

DEUTERONOMY 17

written and compiled by Gary Kukis

Deuteronomy 17:1–20 Laws for Idolatry, the Death Penalty, a Higher Court, a King

These studies are designed for believers in Jesus Christ only. If you have exercised faith in Christ, then you are in the right place. If you have not, then you need to heed the words of our Lord, Who said, “For God so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten [or, uniquely-born] Son, so that every [one] believing [or, trusting] in Him shall not perish, but shall be have eternal life! For God did not send His Son into the world so that He should judge the world, but so that the world shall be saved through Him. The one believing [or, trusting] in Him is not judged, but the one not believing has already been judged, because he has not believed in the Name of the only-begotten [or, uniquely-born] Son of God.” (John 3:16–18). “I am the Way and the Truth and the Life! No one comes to the Father except through [or, by means of] Me!” (John 14:6).

Every study of the Word of God ought to be preceded by a naming of your sins to God. This restores you to fellowship with God (1John 1:8–10). If there are people around, you would name these sins silently. If there is no one around, then it does not matter if you name them silently or whether you speak aloud.

Document Navigation

Preface	Quotations	Outline of Chapter
Charts, Graphics, Short Doctrines	Doctrines Alluded to	Chapters Alluded to
Dictionary of Terms	Introduction	First Verse
Addendum	A Complete Translation	Chapter Word Clouds

Links to the completed chapters of Deuteronomy are found here ([HTML](#)) ([PDF](#)) ([WPD](#)). This chapter is a part of that study. Sometime ago, I did a verse-by-verse exegesis of the books of the Pentateuch, and, in my opinion, did not really give these books the full treatment that they deserved. Here, I am going back and redoing the book of Deuteronomy. All of the information from that previous study will be included in here and this study will eventually supplant the shorter study of the book of **Deuteronomy** ([HTML](#)) ([PDF](#)) ([WPD](#)). From time to time, there will be concepts and exegetical material which will be repeated.

These exegetical studies are *not* designed for you to read each and every word. For instance, the Hebrew exegesis is put into greyish tables, so that if you want to skip over them, that is fine. If you question a translation, you can always refer back to the appropriate Hebrew tables to sort it all out.

The intent is to make this particular study the most complete and most accurate examination of Deuteronomy 17 which is available in writing. The idea is to make every phrase, verse and passage understandable; and to make correct application of all that is studied.

Besides teaching you the doctrinal principles related to this chapter, this commentary is also to help bring this narrative to life, so that you can understand the various characters, their motivations, and the choices that they make. Ideally, you will be able to visualize the peoples and armies as they move across the landscape of the Land of Promise.

It should be pointed out that I quote a vast number of commentators. I am not implicitly supporting their ministry by quoting them. Sometimes I use a quotation in order to illustrate a mistaken notion; and sometimes I use a quotation to illustrate an excellent observation (in my opinion, of course). The surrounding text (or lack thereof) should clearly indicate which is being done. The person being quoted may have a great many accurate observations; but it is also possible that their accurate observations do not extend much further than the quotations found herein.

Similarly, observations made about particular political candidates, parties or issues should not be understood as a blanket endorsement or rejection of any particular party or candidate or politician. These are simply used as illustrations, which should be updated by whomever might teach this same material years in the future.

So that there is no misunderstanding, the doctrines, pronouncements and actions in this book all take place during the Age of Israel. For that reason, not everything that we study herein has direct application to our lives today during the Church Age. For instance, the Sabbath Day (Saturday) was observed during the Jewish Age; but it is not a part of religious observance today (although we can make application of various principles based upon the teaching of the Sabbath Day). An understanding of dispensations is imperative when studying the Word of God from a different era. See the **Doctrine of Dispensations** ([HTML](#)) ([PDF](#)) ([WPD](#)).

Preface: Moses continues giving laws and applications of the Law. In this chapter, Moses deals with the problem of idolatry, the function of higher courts, the evidence of two or more witnesses, and how a future king over Israel must behave.

There are many [chapter commentaries](#) on the book of Deuteronomy. This will be the most extensive examination of Deuteronomy 17 available, where you will be able to examine in depth every word of the original text. Every attempt has been made to make this both a complete and self-contained study. Therefore, all references, vocabulary, and related concepts should be found within this extensive study. Easy access links to more in-depth studies of some vocabulary words, concepts and doctrines are also provided.

Quotations:

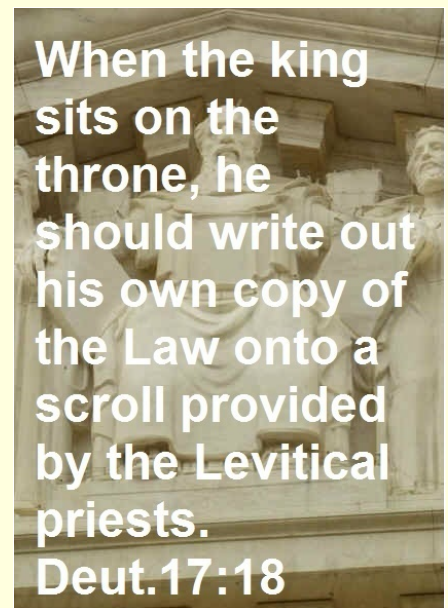
Richard M. Nixon: *When the President does it, that means that it's not illegal.*¹

Gary North: *A rule of bureaucracy is this: the thicker the law book, the more arbitrary the decisions.*²

Deuteronomy 17:18 (a graphic).

Psalm 119:97–100 *Oh how I love Your law! It is my meditation all the day. Your commandment makes me wiser than my enemies, for it is ever with me. I have more understanding than all my teachers, for Your testimonies are my meditation. I understand more than the aged, for I keep Your precepts.* (ESV; capitalized)

John 5:39–40 *“You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that bear witness about Me, yet you refuse to come to Me that you may have life.”* (ESV; capitalized)



¹ From http://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/authors/r/richard_m_nixon_2.html accessed May 1, 2016.

² From <http://www.garynorth.com/Deuteronomy2.pdf> (p. 665); accessed May 15, 2016.

Outline of Chapter 17:**Preface****Introduction**

vv.	1	Animal Sacrifices Should be Without Defect
vv.	2–7	Evidence Against and Execution of an Idolater
vv.	8–13	Laws of Higher Courts
vv.	14–20	Laws for a Future King

Addendum**Charts, Graphics and Short Doctrines:**

Preface	Quotations	
Preface	Deuteronomy 17:18 (a graphic)	
Introduction	Deuteronomy 17 Graphic	
Introduction	Moses' train of thought	
Introduction	Deuteronomy 17 from the 1611 King James Bible (a graphic)	
Introduction	The Prequel of Deuteronomy 17	
Introduction	The Principals of Deuteronomy 17	
Introduction	The Places of Deuteronomy 17	
Introduction	Paragraph Divisions of Modern Translations	
Introduction	Matthew Henry's Outline of Deuteronomy 17	
Introduction	A Synopsis of Deuteronomy 17 by The College Press Bible Study	
Introduction	Deuteronomy 17 Lessons for Today (an Outline of Deuteronomy 17)	
Introduction	Expositor's Bible Commentary on the Confusing Organization of Deuteronomy	
Introduction	The Summarized Bible on Deuteronomy 17	
v.	1	The Unblemished Sacrifice Refers to our Lord (Commentators on Deut. 17:1)
v.	1	Deut. 17:1 in Context
v.	1	The Civil and Spiritual Spheres of Israel in Deuteronomy 16–17
v.	1	Commentators on the Chapter Division and Misplacement of Deuteronomy 17:1
v.	1	Logically tying Deut. 17:1 to its context (Peter Pett)
v.	3	Global Warming as a Religion by W. A. Beatty
v.	3	Photo of the Aftermath of the Earth Day Celebration in San Francisco 2014
v.	3	Forbidding the Worship of the Sun, Moon and Stars (Several Commentators)
v.	4	Idolatry and False Worship (Commentators on Deuteronomy 17:2–4)
v.	4	Idolatry (Ancient, Modern, and Tribulational)
v.	5	The Execution of Idolaters (Commentators on Deuteronomy 17:2–5)
v.	6	According to 2 or 3 witnesses (Commentators on Deuteronomy 17:6)
v.	6	The Death Penalty in the Mosaic Economy (The Apologetics Press)
v.	6	Death Penalty in the Old Testament (a graphic)
v.	6	The Death Penalty in the New Testament (from Gotquestions.org)
v.	6	How some judges are confused about the death penalty and the Bible (Ron Daniel)
v.	7	He who casts the first stone (commentators on Deuteronomy 17:7)
v.	7	Robby Dean's Appended Doctrine of Separation
v.	7	Purging evil from your midst
v.	8	Peter Pett's Chiasmus for Deuteronomy 17:8–13
v.	8	Translating "Between ___ to [for] ___."
v.	8	Interpreting "Between blood to blood"
v.	8	No pope required
v.	8	Steve Rudd: Why Peter was not a good choice for the first pope

- v. 8 [Links to Further Study on the Pope](#)
- v. 8 [Higher Courts in the Land of Israel \(Deuteronomy 17:8\)](#)
- v. 9 [King, Prophet, Priest \(a graphic\)](#)
- v. 9 [Doctrine of the Priesthood \(Ballinger, Thieme\)](#)
- v. 9 [Keil and Delitzsch why it is the Levitical Priesthood rather than the Aaronic Priests](#)
- v. 9 [Commentators on the term *Levitical Priests*](#)
- v. 9 [Several Commentators on the Appellant Courts of Moses](#)
- v. 12 [Respecting the Authority of the Higher Court \(Commentators on Deut. 17:12\)](#)
- v. 12 [Grace Bible Church's "Doctrine of Authority"](#)
- v. 12 [Links to Doctrines of Authority](#)
- v. 14 [Functions of Government \(a graphic\)](#)
- v. 14 [Dr. Peter Pett's Chiasm of Deuteronomy 17:14–20](#)
- v. 14 [Commentators Regarding a Future King; Introducing Deuteronomy 17:14–20](#)
- v. 14 [The Book of Deuteronomy was NOT written during the time of Samuel](#)
- v. 14 [Moses, by the power of God, perceived that the people would want a king](#)
- v. 14 [Applying the Torah to a Modern Nation](#)
- v. 15 [Deuteronomy 17:15 \(a graphic\)](#)
- v. 15 [Moses predicts that Israel will desire a king](#)
- v. 15 [1Samuel 8:7–22 Samuel, the people and their desire for a king](#)
- v. 16 [Commentators Who Think Moses is Restricting the Build-up of Israel's Army](#)
- v. 16 [Warfare Horses \(a graphic\)](#)
- v. 16 [Interpreting Multiplying Horses and Returning to Egypt \(Deuteronomy 17:16\)](#)
- v. 16 [Keil and Delitzsch on a More Timeless Understanding of Deuteronomy 17:16](#)
- v. 16 [Adam Clarke Explains Deuteronomy 17:16](#)
- v. 16 [Deuteronomy 17:16 Israel, Its King, and Its Military \(and Its Horses\)](#)
- v. 17 [Wealth and the King](#)
- v. 17 [Rich Catheters—The Warnings of Moses and the Acts of Solomon](#)
- v. 17 [God's Restrictions Upon a King of Israel](#)
- v. 17 [The College Press Bible Study on a Summary of Transgressions](#)
- v. 17 [David Guzik: "It is a Matter of Balance"](#)
- v. 17 [God Made One VERY Conditional Promise to Solomon](#)
- v. 17 [Solomon's Wisdom Versus Solomon's Failings](#)
- v. 18 [Lessons for Today \(Deut. 17:18–20 —a graphic\)](#)
- v. 18 [The Title of Deuteronomy \(Several Commentators\)](#)
- v. 18 [Scrolls Copied by the King—Deuteronomy 17:18 \(a graphic\)](#)
- v. 18 [What we know about the Old Testament canon](#)
- v. 18 [What we can guess about the Old Testament canon](#)
- v. 19 [Recovering the Law of Moses—2Chronicles 34](#)
- v. 19 [Deuteronomy 17:19 \(a graphic\)](#)
- v. 19 [Moses advances the concept of canonization](#)
- v. 19 [New Testament Canonization](#)
- v. 19 [New Testament Canon Charts](#)
- v. 19 [Dr. Thomas Constable on the Limitations Placed on a King](#)
- v. 20 [Deuteronomy 17:19–20a \(from the CEV; a graphic\)](#)
- v. 20 [Do Not Turn Aside to the Left or to the Right \(Scriptures\)](#)
- v. 20 [Neither to the Left or the Right \(graphic\)](#)
- v. 20 [An Overview of an Israelite King from the Perspective of Moses \(Peter Pett\)](#)
- v. 20 [Dr. Peter Pett: No King Matched the Mosaic Ideal](#)
- v. 20 [J. Orr on the Limited Monarchy in Israel](#)
- v. 20 [Utley on the King of Israel](#)
- v. 20 [The Preacher's Complete Homiletical Commentary Limitations of a King](#)
- v. 20 [Observations on the King of Israel by the Expositor's Bible Commentary](#)

- v. 20 [Why did God wait to allow Israel to have a king?](#)
- v. 20 [Dr. Bob Utley: Moses' Authorship of the Pentateuch](#)

- Addendum [Why Deuteronomy 17 is in the Word of God](#)
- Addendum [What We Learn from Deuteronomy 17](#)
- Addendum [A Complete Translation of Deuteronomy 17](#)
- Addendum [Word Cloud from a Reasonably Literal Paraphrase of Deuteronomy 17](#)
- Addendum [Word Cloud from Exegesis of Deuteronomy 17](#)

Chapter Outline		Charts, Graphics and Short Doctrines
Beginning of Document	Doctrines Alluded to	Chapters of the Bible Alluded to
Definition of Terms	Introduction	Addendum
www.kukis.org		Exegetical Studies in Deuteronomy

Doctrines Alluded To			
	Laws of Divine Establishment		
		Polygamy	

Chapters of the Bible Alluded To or Appropriately Exegeted with this Chapter			
Genesis 14	Deuteronomy 1	Deuteronomy 16	Deuteronomy 22
2Samuel 24	1Kings 3	1Kings 4	1Chron. 6
	Proverbs 1		

Many who read and study this chapter are 1st or 2nd generation students of R. B. Thieme, Jr., so that much of this vocabulary is second nature. One of Bob's contributions to theology is a fresh vocabulary along with a number of concepts which are theologically new or reworked, yet still orthodox. Therefore, if you are unfamiliar with his work, the definitions below will help you to fully understand all that is being said. Also, I have developed a few new terms and concepts which require definition as well.

