [What does the Bible say about stoning?](#)**

**ANSWER** - Stoning is a method of execution during which a group of people, usually peers of the guilty party, throws stones at the condemned person until he or she dies. Death by stoning was prescribed in the Old Testament Law as a punishment for various sins. Both animals and people could be the subjects of stoning (Exodus 21:28), and stoning seems to have been associated with sins that caused irreparable damage to the spiritual or ceremonial purity of a person or an animal.

Some sins that resulted in stoning in the Old Testament were murder (Leviticus 24:17), idolatry (Deuteronomy 17:2–5), approaching near to Mount Sinai while the presence of God was there (Exodus 19:12–13), practicing necromancy or the occult (Leviticus 20:27), and blaspheming the name of the Lord (Leviticus 24:16). Stoning was probably the punishment for various types of sexual sin, as well (Deuteronomy 22:24); the related passages in Leviticus 20 do not specify the method of execution, only that the guilty party was to be “put to death.”

The Mosaic Law specified that, before anyone could be put to death by stoning, there had to be a trial, and at least two witnesses had to testify: “On the testimony of two or three witnesses a person is to be put to death, but no one is to be put to death on the testimony of only one witness” (Deuteronomy 17:6). Those witnesses “must be the first in putting that person to death, and then the hands of all the people” (verse 7). In other words, those who testified against the condemned person in court had to cast the first stone. Examples of stonings in the Old Testament are the deaths of Achan and his family (Joshua 7:25) and Naboth, who was condemned by false witnesses (1 Kings 21).

Stoning was the method of execution chosen by the unbelieving Jews who persecuted the early Christians. Stephen, the church’s first martyr, was stoned to death outside of Jerusalem by the Sanhedrin. On that occasion, a young man named Saul, who later became the apostle Paul, held the coats of those who cast the stones (Acts 7:54–60).

In another famous passage of Scripture, the Pharisees tried to entrap Jesus into granting approval for the stoning of a woman caught in the act of adultery. Significantly, the adulterous man was absent—the Law prescribed death for both the guilty parties. Jesus’ response is interesting. The woman was clearly guilty, but Jesus understood the duplicity of His enemies. Instead of giving them a direct answer, Jesus turned to those who had dragged the woman before Him and said, “Whichever of you is free from sin, throw the first stone” (John 8:1–11). By this, Jesus is asking for the witnesses to step forward—the witnesses, bound by an oath, were the ones to cast the first stones. He also shows the compassionate heart of God toward the sinner and silences the mob’s hypocritical allegations.

Another mode of execution that was also considered stoning involved throwing the guilty party headlong down a steep place and then rolling a large stone onto the body. This is exactly what a mob in Nazareth tried to do to Jesus after His speech in their synagogue. Hearing His claim to be the Messiah, “they got up, drove [Jesus] out of the town, and took him to the brow of the hill on which the town was built, in order to throw him off the cliff” (Luke 4:29). Jesus’ deliverance from this angry mob was miraculous: “He walked right through the crowd and went on his way” (verse 30). It was not the Lord’s time to die (see John 10:18), and He could never have died by stoning because the prophecy said none of His bones would be broken (John 19:36).

Stoning is a horrible way to die. That particular manner of execution must have been a strong deterrent against committing the sins deemed offensive enough to merit stoning. God cares very much about the purity of His people. The strict punishment for sin during the time of the Law helped deter people from adopting the impure practices of their pagan neighbors and rebelling against God. The wages of sin is death (Romans 6:23), and Israel was given a stern commandment to stay pure: “You must purge the evil from among you” (Deuteronomy 17:7). [GotQuestions.org](http://GotQuestions.org)

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#### **QUESTION - [What does the Bible say about the death penalty / capital punishment?](#)**

**ANSWER** - The Old Testament law commanded the death penalty for various acts: murder (Exodus 21:12), kidnapping (Exodus 21:16), bestiality (Exodus 22:19), adultery (Leviticus 20:10), homosexuality (Leviticus 20:13), being a false prophet (Deuteronomy 13:5), prostitution and rape (Deuteronomy 22:24), and several other crimes. However, God often showed mercy when the death penalty was due. David committed adultery and murder, yet God did not demand his life be taken (2 Samuel 11:1-5, 14-17; 2 Samuel 12:13). Ultimately, every sin we commit should result in the death penalty because the wages of sin is death (Romans 6:23). Thankfully, God demonstrates His love for us in not condemning us (Romans 5:8).

When the Pharisees brought a woman who was caught in the act of adultery to Jesus and asked Him if she should be stoned, Jesus replied, “If any one of you is without sin, let him be the first to throw a stone at her” (John 8:7). This should not be used to indicate that Jesus rejected capital punishment in all instances. Jesus was simply exposing the hypocrisy of the Pharisees. The Pharisees wanted to trick Jesus into breaking the Old Testament law; they did not truly care about the woman being stoned (where was the man who was caught in adultery?) God is the One who instituted capital punishment: “Whoever sheds man’s blood, by man his

blood shall be shed, for in the image of God He made man" (Genesis 9:6). Jesus would support capital punishment in some instances. Jesus also demonstrated grace when capital punishment was due (John 8:1-11). The apostle Paul definitely recognized the power of the government to institute capital punishment where appropriate (Romans 13:1-7).

How should a Christian view the death penalty? First, we must remember that God has instituted capital punishment in His Word; therefore, it would be presumptuous of us to think that we could institute a higher standard. God has the highest standard of any being; He is perfect. This standard applies not only to us but to Himself. Therefore, He loves to an infinite degree, and He has mercy to an infinite degree. We also see that He has wrath to an infinite degree, and it is all maintained in a perfect balance.

Second, we must recognize that God has given government the authority to determine when capital punishment is due (Genesis 9:6; Romans 13:1-7). It is unbiblical to claim that God opposes the death penalty in all instances. Christians should never rejoice when the death penalty is employed, but at the same time, Christians should not fight against the government's right to execute the perpetrators of the most evil of crimes. [GotQuestions.org](http://GotQuestions.org)

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#### Related Resources:

- [Why did God mandate capital punishment for murder \(Genesis 9:6\)?](#)

**Deuteronomy 17:6 "On the evidence of two witnesses or three witnesses, he who is to die shall be put to death; he shall not be put to death on the evidence of one witness."**

- De 19:15 Nu 35:30 Mt 18:16 Joh 8:17,18 2Co 13:1 1Ti 5:19 Heb 10:28
- [Deuteronomy 17 Resources](#)

#### Related Passages:

Numbers 35:30 "If anyone kills a person, the murderer shall be put to death on the evidence of witnesses, but no person shall be put to death on the testimony of one witness.

Deuteronomy 19:15 "A single witness shall not rise up against a man on account of any iniquity or any sin which he has committed; on the evidence of two or three witnesses a matter shall be confirmed.

Matthew 18:16 "But if he does not listen to you, take one or two more with you, so that BY THE MOUTH OF TWO OR THREE WITNESSES EVERY FACT MAY BE CONFIRMED.

2 Corinthians 13:1 This is the third time I am coming to you. EVERY FACT IS TO BE CONFIRMED BY THE TESTIMONY OF TWO OR THREE WITNESSES.

1 Timothy 5:19 Do not receive an accusation against an elder except on the basis of two or three witnesses.

### MINIMUM OF TWO WITNESSES

**On the evidence of two witnesses or three witnesses, he who is to die shall be put to death; he shall not be put to death on the evidence of one witness** - One person (with a personal grudge or agenda) would be one person's word against another and that is not enough for conviction. The witnesses would need to be careful to be objective and honest for in Dt 19:16-21 there are penalties for false witnesses. (especially Dt 19:18 "The judges shall investigate thoroughly, and if the witness is a false witness and he has accused his brother falsely, 19 then you shall do to him just as he had intended to do to his brother [IN THIS CASE STONING!]. Thus you shall purge the evil from among you.")

**Morris** - It is implied that the second and/or third witnesses must not be in collusion with the first or with each other, attempting to bear a united false witness against the accused person. Such false witness invoked severe penalties (Deuteronomy 15-19). Also the seriousness of the charge, even if found true, was emphasized by requiring the witnesses to be the first ones to carry out the execution (Deuteronomy 17:7). Additional references include Matthew 18:16; John 8:16-18; 2 Corinthians 13:1; 1 Timothy 5:19; Hebrews 10:28. ([Defender's Study Bible](#))

**Guzik** - We may comfort ourselves that we would never judge someone guilty of murder so quickly, without proper evidence. Yet many will murder someone's reputation in their own mind or in the minds of others with no witnesses, much less one. God is concerned about the murder of reputation, as well as physical murder, and commands that one should not receive an accusation

against an elder except from two or three witnesses (1 Timothy 5:19)—the same standard as for proving murder. Remember 1 Timothy 5:19 does not say “except from two or three gossips”; it says except from two or three witnesses. If a matter is false, it does not become true because many people hear it or many people repeat it. ([Enduring Word Commentary - Deut 17](#))

**Witnesses in the ancient court system.** The task of serving as a witness occurs in a variety of legal contexts and is a solemn duty which is not to be abused (Ex 20:16; Num 35:30; Deut 19:16–19). It can involve hearing testimony, signing commercial or civil documents, or testifying on a legal matter (laws of Ur-Nammu, Code of Hammurabi and the Middle Assyrian laws). Witnesses serve an essential purpose in verifying business transactions (Jer 32:44; Hammurabi), such as the sale of property, marriages and changes in social status (Middle Assyrian laws). Occasionally, they function as representatives of the people in matters brought before a god (Ex 24:9–11; Hammurabi). ([IVP Bible Background Commentary](#))

**Deuteronomy 17:7 "The hand of the witnesses shall be first against him to put him to death, and afterward the hand of all the people. So you shall purge the evil from your midst."**

- **of the witnesses:** De 13:9 Ac 7:58-59
- **So :** De 17:12 13:5 19:19 24:7 Judges 20:13 1Co 5:13
- [Deuteronomy 17 Resources](#)

#### Related Passage:

Acts 7:58-59+ When they had driven him out of the city, they began stoning him; and the witnesses laid aside their robes at the feet of a young man named Saul. 59 They went on stoning Stephen as he called on the Lord and said, “Lord Jesus, receive my spirit!”