In addition, there are other more traditional yet technical theological terms which will be used and therefore defined as well.

Sometimes the terms in the exegesis of this chapter are simply alluded to, without any in-depth explanation of them. Sometimes, these terms are explained in detail and illustrated. A collection of all these terms is found here: ([HTML](#)) ([PDF](#)) ([WPD](#)).

Definition of Terms	
Chiasmus	A chiasmus (also spelled chiasmus) is the way that some portions of the Bible are organized. It takes its name from the Greek letter chi (χ). The first section matches with the last, the second with the second-to-the-last, etc. It is called a chiasmus, because the inverted parallelism looks like a chi (actually, half a chi) when one looks at it from its organizational standpoint. When there is a center element, that is what is often emphasized and what is the most important part of the passage. (Chiasmus example) (Thomas B. Clarke) (Brad McCoy)
Client Nation	Client-Nation, is a national entity in which a certain number of spiritually mature Christians (the salt of the earth) have formed a pivot sufficient to sustain the nation and through which God specifically protects this nation so that believers can fulfill the divine mandates of evangelism, communication and custodianship of Bible doctrine, providing a haven for Jews, and sending missionaries abroad. The United States is a client-nation to God. A client nation must have freedom: Freedom to seek God, freedom to use one's own volition and self-determination to succeed or fail, freedom from anarchy and tyranny, freedom for evangelism, freedom for believers to hear Bible teaching without government interference and, therefore, to grow spiritually, and freedom to send missionaries to other nations. Doctrine of the Client Nation (HTML) (PDF) (WPD).
Divine Good	This is good which is completely in accordance with the plan of God. In order for a person to do acts of divine good, they must be in fellowship and be thinking Bible doctrine. As a result, that which they do is divine good and moves the plan of God forward. See also the Doctrine of Divine Good (Bible Doctrine Resource) (L.G. Merritt); The Production of Divine Good (Bible Doctrine Resource).
The 5th stage of national discipline	The 5 th stage of national discipline involves complete loss of personal and national sovereignty, the destruction of the family and the nation. Offerings to God are unacceptable. Nations which have undergone this destruction have experienced slavery, cannibalism, and the assimilation of its surviving citizens into other cultures. The Five Cycles of Discipline (BDR—probably Thieme) (Mark Perkins) (L. G. Merritt).
Gen X	This is a short and clever reference to the generation of the Exodus. I was going to try to represent this as Gen Ex, but that looked too much like I was just naming the first two books of the Bible. At least with Gen X, most understand that we are speaking of a specific generation. Gen X stands for generation exodus; the generation of adults who left Egypt. Their children with them and the children born in the wilderness will be called the generation of promise.
Fear of the Lord	<i>Fear of the Lord</i> connotes both awe and respect of our Creator. In the Old Testament, this was one way to designate a mature or maturing believer. See the doctrine of the Fear of the Lord (HTML) (PDF) (WPD).
Laws of Divine Establishment	These are the laws, principles and morality which God has designed to perpetuate every society or government in such a way that freedom to evangelize, freedom to teach doctrine and the freedom to send out missionaries are maximized. See the Laws of Divine Establishment (HTML) (PDF) (WPD).
Rebound (Restoration to fellowship with God)	In the New Testament, this is naming your sins to God, so that you are both restored to temporal fellowship with God and are then filled with the Spirit of God. In the Old Testament, naming your sins to God would result in a restoration of fellowship and, in some cases, the empowerment of the Holy Spirit once again (the Holy Spirit was not given to all Old Testament believers). See the Doctrine of Rebound (HTML) (PDF) (WPD).

Definition of Terms	
The Revealed God (or, the Revealed Lord)	We all come to a time of God-consciousness where we understand the concept and possibility of the existence of God. At that point, we face 2 great questions: (1) do we want to know this God and (2) are will willing to believe in God as He has revealed Himself or do we make a god in our own image and worship that? In both the Old and New Testaments, God will make Himself known (He reveals Himself) to those who will believe in Him and to others as well. We know Him firmly and concretely as Jesus Christ; and in the Old Testament, He is known as the God of the Jews, the Creator of the Universe, the God of Moses (or of Abraham), etc.
Sin unto Death	The phrase "sin unto death" describes the final stage of divine discipline in which God removes from the earth the person who is totally alienated from God. The "sin unto death" is not a particular sin; but it is, rather, a mental attitude of total indifference to and rebellion against the will and purpose of God. For more information, see the Doctrine of the Sin unto Death (HTML) (PDF) (WPD).
Type, Antitype, Typical	<i>A type is a preordained representation wherein certain persons, events, and institutions of the O.T. stand for corresponding persons, events, and institutions of the N.T. Types are pictures or object lessons by which God has taught His redemptive plan. They are a shadow of things to come, not the image of those things (Col. 2:17 Heb. 8:5 10:1).³ See the Doctrine of Typology (HTML) (PDF) (WPD).</i>
Verbal plenary inspiration	<i>God the Holy Spirit so supernaturally directed the human writers of Scripture, that without waving their human intelligence, individuality, literary style, personal feelings or any other human factor, His own complete and coherent message to man was recorded in perfect accuracy in the original languages of Scripture, the very words bearing the authority of divine authorship.⁴ The literary style of the human author would include a variety of literary devices and figures of speech. Furthermore, there is nothing in the definition of inspiration which precludes the human authors or even God the Holy Spirit from making use of literary devices. See the Basic Doctrine of Inspiration (HTML) (PDF) (WPD); the Doctrine of Inspiration (HTML) (PDF) (WPD); and the Study of Inspiration (HTML) (PDF) (WPD).</i>
Some of these definitions are taken from http://gracebiblechurchwichita.org/ http://rickhughesministries.org/content/Biblical-Terms.pdf http://www.gbible.org/index.php?proc=d4d http://www.wordoftruthministries.org/terms-and-definitions/ http://www.theopedia.com/	

An Introduction to Deuteronomy 17

Introduction: Deut. 17 is a continuation of the end of Deut. 16; Deut. 16 ended with the choosing of judges and a prohibition against idolatry. This chapter continues with what animals would be acceptable for sacrifice and some specific prohibitions against idolatry. Then Moses covers some specifics concerning the judicial system of Israel and suddenly, seemingly out of the blue, mentions a behavior code for a king, even though there is no provision up until this time for the choosing of a king. This is not a mistake nor was this added years later. Moses prefaces this by informing the Israelites that they would desire a king in the future. And there is a train of thought

³ From <http://www.dake.com/dake/types.html> accessed July 30, 2013.

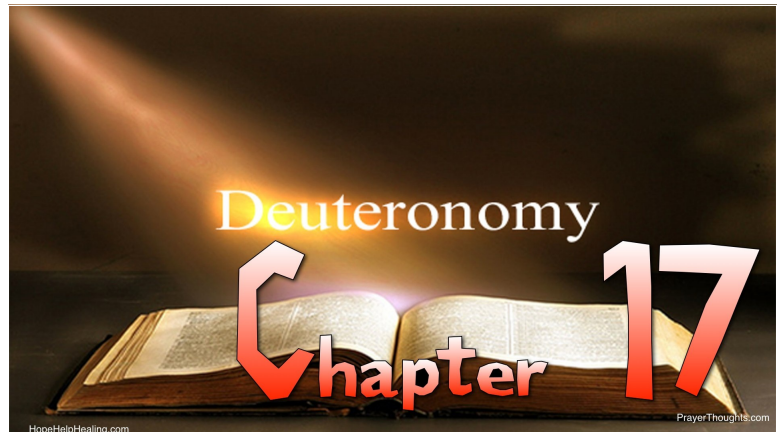
⁴ Quoted and paraphrased from R. B. Thieme, Jr., *Canonicity*; ©1973 by R. B. Thieme, Jr.; p. 5, who in turn took this from Lewis Sperry Chafer, *Systematic Theology*; Abridged Edition; Victor Books, ©1984, Vol. Two, p. 71.

here—Moses was speaking about the judges and the priests—those with great authority in the land—and then begins discussing the highest human authority in most countries, a *king*.

Deuteronomy 17 Graphic; from [Hope, Help, Healing](#); accessed May 13, 2016.

Deut. 17 is simply a continuation of Deut. 16, with a somewhat arbitrary division between the two chapters. In fact, the first two-thirds of Deut. 16 is about the various feasts. Those 17 verses form a single unit. Then, beginning with v. 18, that should have all been placed with Deut. 17. Deut 16:18–22 "You shall appoint judges and officers in all your towns that the LORD your God is giving you, according to your tribes, and they shall judge the people with righteous judgment. You shall not pervert justice. You shall not show partiality, and you shall not accept a bribe, for a bribe blinds the eyes of the wise and subverts the cause of the righteous.

Justice, and only justice, you shall follow, that you may live and inherit the land that the LORD your God is giving you. "You shall not plant any tree as an Asherah beside the altar of the LORD your God that you shall make. And you shall not set up a pillar, which the LORD your God hates." (ESV) See [Deuteronomy 16 \(HTML\)](#) ([PDF](#)) ([WPD](#)) for the exegesis of these verses.



In Deut. 17, Moses continues his second dissertation before the people of Israel. This dissertation began in Deut. 5 with the Ten Commandments, and Moses has now been speaking of a variety of laws and customs which would be for the Israelite people. This chapter will cover a number of different topics, most of which at first appear to be unrelated. Any animal offered up must be without defect; those who are engaged in idolatry must be executed—however, 2 or 3 witnesses are required in order to condemn such a one to death. Then Moses suggests that, for some judges, there might be a particular case which they cannot render a verdict on. Perhaps they do not feel they have enough perception; perhaps they recognize a bias in their own judgement. Whatever it is, they take the case to another court (it might be about murder, injury or a simple civil case). Then it will be tried before Levitical priests or another judge. It appears as if the original judge himself will give testimony, and a decision will be rendered. The original judge *must* carry out that sentence; and if he does not, he is subject to execution himself.

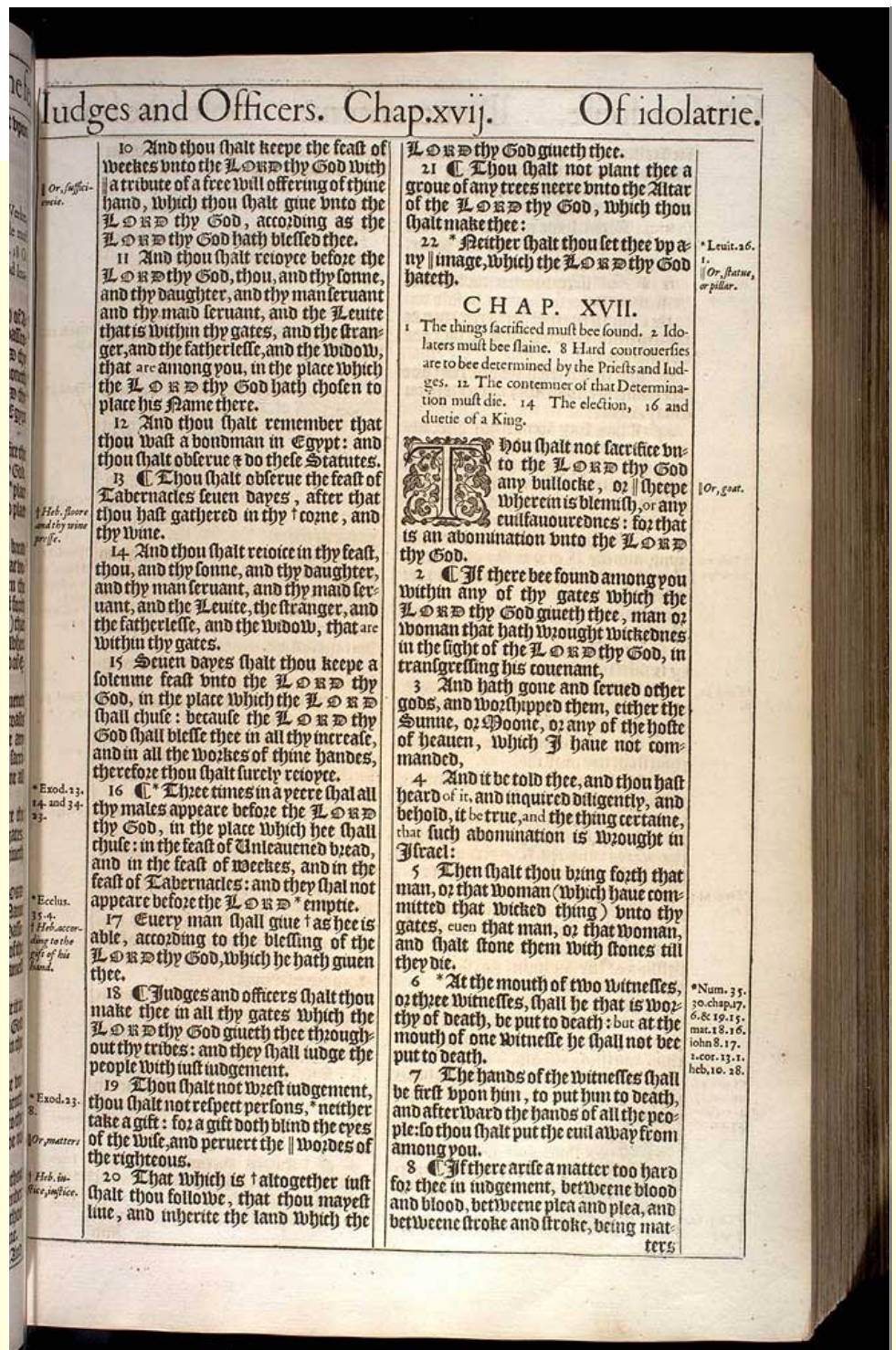
Then, in the final section of this chapter, Moses discusses the possibility of a king. He pretty much acknowledges that this will occur in the future, and he sets up some standards that the king must adhere to. Furthermore, the king must make a copy of the Law for himself and to study and obey that Law (which will prolong his life in the land).

Deuteronomy 17 from the 1611 King James Bible (a graphic); from [King James Bible Online](http://www.kingjamesbibleonline.com); accessed May 13, 2016.

Moses' train of thought: One commentator (Peake) said that this section (Deut. 16:21–17:7) appears to have been misplaced and ought to be between Deut. 12 and 13.⁵ It's an interesting thought but lacking in merit. There is an organization of thought or thought progression for Moses, even though you or I might have organized things differently.

Even though this passage appears to be miscellaneous topics thrown together, there is a logical progression of thought which explains how Moses moves from one topic to the next. So, an overall organization is somewhat difficult to ascertain in the book of Deuteronomy, yet one is often able to understand how Moses goes from one subject to the next. His train of thought can be followed.

Moses continues speaking to a number of mostly unrelated issues (although one can sense a train of thought): Moses speaks of the sort of sacrifice which is unacceptable, and, having spoken about the right way to worship God, he then speaks of those who are idolaters, who are subject to penalty of death for their idolatry. One must be careful here—Israel was not to execute someone merely on the testimony of a single person. That leads, logically, to the courts, and how sometimes and issue might come before the court that was impossible for a judge to decide. He was given the option to take this case to a higher court, with the understanding that he must obey and enforce the decision of the higher court. That is essentially the exercise of executive power, which brings to mind the idea of a king—the next topic that Moses explores in this chapter.



As we have seen throughout much of Deuteronomy, Moses will speak to the people in the 2nd person masculine singular, as if he is speaking to the people of Israel individually. Even in this chapter, when Moses predicts that

⁵ From <http://www.studylight.org/commentaries/pfc/deuteronomy-17.html> accessed May 11, 2016.

the people will want a king—which is quite obviously a national dialogue and decision—he will speak to the people about it as if he is speaking to each person individually. However, there will be one short section where Moses addresses the people as a group.

We have no idea how Moses presented this. Did he have notes, did he speak extemporaneously, did he essentially write the book of Deuteronomy and then read from it? Did someone else write down what he said, either during or after the fact (like Joshua)? He had a great many topics to deal with. Moses began with their shared history (Deut. 1–4), but he eventually began giving principles and correct application of the Law of God.

It is important to understand what has gone before. This prequel came word-for-word from **Deuteronomy 1** ([HTML](#)) ([PDF](#)) ([WPD](#)).

The Prequel of Deuteronomy 17

Y^ehowah God originally brought the children of Israel out of Egypt, where they had been slaves for several centuries. He worked through Moses, who became their spiritual and national leader. The designation *people of Israel* refers not to Israel the nation—which does not exist yet—but to their patriarch Israel, originally named *Jacob*, but renamed *Israel* by God. The people standing before Moses are descended from Israel (Jacob). God brought them out of Egypt with great signs and wonders.

These people, once free of Egypt, first crossed over the Sea of Reeds and went to Mount Sinai, also known as Mount Horeb. There, God gave them the Law. God first spoke to the children of Israel audibly, giving them the Ten Commandments, and they requested that God speak only to Moses, and that Moses would speak to them.

After receiving the Law of God, which was more than simply the Ten Commandments, God led them northward into what would become southern Judah, and told them to take the land that He promised them. First they sent 12 spies into the land, and they confirmed that the land was everything that God said it was—a land flowing with milk and honey. However, they also brought back stories of the fortified cities and the size and power of their adversaries in the land. Ten of the spies actively lobbied the people to not go into the land, and that night after the spies returned, the people cried and accused God of bringing them there to kill them and they did not want to go into this good land. Two spies, Caleb and Joshua, were ready to lead the people into the land to take it. They believed God's promises and the rest of the people did not.

God was quite disgusted with them; and then, suddenly, after God told them to turn around and go back into the desert, many of them decided that they had changed their minds and they would attack the Amorites in the land. God told Moses to tell them not to do this, because He would not be with their whiney, sorry butts if they tried to attack the Amorites. They still went and attacked and they were soundly defeated, and chased all over, until they finally came back to Kadesh, where all the people had been camped out.

They lived there for awhile. They moved around to different parts of the desert. During this time, God killed off all the older generation—**Gen X** as I have designated them (the generation of the exodus)—all those who were 20 and older when they left Egypt. They dropped like flies in the desert, dying the **sin unto death**, yet while God preserved their children and their children's children.

So now it is 38 or so years after their failure at Kadesh-barnea and God is leading this new generation of Israelites—I will call them the generation of promise—back to take the land. These are the people who were 20 or younger when they left Egypt, who are now between the ages of 40 and 60, and who have their own children now. As adults, all they have known is God taking care of them in the desert-wilderness.

There is also a set of young adults, aged 20–40, who were born in the desert (all those between ages 1 and 40 were born in the desert-wilderness). The young adults will be considered a part of the generation of promise; they will not be distinguished from those between the ages of 40 and 60.

The Prequel of Deuteronomy 17

In the final few chapters of Numbers, God brings this new generation up along the east side of the Dead Sea, to Mountains overlooking the Jordan River to the west of them. God will bring them across this river in the book of Joshua to take the land He has promised them.

However, there is a problem, and that is that Moses will not go with them. He will die east of the Dead Sea. God will not allow Moses to lead them into the land. Here's what happened:

Near the beginning of this trek from Egypt to the land, there was no water, and the people complained, and God provided water for them through Moses. Moses was to strike this huge rock (which represents the judgment of Jesus on the cross) and from that rock would flow a river of living waters (just as Jesus, by His sacrifice, would provide us with the living water of salvation). This water gushed out and gave the people the water they needed; without which, they would have died in that dry, desolate place.

This same no-water test occurred again near the end of this 40 years in the desert. The people were again thirsty—there was no water. This time, God told Moses to speak to the rock. Jesus, their Savior, represented by the rock, would again give them all the water that they needed. Moses was not to strike the rock, because Jesus died for our sins one time—He is never judged again for our sins. That had already been represented when Moses struck the rock previously. Therefore, the proper way to represent this is by speaking to the rock. Moses was upset with the people, and he yelled at them, and he hit that rock hard, twice, with his walking stick. God still provided the people water, but He could not allow Moses to lead them into the Land of Promise, as he had failed to continue the **type** which God was setting up. Since Jesus was not judged twice for our sins, the rock was only to be struck one time, which occurred during the first no-water test.

For Moses and for many centuries of Jews, this is seen as simply an act of disobedience. However, since Jesus died on the cross, we understand that there was more to the provision of water than just obedience or lack thereof. God wanted the striking of the rock to represent Jesus dying on the cross for our sins and from Him would flow a river of living waters. When one wished to be refreshed by those waters after the crucifixion, he mere speaks to the rock (for the believer, this is **rebound**; for the unbeliever, this is expressing saving faith in Jesus Christ). God wanted Moses to establish that as a type; Moses did not; and so Moses was not allowed to cross over the Jordan.

So, here Israel stands, east of the Jordan River, about to cross over and take the land. Moses is going to speak a few words to them—which words will fill up the book of Deuteronomy.

Deut. 17 will continue with Moses speaking to the people. This is Moses 2nd address to the people, which goes from Deut. 5:1–26:19.

[Chapter Outline](#)

[Charts, Graphics and Short Doctrines](#)

We need to know who the people are who populate this chapter. Primarily, we have Moses and his audience, who do not really play an active roll in this chapter.

The Principals of Deuteronomy 17

Characters

Commentary

Moses

Moses is the leader of the children of Israel, those he led out of Egypt with great signs and wonders done by God—signs and wonders which were seen both by the Egyptians and the Israelites.

The Principals of Deuteronomy 17

Characters	Commentary
The children of Israel	This is a general term applied to the people who left with Moses out of Egypt. One could include the children who were born to them when in the desert in this category. This is Moses' audience.
Gen X	There are actually two distinct generations to which Moses will only occasionally refer. Gen X are those who are 20 and older when they begin to consider taking the Land of Promise, which lies before them. These would be those considered adult enough to go to war. God would wipe out this generation of Jews because of their cowardice and unbelief. Gen X is a term I came up with; it is not found in the Bible.
The Generation of Promise	Those who are children when the Israelites come to the southern border of Judah (what would soon become Judah), who were not old enough to fight when God told them to take the land, they are the generation of promise. Them and those born to them in the desert over the next 40 years.
Generation of Promise A	If you wanted to be complete accurate, there are actually two generations which make up the generation of promise: the GOP A and the GOP B. The GOP A are those who were between the ages of 1 and 20 and they came into the land with their parents, following Moses. After 40 years in the desert, they are now between the ages of 40 and 60.
Generation of Promise B	GOP B are those who were born in the desert wilderness to any of the generations named above. They would be between the ages of 1 and 40, and they had never known slavery or Egypt. This does not mean that they do not suffer from the bad influence of their parents. That is, these same people, having never been under slavery, may express a desire to return to their true homeland, which is Egypt (to their way of thinking).

Because of the overlapping and fluid nature of generations, these distinctions are only occasionally made. Most of the time that these distinctions are made, I will be making them as a part of the exegesis. Moses is speaking to the children of Israelites, he is actually speaking to the generation of promise about their parents, Gen X.

[Chapter Outline](#)

[Charts, Graphics and Short Doctrines](#)

This way you can understand the places which are named in this chapter.

The Places of Deuteronomy 17

Places	Description

[Chapter Outline](#)

[Charts, Graphics and Short Doctrines](#)

Paragraph Divisions of Modern Translations			
NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
Justice Must be Administered (Deut. 16:18 to Deut. 17:13) Deut. 16:21 to Deut. 17:1 Deut. 17:2-7	Laws Dealing with Justice and Religion (Deut. 16:18 to Deut. 17:20) Deut. 16:21 to Deut. 17:1 Deut. 17:2-7	The Administration of Justice (Deut. 16:18 to Deut. 17:13) Deut. 16:21 to Deut. 17:1 Deut. 17:2-7	Abuses in Worship (Deut. 16:21 to Deut. 17:7) Deut. 16:21 to Deut. 17:1 Deut. 17:2-7 Levitical Judges Deut. 17:8-13
Deut. 17:8-13	Deut. 17:8-13	Deut. 17:8-13	Deut. 17:8-13
Principles Governing Kings Deut. 17:14-17 Deut. 17:18-20	Deut. 17:14-20	Instructions Concerning a King Deut. 17:14-20	Kings Deut. 17:14-15 Deut. 17:16-20

From Dr. Bob Utley; © 2014 Bible Lessons International. From E-sword; Utley's website: freebiblecommentary.org

[Chapter Outline](#)

[Charts, Graphics and Short Doctrines](#)

This is pretty much exactly what my outline is. There is very little disagreement on organizing this chapter.

Matthew Henry's Outline of Deuteronomy 17

The charge of this chapter is,

- I. Concerning the purity and perfection of all those animals that were offered in sacrifice (Deut. 17:1).
- II. Concerning the punishment of those that worshipped idols (Deut. 17:2-7).
- III. Concerning appeals from the inferior courts to the great sanhedrim (Deut. 17:8-13).
- IV. Concerning the choice and duty of a king (Deut. 17:14, etc.).

Matthew Henry, *Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible*; from e-Sword, Deut. 17 chapter commentary.

[Chapter Outline](#)

[Charts, Graphics and Short Doctrines](#)

Hawker summarizes this chapter: *The subject of the divine laws is continued through this Chapter. Moses under GOD'S authority, points out the unblemished state required of the animals to be offered in sacrifice; of the punishment of idolaters: of controversies in judgment: of the election of a king; and of special duties required of him.*⁶

Here is what to expect in Deuteronomy 17:

A Synopsis of Deuteronomy 17 by The College Press Bible Study

All sacrifices to be without blemish, 1.

Of persons convicted of idolatry and their punishment, 2-7.

Difficult matters in judgment to be laid before the priests and judges, and to be determined by them; and all to submit to their decision, 8-13.

The king that may be chosen to be one of their brethren; no stranger to be appointed to that office, 14, 15. He shall not multiply horses to himself, nor cause the people to return unto Egypt, 16. Nor multiply wives, money, &c., 17. He shall write a copy of the law for his own use, and read and study it all his days, that his heart be not lifted up above his brethren, 18-20.

⁶ Robert Hawker *The Poor Man's Commentary*; ©1805; from e-sword, Deut. 17:1.

Like all chapters of the Word of God, you need more than just the simple plot outline to understand what God wants us to know.

The College Press Bible Study Textbook Series; (a compilation of many commentaries); from e-sword; Deut. 17 chapter comments.

Chapter Outline

Charts, Graphics and Short Doctrines

Deuteronomy 17 Lessons for Today (an Outline of Deuteronomy 17); from [Slide Player](#); accessed May 13, 2016.

F. Delitzsch: *Just as in its religious worship the Israelitish nation was to show itself to be the holy nation of Jehovah, so was it in its political relations also. This thought forms the link between the laws already given and those which follow. Civil order, that indispensable condition of the stability and prosperity of nations and states, rests upon a conscientious maintenance of right, by means of a well-ordered judicial constitution and an impartial administration of justice.*⁷

Arno Gaebelein continues: *Judges and officials were to be appointed and a higher judicial court for more difficult cases to be established, the latter at the place of the sanctuary. Idolatry is prominently mentioned again because it is the most serious matter, both individually and nationally, to forsake the one Jehovah. Apostasy from Jehovah and His covenant is wickedness. Chapter 16:21–22 also has reference to idolatry. The idolatrous altars and images were set up under, or, beside green trees. See 1Kings 14:23; 2Kings 17:10; Jer. 17:2. Then there is provision made for the choice of a king. The Lord foresaw Samuel's time, when the people would reject Him as their King and desire to be like other nations; and foreseeing their failures He made provision for this emergency. Gaebelein's mention of Deut. 16:21–22 is common, the separation between these chapters being oh-so arbitrary.*

Gaebelein continues: *A comparison of verse 16 and 17 with 1 Kings 9-11 is most interesting. What failure man is in himself. And Solomon was the wisest and most influential of all the kings. This fact that Solomon did the very opposite from what the king should do has led the critics to say that this passage was written after Solomon. As if God did not know all this beforehand! But there is not allusion to Solomon's kingdom at all in the words Moses spoke.*⁸

It is, in fact, the exegetical study of **1Kings 4** ([HTML](#)) ([PDF](#)) ([WPD](#)) which pushed me towards the examination of this chapter in Deuteronomy; because the commentators were so quick to point to a verse in this chapter to condemn Solomon on the matter of horses (he had a cavalry), a condemnation which did not strike me as being completely legitimate. Solomon has failings—there is no doubt about that—failings worth studying and taking note

⁷ Arno Clement Gaebelein, *The Annotated Bible*; 1919; from e-Sword, Deut. 17:1.

⁸ Arno Clement Gaebelein, *The Annotated Bible*; 1919; from e-Sword, Deut. 17:1.