1 Corinthians 5:13+ But those who are outside, God judges. REMOVE THE WICKED MAN FROM AMONG YOURSELVES.

Leviticus 24:14+ “Bring the one who has cursed outside the camp, and let all who heard him lay their hands on his head; then let all the congregation stone him.

Dt 13:9+ But you shall surely kill him; your hand shall be first against him to put him to death, and afterwards the hand of all the people.

### WITNESSES CAST FIRST STONES

**The hand of the witnesses shall be first against him to put him to death, and afterward the hand of all the people-** The two or three witnesses are to throw the first stones. If the witnesses were "bearing false witness," that was their first sin and their second would be murder for shedding innocent blood. There's a modern saying that it takes a village to raise a child. Moses is saying it takes a village to remove the corruption.

**Cast the first stone** is an idiom in English - throw the first stone. Be quick to blame, criticize, or punish, as in She's always criticizing her colleagues, casting the first stone no matter what the circumstances. The term comes from the New Testament (John 8:7), where Jesus defends an adulteress against those who would stone her, saying “He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her.” Also see people who live in glass houses; pot calling the kettle black.

**Guzik** adds " the witnesses had to be so certain of what they saw, that they were willing to initiate the actual execution. This made certain that no one would be executed for a crime they did not commit. This puts the words of Jesus regarding the woman taken in adultery in John 8 in perspective: He who is without sin among you, let him throw a stone at her first (John 8:7). Jesus asked for the official witness to step forward and identify themselves on record as having witnessed this act of adultery, yet was hypocritical enough to bring the woman and not the man. ([Enduring Word Commentary - Deut 17](#))

**So you shall purge the evil from your midst-** See Dt 17:7, 12; 19:19; 21:21; 22:21; 24:7 (the death penalty is implied in these cases).

**Purge** (remove, burn) ([01197](#)) **ba'ar** literally to burn, but most uses in Deuteronomy describe the state or action of destroying an entity into non-existence as a figurative extension of fire consuming an object. Thus it often means to kill.



The first 3 uses in Deuteronomy describes Mt Sinai = "the mountain **burned** with fire to the very heart of the heavens." (Dt 5:23, 9:15).

**What will be purged?** False prophet (Dt 13:5), false worshiper (Dt 17:7), one who show contempt for a judge (Dt 17:12), murderer (Dt 19:13), false witness (Dt 19:19), people's bloodguiltiness for an unsolved murder (Dt 21:6), a stubborn, rebellious son (Dt 21:21), girl who lied when she married and was not actually a virgin (Dt 22:21), kidnapper (Dt 24:7).

**Evil** (07451) רַע *ra'*, רָעָה *rā'āh*: An adjective meaning bad, evil. It means bad in a moral and ethical sense and is used to describe, along with good, the entire spectrum of good and evil; hence, it depicts evil in an absolute, negative sense, as when it describes the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (Ge 2:9; 3:5, 22).

**ESVSB** - Just as Israel is to destroy all pagans from the land, so are they to purge any apostate Israelites, like they would a contagious infection (cf. excommunication in 1 Cor. 5:13). Capital punishment therefore is not only retributive but also protective of the community.

**Ryrie** - they had to be sure enough of their own testimony to be willing to cast the first stones. In a stoning, the victim was stripped naked and his hands bound; then he was paraded out of town, where he was placed on a scaffold about nine feet high. The first witness pushed him off the scaffold; the second dropped a large stone on his head or chest. Then bystanders pelted the dying man with stones. No mourning was permitted for the dead man.

**Jack Deere** - New Testament churches have a similar responsibility to keep themselves pure. A Christian offender should be "cut off" from his local church's fellowship if a thorough investigation proves his sin and he is unwilling to repent of it. If he is a genuine believer he will not lose eternal life. But he will suffer loss on earth and receive less reward in heaven (Matt. 18:15–20; 1 Cor. 3:10–15; 5; 1 Tim. 5:19). ([The Bible Knowledge Commentary](#))

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### What does the Bible say about stoning?

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#### Related Resources:

- [What does the Bible say about the death penalty / capital punishment?](#)
- [Why did God mandate capital punishment for murder \(Genesis 9:6\)?](#)
- [The stoning of Stephen - Why were the Jews allowed to stone Stephen but had to go through Pilate to kill Jesus?](#)

**Deuteronomy 17:8 "If any case is too difficult for you to decide, between one kind of homicide or another, between one kind of lawsuit or another, and between one kind of assault or another, being cases of dispute in your courts, then you shall arise and go up to the place which the LORD your God chooses.**

- arise: De 1:17 Ex 18:26 1Ki 3:16-28 2Ch 19:8-10 Hag 2:11 Mal 2:7
- between blood: De 19:4,10,11 Ex 21:12-14,20,22,28 22:2 Nu 35:11,16,19-34
- get thee up: De 12:5 19:17 Ps 122:4,5
- [Deuteronomy 17 Resources](#)

### NO DISTINCTION BETWEEN SECULAR AND SACRED

**If any case is too difficult for you to decide, between one kind of homicide or another** (Hebrew "between blood and blood."), **between one kind of lawsuit or another** (Heb - between claim and claim"), **and between one kind of assault or another** (Heb "between blow and blow"), **being cases of dispute in your courts, then you shall arise and go up to the place which the LORD your God chooses** - NET - If a matter is too difficult for you to judge— bloodshed, legal claim, or assault— matters of controversy in your villages— you must leave there and go up to the place the LORD your God chooses." To the central sanctuary (cf. Dt 12:5, 11, 13).

**HCSB** - The presence of priests and a judge makes clear that there was no separation between the secular and the sacred and that every violation of the law was a violation of the covenant between the Lord and His people. In the theocracy of OT Israel, sin and crime were one and the same. ([Holman Christian Standard Bible Study Bible](#) - Nice notes)

**Utlley** - These types of judicial difficulties are described as: "blood to blood", meaning homicide, "judgment to judgment", NRSV, "one kind of legal right and another", TEV, "certain cases of property rights", NJB, "conflicting claims", REB, "civil rights", PSOA, "civil law", NET Bible, "legal claim", IV, "lawsuits", "stroke to stroke" (BDB 619), meaning some kind of assault (cf. Dt 21:5) The Jewish Study Bible, p. 405, asserts that the difficult cases involved a lack of evidence. By referring these to the priests at the central sanctuary, Moses is assuming that divine insight will determine the guilt or innocence of the parties involved. ([Deuteronomy 17 Commentary](#))

**ESVSB** on **place that the LORD your God chooses** indicates the integration of worship with justice, deriving from the character of God as just and implying that ultimately God himself is the judge (see Dt 12:5–6).

**Courts** ([08179](#))(**shaar**) Basically, this word represents a structure closing and enclosing a large opening through a wall, or a barrier through which people and things pass to an enclosed area. The "gate" of a city often was a fortified structure deeper than the wall. This is especially true of strong, well-fortified cities

**Deuteronomy 17:9 "So you shall come to the Levitical priest or the judge who is in office in those days, and you shall inquire of them and they will declare to you the verdict in the case.**

- **priest:** Jer 18:18 Hag 2:11 Mal 2:7

- shall: De 19:17-21 Eze 44:24
- [Deuteronomy 17 Resources](#)

This section shows the importance attached to the recognition of authority, the principle without which anarchy and chaos will prevail.

**So you shall come to the Levitical priest or the judge who is in office in those days, and you shall inquire of them and they will declare to you the verdict in the case** - NET = "You will go to the Levitical priests and the judge in office in those days and seek a solution; they will render a verdict."

**Utlley** - The Masoretic Text (Hebrew), the Septuagint (Greek), and the Peshitta (Aramaic) have the plural, "priests." This indicates a pool or guild of priests (cf. 19:17). This was **the rabbinical proof text** for the Sanhedrin (set up by Ezra). ([Deuteronomy 17 Commentary](#))

This pattern of arriving at a righteous judgment was not practiced by most of the pagan nations. The [IVP Bible Background Commentary](#) has an interesting note in this regard - **Verdict by omen in ancient Near East**. In situations where physical evidence was not present or was insufficient, a verdict could be determined by the reading of omens. This meant that plaintiffs had to consult religious professionals (cf Levitical priests in Dt 17:9), whose service included seeking divine verdicts (ED: THE LEVITICAL PRIEST DID NOT USE OMENS BUT IN SOME WAY NOT STATED WENT TO GOD FOR HIS JUDGMENT DID THEY USE [Urim and Thummim](#)?). Among the divination methods used in the ancient Near East were the examination of a sheep's liver (hepatoscopy), the interpretation of dreams (specific Babylonian texts contain lists of dreams and what they portend— accidents, deaths, military defeats or victories; see Da 2:9), the noting of freak occurrences in nature and the use of astrological charting (especially during the period of the Assyrian empire in the tenth to seventh centuries B.C.). In the biblical text, the [Urim and Thummim](#) (Ex 28:30; Nu 27:21) were used to help divine God's will, and a number of the prophets point to famines, droughts and other natural calamities as a sign of God's judgment on an unfaithful people (Amos 4:10–12; Hag 1:5–11).

**Deuteronomy 17:10 "You shall do according to the terms of the verdict which they declare to you from that place which the LORD chooses; and you shall be careful to observe according to all that they teach you.**

- Mt 22:2,3
- [Deuteronomy 17 Resources](#)

**You shall do according to the terms of the verdict which they declare to you from that place which the LORD chooses; and you shall be careful to observe according to all that they teach you** - NET = "You must then do as they have determined at that place the LORD chooses. Be careful to do just as you are taught."