Deuteronomy 17 Lessons for Today

- Offer the Lord your best – anything less is an abomination (17:1)
- Idolatry is an abomination and punishable by death (17:2-7)
- Follow the judgment given by God's judges / priests or else be put to death (17:8-13)
- A leader of God's people must trust in God and read / obey God's word (17:14-20)

of—but, rightly dividing the Word of Truth means that we need to condemn Solomon *only* when he is worthy of such condemnation. Therefore, we will spend a great deal of time discussing Moses' warnings from this chapter and Solomon's actions and failings in his life.

I need to edit this down.

Expositor's Bible Commentary on the Confusing Organization of Deuteronomy

WITH this section (chapters 12-26) we have at length reached the legislation to which all that has gone before is, in form at least, a prelude. But in its general outline this code, if it can be so called, has a very unexpected character. When we speak of a code of laws in modern days, what we mean is a series of statutes, carefully arranged under suitable heads, dealing with the rights and duties of the people, and providing remedies for all possible wrongs, then behind these laws there is the executive power of the Government, pledged to enforce them, and ready to punish any breaches of them which may be committed. In most cases, too, definite penalties are appointed for any disregard or transgression of them. Each word has been carefully selected, and it is understood that the very letter of the laws is to be binding. Every one tried by them knows that the exact terms of the laws are to be pressed against him, and that the thing aimed at is a rigorous, literal enforcement of every detail. Tried by such a conception, this Deuteronomic legislation looks very extraordinary and unintelligible.

In the first place, there is very little of orderly sequence in it. Some large sections of it have a consecutive character; but there is no perceptible order in the succession of these sections, and there has been very little attempt to group the individual precepts under related heads. Moreover in many sections there is no mention of a penalty for disobedience, nor is there any machinery for enforcing the prescriptions of the code. There is, too, much in it that seems rather to be good advice, or direction for leading a righteous life, a life becoming an Israelite and a servant of Yahweh, than law. For instance, such a prescription as this, "If there be with thee a poor man, one of thy brethren, within any of thy gates, in thy land which Yahweh thy God giveth thee, thou shalt not harden thine heart nor shut thine hand from thy poor brother," can in no sense be treated as a law, in the hard technical sense of that word. It stands exactly on a level with the exhortations of the New Testament, e.g., "Be not wise in your own conceits," "Render to no man evil for evil," and rather sets up an ideal of conduct which is to be striven after than establishes a law which must be complied with. There is no punishment prescribed for disobedience. All that follows if a man do harden his heart against his poor brother is the sting of conscience, which brings home to him that he is not living according to the will of God.

In almost every respect, therefore, this Deuteronomic code differs from a modern code, and in dealing with it we must largely dismiss the ideas which naturally occur to us when we speak of a code of laws. Our conception of that is, clearly, not valid for these ancient codes; and we need not be surprised if we find that they will not bear being pressed home in all their details, as modern codes must be, and are meant to be. Great practical difficulties have arisen in India, Sir Henry Maine assures us, from applying the ideas of Western lawyers to the ancient and sacred codes of the East. He says that the effect of a procedure under which all the disputes of a community must be referred to regular law-courts is to stereotype ascertained usages, and to treat the oracular precepts of a sacred book as texts and precedents that must be enforced. The consequence is that vague and elastic social ordinances, which have hitherto varied according to the needs of the people, become fixed and immutable, and an Asiatic society finds itself arrested and, so to speak, imprisoned unexpectedly within its own formulas. Inconsistencies and contradictions, which were never perceived when these laws were worked by Easterns, who had a kind of instinctive perception of their true nature, became glaring and troublesome under Western rule, and much unintentional wrong has resulted. May it not be that the same thing has happened in the domain of literature in connection with these ancient Hebrew laws? Discrepancies, small and great, have been the commonplace of Pentateuch criticism for many years past, and on them very far-reaching theories have been built. It may easily be that some of these are the result rather of our failure to take into account the elastic nature of Asiatic law, and that a less strained application of modern notions would have led to a more reasonable interpretation.

But granting that ordinary ancient law is not to be taken in our rigorous modern sense, yet the fact that what we are dealing with here is Divine law may seem to some to imply that in all its details it was meant to be fulfilled to the letter. If not, then in what sense is it inspired, and how can we be justified in regarding it as Divinely

Expositor's Bible Commentary on the Confusing Organization of Deuteronomy

given? The reply to that is, of course, simply this, that inspiration makes free use of all forms of expression which are common and permissible at the time and place at which it utters itself. From all we know of the Divine methods of acting in the world, we have no right to suppose that in giving inspired laws God would create entirely new and different forms for Himself. On the contrary, legislation in ancient Israel, though Divine in its source, would naturally take the ordinary forms of ancient law. Moreover in this case it could hardly have been otherwise. As has already been pointed out, a large part of the Mosaic legislation must have been adopted from the customs of the various tribes who were welded into one by Moses. It cannot be conceived that the laws against stealing, for example, the penalties for murder, or the prescriptions for sacrifice, can have been first introduced by the great Lawgiver. He made much ancient customary law to be part and parcel of the Yahwistic legislation by simply taking it over. If so, then all that he added would naturally, as to form, be molded on what he found pre-existing. Consequently we may apply to this law, whether Divinely revealed or adopted, the same tests and methods of interpretation as we should apply to any other body of ancient Eastern law.

Now of ancient Eastern codes the laws of Manu are the nearest approach to the Mosaic codes, and their character is thus stated by themselves (chapter 1., ver. 107): "In this work the sacred law has been fully stated, as well as the good and bad qualities of human actions and the immemorial rule of conduct to be followed by all." That means that in the code are to be found ritual laws, general moral precepts, and a large infusion of immemorial customs. And its history, as elicited by criticism, has very interesting hints to give us as to the probable course of legal development in primitive nations. It is sometimes said that the results of the criticism of the Old Testament, if true, present us with a literature which has gone through vicissitudes and editorial processes for which literary history elsewhere affords absolutely no parallel. However that may be as regards the historical and prophetic books, it is not true with regard to the legal portions of the Pentateuch. The very same processes are followed in Professor Buhler's Introduction to his translation of the "Laws of Manu," forming Vol. 25. of "The Sacred Books of the East." as are followed, in the critical commentaries on the Old Testament law codes. Pages 67, seq. of Buhler's Introduction read exactly like an extract from Kuenen or Dillmann: and the analysis of the text, with its resultant list of interpolations, runs as much into detail as any similar analysis in the Old Testament can do. Moreover the conjectures as to the growth of Manu's code are, in many places, parallel to the critical theories of the growth of the Mosaic codes. The foundation of Manu is, in the last resort, threefold - the teaching of the Vedas, the decisions of those acquainted with the law, and the customs of virtuous Aryas. At a later time the teachers of the Vedic schools gathered up the more important of these precepts, decisions, and customs into manuals for the use of their pupils, written at first in aphoristic prose, and later in verse. These, however, were not systematic codes at all. As the name given them implies, they were strings of maxims or aphorisms. Later, these were set forth as binding upon all, and were revised into the form of which the "Laws of Manu" is the finest specimen.

In Israel the process would appear to have been similar, though much simpler. It was similar; for though there are radical differences between the Aryan and the Semitic mind which must not be overlooked, the former being more systematic and fond of logical arrangement than the latter, a great many of the things which are common to Moses and Manu are quite independent of race, and are due to the fact that both legislations were to regulate the lives of men at the same stage of social advancement. But Manu was much later than Moses. Indeed, as we now have them, the laws of Manu are as late as the post-Ezraite Judaic code, and in temper and tone these two codes very nearly resemble each other. Consequently the earlier codes of the Pentateuch are simpler than Manu. When Israel left Egypt, custom must have been almost alone the guide of life. Moses' task was to promulgate and force home his fundamental truths; in this view he must adopt and remodel the customary law so as to make it innocuous to the higher principles he introduced, or even to make it a vehicle for the popularizing of them. So far as he made codes, he would make them with that end. Consequently he would take up mainly such prominent points as were most capable of being, or which most urgently needed to be, moralized, leaving all the rest to custom where it was harmless. This is the reason, too, most probably, why the earlier codes are so short and so unsystematic. They are selections which needed special attention, not complete codes covering the whole of life. In fact the form and contents of all the Old Testament codes can be accounted for only on this supposition. As the codes lengthen, they do so simply by taking up, in a modified or unmodified form, so much more of the custom; and under the pressure of Yahwistic ideas these selected codes

Expositor's Bible Commentary on the Confusing Organization of Deuteronomy

became more and more weighted with spiritual significance and power.

That would seem to have been the process by which the inspired legislators of Israel did their work; and if it be so, some of the variations which are now taken to be certain indications of different ages and circumstances may simply represent local varieties of the same custom. Custom tends always to vary with the locality within certain narrow limits. It would be quite in accord with the general character of ancient customary law to believe that, provided the law was on the whole observed, there would be no inclination to insist upon excluding small local variations; and equally so that in a collection like the Pentateuch the custom of one locality should appear in one place, that of another in another. In that case, to insist that a certain sacrifice, for example, shall always consist of the same number of animals, and that any variation means a new and later legislation on the subject, is only to make a mistake. The discrepancy is made important only by applying modern English views of law to ancient law. Professor A. B. Davidson has shown in the Introduction to his "Ezekiel" (p. 53.) that this latter was probably Ezekiel's view. "On any hypothesis of priority," he says, "the differences in details between him (i.e., Ezekiel) and the law (i.e., P) may be easiest explained by supposing that, while the sacrifices in general and the ideas which they expressed were fixed and current, the particulars, such as the kind of victims and the number of them, the precise quantity of meal, oil, and the like, were held non-essential and alterable when a change would better express the idea." The same principle would apply to the differences between Ezekiel and Deuteronomy, e.g., the omission of the feast of weeks and of the law of the offering of the firstlings of the flock. If so, then obviously Ezekiel must have thought that the previous ritual law was not meant to be as binding as we make it.

But, as has already been remarked, this law was elastic in more important matters; often, even when it seems to legislate, it is only setting up ideals of conduct. Before we leave this subject an example should be given, and the law of war may serve, especially if we compare it with the corresponding section of Manu. The provisions in Deuteronomy, chapter 20, according to which on the eve of a battle the officers should proclaim to the army that any man who had built a new house and had not dedicated it, or who had planted a vineyard and had not yet used the fruit of it, or who had betrothed a wife and not yet taken her, or who was afraid, should retire from the danger, as also the provisions that forbid the destruction of fruit-trees belonging to a besieged city, cannot have been meant as absolute laws. Yet that is no ground for supposing that they could have been introduced only after Israel, having ceased to be a sovereign state, waged no war, and that consequently they are interpolations in the original Deuteronomy. For the similar provisions of the laws of Manu were given while kings reigned, and were addressed to men constantly engaged in war. Yet this is what we find: "When he (the king) fights with his foes in battle, let him not strike with weapons concealed (in wood), nor with (such as are) barbed, poisoned, or the points of which are blowing with fire. Let him not strike one who (in flight) has climbed on an eminence, nor a eunuch, nor one who joins the palms of his hands (in supplication), nor one (who flees) with flying hair, nor one who sits down, nor one who says 'I am thine,' nor one who sleeps, nor one who has lost his coat of mail, nor one who is naked, nor one who is disarmed, nor one who looks on without taking part in the fight, nor one who is fighting with another foe, nor one whose weapons are broken, nor one afflicted (with sorrow), nor one who has been grievously wounded, nor one who is in fear, nor one who has turned to flight; but in all these cases let him remember the duty (of honorable warriors)." With an exact and unremitting obligation to observe these precepts war would be impossible, and we may be sure that in neither case were they meant in that sense. They simply set forth the conduct which a chivalrous soldier would desire to follow, and would on fitting occasions actually follow; but by no means what he must do, or else break with his religion. Only by hypotheses like these can the form and the character of such laws be properly explained, and if we keep them constantly in mind, some at least of the difficulties which result from a comparison of the law and the histories may be mitigated.

Such being the character of the Deuteronomic code, the question has been raised whether its introduction and acceptance by Josiah was not a falling away from the spirituality of ancient religion. Many modern writers, supported by St. Paul's dicta concerning the law, say that it was. Indeed the very mention of law seems to depress writers on religion in these days, and Deuteronomy appears to be to them a name of fear. But whatever tendencies of modern thinking may have brought this about, it is nevertheless true that experience embodied in custom and law is the kindly nurse, not the deadly enemy, of moral and spiritual life. Without law a nation

Expositor's Bible Commentary on the Confusing Organization of Deuteronomy

would be absolutely helpless; and it is inconceivable that at any stage of Israel's history they were without this guide and support. As we have seen, they never were. First they had customary law; then along with that short special codes, e.g., the Book of the Covenant and the Deuteronomic code; and even when the whole Pentateuchal law as we have it had been elaborated, a good deal must still have been left to custom. Consequently there was nothing so startling and revolutionary in the introduction of Deuteronomy as many have combined to represent. Indeed it is difficult to see how it altered anything in this respect. Of all forms of law, customary law is perhaps that which demands and receives most unswerving obedience. Under it, therefore, the pressure of law was heavier than it could be in any other form. It does not appear how the fact that those observing it did not think of that which they obeyed as law, but simply custom, altered the essential nature of their relation to it. They were guided by ordinances which did not express their own inward conviction, and were not a product of their own thought. They obeyed ordinances from without, and these ought therefore to have had the same effect upon the moral and spiritual life as written laws. For they cannot be said to have regulated only civil life. Religious life (even if the Book of the Covenant be Mosaic or sub-Mosaic, as I believe; much more if it be post-Davidic, as many say) must have been largely regulated by the customs of Israel. If law then be in its own nature, as the antinomians tell us, destructive of spontaneity and progress, if it necessarily externalizes religion, then there would have been as little room for the religion of the prophets before Deuteronomy as after it.

But, as a matter of fact, no falling off in spirituality took place after Deuteronomy. Wellhausen says that with law freedom came to an end, and this was the death of prophecy. But he can support his thesis only by denying the name of prophet to all the prophets after Jeremiah. It is difficult to see the basis of such a distinction. It is judged by this, if by nothing else—that it compels Wellhausen to deny that the author of Second Isaiah is a prophet. That he wrote anonymously is held to prove that he felt this himself. Now a view so extraordinarily superficial has no root, and every reader of that most touching and sublime of all the Old Testament books will simply stand amazed at the depth of the critical prejudice which could dictate such a judgment. If the post-Deuteronomic prophets are not prophets, then there are no prophets at all, and the whole discussion becomes a useless logomachy. But even if Ezekiel and Second Isaiah and the rest are not prophets, they are at least full of spiritual life and power, so that the decay of spiritual religion which the adoption of Deuteronomy is supposed to have brought about must be considered purely imaginary on that ground also. And this contention is strengthened by the theories of the critical school themselves. If the bulk of the Psalms, as all critics incline to believe, or all of them, as some say, are post-exilic, then the first centuries of the post-exilic period must have been the most spiritually minded epoch in Israelite history. The depth of religious feeling exhibited in the Psalms, and the comprehension of the inwardness of man's true relation to God by which they are penetrated, are the exact contrary of the externality and superficiality which the introduction of written law is said to have produced. So long as the Psalms were being written religious life must have been vigorous and healthy, and to date the beginnings of Pharisaic externalism from Josiah's day must consequently be an error.

After what has been said it is scarcely necessary to discuss Duhm's views of the opposition between prophecy and Deuteronomy, It will be sufficient to ask how the latter can have turned against prophecy, when it is in its essence an embodiment of prophetic principles in law, and was introduced and supported by prophets. But, it may be said, after all prophecy did decay, and ultimately die, and that too during the period after Deuteronomy. Is there not in that admitted fact a presumption that this law did work against prophecy? If so, then it is more than met by the fact that the decay of spiritual religion became noticeable only some centuries after this, and that the immediate effect of Deuteronomy was rather to deepen and intensify religion, and to keep it alive amid all the vicissitudes of the Captivity and Return. Moreover the break-up of the national life was sufficient to account for the slow decay and final cessation of prophecy. From the first, prophecy had been concerned with the building up of a nation which should be faithful to Yahweh. Its main function had been to interpret and to foretell the great movements and crises of national life—to read God's purpose in the great world movements and to proclaim it. With Israel's death as a nation the field of prophecy became gradually circumscribed, and ultimately its voice ceased. Consequently, though in the main the final cessation of prophecy was connected with the rise of externalism in religion and with the great decay of spiritual life in the two or three centuries before Christ, the destruction of the nation would account for the feebleness of prophecy during a period when

Expositor's Bible Commentary on the Confusing Organization of Deuteronomy

the inner spiritual life was flourishing as it flourished after Deuteronomy. Moreover, as religion became more inward and personal, prophecy, in the Old Testament sense, had less place. Though in New Testament times spiritual life and spiritual originality and power were more present than at any time in the world's history, prophecy did not revive. In the whole New Testament there is not one purely prophetic book save the Revelation, and that is apocalyptic more than simply prophetic; and though there was an order of prophets in the early Church, if they had any special function other than that of preachers their office soon died out. If then the denationalizing of religion and its growth in individualism and inwardness in New Testament times prevented the revival of prophecy, we may surely gather that the same things, and not the introduction of written law, brought it to an end in the Old Testament.

Nor does St. Paul's judgment as to the meaning and use of law, in Galatians, when rightly understood, contradict this. No doubt he seems to say that the Mosaic law by its very nature as law is incompatible with grace, that it necessarily stands out of relation to faith, and that its principle is a purely external one, so much wages for so much work: Further, he clearly regards it as having been interpolated into the history of Israel between the promises given to Abraham and the fulfillment of them in the redemption by Christ, and as having served only to increase sin and to drive men thus to Christ. But when he says this he is replying mainly to the Pharisaic view of the law which was represented by the Judaizers, and finds himself all the more at home in refuting it that it was his own view before he became a Christian. According to that view, the whole law, both the moral and ceremonial provisions of it, was necessary to obtain moral righteousness, and the mere doing of the legally prescribed things gave a claim to the promised reward. So interpreted, law had all the evil qualities he states, and stood in absolute hostility to grace and faith, the great Christian principles. The only difficulty is that St. Paul does not say, as we should expect him to do, that originally the law was not meant to be so regarded. He seems to admit by his silence that the Pharisaic view of the law was the right one. But if he does, he cannot have meant to include Deuteronomy. For there law is made to have its root and ground in grace. It is given to Israel as a token of the free love of God, and it is a law of life which, if kept, would make them a peculiar people unto God. Further, love to God is to be the motive from which all obedience springs, so that this law is bound up with both grace and faith. But the probability is that St. Paul admits the Pharisaic view only because it is that view with which alone he has to contend in the case in hand. For in Rom_7:1-25 he gives us quite another conception of the Mosaic law. There he is thinking of it mainly from an ethical point of view, and he regards it as full of the Spirit of God, as a norm of moral life which not only continues to be valid in Christianity, but which finds in the Christian life the very fulfillment which it was intended to have. It presses home too the moral ideal upon the man with extraordinary power, and marks and emphasizes the terrible divergence between his aspirations and his actual performance. This is a much higher office than that which he assigns to law in Galatians; and hence one gathers that he is not speaking in Galatians exhaustively and conclusively, but is condemning rather a way of regarding the Mosaic law with which he had once sympathized than that law in its own essential character. In its moral aspects, as represented by the Decalogue, the law is of eternal obligation. From it comes the light which brings to the Christian that moral unrest and dissatisfaction which is one of God's Divinest gifts to His people. In this aspect, the law is holy and just and good: instead of favoring the critical view St. Paul leaves it without any fragment of real support.

Our conclusion is, therefore, that the anti-nomianism, which makes the acknowledgment of Deuteronomy by Josiah and his people the turning-point for the worse in the religious history of Israel, is unfounded. The nation had always been under law, and previous to Deuteronomy under even written law. This code was not in any previously unheard-of way made the law of the kingdom. Its very contents are conclusive against that view, for it contains much that could not be enforced by the State. Instead of trying to do by external means that which the persuasions of the prophets had failed to do, Josiah and his people did just what they would have had to do, when they became convinced that the prophetic principles ought to be carried out. They made an agreement to follow these Divine commands, these God-given principles, in actual life. But there is no hint that they regarded Deuteronomy as the sum of the Divine ordinances for the life of men. Indeed there are many references to other Divine laws; and the priestly oracle remained, after Deuteronomy as before it, a source of Divine guidance. Deuteronomy therefore did not destroy prophecy; the post-exilic Psalms are proof that it did not destroy spiritual life: and the Pauline view of the law, in at least one series of passages, coincides entirely

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with the view that law stated as it is stated in Deuteronomy may be one of the mightiest influences to mould, and enrich, and deepen, moral and spiritual life.

Expositor's Bible Commentary; Edited by the Rev. W. Robertson Nicoll; ©1887-1896; public domain; from e-sword, Deut. 17 chapter commentary.

[Chapter Outline](#)

[Charts, Graphics and Short Doctrines](#)

Their summaries are just so-so. I should probably edit these summaries to improve them.

The Summarized Bible on Deuteronomy 17

Contents:	Laws concerning idolaters and obedience to authority and kings.
Characters:	God, Moses.
Conclusion:	God would possess men with a dread of that sin—worshipping false gods—which is a sin in itself exceedingly heinous and the highest affront that can be offered to Almighty God.
Key Word:	Transgressing, Deut. 17:2.
Strong Verses:	Deut. 17:18, Deut. 17:19, Deut. 17:20.
Striking Facts:	Deut. 17:1. Old testaments sacrifices were required to be perfect because types of Christ, 1Peter 1:19, who was perfectly pure from all sin and all appearances of it.

Keith L. Brooks, *Summarized Bible; Complete Summary of the Bible*; ©1919; from e-Sword, Deut. 17 chapter commentary.

[Chapter Outline](#)

[Charts, Graphics and Short Doctrines](#)

J. Vernon McGee sums up this and the next chapter: *In chapters 17 and 18 we come to a section which deals with the regulations that would control a king, a priest, and a prophet. These were the three main offices in the nation Israel, in the theocracy which God had set up for these people. God laid down rules for each of these offices.*⁹

The end of Deut. 16 really should have been placed with Deut. 17 (the chapter and verse divisions in the Bible are *not* inspired). Deut 16:18–22 "You shall appoint judges and officers in all your towns that the LORD your God is giving you, according to your tribes, and they shall judge the people with righteous judgment. You shall not pervert justice. You shall not show partiality, and you shall not accept a bribe, for a bribe blinds the eyes of the wise and subverts the cause of the righteous. Justice, and only justice, you shall follow, that you may live and inherit the land that the LORD your God is giving you. You shall not plant any tree as an Asherah beside the altar of the LORD your God that you shall make. And you shall not set up a pillar, which the LORD your God hates." (ESV) You see that the Israelites are commanded to appoint judges and other officials over them; and, in Deut. 17, Moses will talk about the idea of a king of Israel. At the very end of Deut. 16, there are things which are forbidden to Israel, which prohibitions continue and conclude with Deut. 17:1.

[Chapter Outline](#)

[Charts, Graphics and Short Doctrines](#)

Animal Sacrifices Should be Without Defect

It amazes me no end as to how much material is related to this simple verse. Why is it found here? What about the chapter divisions? How does this fit with the text that follows? And, most fundamentally, what does this verse mean (which is the most basic question and the easiest to answer)?

⁹ From http://archive.org/stream/05_Deuteronomy/05-DEUTERONOMY_djvu.txt (Chapter 17); accessed May 10, 2016.

This verse does not seem to fit in with any of what follows. Many **translations** associate it with previous verses (which are noted below in the translations).

Deut. 16:21–22 and 17:1 (You shall not set up for yourself pillars of any trees, which you make for yourself near the altar of Jehovah your God. And you shall not raise up for yourself any standing image, which Jehovah your God detests. You shall not sacrifice to Jehovah your God an ox or sheep in which there is a blemish, any evil thing, for it is a hateful thing to Jehovah your God.—ESV) should be grouped together under “Unacceptable Religious Practices.”

As always, 3 separate translations will be produced for each verse. The slavishly literal translation attempts to preserve word order and number, making it more literal than Young’s translation (however, I do not preserve the consistency of the translation that Young does). The moderately literal translation may add or delete a definite article, change the number of a noun to correspond with the English sense of thinking, and the order is often changed in order to better represent our English sentence structure. The paraphrase is an attempt to give a thought-for-thought interpretation of what each verse tells us.

Also, as I have done throughout Deuteronomy, I will begin and end this chapter with quotation marks, indicating that Moses is speaking all that we read here. I will not begin new paragraphs with quotation marks.

Kukis slavishly literal:

“You will not sacrifice to Y^ehowah your Elohim an ox and a lamb which is in him a blemish—any word evil—for an abomination of Y^ehowah your Elohim that.

Deuteronomy
17:1

Kukis moderately literal:

“You will not sacrifice to Y^ehowah your Elohim an ox or a lamb on which [there] is a blemish—[or] any injury [imperfection or defect]—for that [is] an abomination [to] Y^ehowah your Elohim.

Kukis not so literal:

“You will not offer up to Jehovah your God any ox or lamb on which there is a blemish or defect of any kind, for that would be an abomination to Jehovah your God.

Here is how others have translated this verse:

Ancient texts:

Note: I compare the Hebrew text to English translations of the Latin, Syriac (= Aramaic) and Greek texts, using the Douay-Rheims translation¹⁰; George Lamsa’s translation, and Sir Lancelot Charles Lee Brenton’s translation as revised and edited by Paul W. Esposito, respectively. I often update these texts with non-substantive changes (e.g., *you* for *thou*, etc.). I often use the text of the Complete Apostles’ Bible instead of Brenton’s translation, because it updates the English text.

The Septuagint was the earliest known translation of a book (circa 200 B.C.). Since this translation was made before the textual criticism had been developed into a science and because different books appear to be translated by different men, the Greek translation can sometimes be very uneven.

When there are serious disparities between my translation and Brenton’s (or the text of the Complete Apostles’ Bible), I look at the Greek text of the Septuagint (the LXX) to see if a substantive difference actually exists (and I reflect these changes in the English rendering of the Greek text). I use the Greek LXX with Strong’s numbers and morphology available for e-sword. The only problem with this

¹⁰ I have begun to doubt my e-sword Douay-Rheims version, so I now use www.latinvulgate.com.

resource (which is a problem for similar resources) is, there is no way to further explore Greek verbs which are not found in the New Testament. Although I usually quote the Complete Apostles' Bible here, I have begun to make changes in the translation when their translation conflicts with the Greek and note what those changes are.

The Masoretic text is the Hebrew text with all of the vowels (vowel points) inserted (the original Hebrew text lacked vowels). We take the Masoretic text to be the text closest to the original. However, differences between the Masoretic text and the Greek, Latin and Syriac are worth noting and, once in a great while, represent a more accurate text possessed by those other ancient translators.

In general, the Latin text is an outstanding translation from the Hebrew text into Latin and very trustworthy (I say this as a non-Catholic). Unfortunately, I do not read Latin—apart from some very obvious words—so I am dependent upon the English translation of the Latin (principally, the Douay-Rheims translation).

Underlined words indicate differences in the text.

Bracketed portions of the Dead Sea Scrolls are words, letters and phrases lost in the scroll due to various types of damage. Underlined words or phrases are those in the Dead Sea Scrolls but not in the Masoretic text.

I will only list the translation from the Dead Sea Scrolls if it exists and if it is different from the Masoretic text.

These Bibles often fall into more than one category; I placed them where I believed them to have the best fit.

Ancient texts:

Masoretic Text (Hebrew)	"You will not sacrifice to Y ^e howah your Elohim an ox and a lamb which is in him a blemish—any word evil—for an abomination of Y ^e howah your Elohim that.
Targum of Onkelos	You shall not sacrifice before the Lord your God a bullock or lamb which hath any blemish or evil in it, or which is torn or rent; for that is abominable before the Lord your God.
Latin Vulgate	You shall not sacrifice to the Lord your God a sheep, or an ox, wherein there is blemish, or any fault: for that is an abomination to the Lord your God.
Peshitta (Syriac)	YOU shall not sacrifice to the LORD your God an ox or a lamb wherein is blemish, or anything impious; for that is an abomination <u>in the sight of</u> the LORD your God.
Septuagint (Greek)	You shall no sacrifice to the Lord your God a calf or a sheep, in which there is a blemish, or any evil thing; for it is an abomination to the Lord your God.
Significant differences:	The Syriac adds <i>in the sight of</i> .

Limited Vocabulary Bibles:

Bible in Basic English	No ox or sheep which has a mark on it or is damaged in any way may be offered to the Lord your God: for that is disgusting to the Lord your God.
Easy English	A list of other rules and rules for a king You must bring good gifts to the LORD your God. Do not bring any sheep or cow whose body is not completely right. The LORD hates this.
Easy-to-Read Version(2002)	"You must not sacrifice to the Lord your God a cow or sheep if there is anything wrong with it. Why? Because the Lord your God hates it!