**Deuteronomy 17:11 "According to the terms of the law which they teach you, and according to the verdict which they tell you, you shall do; you shall not turn aside from the word which they declare to you, to the right or the left.**

- **According to:** Jos 1:7 Mal 2:8,9 Ro 13:1-6 Tit 3:1 1Pe 2:13-15 2Pe 2:10 Jude 1:8
- **to the right:** De 17:20 5:32 28:14 Jos 1:7 23:6 2Sa 14:19 Pr 4:27
- [Deuteronomy 17 Resources](#)

## WALK THE STRAIGHT AND NARROW PATH!

[Straight and narrow](#) is an idiom describing the way of virtuous, proper conduct and moral integrity.

**According to the terms of the law which they teach you, and according to the verdict which they tell you, you shall do; you shall not turn aside from the word which they declare to you, to the right or the left** (This Hebrew idiom is found in Dt 5:32, Dt 17:11, 20, Dt 28:14, Josh 1:7, Josh 23:6, 2 Ki 22:2, 2 Chr 34:2 = [godly King Josiah](#) the only king given this description!, Pr 4:27) - Turning to **the right or the left** was like doing your own thing, going your own way, not regarding the will and way of the LORD, for once His will is known, turning **to the right or to the left** is simply a way of describing disobedience.

**Utlley** - "you shall not turn aside from the word ... **to the right or the left**" This is a Hebrew idiom for not changing the verdict and punishment handed down by the Levitical judges. A similar metaphor is used of YHWH's words in Dt 4:2; 12:32. ([Deuteronomy 17](#)

**Deuteronomy 17:12 "The man who acts presumptuously by not listening to the priest who stands there to serve the LORD your God, nor to the judge, that man shall die; thus you shall purge the evil from Israel.**

- will do: De 13:5,11 Nu 15:30 Ezr 10:8 Ps 19:13 Ho 4:4 Mt 10:14 Heb 10:26-29
- and will not hearken: Heb. not to hearken, Jer 25:3-14
- the priest: De 10:8 18:5,7 Lu 10:16 Joh 12:48 20:23 1Th 4:2,8
- that man: Heb 10:28
- thou shalt: De 17:7 13:5 Pr 21:11 1Ti 5:20
- [Deuteronomy 17 Resources](#)

#### **Related Passages:**

Deuteronomy 1:43; "So I spoke to you, but you would not listen. Instead you rebelled against the command of the LORD, and acted presumptuously and went up into the hill country.

Deuteronomy 17:12 "The man who acts presumptuously by not listening to the priest who stands there to serve the LORD your God, nor to the judge, that man shall die; thus you shall purge the evil from Israel.13 "Then all the people will hear and be afraid, and will not act presumptuously again.

1 Samuel 3:14 "Therefore I have sworn to the house of Eli that the iniquity of Eli's house shall not be atoned for by sacrifice or offering forever."

Exodus 21:14 "If, however, a man acts presumptuously toward his neighbor, so as to kill him craftily, you are to take him even from My altar, that he may die.

### **"CONTEMPT OF COURT" A COSTLY CAPITAL OFFENSE**

**Contempt of court**, often referred to simply as "contempt", is the offense of being disobedient to or disrespectful toward a court of law and its officers in the form of behavior that opposes or defies the authority, justice and dignity of the court.

**The man who acts presumptuously by not listening** ([shama](#) - and not obeying) **to the (Levitical) priest who stands there to serve the LORD your God, nor to the judge, that man shall die-** NET = "The person who pays no attention to the priest currently serving the LORD your God there, or to the verdict— that person must die, so that you may purge evil from Israel." Ignoring justice dictated by the priests was also a capital offense, because it is basically rejecting God.

To not listen to **priest**, God's representative, is tantamount to not listening to God. The sin of presumption seems to reflect the cold, calculated sin for which a man was not in the least sorry, the open-eyed disobedience of God. Presumptuous sins are: Dt 1:43; 17:12,13, 1Sa3:14, Ex 21:14 Presumptuous sins also excluded the individual from sanctuary in the cities of refuge (Dt 19:11-13).

**Utley on man who acts presumptuously** -This term is used of wilful disobedience (cf. Dt 1:43; 17:12, 13; 18:20, 22). The judge and priest were representatives of YHWH's authority. Therefore, to reject their decisions was to reject YHWH! In Dt 18:20–22, it is prophets who do not know YHWH speaking in His name, using His authority! ([Deuteronomy 17 Commentary](#))

**Presumptuously** ([02087](#))(**zadon** related to **zud** - act in a proud manner) insolence, presumptuousness, pride, primarily used in contexts which describe people whose pride causes them to oppose God and exalt themselves. David's brother's accusation against David (1 Sa 17:28) Obadiah 1:3 addresses the pride of the Edomites who fatally presumed that they had a safe place in the cliffs. Proverbs also describes the negative aspects of pride (Prov. 11:2; 13:10; 21:24), while Ezekiel uses this word in his description of the day of judgment (Ezek. 7:10). The adjective and noun forms of **zîd** are used in contexts having pride in view as opposed to God, which is a major sin. Persons so characterized are paralleled with those who "work wickedness" and "tempt God" (Malachi 3:15 [H 13]), and with "all who do wickedly. As a result, they will be burned like stubble in the day of God's impending punishment (Malachi 4:1 [H 3:19]). Frequently, such people are depicted as opposing those who try to do the will of God (Psalm 19:14; Psalm 119:51, 69, 78, 122; Jeremiah 43:2). (Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament)

**Related words -**

- Arrogant, proud, presumptuous ([02086](#)) [zed](#)
- Presumptuously (act arrogantly)([02102](#)) [zud](#)

**Zadon** - 11x- arrogance(3), arrogant(2), insolence(2), insolent pride(1), presumptuously(2), pride(1). Deut. 17:12; Deut. 18:22; 1 Sam. 17:28; Prov. 11:2; Prov. 13:10; Prov. 21:24; Jer. 49:16; Jer. 50:31; Jer. 50:32; Ezek. 7:10; Obad. 1:3

**Thus you shall purge** (put away, remove, banish) **the evil from Israel** - Key phrase in Deuteronomy for promotion of enjoyment and God's blessing in the Promised Land.

**Purge** (remove, burn) ([01197](#)) [ba'ar](#) literally to burn, but most uses in Deuteronomy describe the state or action of destroying an entity into non-existence as a figurative extension of fire consuming an object. Thus it often means to kill.

The first 3 uses in Deuteronomy describes Mt Sinai = "the mountain **burned** with fire to the very heart of the heavens." (Dt 5:23, 9:15).

**What will be purged?** False prophet (Dt 13:5), false worshiper (Dt 17:7), one who show contempt for a judge (Dt 17:12), murderer (Dt 19:13), false witness (Dt 19:19), people's bloodguiltiness for an unsolved murder (Dt 21:6), a stubborn, rebellious son (Dt 21:21), girl who lied when she married and was not actually a virgin (Dt 22:21), kidnapper (Dt 24:7).

**Evil** ([07451](#)) [רַע](#) [ra'](#), [רָעָה](#) [rā'āh](#): An adjective meaning bad, evil. It means bad in a moral and ethical sense and is used to describe, along with good, the entire spectrum of good and evil; hence, it depicts evil in an absolute, negative sense, as when it describes the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (Ge 2:9; Ge 3:5, 22+).

**Deuteronomy 17:13 "Then all the people will hear and be afraid, and will not act presumptuously again."**

- **hear**: De 13:11 19:20
- **presumptuously**: Nu 15:30,31
- [Deuteronomy 17 Resources](#)

## FEAR OF PUNISHMENT

**Then all the people will hear and be afraid, and will not act presumptuously again** - Fear of God impedes pursuit of evil but if one persists in this pursuit there is the fear is of punishment for [presumptuous](#) behavior. Capital punishment is clearly seen as a deterrent! How far we have gravitated from this Biblical truth in our society in America! And we are paying a dear price, for crime is rampant from the streets to the corporations and even to the churches!

**Deuteronomy 17:14 "When you enter the land which the LORD your God gives you, and you possess it and live in it, and you say, 'I will set a king over me like all the nations who are around me,'"**

- **When**: De 7:1 12:9,10 18:9 26:1,9 Lev 14:34 Jos 1:13
- **I will set**: 1Sa 8:5-7,1 Sa 8:19-20 1 Sa 12:19
- [Deuteronomy 17 Resources](#)

### Related Passages:

1 Samuel 8:5-7 (**ISRAEL DESIRED/DEMANDED A KING IN 1050 BC, ALMOST 400 YEARS AFTER DEUTERONOMY WAS SPOKEN TO ISRAEL**) and they said to him, "Behold, you have grown old, and your sons do not walk in your ways. **Now appoint a king for us to judge us like all the nations**" 6 But the thing was displeasing in the sight of Samuel when they said, "Give us a king to judge us." And Samuel prayed to the LORD. 7 The LORD said to Samuel, "Listen to the voice of the people in regard to all that they say to you, for they have not rejected you, but they have rejected Me from being king over them.....19 Nevertheless, the people refused to listen to the voice of Samuel, and they said, "No, but **there shall be a**

king over us, 20 that we also may be like all the nations, that our king may judge us and go out before us and fight our battles.”

## WHEN ISRAEL SEEKS A KING

**Deere** has an interesting comment introducing this section on the king of Israel - After Moses and Joshua died, the people were to be governed by judges and priests. However, this system did not provide Israel with any semblance of a strong central government. It could only work if the leaders (the judges and the priests) and the people were committed to following the Lord. The Book of Judges records the sad failure of the people and the leaders in this system. Moses anticipated that failure by including this law in reference to the future king. One may ask why God allowed the priests and judges to fail. Or why did not God institute the monarchy immediately? The answer, at least partly, is that He was preparing the nation to appreciate the gift of the monarchy. ([The Bible Knowledge Commentary](#))

**When you enter the land which the LORD your God gives you, and you possess it and live in it, and you say, 'I will set a king over me like all the nations who are around me,'** - Who was Israel's king? God Himself! And God here prophetically anticipated what He knew would come to pass more than 300 years later (1Sa 8:5,19,20) and the dangers that would ensue when such a king, in order to make political alliances with other kings, would "multiply wives to himself" (Dt 17:17 - see 1Ki 11:1-12 for its tragic fulfillment). Kingship had already been predicted (cf. Ge 49:10; Nu 24:17-19+), but this was a prophecy of the Messiah Who would one day rule over Israel as King of kings. But in the present context human kingship was viewed in a negative light, since it arises from Israel's desire to be "like all the nations," and had the potential for negative results (1 Sa 8:10-18). Divine permission would be granted, accompanied by certain stipulations - (1) the king must be divinely chosen; (2) he must be an Israelite; (3) he must not follow a luxurious and decadent lifestyle; and (4) he must be a disciple of the Scriptures.

Sadly later generations of Israel would forget that they had already experienced living under an Egyptian "King" and it was oppressive and onerous. But memory is a sad thing to lose and the later generations quickly forgot what their ancestors had suffered for under a harsh Egyptian "King."

Note the critical phrase **like all the nations who are around me** indicating they cannot appreciate that they had the best "King" one could have. And so their desire to be like the other nations was the main cause for Israel's cry for a king. They looked around and saw the pagan nations with fallen, willful, autocratic, dictatorial kings and desired them over the perfect Ruler Jehovah! Amazing!

As **Wiersbe** points out "Israel's great distinction was that they were not like the other nations! They were God's chosen people, a kingdom of priests, and God's special treasure (Ex. 19:5-6). "Lo, the people shall dwell alone, and shall not be reckoned among the nations" (Num. 23:9). Imitating the world instead of trusting the Lord has always been the great temptation of God's people, and each time they've succumbed, they've suffered. During their wilderness journey, Israel compared everything that happened with what they had experienced in Egypt, and at Kadesh-Barnea they even wanted to choose a leader and go back to Egypt! (Dt 14:1-5) But the church today is equally guilty of unbelief. When church leaders adopt the methods and measurements of the world, then the church has taken a giant step toward becoming like the world and losing its divine distinctives. Instead of trusting the Word of God and prayer (Acts 6:4), we depend on following the world's wisdom, imitating the world's methods, and catering to the world's appetites, giving people what they want instead of what they need. Believers today need to take to heart God's reminder to Israel: "I am the Lord your God, who has separated you from the peoples" (Num. 20:24NKJV). ([Be Equipped](#))

**Utley** points out that "17:14-20 are some of the most controversial verses in the OT, especially the Pentateuch. These verses speak about a coming king. Many OT scholars of our day say that Deuteronomy is the book that was found during Josiah's reform hundreds of years later during the monarchical period, and that it was written by the priests then to centralize worship at Jerusalem (cf. 2 Kgs. 22:8; 2 Chr. 34:14-15). They assert that this is evidence that it was not written by Moses because nowhere else in the Pentateuch is there mention of a king. It is an anachronism referring to Solomon, so obviously it must have been written later. I do not believe any of this! Some verses which show that vv. 14-20 are not unique in the Pentateuch are Gen. 17:6, 35:11; 36:31; Num. 24:7; Jdgs. 8:22, 23; 9:6. See [Moses' Authorship of the Pentateuch \(Deuteronomy 17 Commentary\)](#)

**Warren Wiersbe** - Israel did ask for a king, and God gave them **Saul** (1 Sa 8-10). We do not know whether he obeyed (Dt 17:18-20), but we do know that he failed to obey God's will (1 Sam. 15:1-35). His successor David was a man of God's Word, but David's son Solomon committed all of the sins named in Deut 17:16-17 (1 Kings 10:1-11:14). There was great prosperity for a time, but then the nation divided and turned from God. Common citizens, priests, judges, and kings—all had an obligation to submit to God's Word and obey it. The higher the position, the greater the responsibility. "Hear and fear!" ([Be Equipped](#))

DEUTERONOMY 17:14–20 “You may indeed set a king over you whom the LORD your God will choose. One from among your brothers you shall set as king over you” (v. 15).

Following Joshua’s initial conquest of Canaan and the period of the judges, the Israelites expressed their desire for a king (1 Sam. 8). This request was motivated by Israel’s desire to be like the other nations who looked to a king to fight its battles (v. 20) rather than to the Lord who promised to wage war for the people (Ex. 14:14). The request for a king in Samuel’s day was an implicit rejection of God as king (1 Sam. 8:7–9).

Importantly, the sin behind the people’s request reveals why Samuel frowned upon it. The desire for a king over Israel was not itself inherently evil; the Lord has always been pleased to rule His people through a human vice-regent when they seek a king with pure motives. This is clear in today’s passage, which was written long before the Israelites asked Samuel for a king. Indeed, Deuteronomy 17:14–20 looks for Israel to have a king—a king whom God Himself chooses (vv. 14–15).

The type of king God desires is defined in this passage. First, the king must be an Israelite, not a foreigner (v. 15). This would help prevent Israel from becoming subservient to another empire and guard against the introduction of false gods by outsiders. The concern to prevent idolatry is also behind the warning for the king not to take many wives who would turn his heart away from the Creator (v. 17). Unfortunately, Solomon’s own life demonstrated the wisdom of this stipulation (1 Kings 11:1–8). The king must also not seek excessive military might in the form of horses or excessive luxury in the form of silver and gold (Deut. 17:16–17).

Since ancient Near Eastern kings were honored according to the size of their armies, treasuries, and harems, we can see how the king of Israel was to be most unlike the kings of pagan nations. Israel’s king was to be subservient to God’s law (vv. 18–20). As a servant of the people, the king did not abide by different rules, for he was subject to the same commands and penalties as ordinary people. Here is the notion of the rule of law that has become so prominent in Western legal theory. We see this principle illustrated in point 45 of the Magna Carta: “We will appoint as justiciars, constables, sheriffs, or bailiffs only such men as know the law of the kingdom and well desire to observe it.” Though we do not live in a theocracy like Israel, rulers both secular and in the church are never laws unto themselves.

CORAM DEO Living before the face of God - For decades, presidents, parliaments, and other ruling bodies in our country and around the world have paid lip service to the rule of law while acting as if they are above the laws of the land. We can do something about this in our own society by voting for people who will subject themselves to God’s moral claims (natural law). We can also strive to follow God’s law and make disciples who may grow into godly leaders in positions of influence both great and small

**Deuteronomy 17:15 you shall surely set a king over you whom the LORD your God chooses, one from among your countrymen you shall set as king over yourselves; you may not put a foreigner over yourselves who is not your countryman.**

- whom: 1Sa 9:15-17 10:24 16:12,13 2Sa 5:2 1Ch 12:23 22:10 28:5 Ps 2:2,6
- from among: Jer 30:21 Mt 22:17
- not set: Jer 2:25
- [Deuteronomy 17 Resources](#)

#### Related Passages:

Dan 2:20+ Daniel said, “Let the name of God be blessed forever and ever, For wisdom and power belong to Him. 21 “It is He who changes the times and the epochs; **He removes kings and establishes kings**; He gives wisdom to wise men And knowledge to men of understanding. 22 “It is He who reveals the profound and hidden things; He knows what is in the darkness, And the light dwells with Him.

### **GOD’S IS SOVEREIGN OVER CHOOSING SOVEREIGNS!**

**you shall surely set a king over you whom the LORD your God chooses- God chooses** and Israel confirms His choice by affirmation (e.g., Jdg. 11:11; Hos. 1:11). What follows are the qualifications for a king of Israel and they are very clear.

**Deere** - Later history made it clear that prophets, speaking on God’s behalf, would declare His choice (e.g., Samuel’s support for Saul, 1 Sam. 9–12, and then for David, 1 Sam. 16; Nathan’s support of Solomon, 1 Kings 1). The people could be sure that God would place no one on the throne whom He had not gifted to be king. Therefore if a king failed, the reason for his failure would not lie



in his lack of ability but in his moral life. ([The Bible Knowledge Commentary](#))

Recall God's choice of David, and how even Samuel did not recognize the LORD's choice, Samuel later recording "the LORD said to Samuel, "Do not look at his appearance or at the height of his stature, because I have rejected him; for God sees not as man sees, for man looks at the outward appearance, but **the LORD looks at the heart**" (1 Sa 16:7).

**Wiersbe** makes an interesting comment - The king was not to be elected by the people; he was to be chosen by God. Israel's first king was Saul (1 Sam. 9–10), but God never intended Saul to establish a royal dynasty in Israel. Saul was from the tribe of Benjamin, but Judah was the royal tribe (Gen. 49:8–10), and the Messiah would come from Judah. Actually, Saul was given to the people to chasten them because they rejected the Lord (1 Sam. 8:7), for God's greatest judgment is to give His people what they want and let them suffer for it. ([Be Equipped](#))

**ESVSB** - Kings prefigure the righteousness of Christ the perfect King (Isa. 9:6–7; Matt. 27:37; Rev. 19:16).

**One from among your countrymen you shall set as king over yourselves** - Only a native Israelite could be king. "Not only must the king be chosen by God, but the king must be from Israel and not be a foreigner. Whenever God wanted to chasten His people, He would set a foreign ruler over them and let the people experience the contrast between the goodness of God and the oppressiveness of the idolatrous Gentiles." ([Wiersbe](#))

**you may not put a foreigner over yourselves who is not your countryman**- No strangers, someone who was not part of the family of Israel.

**Foreigner** ([05237](#)) ([nokriy](#)) comes from a word that means "to recognize" or be conspicuous. The most common usage is in describing that which is foreign, especially "foreign" people (not Israelites - Ruth the Moabitess). Uses in Deut - Deut. 14:21; Deut. 15:3; Deut. 17:15; Deut. 23:20; Deut. 29:22;

**Webster on foreign** - situated outside a place or country; especially : situated outside one's own country; born in, belonging to, or characteristic of some place or country other than the one under consideration; alien in character

**Deuteronomy 17:16** "Moreover, he shall not **multiply** horses for himself, nor shall he cause the people to return to Egypt to **multiply** horses, since the LORD has said to you, 'You shall never again return that way.'