<i>The Message</i>	And don't sacrifice to GOD, your God, an ox or sheep that is defective or has anything at all wrong with it. That's an abomination, an insult to GOD, your God.
Names of God Bible	Never offer an ox or a sheep that has a defect or anything seriously wrong with it as a sacrifice to Yahweh your Elohim . That would be disgusting to Yahweh your Elohim .
NIRV	Suppose an ox or sheep has anything at all wrong with it. Then don't sacrifice it to the Lord your God. He hates it.

Thought-for-thought translations; paraphrases:

Common English Bible	Don't sacrifice to the LORD your God any oxen or sheep that have defects of any kind, because that is detestable to the LORD your God.
Contemporary English V.	If an ox or a sheep has something wrong with it, don't offer it as a sacrifice to the LORD your God--he will be disgusted!
The Living Bible	"Never sacrifice a sick or defective ox or sheep to the Lord your God. He doesn't feel honored by such gifts!
New Berkeley Version	"Sacrifices to the LORD your God must never include a member of your herd or flock in which there is a blemish or defect; for such a sacrifice would be abhorrent to the LORD your God.
New Century Version	If an ox or sheep has something wrong with it, do not offer it as a sacrifice to the Lord your God. He would hate that.
New Life Bible	"Do not give to the Lord your God a bull or a sheep which is not perfect. For that is a hated thing to the Lord your God.
New Living Translation	"Never sacrifice sick or defective cattle, sheep, or goats to the Lord your God, for he detests such gifts.

Partially literal and partially paraphrased translations:

American English Bible	'You must not sacrifice a calf or a sheep to Jehovah your God that is scarred or deformed in any way, for that would be disgusting to Jehovah your God.
International Standard V	You are not to sacrifice to the LORD your God an ox or a sheep that has a defect or any flaw in it, because that is detestable to the LORD your God."
New Advent (Knox) Bible	Never shalt thou offer in sacrifice sheep or ox that has any blemish or defect; such impiety is hateful to the Lord thy God.
Translation for Translators	Warning against sacrificing defective animals "Do not sacrifice to Yahweh our God any cattle or sheep or goats that have any defects, because Yahweh hates that kind of gift."

Mostly literal renderings (with some occasional paraphrasing):

Ferrar-Fenton Bible	^{16:18} You shall appoint judges and Recorders for yourselves in every village which your EVER-LIVING GOD gives to you, to control you, and to govern the People with honest government. ¹⁹ You shall not distort justice. You shall not regard stations. You shall not take bribes ; — for bribes blind the eyes of the intelligent, and pervert the decrees of justice. ²⁰ You shall follow perfect justice, so that you may live and possess the country that your Ever-living God has given to you. ²¹ You shall not plant shrines, or any trees, at the side of the altar you make to your Ever-living God; ²² nor shall you erect for yourselves columns, as standards, to your Ever-living God. ^{17:1} You shall not sacrifice to your Ever-living God an ox or a sheep in which there is any defect, — any thing bad, — for that would be an insult to your Ever-living God. The Ferrar-Fenton Bible begins speech V with Deut. 16:18 (included above).
Lexham English Bible	"You shall not sacrifice to Yahweh your God an ox or sheep <i>that has a physical defect of anything seriously wrong</i> , for that is a detestable thing to Yahweh your God.

NIV – UK Do not sacrifice to the Lord your God an ox or a sheep that has any defect or flaw in it, for that would be detestable to him.

Catholic Bibles (those having the imprimatur):

Christian Community (1988) You shall not sacrifice to Yahweh, your God, an ox or a sheep that has any blemish or defect because Yah weh abhors this.

The Heritage Bible You shall not sacrifice to Jehovah, your God, bullock or sheep in which is a blemish, or any evil word, for that is an abomination to Jehovah, your God.

New American Bible (2002) "You shall not sacrifice to the LORD, your God, from the herd or from the flock an animal with any serious defect; that would be an abomination to the LORD, your God.

New American Bible (2011)¹¹ You shall not sacrifice to the LORD, your God, an ox or a sheep with any serious defect [Lev 22:20.]; that would be an abomination to the LORD, your God.

New Jerusalem Bible 'To Yahweh your God you must sacrifice nothing from herd or flock that has any blemish or defect whatsoever, for Yahweh your God holds this detestable.

New RSV You must not sacrifice to the Lord your God an ox or a sheep that has a defect, anything seriously wrong; for that is abhorrent to the LORD your God.

Revised English Bible You must not sacrifice to the LORD your God a bull or sheep that has any defect or serious blemish, for that would be abominable to the LORD your God.

Jewish/Hebrew Names Bibles:

Complete Jewish Bible "You are not to sacrifice to ADONAI your God a cow or sheep that has a defect or anything wrong with it; that would be an abomination to ADONAI your God.

exeGesés companion Bible **THE TORAH ON SACRIFICES**
Thou shalt not sacrifice
unto the LORD Yah Veh thy God Elohim
any bullock ox , or sheep lamb ,
wherein is blemish, or any evilfavouredness evil word :
for that is an abomination abhorrence
unto the LORD Yah Veh thy God Elohim.

JPS (Tanakh—1985) You shall not sacrifice to the Lord your God an ox or a sheep that has any defect of a serious kind, for that is abhorrent to the Lord your God.

Kaplan Translation *Blemished Sacrifice*
Do not sacrifice to God your Lord any ox, sheep or goat that has a serious blemish, since to do so before God your Lord is considered revolting.

Orthodox Jewish Bible Thou shalt not sacrifice unto Hashem Eloheicha any ox, or sheep, wherein is mum (blemish), or any evil thing, any defect: for that is a to'avat (abomination) unto Hashem Eloheicha.

The Scriptures 1998 "Do not slaughter to יהוה your Elohim a bull or sheep which has any blemish, any evil matter, for that is an abomination to יהוה your Elohim.

Expanded/Embellished Bibles:

The Amplified Bible Administration of Justice
"You shall not sacrifice to the Lord your God an ox or sheep with a blemish or any defect, for that is a detestable thing to the Lord your God.

The Expanded Bible If an ox or sheep has something wrong with it [a blemish/defect, anything wrong with it; Lev. 22:17–25], do not offer it as a sacrifice to the Lord your God. He would hate [detest] that.

¹¹ Also called the revised edition.

Kretzmann's Commentary

Verses 1-7**Punishment of Idolatry**

Thou shalt not sacrifice unto the Lord, thy God, any bullock or sheep wherein is blemish, or any evil-favoredness; for that is an abomination unto the Lord, thy God. The offering of an imperfect animal as sacrifice, one infected with any of the evils mentioned Lev. 22:20-24, is just as much an insult to Jehovah as the erecting of pillars to Asherah and Baal; hence the authorities were to watch carefully over these matters.

NET Bible®

Examples of Legal Cases

You must not plant any kind of tree as a sacred Asherah pole near the altar of the Lord your God which you build for yourself. You must not erect a sacred pillar, a thing the Lord your God detests. You must not sacrifice to him [*Heb* "to the Lord your God."] a bull or sheep that has a blemish or any other defect, because that is considered offensive to the Lord your God. When it comes to making an actual material change to the text, the NET Bible® is pretty good about indicating this. Since most of these corrections will be clear in the more literal translations below and within the Hebrew exegesis itself, I will not continue to list every NET Bible® footnote. Language footnotes will be placed in the Hebrew exegesis. Some footnotes will quoted elsewhere in this document. The NET Bible places vv. 21–22 from the previous chapter with this section.

The Voice

Don't sacrifice an ox or a sheep to the Eternal your God if it has any defect or problem. He would be deeply offended by such an offering!

Literal, almost word-for-word, renderings:

Concordant Literal Version

You shall not sacrifice to Yahweh your Elohim a bull or a flockling in which there is a blemish, any bad thing, for it is an abhorrence to Yahweh your Elohim.

Context Group Version

You shall not sacrifice to YHWH your God an ox, or a sheep, in which is a blemish, [or] anything evil; for that is disgusting to YHWH your God.

God's Truth (Tyndale)

You shall offer unto the Lord your God no ox or sheep wherein is any deformity, whatsoever evil favoredness it be: for that is an abomination unto the Lord your God.

Green's Literal Translation

You shall not sacrifice to Jehovah your God an ox or sheep in which there is a blemish, any evil thing, for it is a hateful thing to Jehovah your God.

NASB

Administration of Justice

"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.

New European Version

You must not sacrifice to Yahweh your God an ox or a sheep in which is a blemish or anything imperfect, for that is an abomination to Yahweh your God.

Webster's Bible Translation

Thou shalt not sacrifice to the LORD thy God any bullock, or sheep, in which is blemish, or any evil favoredness: for that is an abomination to the LORD thy God.

World English Bible

You shall not sacrifice to Yahweh your God an ox, or a sheep, in which is a defect, or anything evil; for that is an abomination to Yahweh your God.

Young's Updated LT

"You will not sacrifice to Jehovah your God ox or sheep in which there is a blemish—any evil thing; for it is the abomination of Jehovah your God.

The gist of this passage:

Animals with blemishes or defects are not to be sacrificed to God.

Deuteronomy 17:1a			
Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
lô' (לֹא or לוֹל) [pronounced low]	<i>not, no</i>	negates the word or action that follows; the absolute negation	Strong's #3808 BDB #518
zâbach (זָבַח) [pronounced zaw ^b -VAHKH]	<i>to slaughter [usually an animal for sacrifice]; to sacrifice [an animal]; to slay, to immolate [an animal sacrifice]</i>	2 nd person masculine singular, Qal imperfect	Strong's #2076 BDB #256
lâmed (ל) [pronounced l ^e]	<i>to, for, towards, in regards to</i>	directional/relational preposition	No Strong's # BDB #510
YHWH (יהוה) [pronunciation is possibly yohh-WAH]	transliterated variously as <i>Jehovah, Yahweh, Y^ehowah</i>	proper noun	Strong's #3068 BDB #217
'Ēlôhîym (אֱלֹהִים) [pronounced el-o-HEEM]	<i>God; gods, foreign gods, god; rulers, judges; superhuman ones, angels; transliterated Elohim</i>	masculine plural noun with the 2 nd person masculine singular	Strong's #430 BDB #43
shôwr (שׁוֹר) [pronounced shohr]	<i>an ox, a bull, a head of cattle, oxen</i>	masculine singular noun	Strong's #7794 BDB #1004
w ^e (or v ^e) (וּ, or ו) [pronounced weh]	<i>and, even, then; namely; when; since, that; though</i>	simple wâw conjunction	No Strong's # BDB #251
The wâw conjunction can connect alternative cases or contrasting ideas and be properly rendered <i>or, but, yet</i> . The wâw conjunction can also be rendered <i>for</i> .			
seh (שֶׁה) [pronounced seh]	<i>one of a flock, a lamb, a sheep, a goat; young sheep, young goats; collectively for a flock</i>	masculine singular noun	Strong's #7716 BDB #961
'âsher (אֲשֶׁר) [pronounced uh-SHER]	<i>that, which, when, who, whom; where; in that, in which, in what</i>	relative pronoun; sometimes the verb <i>to be</i> is implied	Strong's #834 BDB #81
hâyâh (הָיָה) [pronounced haw-YAW]	<i>to be, is, was, are; to become, to come into being; to come to pass</i>	3 rd person masculine singular, Qal imperfect	Strong's #1961 BDB #224
b ^e (ב) [pronounced b ^{eh}]	<i>in, into, through; at, by, near, on, upon; with, before, against; by means of; among; within</i>	a preposition of proximity with the 3 rd person masculine singular suffix	No Strong's # BDB #88
môm (מוֹם) [pronounced moom]	<i>a blemish, corruption, a [physical] defect, disfigurement; a moral stain [defect]</i>	masculine singular noun	Strong's #3971 BDB #548

Translation: "You will not sacrifice to Y^ehowah your Elohim an ox or a lamb on which [there] is a blemish... When an animal is offered up as a blood sacrifice, that animal cannot have any sort of a blemish because the animal represents Jesus Christ, a man without sin. One has to be willfully blind to read the animal sacrifices in the Old

Testament and not recognize how they foretell the offering of Jesus Christ on the cross for our sins, our sacrificial **Lamb without spot or blemish** (1Peter 1:9).

Jamieson, Fausset and Brown indicates that this does not refer to two particular animals, but to two categories of animals: *Under the name of bullock were comprehended bulls, cows, and calves; under that of sheep, rams, lambs, kids, he- and she-goats.*¹²

Deuteronomy 17:1b			
Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
kôl (לֹכ) [pronounced kohl]	<i>every, each, all of, all; any of, any</i>	masculine singular construct not followed by a definite article	Strong's #3605 BDB #481
dâbâr (דָּבָר) [pronounced daw ^b -VAWR]	<i>word, saying, doctrine, thing, matter, command; business, occupation; case; something; manner</i>	masculine singular noun	Strong's #1697 BDB #182
ra' (עָר) [pronounced rahg]	<i>evil, bad, wicked; evil in appearance, deformed; misery, distress, injury; that which is displeasing [disagreeable, unhappy, unfortunate, sad]</i>	masculine singular adjective/noun	Strong's #7451 BDB #948

Translation: ...—[or] any injury [imperfection or defect]—... There cannot be anything wrong with the animals offered up to God. Again, this is all about the animal representing Jesus Christ as perfect. The animal sacrifice is **typical** of Jesus offering Himself on the cross on our behalf.

The reference to the lack of defect is interesting. The phrase is translated by the NASB as *any defect*; Owen reads: *any defect whatsoever*; NIV: *any flaw*. The first word is the construct of kôl (לֹכ) [pronounced kohl] and this word means *the whole, all of, the entirety of, all, every or any*. Strong's #3605 BDB #481. It is followed by the construct of dâbâr (דָּבָר) [pronounced daw^b-VAWR], which means *word, saying, doctrine, command*. It is something which proceeds from the mouth and the context determines its exact parameters. Strong's #1697 BDB #182. The adjective which describes dâbâr is ra' (עָר) [pronounced rahg] and it means *evil, bad*. Strong's #7451 BDB #948. This therefore literally reads *any evil word*. We could render this *any evil thing*. However, during the time of Moses, this was possibly an unusual phrase to apply to an animal. At best, we can translate this *any evil thing*; a reference to all of the defects enumerated in Lev. 22:22–24.