- multiply horses: 1Sa 8:11 2Sa 8:4 1Ki 1:5 4:26 10:26-28 2Ch 9:25 Ps 20:7 Isa 36:8,9 Ho 14:3
- cause: Isa 31:1-3 Jer 42:14 Eze 17:15
- Ye shall henceforth: De 28:68 Ex 13:17 14:13 Nu 14:3,4 Jer 42:15,16 Ho 11:5
- [Deuteronomy 17 Resources](#)

#### Related Passage:

1 Kings 4:26; 10:14 Solomon had 40,000 stalls of horses for his chariots, and 12,000 horsemen.

Isaiah 31:1 **Woe to those who go down to Egypt for help** And rely on horses, And trust in chariots because they are many And in horsemen because they are very strong, But they do not look to the Holy One of Israel, nor seek the LORD!

Deuteronomy 28:68 "The LORD will bring you back to Egypt in ships, by the way about which I spoke to you, 'You will never see it again!' And there you will offer yourselves for sale to your enemies as male and female slaves, but there will be no buyer."

## THE DANGER OF MULTIPLICATION

**Moreover, he shall not multiply horses for himself** - What would "multiplication of horses" have signified in these times? One thought is that he is not to seek military might by multiplying horses, just as he should not seek political alliances by multiplying wives. The implication of many horses is military might and the king is not to trust in created horses but to trust in Yahweh Who created the horses! David writes " Some boast in chariots and some in horses, but we will boast in the name of the LORD, our God." (Ps 20:7)

**Jack Deere** - The prohibition against acquiring great numbers of horses meant that on human terms the king's army, composed

mainly of infantry, would be significantly weaker than an enemy's army with many chariots and cavalry. Yet this was precisely the point. An obedient Israelite king was to depend not on military strength but on the LORD alone. God had already demonstrated His ability to crush a large superior chariot army (Ex. 14–15). Acquiring horses would mean the people would be going to Egypt, where many were available. Returning to the nation's former land of slavery was unthinkable. ([The Bible Knowledge Commentary](#))

**Utley** - Horses were owned only by rulers, not local people. A horse was a battle weapon for war. In other words, "Don't trust in your military might. I, God, am protecting you." ([Deuteronomy 17 Commentary](#))

**ESVSB** - . God is warning that governmental leaders will constantly face the temptation to abuse their power for the sake of personal gain, which is contrary to his will.

**IVP Bible Background Commentary** - **proliferation of horses.** Since horses were used primarily to draw chariots and carry horsemen into battle, the acquisition of large numbers of these animals implies either an aggressive foreign policy or a monarch who wishes to impress his people and his neighbors with his wealth and power. The reference to Egypt is suggestive of dependence on that nation as an ally and a supplier of horses for war (Isa 36:6–9). Such alliances in the late monarchy period proved disastrous for Israel and Judah and were roundly condemned by the prophets (Isa 31:1–3; Mic 5:10).

**TSK** - Multiplying horses for chariots of war and cavalry, or for luxury, would increase the splendour of a monarch, and form a ground of confidence distinct from a proper confidence in God, and inconsistent with it, and with considering him as the glory of Israel. Egypt abounded in horses; and the desire of multiplying these would induce the prince to encourage a trade with that kingdom; and this might make way for the Israelites being again subjugated by the Egyptians, or at least corrupted by their idolatries and vices. Whereas, it was the command of God that they should no more return thither, but be totally detached from them.

Besides, they might be tempted to extend their dominion by means of cavalry, and so get scattered among the surrounding idolatrous nations, and thus cease to be that distinct, separate people, which God intended they should be.

**Nor shall he cause the people to return to Egypt to multiply horses, since the LORD has said to you, 'You shall never again return that way.'** - To go back to a place of former slavery was forbidden. That included not seeking help from Egypt.

**"You shall never again return that way"** possibly refers to a later practice of trading Hebrew mercenaries for horses. One historical example is the Elephantine community. However, in context, it again asserts that the coming king must trust totally in YHWH alone!

**Deuteronomy 17:17** "He shall not multiply wives for himself, or else his heart will turn away; nor shall he greatly increase silver and gold for himself.

- multiply wives: Ge 2:24 2Sa 3:2-5 1Ki 11:1-4 Ne 13:26 Mal 2:15 Mt 19:5
- neither shall he: 1Ki 10:21 Ps 62:10 Pr 30:8,9 Mt 6:19,20 13:22 19:23,24 Lu 12:15 1Ti 6:9,17
- [Deuteronomy 17 Resources](#)

#### Related Passages:

Deuteronomy 7:3-5 "Furthermore, you shall not intermarry with them; you shall not give your daughters to their sons, nor shall you take their daughters for your sons. 4 "For they will turn your sons away from following Me to serve other gods; then the anger of the LORD will be kindled against you and He will quickly destroy you. 5 "But thus you shall do to them: you shall tear down their altars, and smash their sacred pillars, and hew down their Asherim, and burn their graven images with fire.

1 Kings 10:14 Now the weight of gold which came in to Solomon in one year was 666 talents of gold,

### ROYAL WIVES WERE LIKE ANCIENT "NON-AGGRESSION" PACTS

**He shall not multiply wives for himself, or else his heart will turn away** - Kings would marry daughters of other kings to cement political alliances, but the king of Israel was not to do that because His alliance was to be with Jehovah as his covenant defender. For a king, often the acquisition of wives was politically expedient in order to make treaties or alliances with other nations. Moses had already issued a warning concerning these alliances (Dt 7:3-5; cf. 1 Ki 10:14-11:8).

**Jack Deere** - The prohibition against taking many wives was given because many kings married foreign women to form political alliances. If the king followed the Lord he would not need political alliances. Also foreign wives would cause his heart to be led astray

to worship their idols. ([The Bible Knowledge Commentary](#))

**IVP Bible Background Commentary - Royal marriage as alliance.** Marriage was a tool of diplomacy throughout the ancient Near East. For instance, Zimri-Lim, the king of Mari (eighteenth century B.C.), used his daughters to cement alliances and establish treaties with his neighboring kingdoms. Similarly, Pharaoh Thutmose IV (1425–1412 B.C.) arranged a marriage with a daughter of the Mitannian king to demonstrate good relations and end a series of wars with that middle Euphrates kingdom. Solomon's seven hundred wives and three hundred concubines (1 Kings 11:3) were a measure of his power and wealth (just as horses are in Deut 17:16), especially his marriage to the daughter of the pharaoh (1 Kings 3:1). While the political advantages were quite evident, the danger of such marriages is demonstrated in the introduction of the worship of other gods by Solomon's wives (1 Kings 11:4–8).

The problem with wives, especially pagan wives, is they would coerce the king's heart to pagan practices, which is exactly what transpired with Solomon (note repetition of phrase "turn heart away" below)...

(1 Kings 11:1-12) **Now King Solomon loved many foreign women** along with the daughter of Pharaoh: Moabite, Ammonite, Edomite, Sidonian, and Hittite women, 2 from the nations concerning which the LORD had said to the sons of Israel, **"You shall not associate with them, nor shall they associate with you, for they will surely turn your heart away after their gods."** Solomon held fast (clung, stuck like glue) to these in love. 3 He had seven hundred wives, princesses, and three hundred concubines, and his wives **turned his heart away**. 4 For when Solomon was old, his **wives turned his heart away** after other gods; and his heart was not wholly devoted to the LORD his God, as the heart of David his father had been. 5 For Solomon went after Ashtoreth the goddess of the Sidonians and after Milcom the detestable idol of the Ammonites. 6 Solomon (HE LOST FEAR OF THE LORD AND) did what was evil in the sight of the LORD, and did not follow the LORD fully, as David his father had done. 7 Then Solomon built a high place for Chemosh the detestable idol of Moab (CHILD SACRIFICES!), on the mountain (OLIVET) which is east of Jerusalem (OVERLOOKING THE HOLY TEMPLE!), and for Molech the detestable idol of the sons of Ammon (CHILD SACRIFICE). 8 Thus also he did for all his foreign wives, who burned incense and sacrificed to their gods (SOLOMON PARTICIPATED IN IDOLATRY!). 9 Now the LORD was angry with Solomon because his **heart was turned away from the LORD**, the God of Israel, who had appeared to him twice (PERSONAL ENCOUNTERS DO NOT PREVENT FUTURE FORSAKING! CONTINUED FAITHFULNESS NECESSITATES A DAY BY DAY PURSUIT OF JEHOVAH!), 10 and had commanded him concerning this thing, that he should not go after other gods; BUT (A SAD TERM OF CONTRAST!) he did not observe what the LORD had commanded. 11 So (ALSO A SAD TERM OF CONCLUSION) the LORD said to Solomon, "Because you have done this, and you have not kept My covenant and My statutes (MOSAIC COVENANT), which I have commanded you, I will surely tear the kingdom from you, and will give it to your servant. 12 "Nevertheless I will not do it in your days for the sake of your father David, but I will tear it out of the hand of your son.

**Wiersbe** comments - Solomon married an Egyptian princess (1 Kings 3:1), the first of many political alliances he made by taking foreign wives (1 Ki 11:1–6). He went back to Egypt not only for a wife but also for horses for his army, and built "chariot cities" in Israel where he stabled his horses and chariots (1 Ki 10:26, 28–29). As for his wealth, it was fabulous and impossible to calculate (1 Ki 10:14–25, 27). The description of Solomon's kingdom in 1 Kings 10 makes it look like a paradise, but it was decaying from within. ([Be Equipped](#))

**MacArthur** - The king was not to rely on military strength, political alliances, or wealth for his position and authority, but he was to look to the Lord. Solomon violated all of those prohibitions, while his father, David, violated the last two. Solomon's wives brought idolatry into Jerusalem, which resulted in the kingdom being divided (1Ki 11:1–43). (MSB)

**Nor shall he greatly increase silver and gold for himself** - This would result in trusting in **gold** not **God** (only one letter difference, but makes all the difference in time and potentially in eternity!) Solomon who accumulated riches (see [passage above](#)) once wrote **"He who trusts in his riches will fall**, But the righteous will flourish like the green leaf. (Pr 11:28)

The LORD wanted a man as king who would seek first His kingdom (Mt 6:33) and not have as his goal worldly wealth (Mt 6:24). How would a man seek God in those days or today for that matter? Obviously by studying and meditating on His Word (Dt 17:18ff).