Today we know that the sacrificed animals all point forward to Jesus Christ, and in Him was no evil word or deed. The call for virtual perfection of the animal sacrifice is spoken of often in the Torah: “Your kid will be an unblemished male a year old; you may take it from the sheep or from the goats.” (Ex. 12:5). “Whatever has a defect, you will not offer, for it will not be acceptable with respect to you.” (Lev. 22:20). “But if it has any blemish, lameness, or blindness, any or all evil, you will not sacrifice it to Y^ehowah your God.” (Deut. 15:21). The sacrifice of same is one of the man signs of spiritual adultery in the nation Israel. “But cursed be the swindler who has a male in his flock and vows it to Y^ehowah, for I am a great King,” says Y^ehowah of the armies; “And My name is feared and revered among the Gentiles.” (Malachi 1:14).

¹² Robert Jamieson, A. R. Fausset and David Brown; *Commentary Critical and Explanatory on the Whole Bible*; 1871; from e-sword, Deut. 17:1.

Deuteronomy 17:1c

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
kîy (כי) [pronounced <i>kee</i>]	<i>for, that, because; when, at that time, which, what time</i>	explanatory or temporal conjunction; preposition	Strong's #3588 BDB #471
tôw'êvâh (תועות) [pronounced <i>to-gay-VAWH</i>]	<i>disgusting act, an abomination, abhorrent, abhorrence, an abhorrent act</i>	feminine singular construct	Strong's #8441 BDB #1072
<p>Originally, this word was used to describe how the Egyptians felt about the Jews (Gen. 43:32 46:34 Ex. 8:26). This same word was often used for the abominations committed by the heathen of the land which God told the Jews to destroy (Deut. 18:9, 12 20:18 2Kings 21:2 2Chron. 28:3 2Kings 21:11 2Chron. 28:3). Jews who did such an abhorrent act were to be cut off from their people (Lev. 18:29). People who committed abhorrent acts often stirred God up to anger (Deut. 32:16). This particular word was often associated with sexual degeneracy (Lev. 18:22 1Kings 14:24), with child sacrifice (Deut. 12:31 2Kings 16:3) and with the Jews going after other gods (Deut. 32:16).</p>			
<p>The NET Bible: <i>The Hebrew word תועות (to'evah, "an abomination"; cf. NAB) describes persons, things, or practices offensive to ritual or moral order.</i>¹³</p>			
YHWH (יהוה) [pronunciation is possibly <i>yhoh-WAH</i>]	transliterated variously as <i>Jehovah, Yahweh, Y^ehowah</i>	proper noun	Strong's #3068 BDB #217
Ēlôhîym (אֱלֹהִים) [pronounced <i>el-o-HEEM</i>]	<i>God; gods, foreign gods, god; rulers, judges; superhuman ones, angels; transliterated Elohim</i>	masculine plural noun with the 2 nd person masculine singular	Strong's #430 BDB #43
hûw' (אוּהוּ) [pronounced <i>hoo</i>]	<i>he, it; him, himself as a demonstrative pronoun: that, this (one); same</i>	3 rd person masculine singular, personal pronoun; sometimes the verb <i>to be</i> , is implied	Strong's #1931 BDB #214

Translation: ...for that [is] an abomination [to] Y^ehowah your Elohim. The word *abomination* is a strong word. It is how the Egyptians spoke of the Jews in their land. The Hebrew word is tôw'êvâh (תועות) [pronounced *to-gay-VAWH*] and it means, *disgusting act, an abomination, abhorrent, abhorrence, an abhorrent act*. Strong's #8441 BDB #1072. In other words, offering an animal with some sort of defect is not simply *problematic* or *not recommended*; it is an *abomination*; it is *abhorrent* to God.

Deut. 17:1 "You will not offer up to Jehovah your God any ox or lamb on which there is a blemish or defect of any kind, for that would be an abomination to Jehovah your God. The idea behind this is fairly simple. Animal sacrifices represent Jesus Christ to come; they represent His death on the cross. Therefore, they animals must be perfect in appearance to be a proper representation (type) of Christ.

Note in this verse that God does not want our leftovers, our castoffs, our excess. God required from Israel their firstborn and He required it to be perfect. If a farmer/rancher in Israel had anything at all, they had a firstborn—so all Israel was able to give to God.

J. Vernon McGee: *When you come to the last book of the Old Testament, you will find that Malachi lists the charges which God brought against His people — the sins that brought His judgment down*

¹³ From <https://bible.org/netbible/index.htm?deu17.htm> (footnote); accessed April 21, 2016.

upon them. The number one charge was that they were offering sick animals to God. Suppose a farmer had a very fine bullock which he had decided to keep. One morning he goes out to his barn lot and finds that this animal is sick. He would say to his boys, "Hustle up, boys; we'll put this bullock in the cart and rush it over to the temple and we'll offer this prize bullock to the Lord." The neighbors would say, "My, my, look at Mr. So-and-So. Isn't he generous! He's giving God that prize bullock." But God, who knows the heart, says, "I will not accept it. Such an offering is absolutely meaningless."¹⁴

Many of us have savings accounts—the money which we give to God is a divine savings account. Have you ever had the dream where you amass wealth or certain possessions and when you wake up, they are all gone (you may even experience a tinge of sadness). There are many of us who will gather considerable wealth here on earth, but will not give to the poor or to evangelists or missionaries or to their local church. When they die, they will wake up to see that they no longer have all of these possessions which they collected here on earth. However, for those who have given to support God's work, they will have amassed riches which will remain with them after they have died. Giving when filled with the Holy Spirit is one act of **divine good** which follows us into heaven.

So that there is no misunderstanding, as believers, we are to provide for our own. You do not deprive your children so that you can give; on the other hand, there are many things that we give to our children that they really do not need.

Deut. 17:1 "You will not offer up to Jehovah your God any ox or lamb on which there is a blemish or defect of any kind, for that would be an abomination to Jehovah your God.

There is no argument as to the meaning of these animal sacrifices.

The Unblemished Sacrifice Refers to our Lord (Commentators on Deut. 17:1)

D. Davies: *When piety declines, a man becomes the slave of his senses. He is moved or terrified only by what is visible. He is afraid of a human frown; he is impervious to the Divine displeasure. The lamb which is unfit for barter, and which is scarce fit for food, will be deemed good enough for sacrifice.*¹⁵

Gill: *No sacrifice of any sort, whether burnt offering, sin offering, or peace offering, was to have any blemish in it; typical of the unblemished and immaculate Lamb of God, who, being without sin, offered himself without spot to God, and so could take away the sins of others by the sacrifice of himself.*¹⁶

Guzik makes the additional note: *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. The Guzik adds: 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 (2Sam. 24:24). David understood that if it didn't cost something, it wasn't a sacrifice.*¹⁷

Hawker: *I hope the Reader will not overlook, in the frequent notice which he must have made in the several parts of Moses' writings, concerning the unblemished state of the animals to be offered in sacrifice, how exceedingly concerned the Holy Spirit was, to direct the view of Israel to JESUS, the Lamb without blemish and without spot. For as all the sacrifices of the Jews were types of him, nothing can be more pointed than this one feature.*¹⁸

¹⁴ From http://archive.org/stream/05_Deuteronomy/05-DEUTERONOMY_djvu.txt (Chapter 17); accessed May 10, 2016.

¹⁵ *The Pulpit Commentary*; 1880-1919; by Joseph S. Exell, Henry Donald Maurice Spence-Jones, from e-sword, Deut. 17:1.

¹⁶ Dr. John Gill, *John Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible*; from e-Sword, Deut. 17:1.

¹⁷ *David Guzik's Commentary on the Old Testament*; courtesy of e-sword; ©2006; Deut. 17:1-5.

¹⁸ Robert Hawker *The Poor Man's Commentary*; ©1805; from e-sword, Deut. 17:1 (slightly edited).

The Unblemished Sacrifice Refers to our Lord (Commentators on Deut. 17:1)

Matthew Henry: *No creature which had any blemish was to be offered in sacrifice to God. We are thus called to remember the perfect, pure, and spotless sacrifice of Christ.*¹⁹

Ron Daniel: *Defective offerings would not be accepted because they were detestable to the Lord. This was to demonstrate His absolute holiness and standard of perfection. When Jesus Christ was crucified, He was the only One who could die for our sins, because He was the only one without the defect of sin. Peter said that we were redeemed with... 1Pet. 1:19 ...precious blood, as of a lamb unblemished and spotless, the blood of Christ. This means that He... Heb. 9:14 ...offered Himself without blemish to God....*²⁰

Even to the end, the Jewish people sometimes disregarded this mandate. Mal 1:8 *When you offer blind animals in sacrifice, is that not evil? And when you offer those that are lame or sick, is that not evil? Present that to your governor; will he accept you or show you favor? says the LORD of hosts.* (ESV)

The New Testament testifies to this **typology**:

Heb. 9:13–14 *For if the blood of goats and bulls, and the sprinkling of defiled persons with the ashes of a heifer, sanctify for the purification of the flesh, how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish to God, purify our conscience from dead works to serve the living God.* 1Peter 1:18b–19 *[You know] that you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your forefathers, not with perishable things such as silver or gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot.* (ESV)

[Chapter Outline](#)

[Charts, Graphics and Short Doctrines](#)

Moses, in v. 1, is essentially summarizing Lev. 22:22–24 *Animals blind or disabled or mutilated or having a discharge or an itch or scabs you shall not offer to the LORD or give them to the LORD as a food offering on the altar. You may present a bull or a lamb that has a part too long or too short for a freewill offering, but for a vow offering it cannot be accepted. Any animal that has its testicles bruised or crushed or torn or cut you shall not offer to the LORD; you shall not do it within your land,...* (ESV) Similar passages include Ex. 12:5 Lev. 1:3 22:20–25 Deut. 15:21 Mal. 1:8, 13–14.

Deut. 17:1 in Context:

When we place this verse in its context, it does not stand out as much as we might think that it would:

Deut. 16:21–22 *"You shall not plant any tree as an Asherah beside the altar of the LORD your God that you shall make. And you shall not set up a pillar, which the LORD your God hates.*

Deut. 17:1 *"You shall not sacrifice to the LORD your God an ox or a sheep in which is a blemish, any defect whatever, for that is an abomination to the LORD your God. Perhaps the implication is, the heathen did not care what sort of animal they sacrificed to their gods. That would lead Moses to the next topic...*

Deut. 17:2–5 *"If there is found among you, within any of your towns that the LORD your God is giving you, a man or woman who does what is evil in the sight of the LORD your God, in transgressing his covenant, and has gone and served other gods and worshiped them, or the sun or the moon or any of the host of heaven, which I have forbidden, and it is told you and you hear of it, then you shall inquire diligently, and if it is true and certain that such an abomination has been done in Israel, then you shall bring out to your gates that man or woman who has done this evil thing, and you shall stone that man or woman to death with stones."* (ESV)

¹⁹ Matthew Henry, *Matthew Henry's Concise Commentary on the Whole Bible*; from e-Sword, Deut. 17:1–7.

²⁰ From <http://rondaniel.com/library/05-Deuteronomy/Deuteronomy1618.php> accessed May 10, 2016.

The division into chapters of the Bible occurred long after the inspired text had been written. Sometimes the division of chapters seems inspired and, at other time (as in this case), mis-divided. Many Bible commentators²¹ associated these verses together, ignoring the division between chapters 16 and 17.

In both chapters, there is an interplay between the religious and civil life of the citizens of future Israel. One reason for this overview is to simply look at the division of topics, to see if we can find a pattern of any sort.

The Civil and Spiritual Spheres of Israel in Deuteronomy 16–17

Scripture	Commentary
<p>Deut. 16:1–8 "Observe the month of Abib and keep the Passover to the LORD your God, for in the month of Abib the LORD your God brought you out of Egypt by night. And you shall offer the Passover sacrifice to the LORD your God, from the flock or the herd, at the place that the LORD will choose, to make his name dwell there. You shall eat no leavened bread with it. Seven days you shall eat it with unleavened bread, the bread of affliction—for you came out of the land of Egypt in haste—that all the days of your life you may remember the day when you came out of the land of Egypt. No leaven shall be seen with you in all your territory for seven days, nor shall any of the flesh that you sacrifice on the evening of the first day remain all night until morning. You may not offer the Passover sacrifice within any of your towns that the LORD your God is giving you, but at the place that the LORD your God will choose, to make his name dwell in it, there you shall offer the Passover sacrifice, in the evening at sunset, at the time you came out of Egypt. And you shall cook it and eat it at the place that the LORD your God will choose. And in the morning you shall turn and go to your tents. For six days you shall eat unleavened bread, and on the seventh day there shall be a solemn assembly to the LORD your God. You shall do no work on it.</p>	<p>Keeping the Passover; a religious ceremony that represents our Lord's sacrifice on the cross (He is our Passover).</p>
<p>Deut. 16:9–12 "You shall count seven weeks. Begin to count the seven weeks from the time the sickle is first put to the standing grain. Then you shall keep the Feast of Weeks to the LORD your God with the tribute of a freewill offering from your hand, which you shall give as the LORD your God blesses you. And you shall rejoice before the LORD your God, you and your son and your daughter, your male servant and your female servant, the Levite who is within your towns, the sojourner, the fatherless, and the widow who are among you, at the place that the LORD your God will choose, to make his name dwell there. You shall remember that you were a slave in Egypt; and you shall be careful to observe these statutes.</p>	<p>The Feast of Weeks, another religious ceremony with historical and future significance.</p>
<p>Deut. 16:13–17 "You shall keep the Feast of Booths seven days, when you have gathered in the produce from your threshing floor and your winepress. You shall rejoice in your feast, you and your son and your daughter, your male servant and your female servant, the Levite, the sojourner, the fatherless, and the widow who are within your towns. For seven days you shall keep the feast to the LORD your God at the place that the LORD will choose, because the LORD your God will bless you in all your produce and in all the work of your hands, so that you will be altogether joyful. "Three times a year all your males shall appear before the LORD your God at the place that he will choose: at the Feast of Unleavened Bread, at the Feast of Weeks, and at the Feast of Booths. They shall not appear before the LORD empty-handed. Every man shall give as he is able, according to the blessing of the LORD your God that he has given you.</p>	<p>The Feast of Booths, another religious ceremony with historical and future significance.</p>
<p>At this point, Deut. 16 should end, and Deut. 17 ought to begin.</p>	

²¹ For example, Arno Clement Gaebelein, The College Press Bible Study.