**Deere** - The prohibition against large amounts of silver and gold was intended to keep the king from developing a sense of independence and a lust for material wealth (cf. Prov. 30:8–9). All three prohibitions, then, were designed to reduce the king to the status of a servant totally dependent on his Master, the Lord. The tragedy of ignoring these commands is seen in Solomon who broke all three prohibitions (1 Kings 10:14–15, 23, 26–28; 11:1–6). ([The Bible Knowledge Commentary](#))

**IVP Bible Background Commentary - royal treasuries.** The theme of excessive acquisition of royal symbols of power (horses, wives, gold and silver) continues in this admonition against overtaxing the people simply to fill the royal treasury. All of the categories

of wealth are said to lead to excessive pride, apostasy and a rejection or diminution of Yahweh's role (compare Dt 8:11–14). The vanity of kings who amass wealth without purpose other than pride is found in Ecclesiastes 2:8–11 and Jeremiah 48:7. The treasuries typically contained the precious metal assets of temple and state, including contributions as well as plunder. Though coinage or bullion may have been included, much of it would be in the form of jewelry, vessels for ritual use, religious objects or the various accessories of royal or wealthy households. Payment of tribute at times required drawing from or even emptying the treasuries (see 1 Kings 14:26; 2 Kings 18:15). Excavations or descriptions of temples and palaces often indicate rooms as treasuries, and royal officers included keepers of the treasuries.

**Guzik** - Each of these issues (MULTIPLICATION) is a matter of balance. The king had to have some military power, but not too much; one wife and certain comforts, but not too much; some personal wealth, but not too much. Such balances are often the hardest to keep. i. Solomon was a notorious breaker of these commands. He had forty thousand stalls of horses for his chariots (1 Kings 4:26), and Solomon had horses imported from Egypt (1 Kings 10:28). He had seven hundred wives, princesses, and three hundred concubines; and his wives turned away his heart (1 Kings 11:3). He surpassed all the kings of the earth in riches (1 Kings 10:23).. Yet, all along, we might see Solomon knowing the commands of Deuteronomy 17, yet deceiving himself by asking the self-justifying questions, "How much is 'multiply'? I can handle this. I haven't gone too far." It might seem self-evident that 700 wives and 300 concubines is multiplying wives to yourself, but one should never underestimate the ability of the human heart to deceive itself in such situations.i. Each of these three areas reflects the places where many modern Christian leaders fall: In regard to power, pleasure, or money. God's commands for leaders have not changed; and neither has the need to be on guard against the self-deception in these things which felled Solomon. ([Enduring Word Commentary - Deut 17](#))

**Deuteronomy 17:18** "Now it shall come about when he sits on the throne of his kingdom, he shall write for himself a copy of this law on a scroll in the presence of the Levitical priests.

- **shall:** 2Ki 11:12
- **shall write for himself a copy:** De 31:9,25,26 2Ki 22:8 2Ch 34:15
- [Deuteronomy 17 Resources](#)

## A SECOND COPY OF THE LAW

Now Moses ends this section (Dt 17:18-20) by focusing on the king's relationship with Yahweh, which would be predominantly through Yahweh's Book of the Law.

**Now it shall come about when he sits on the throne of his kingdom, he shall write for himself a copy of this law on a scroll in the presence of the Levitical priests** - The original copy was deposited in the central sanctuary (Dt 31:9). Did this refer only to the book of Deuteronomy or the entire Pentateuch?

**Guzik** - It is striking to think of the king of Israel, laboring over parchment with a pen, making a personal copy of the law of Israel. This shows how greatly God wanted the word of God to be on the hearts of His rulers; God wanted every king to also be a scribe. ([Enduring Word Commentary - Deut 17](#))

**A copy of this law** - Hebrew = "*Mishneh hattorah hazzoth*," "a duplicate of this law." translated by the Septuagint as "*to deuteronomion touto*" literally rendered "this Deuteronomy," from which the Vulgate and all the modern versions have taken this as the name of the book.

**NET NOTE** - Or "instruction." The LXX reads here τ δευτερονόμιον το το (to deuteronomion touto, "this second law"). From this Greek phrase the present name of the book, "Deuteronomy" or "second law" (i.e., the second giving of the law), is derived. However, the MT's expression מִשְׁנֵה הַתּוֹרָה הַזֹּאת (mishneh hattorah hazzot) is better rendered "copy of this law." Here the term תּוֹרָה (torah) probably refers only to the book of Deuteronomy and not to the whole Pentateuch.

**MacArthur** - The king was pictured as a scribe and scholar of Scripture. Josiah reinstituted this approach at a bleak time in Israel's history (cf. 2Ki 22:1-20).

**Utlley** thinks "This probably refers to someone (i.e., a Levitical priest) making a copy for him (cf. 2 Kgs. 11:12). This is the verse from which the Septuagint got the title for the book of Deuteronomy (i.e., the Second Law), but in context this verse refers to a second copy of the Law, not a revised version of the Law." ([Deuteronomy 17 Commentary](#))

**Scroll** ([05612](#)) (seper) is a masculine noun meaning a document, a writing, a book, a scroll. Borrowed from an

Assyrian word meaning missive or message, this word can refer to a letter (2 Sam. 11:14, 15; 1 Ki. 21:8, 9, 11; 2 Ki. 10:1, 2, 6, 7; Jer. 29:1); a divorce decree (Deut. 24:1, 3; Isa. 50:1; Jer. 3:8); a proof of purchase deed (Jer. 32:10-12, 14, 16); a book in which things were written for a need in the future (Ex. 17:14; 1 Sam. 10:25; Isa. 30:8); a book of laws (Ex. 24:7; Deut. 30:10; Josh. 1:8; Neh. 8:1, 3; 13:1); a genealogical record (Gen. 5:1; Neh. 7:5); writing and language (Dan. 1:4, 17).

The Hebrew term סֵפֶר (sefer) means a "writing" or "document" and could be translated "book" (so KJV, ASV, TEV). However, since "book" carries the connotation of a modern bound book with pages (an obvious anachronism) it is preferable to render the Hebrew term "scroll" here and elsewhere.

**Vine** - "book; document; writing." Sēper seems to be a loanword from the Akkadian sipru ("written message," "document"). The word appears 187 times in the Hebrew Old Testament, and the first occurrence is in Gen. 5:1: "This is the book of the generations of Adam. When God created man, he made him in the likeness of God" (rsv). The word is rare in the Pentateuch except for Deuteronomy (11 times). The usage increases in the later historical books (Kings 60 times but Chronicles 24 times; cf. Esther 11 times and Nehemiah 9 times). The most common translation of sēper is "book." A manuscript was written (Exod. 32:32; Deut. 17:18) and sealed (Isa. 29:11), to be read by the addressee (2 Kings 22:16). The sense of sēper is similar to "scroll" (megillā): "Therefore go thou, and read in the roll [sēper] which thou hast written from my mouth, the words of the Lord in the ears of the people in the Lord's house upon the fasting day: and also thou shalt read them in the ears of all Judah that come out of their cities" (Jer. 36:6). Sēper is also closely related to "book" (siprā) (Psa. 56:8).

Many "books" are named in the Old Testament: the "book" of remembrance (Mal. 3:16), "book" of life (Psa. 69:28), "book" of Jasher (Josh. 10:13), "book" of the generations (Gen. 5:1), "book" of the Lord, "book" of the chronicles of the kings of Israel and of Judah, and the annotations on the "book" of the Kings (2 Chron. 24:27). Prophets wrote "books" in their lifetime. Nahum's prophecy begins with this introduction: "The burden of Nineveh. The book of the vision of Nahum the Elkoshite" (Nah 1:1).

Jeremiah had several "books" written in addition to his letters to the exiles. He wrote a "book" on the disasters that were to befall Jerusalem, but the "book" was torn up and burned in the fireplace of King Jehoiakim (Jer. 36). In this context, we learn about the nature of writing a "book." Jeremiah dictated to Baruch, who wrote with ink on the scroll (Jer. 36:18). Baruch took the "book" to the Judeans who had come to the temple to fast. When the "book" had been confiscated and burned, Jeremiah wrote another scroll and had another "book" written with a strong condemnation of Jehoiakim and his family: "Then took Jeremiah another roll, and gave it to Baruch the scribe, the son of Neriah; who wrote therein from the mouth of Jeremiah all the words of the book which Jehoiakim king of Judah had burned in the fire: and there were added besides unto them many like words" (Jer. 36:32). Ezekiel was commanded to eat a "book" (Ezek. 2:8-3:1) as a symbolic act of God's judgment on and restoration of Judah. Sēper can also signify "letter." The prophet Jeremiah wrote a letter to the Babylonian exiles, instructing them to settle themselves, as they were to be in Babylon for 70 years: "Now these are the words of the letter (sēper) that Jeremiah the prophet sent from Jerusalem unto the residue of the elders which were carried away captives, and to the priests, and to the prophets, and to all the people whom Nebuchadnezzar had carried away captive from Jerusalem to Babylon..." (Jer. 29:1).

The contents of the sēper varied. It might contain a written order, a commission, a request, or a decree, as in: "And [Mordecai] wrote in the king Ahasuerus' name, and sealed it [sēper] with the king's ring, and sent letters by posts on horseback, and riders on mules, camels, and young dromedaries" (Esth. 8:10). In divorcing his wife, a man gave her a legal document known as the sēper of divorce (Deut. 24:1). Here sēper meant a "certificate" or "legal document." Some other legal document might also be referred to as a sēper. As a "legal document," the sēper might be published or hidden for the appropriate time: "Thus saith the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel; Take these evidences [sēper], this evidence of the purchase, both which is sealed, and this evidence which is open; and put them in an earthen vessel, that they may continue many days" (Jer. 32:14).

The Septuagint gives the following translations: biblion ("scroll; document") and gramma ("letter; document; writing; book"). The kǝv gives these senses: "book; letter; evidence."

**Seper** - 173v - Book(47), book(79), books(2), certificate(3), deed(6), deeds(3), illiterate\*(1), indictment(1), letter(14), letters(15), literate\*(1), literature(2), read\*(1), scroll(6), scroll\*(3), writ(1). Gen. 5:1; Exod. 17:14; Exod. 24:7; Exod. 32:32; Exod. 32:33; Num. 5:23; Num. 21:14; Deut. 17:18; Deut. 24:1; Deut. 24:3; Deut. 28:58; Deut. 28:61; Deut. 29:20; Deut. 29:21; Deut. 29:27; Deut. 30:10; Deut. 31:24; Deut. 31:26; Jos. 1:8; Jos. 8:31; Jos. 8:34; Jos. 10:13; Jos. 18:9; Jos. 23:6; Jos. 24:26; 1 Sam. 10:25; 2 Sam. 1:18; 2 Sam. 11:14; 2 Sam. 11:15; 1 Ki. 11:41; 1 Ki. 14:19; 1 Ki. 14:29; 1 Ki. 15:7; 1 Ki. 15:23; 1 Ki. 15:31; 1 Ki. 16:5; 1 Ki. 16:14; 1 Ki. 16:20; 1 Ki. 16:27; 1 Ki. 21:8; 1 Ki. 21:9; 1 Ki. 21:11; 1 Ki. 22:39; 1 Ki. 22:45; 2 Ki. 1:18; 2 Ki. 5:5; 2 Ki. 5:6;

2 Ki. 5:7; 2 Ki. 8:23; 2 Ki. 10:1; 2 Ki. 10:2; 2 Ki. 10:6; 2 Ki. 10:7; 2 Ki. 10:34; 2 Ki. 12:19; 2 Ki. 13:8; 2 Ki. 13:12; 2 Ki. 14:6; 2 Ki. 14:15; 2 Ki. 14:18; 2 Ki. 14:28; 2 Ki. 15:6; 2 Ki. 15:11; 2 Ki. 15:15; 2 Ki. 15:21; 2 Ki. 15:26; 2 Ki. 15:31; 2 Ki. 15:36; 2 Ki. 16:19; 2 Ki. 19:14; 2 Ki. 20:12; 2 Ki. 20:20; 2 Ki. 21:17; 2 Ki. 21:25; 2 Ki. 22:8; 2 Ki. 22:10; 2 Ki. 22:11; 2 Ki. 22:13; 2 Ki. 22:16; 2 Ki. 23:2; 2 Ki. 23:3; 2 Ki. 23:21; 2 Ki. 23:24; 2 Ki. 23:28; 2 Ki. 24:5; 1 Chr. 9:1; 2 Chr. 16:11; 2 Chr. 17:9; 2 Chr. 20:34; 2 Chr. 24:27; 2 Chr. 25:4; 2 Chr. 25:26; 2 Chr. 27:7; 2 Chr. 28:26; 2 Chr. 32:17; 2 Chr. 32:32; 2 Chr. 34:14; 2 Chr. 34:15; 2 Chr. 34:16; 2 Chr. 34:18; 2 Chr. 34:21; 2 Chr. 34:24; 2 Chr. 34:30; 2 Chr. 34:31; 2 Chr. 35:12; 2 Chr. 35:27; 2 Chr. 36:8; Neh. 7:5; Neh. 8:1; Neh. 8:3; Neh. 8:5; Neh. 8:8; Neh. 8:18; Neh. 9:3; Neh. 12:23; Neh. 13:1; Est. 1:22; Est. 2:23; Est. 3:13; Est. 6:1; Est. 8:5; Est. 8:10; Est. 9:20; Est. 9:25; Est. 9:30; Est. 9:32; Est. 10:2; Job 19:23; Job 31:35; Ps. 40:7; Ps. 69:28; Ps. 139:16; Eccl. 12:12; Isa. 29:11; Isa. 29:12; Isa. 29:18; Isa. 30:8; Isa. 34:4; Isa. 34:16; Isa. 37:14; Isa. 39:1; Isa. 50:1; Jer. 3:8; Jer. 25:13; Jer. 29:1; Jer. 29:25; Jer. 29:29; Jer. 30:2; Jer. 32:10; Jer. 32:11; Jer. 32:12; Jer. 32:14; Jer. 32:16; Jer. 32:44; Jer. 36:2; Jer. 36:4; Jer. 36:8; Jer. 36:10; Jer. 36:11; Jer. 36:13; Jer. 36:18; Jer. 36:32; Jer. 45:1; Jer. 51:60; Jer. 51:63; Ezek. 2:9; Dan. 1:4; Dan. 1:17; Dan. 9:2; Dan. 12:1; Dan. 12:4; Nah. 1:1; Mal. 3:16

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## G Campbell Morgan - Life Applications from Every Chapter of the Bible -

Deu. 17:18 He shall write him a copy of this law in a book. Deut. 17:18

In this chapter, at verse fourteen, we commence a section which ends at the close of the next chapter. It deals with the threefold medium through which the will of God would be interpreted to the people, that of the king, the priest, the prophet. In this chapter the subject is that of the king. In dealing with it, Moses was speaking in the light of prophetic foresight. He foresaw what would happen after they came into the land. He knew how they would clamour for a king, and how God would grant them their request, and so teach them, ultimately, the folly of their desire. In the light of this, the principles of the appointment were declared. The king must be chosen of God, and be of their own nation. He was forbidden to multiply horses, wives, silver and gold. Perhaps the most striking requirement was this, that he, the king, should write a copy of the law in a book. Necessarily the purpose was that he should be a student of the law, but this requirement gave special emphasis to that requirement. One wonders how many of the kings carried out this wise instruction. This whole paragraph is a remarkable revelation of God's ideal of a king. It would be an interesting exercise to place the kings of all time by the side of it for measurement. Such a procedure would inevitably result in a twofold consciousness. First, we should surely discover that the measure in which kings have approximated to this ideal, is the measure in which they have contributed to national strength. Second, we should as surely find that one King only fulfils the conditions.

**Deuteronomy 17:19 "It shall be with him and he shall read it all the days of his life, that he may learn to fear the LORD his God, by carefully observing all the words of this law and these statutes,**

- De 6:6-9 11:18 Jos 1:8 Ps 1:2 119:97-100 Joh 5:39 2Ti 3:15-17
- [Deuteronomy 17 Resources](#)

### Related Passages:

Deuteronomy 6:1-2+ "Now this is the commandment, the statutes and the judgments which the LORD your God has commanded me to teach you, that you might do them in the land where you are going over to possess it, 2 so that you and your son and your grandson might fear the LORD your God, to keep all His statutes and His commandments which I command you, all the days of your life, and that your days may be prolonged.

## LEARNING TO FEAR THE LORD

**It shall be with him and he shall read it all the days of his life-** What does this mean..."**be with him**"? Can you imagine a king walking around carrying his scroll of God's law? This could be part of the meaning that this word is literally with him. But the optimal place for God's word is not ON a scroll but IN our hearts. Are you treasuring God's Word in your heart that you may not sin against Him? (Ps 119:9-11+) Why not? Are you carrying your small pocket Bible around so that you might refer to it on short notice for wisdom from on high?

The kings of Israel all needed to be like **David** who wrote...



The law of **his** God is in **his** heart; **his** steps do not slip.

-- Ps 37:31

**Guzik** - It is striking to consider that reading a book—the Great Book, the Bible—can keep a person from sin. We may not understand all the spiritual work behind the word of God, but staying in the word will keep one from sin. It has been well written in many Bibles: "This book will keep you from sin. Sin will keep you from this book.". Luther said he would rather live in hell with the Bible than to live in Paradise without the Bible. ([Enduring Word Commentary - Deut 17](#))

**He shall read it all the days of his life** (cp Dt 8:3, 32:47): If Israel would be the people God desired them to be, they must be a people of the Book, a people filled with & guided by His holy Word. If they were to have the leadership they needed and that God desired for them, they must follow God in the choice of who would be king. What was the ONE thing that the king was instructed to do for himself (and by implication the most important thing)?

**Utley** - This copy of God's law is to remain with the king. This reflects the parallel of the Hittite treaties, where two copies of the covenant were made. One was put in the temple of the covenant partners' deity (here YHWH's tabernacle) and the other remained with the vassel king (i.e., to be read regularly so as to be in compliance). ([Deuteronomy 17 Commentary](#))

[IVP Bible Background Commentary](#) - In Egypt and Mesopotamia the king was the fountainhead of law. It was his task to perceive and maintain the order that was built into the universe (Egyptian ma'at; Mesopotamian me). The king could not be "brought to justice," except by the gods. He was not above the law, but there was no mechanism by which he could be tried in a human court. Judicially this may have been no different in Israel, though the prophets, as spokesmen for the deity, could call the king to account.

#### Related Resources:

- [Meditate](#)
- [Primer on Biblical Meditation](#)
- [Memorizing His Word](#)
- [Memory Verses by Topic](#)

**That** - Purpose and what a wonderful purpose the Word fulfills.

**He may learn to fear the LORD his God**- (cf. Jos 1:7,8, Ps 1:2, Ps 119:97-100) First note the Word is read, and learned and with it the Spirit energizes in our heart a holy, reverential fear of Yahweh. But that's just the first benefit. For proper fear promotes a pure path.

Moses had previously spoken of learning to fear the LORD...

"Remember the day you stood before the LORD your God at Horeb, when the LORD said to me, 'Assemble the people to Me, that I may let them **hear My words** so they **may learn to fear Me all the days they live on the earth**, and that they may teach their children.' (Dt 4:10+, cf Dt 31:12-13+)

God's command to Joshua emphasizes how important the Word of God was in the life of the leader of Israel (and the life of any person)...

"Only be strong and very courageous; be careful to do according to all the law which Moses My servant commanded you; do not turn from it to the right or to the left, so that you may have success wherever you go.  
8 "This book of the law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it; for **then** you will make your way prosperous, and **then** you will have success.(Joshua 1:7-8+)

**By carefully observing all the words of this law and these statutes** - the result of knowing the Word would be the fear of the Lord -- with the concomitant result, obedience, a walk of humility not pride, as well as a walk that was consistent rather than veering away into wrong paths. How did King David do? Was he perfect? No but God testified of him " 'I HAVE FOUND DAVID the son of Jesse, A MAN AFTER MY HEART, who will do all My will.' (Acts 13:22+). Note that **carefully observing** is not talking about legalistic adherence to a list of "do's and don'ts" but an obedience that comes from a circumcised heart (Dt 10:16, Dt 30:6, Ro 2:28,29) motivated by love for God (Dt 6:5, Dt 10:12), for as Jesus said "If you **love Me**, you will **keep** (obey) My commandments (now possible by depending on His Spirit - Php 2:13NLT+)." (Jn 14:15)

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#### Deuteronomy 17:19 PROFITABLE READING

Some of the greatest scholars in the world have stated without apology that no man's education can be complete without an ac-

quaintance with the Bible. Not only are its contents of inestimable value, but its very literary perfection and beauty are also worthy of our special attention and admiration. If we are to know this Book, it goes without saying that we must be willing to read and study it faithfully. No man can master any subject without diligent effort, concentration, and application. Much of the criticism laid against the Scriptures has come from those who have never studied it, much less even read it through.

A certain Bible teacher, boarding a train, found a seat next to a man who was diligently reading his newspaper. Opening his briefcase the preacher took out his Bible and began to read. The gentleman with the newspaper, glancing out of the corner of his eye, saw this unusual sight and his curiosity was aroused. Finally he said, "Pardon me, Sir, are you a minister?" "Yes, I am," said the man, and began talking to his questioner about the Bible. He explained some of the mysteries of that wonderful Book and its marvelous doctrines and revelations until the other exclaimed in amazement, "How in the world did you ever learn so much about that Book?" The Bible teacher simply replied, "I certainly did not get it by reading the daily newspaper!" Now, we should know what's going on in the world today. But I am concerned over the amount of time that is taken up in reading our news-papers, magazines, and periodicals as compared with the Bible.

By the way, how much time do you spend in spiritual meditation each day? How diligently do you study God's Word? Upon your answer will depend your knowledge of the Scriptures and the Man of the Book, the Lord Jesus Christ.

In my soul, in my soul,  
Send a great revival;  
Teach me how to watch and pray,  
And to read my Bible!  
—Anon.

**There are multitudes whose Bibles are "read" only on the edges!**

**Deuteronomy 17:20 that his heart may not be lifted up above his countrymen and that he may not turn aside from the commandment, to the right or the left, so that he and his sons may continue long in his kingdom in the midst of Israel.**

- **his heart:** De 8:2,13,14 2Ki 14:10 2Ch 25:19 26:16 32:25,26 33:12,19,23 34:27 Ps 131:1,2 Isa 2:12 Da 5:20-23 Hab 2:4 2Co 12:7 1Pe 5:5
- **turn:** De 4:2 5:32 12:25,28,32 1Ki 15:5
- **right hand:** De 17:11 1Sa 13:13,14 15:23 1Ki 11:12,13,34,36 2Ki 10:30 Ps 19:11 Ps 132:12 Pr 27:24 Ec 8:13
- that he: Pr 10:27
- [Deuteronomy 17 Resources](#)

#### **Related Passages:**

Deuteronomy 11:8-9; 32+ "You shall therefore keep every commandment which I am commanding you today, so that you may be strong and go in and possess the land into which you are about to cross to possess it; so that you may prolong your days on the land which the LORD swore to your fathers to give to them and to their descendants, a land flowing with milk and honey....32 and you shall be careful to do all the statutes and the judgments which I am setting before you today.

Numbers 14:24 ("But My servant Caleb, because he has had a different spirit and has followed Me fully, I will bring into the land which he entered, and his descendants shall take possession of it.

Joshua 1:3; 8 "Every place on which the sole of your foot treads, I have given it to you, just as I spoke to Moses...(1:8) "This book of the law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it; for then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have success.

### **LAW EXALTS GOD HUMBLES MAN**

**that his heart** (see [below](#)) **may not be lifted up above his countrymen** - Reading the law leads to fearing the Lord which is manifest by observing the law which here has the effect of creating in the king a humble (teachable) heart. The king was not to be above the law, but "under" the law, submitted to the law, in effect submitted to the LORD.

**THOUGHT** - When one sees the glory, greatness and goodness of the LORD in His Law, the ideal response is to fall down in worship at His footstool in humble adoration.

**HCSB** - This admonition to consistent Bible reading is designed to help the reader to fear the LORD and to obey all that He commands. Rulers of the OT theocracy (meaning Israel's rulers) in particular needed to be careful to do this so as not to think of themselves as overly exalted above their countrymen and to protect themselves against deviating from their covenantal obligations to God. Many of Israel's kings fell short of this ideal, with the result that the Davidic line came to an end and would resume only with the reign of Christ, the son of David (Zech 9:9-10; cp. Mt 21:9). ([Holman Christian Standard Bible Study Bible](#) - Nice notes)

**And that he may not turn aside from the commandment, to the right or the left-** (Dt 5:32, Dt 17:11, 20, Dt 28:14, Josh 1:7, Josh 23:6, 2 Ki 22:2, 2 Chr 34:2 = [godly King Josiah](#) the only king given this description!, Pr 4:27) Hebrew idiomatic way to describe a person's obedience, of turning one's foot from evil (Pr 4:27).

**THOUGHT** - Not turn aside...to the right or the left - It speaks of focus, eyes set on the narrow path of righteousness marked out clearly in God's Word. It reminds me of Jesus as He journeyed to the Cross and how He "steadfastly set his face to go to Jerusalem." (Lk 9:51KJV+) In light of that passage, for us today the way to not turn to the right or the left is to fix our eyes on Jesus, the Author and the Perfecter of our faith (Heb 12:2+). God's good and perfect will is in His Word and lights for the reader the way he should walk, straight ahead, not veering from God's Word. Psalms and Proverbs (the latter written by Solomon who failed to follow his own wisdom!!!)

Psalms 119:105+ Nun. Your word is a lamp to **my feet** And a light to **my path**.

Proverbs 6:23+ For the commandment is a **lamp** and the teaching is **light**; And reproofs for discipline are **the way of life**

So as result of having a copy of God's Word, reading it and properly reverencing God (learning proper fear of Him), the Word would cause him to walk in humility and would protect from a haughty opinion of himself. It would cause him to walk consistently (not turning aside) rather than veering the wrong way. And look at the promises: long reign for himself and his sons, the very thing which Solomon's disobedience forfeited! (1 Kings 11:12-14)

**Matthew Poole** - "The Scriptures, diligently read and studied, are a powerful and probable means to keep him humble, because they show him that, though a king, he is subject to a higher Monarch, to whom he must give an account ... sufficient to abate the pride of the haughtiest person in the world, if he duly consider it."

**So that** - Purpose clause. Moses gives this promise to the king who reads the law, learns to fear the LORD, seeks diligently to observe the Law and does turn to the right or left.

**He and his sons may continue long in his kingdom in the midst of Israel-** Solomon himself wrote that "The fear of the LORD prolongs life, But the years of the wicked will be shortened. (Pr 10:27)

**Utleigh** - Kingship, like the high priesthood, was to be a hereditary descent. The kingship (i.e., later concept of Messiah) was predicted to be in the line of Judah (cf. Gen. 49:10; 2 Samuel 7). ([Deuteronomy 17 Commentary](#))

The **heart** of the problem is usually the problem of the **heart** so it is emphasized repeatedly in Deuteronomy

Deut. 1:28; Deut. 2:30; Deut. 4:9; Deut. 4:11; Deut. 4:29; Deut. 4:39; Deut. 5:29; Deut. 6:5; Deut. 6:6; Deut. 7:17; Deut. 8:2; Deut. 8:5; Deut. 8:14; Deut. 8:17; Deut. 9:4; Deut. 9:5; Deut. 10:12; Deut. 10:16; Deut. 11:13; Deut. 11:16; Deut. 11:18; Deut. 13:3; Deut. 14:26; Deut. 15:7; Deut. 15:9; Deut. 15:10; Deut. 17:17; Deut. 17:20; Deut. 18:21; Deut. 20:8; Deut. 24:15; Deut. 26:16; Deut. 28:28; Deut. 28:47; Deut. 28:65; Deut. 28:67; Deut. 29:4; Deut. 29:18; Deut. 29:19; Deut. 30:2; Deut. 30:6; Deut. 30:10; Deut. 30:14; Deut. 30:17; Deut. 32:46

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**F B Meyer - Deuteronomy 17:20 That his heart be not lifted up.**

Beware of pride! By that sin fell the angels. If they fell by it, how much more may we! When a man is raised from some lowly sphere to a position of commanding influence, he is greatly tempted to arrogance and pride. The adulation which he receives on every hand makes it all the harder to live humbly and unassumingly. But when once pride enters, it seems to close the heart to God. The proud man multiplies to himself chariots and horses, with the intention of making his position more secure; but he shuts out the help of the Most High. How necessary, therefore, that our hearts should not be lifted up!

The corrective suggested here is meditation on the Word of God. The king was to write out a copy with his own hand, and meditate

on it all the days of his life; this would keep him in the lowlands of humility. The Bible is so true in its analysis of the heart; like a mirror it reveals a man to himself. It gives such exalted views of the greatness and holiness of God, compared with which the greatest human state is like the royalties of an ant-heap. It assures us that we must receive everything as the gift of God's grace. "Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law — of works?" No, but by the grace of God which bringeth salvation, apart from merit.

May God make us humble, with a transparent humility, which is not conscious that it is humble, like the utter unconsciousness of the little child, who does not bend back on herself. Still and quiet your soul, dear child of God, as a child weaned from its mother; and be sure to feed humility on the sincere milk of the Word.