The Civil and Spiritual Spheres of Israel in Deuteronomy 16–17

Scripture	Commentary
Deut. 16:18–20 "You shall appoint judges and officers in all your towns that the LORD your God is giving you, according to your tribes, and they shall judge the people with righteous judgment. You shall not pervert justice. You shall not show partiality, and you shall not accept a bribe, for a bribe blinds the eyes of the wise and subverts the cause of the righteous. Justice, and only justice, you shall follow, that you may live and inherit the land that the LORD your God is giving you.	Appointment of judges and mayors and other public servants. Civil organization and civil morality.
Deut. 16:21–22 "You shall not plant any tree as an Asherah beside the altar of the LORD your God that you shall make. And you shall not set up a pillar, which the LORD your God hates.	Religious restrictions; the people were not to follow or combine with heathen worship.
Deut. 17:1 "You shall not sacrifice to the LORD your God an ox or a sheep in which is a blemish, any defect whatever, for that is an abomination to the LORD your God.	Religious restrictions continued.
Deut. 17:2–5 "If there is found among you, within any of your towns that the LORD your God is giving you, a man or woman who does what is evil in the sight of the LORD your God, in transgressing his covenant, and has gone and served other gods and worshiped them, or the sun or the moon or any of the host of heaven, which I have forbidden, and it is told you and you hear of it, then you shall inquire diligently, and if it is true and certain that such an abomination has been done in Israel, then you shall bring out to your gates that man or woman who has done this evil thing, and you shall stone that man or woman to death with stones.	Idolatry is outlawed and idolaters were to be executed (combining religious and civil spheres).
Deut. 17:6–7 On the evidence of two witnesses or of three witnesses the one who is to die shall be put to death; a person shall not be put to death on the evidence of one witness. 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.	Death penalty evidence requires 2 or more witness (although this follows from above; it stands on its own).
Deut. 17:8–13 "If any case arises requiring decision between one kind of homicide and another, one kind of legal right and another, or one kind of assault and another, any case within your towns that is too difficult for you, then you shall arise and go up to the place that the LORD your God will choose. And you shall come to the Levitical priests and to the judge who is in office in those days, and you shall consult them, and they shall declare to you the decision. Then you shall do according to what they declare to you from that place that the LORD will choose. And you shall be careful to do according to all that they direct you. According to the instructions that they give you, and according to the decision which they pronounce to you, you shall do. You shall not turn aside from the verdict that they declare to you, either to the right hand or to the left. The man who acts presumptuously by not obeying the priest who stands to minister there before the LORD your God, or the judge, that man shall die. So you shall purge the evil from Israel. And all the people shall hear and fear and not act presumptuously again.	Judges looking to a higher court for guidance. A civil or governmental matter.

The Civil and Spiritual Spheres of Israel in Deuteronomy 16–17

Scripture	Commentary
Deut. 17:14–17 "When you come to the land that the LORD your God is giving you, and you possess it and dwell in it and then say, 'I will set a king over me, like all the nations that are around me,' 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. You may not put a foreigner over you, who is not your brother. Only he must not acquire many horses for himself or cause the people to return to Egypt in order to acquire many horses, since the LORD has said to you, 'You shall never return that way again.' And he shall not acquire many wives for himself, lest his heart turn away, nor shall he acquire for himself excessive silver and gold.	Choosing a king; restrictions made upon a king, combining the civil and spiritual spheres.
Deut. 17:18–20 "And when he sits on the throne of his kingdom, he shall write for himself in a book a copy of this law, approved by the Levitical priests. And it shall be with him, and he shall read in it all the days of his life, that he may learn to fear the LORD his God by keeping all the words of this law and these statutes, and doing them, that his heart may not be lifted up above his brothers, and that he may not turn aside from the commandment, either to the right hand or to the left, so that he may continue long in his kingdom, he and his children, in Israel.	Divine guidance to a king through the Word of God; combining the civil and spiritual spheres.

The ESV; capitalized is used throughout.

As you can observe, there is no clear-cut division between the spiritual and civil spheres in nation Israel. This is because they were a nation founded on faith in God, founded by the mighty hand of God, and directed by the very words of God.

If we separate these two chapters, then Deut. 17:1 seems to be in a very odd place and unrelated to the rest of the chapter. However, it fits well enough between the two chapters, and suggests that perhaps there should not have been a chapter division here.

The Cambridge Bible observes: *This group of laws against heathen symbols and blemished sacrifices and the worship of other gods—all of them abominations to, or hated by, Jehovah—is quite isolated, between two sets of laws on judicial procedure, Deut. 16:18–20 and Deut. 17:8.*²²

[Chapter Outline](#)

[Charts, Graphics and Short Doctrines](#)

I am not the only person who struggled with the location of v. 1.

Commentators on the Chapter Division and Misplacement of Deuteronomy 17:1

Barnes: *This verse belongs in subject to the last chapter.*²³

The College Press Bible Study includes v. 1 with the final section of Deut. 16. They remark: *It seems probable that this exhortation was given in connection with the sacrifices to be offered at the three major festivals just mentioned.*²⁴

Peter Pett lumps v. 1 with Deut. 16:21–22, and titles this section: *A Ban On All Religious Objects And Behaviour Which Would Dishonour Yahweh And Make Them Unfit As Judges.*²⁵

²² *The Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges*; 1882-1921; by Cambridge University Press; General Editor J. J. S. Perowne, from e-sword, Deut. 17:1.

²³ Albert Barnes, *Barnes' Notes on the Old Testament*; from e-Sword, Deut. 17:1.

²⁴ *The College Press Bible Study Textbook Series*; (a compilation of many commentaries); from e-sword; Deut. 16:16–17:1.

²⁵ Dr. Peter Pett; *Commentary Series on the Bible*; from e-sword, Deut. 16:21–17:1.

Chapter Outline

Charts, Graphics and Short Doctrines

Logically tying Deut. 17:1 to its context (Peter Pett): Again, let's read Deut. 16:21–17:1 "You shall not plant any tree as an Asherah beside the altar of the LORD your God that you shall make. And you shall not set up a pillar, which the LORD your God hates. You shall not sacrifice to the LORD your God an ox or a sheep in which is a blemish, any defect whatever, for that is an abomination to the LORD your God.

Peter Pett logically ties together this section with what follows: *It is quite possible that certain matters of justice among the Canaanites (both in Canaan, and in Egypt where Canaanites settled) were decided at Canaanite sanctuaries, with pillars and Asherah involved in the procedures. If so such a procedure was not to be followed by Israel. It would reveal the judges as unfit to judge. So would the offering of blemished sacrifices. All would demonstrate an attitude of mind that was contrary to Yahweh. For where God was to be involved Israel must rather come to the priests and the supreme judge (Deut. 17:9), in the courtyard of the tabernacle, in the place where Yahweh would choose to dwell (Deut. 17:8; Deut. 17:10), where any difficult case could be settled before Yahweh (Deut. 17:12).²⁶*

Pett's theory here allows us to follow Moses' train of thought, which is somewhat obscure. It is reasonable to think that Moses, as a genius, has a progression of thought which is not always obvious to us.

Pett continues: *The emphasis on right justice and right behaviour towards Yahweh has led on to the banning of wooden Asherim and stone Pillars as an approach to God. The mention of the Asherim and the Pillars leads on to other questions concerning their approach to God and their attitude towards other gods, blemished offerings and outright idolatry. That verse 1 connects with Deut. 16:21–22 is suggested by the three fold, 'you shall not plant yourself an Asherah — nor shall you set up to yourself a pillar — you shall not sacrifice to Yahweh your God an ox or a sheep in which is a blemish'. These are three angles of one fact, that such behaviour invalidates those who judge. In order to serve Yahweh it was necessary to be true within.²⁷*

Chapter Outline

Charts, Graphics and Short Doctrines

Evidence Against and Execution of an Idolater

Vv. 2–13 sets up case law precedence. We will find out how idolatry is to be dealt with (vv. 2–5); what evidence is sufficient for conviction (vv. 6–7) (which is applicable elsewhere, even though, in context, it is related to executing idolaters); and what a judge should do if a case comes before him and he cannot come to a just verdict. Most **Bibles** split this passage up into 2 or 3 sections (or paragraphs).

That the Israelites would appoint judges was presented in the previous chapter. Deut. 16:18–19 "You shall appoint judges and officers in all your towns that the LORD your God is giving you, according to your tribes, and they shall judge the people with righteous judgment. You shall not pervert justice. You shall not show partiality, and you shall not accept a bribe, for a bribe blinds the eyes of the wise and subverts the cause of the righteous. (ESV) In this section, we deal with the idea that, maybe these judges have a case that they are unable to render a judgment on.

²⁶ Dr. Peter Pett; *Commentary Series on the Bible*; from e-sword, Deut. 16:21–17:1.

²⁷ Dr. Peter Pett; *Commentary Series on the Bible*; from e-sword, Deut. 16:21–17:1.

What follows in vv. 2–5 is a very long and complex thought. Moses often thought in very complex sentences. The summation of all this is, *if anyone is found to be openly worshipping other gods, then they are to be executed*. Moses uses about 90 words (in the Hebrew, including prepositions) to describe this situation; which then requires over 150 English words to translate.

For if he is found in your midst in one of your gates who Y^ehowah your Elohim is giving to you, a man or a woman who is doing the evil in eyes of Y^ehowah your Elohim, to pass over His covenant, and so he goes and so he serves gods [elohim] others and so he bows down to them and to the sun or to the moon or to all a host of the [two] heavens, which I have not mandated; and he has made known to you and you have heard and you have investigated [this] rightly; and behold, true is established the word, has done the abomination the this in Israel; and you have brought forth the man the this or the woman the this who have done the word the evil the this unto your gates—the man or the woman—and you have stoned them with stones and they have died.

Deuteronomy
17:2–5

When [one] is found in your midst, in one of your cities [lit., **gates**] that Y^ehowah your Elohim will give to you, a man or a woman who is doing evil in the sight of Y^ehowah your Elohim, to violate His covenant; and he has gone and served other gods [lit., **elohim**] and he bows down to them (or to the sun or to the moon or to the host of the heavens), which I have instructed [you] not [to do]; and [this idolatry] has been made known to you and you have heard [a credible report about it] and you have diligently investigated [this matter]; and if [lit., **behold**] the thing is established [as] true, [that] this abomination has been done in Israel; then you will bring [out] this man or this woman, who has done this evil thing, to your gates—the man or the woman—and you will stone them with stones until [lit., **and**] they die.

If it is discovered that a man or a woman in your midst is doing evil in the sight of Jehovah your God in one of the cities that your God will give to you—which act violates His covenant—and this person is serving other gods so that he bows down to them (or worships the sun, the moon or all the stars)—which I have instructed should not be done—and this has been made known to you—you have heard about it and then you diligently investigated the matter—and if this thing turns out to be true, that this abomination has been done in Israel; then you will bring this man or this woman to the gates of your city and you will stone them to death.

Here is how others have translated this verse:

Ancient texts:

Masoretic Text (Hebrew)

For if he is found in your midst in one of your gates who Y^ehowah your Elohim is giving to you, a man or a woman who is doing the evil in eyes of Y^ehowah your Elohim, to pass over His covenant, and so he goes and so he serves gods [elohim] others and so he bows down to them and to the sun or to the moon or to all a host of the [two] heavens, which I have not mandated; and he has made known to you and you have heard and you have investigated [this] rightly; and behold, true is established the word, has done the abomination the this in Israel; and you have brought forth the man the this or the woman the this who have done the word the evil the this unto your gates—the man or the woman—and you have stoned them with stones and they have died.

Targum of Onkelos

If there be found among you in one of your cities that the Lord your God will give you a man or woman who does what is evil before the Lord your God in transgressing His covenant, and, following after evil desire, shall serve the idols of the Gentiles, and worship them, or the sun, or the moon, or all the host of the heavens, which I have not commanded; and it be told you, and you hear and make inquiry by witnesses fairly; and, behold, if this word be true and certain, that such abomination is wrought among you, then you shall bring forth that man or woman

who hath done this evil thing, [p. 611] unto the gate of your house of judgment, the man or the woman, and you shall stone them that they die.

Latin Vulgate

When there shall be found among you within any of your gates, which the Lord your God shall give you, man or woman that do evil in the sight of the Lord your God, and transgress his covenant, So as to go and serve strange gods, and adore them, the sun and the moon. and all the host of heaven, which I have not commanded: And this is told you, and hearing it you have inquired diligently, and found it to be true, and that the abomination is committed in Israel: You shall bring forth the man or the woman, who have committed that most wicked thing, to the gates of your city, and they shall be stoned.

Peshitta (Syriac)

If there is found among you, within any of your towns which the LORD your God gives you, a man or a woman who shall do evil in the sight of the LORD your God and transgress his covenant, And shall go and serve other gods and worship them, either the sun, or the moon, or any of the host of heaven, which I have not commanded; And it is told you, and you shall hear of it, you shall inquire diligently, and if it is true that such an abomination has been committed in Israel; Then you shall bring forth that man or that woman who has committed that wicked thing within your towns, whether he is a man or a woman; and you shall stone him with stones, till he die.

Septuagint (Greek)

And if there should be found in any one of your cities, which the Lord your God gives you, a man or a woman who shall do that which is evil before the Lord your God, so as to transgress his covenant, and they should go and serve other gods, and worship them, the sun, or the moon, or any of the host of heaven, which He commanded you not to do, and it be told you, and you shall have enquired diligently, and, behold, the thing really took place, this abomination has been done in Israel; then shall you bring out that man, or that woman, and you shall stone them with stones, and they shall die.

Significant differences:

The Syriac has *towns* and the Greek has *cities* rather than *gates*; but *gates* can be a metonym for either of those words. The Latin adds the word *strange* before *gods*; and has *adore* rather than *bow down* (which is a reasonable substitute). The Greek has *serve* rather than *bow down*, also a reasonable substitute.

The Hebrew has *which I have not commanded*; the Greek has *He* instead (I capitalized it, assuming their reference is to God). The Syriac adds an *if* before *it is true* (not found in the Hebrew).

In the final few phrases, *man and woman* is repeated in the Hebrew, but not in the Greek, Latin or Syriac.

As is to be expected, the targum adds some verbiage, but not as much as it does in other books.

Limited Vocabulary Translations:

Bible in Basic English

If there is any man or woman among you, in any of the towns which the Lord your God gives you, who does evil in the eyes of the Lord your God, sinning against his agreement, By becoming a servant of other gods and worshipping them or the sun or the moon or all the stars of heaven, against my orders; If word of this comes to your ears, then let this thing be looked into with care, and if there is no doubt that it is true, and such evil has been done in Israel; Then you are to take the man or woman who has done the evil to the public place of your town, and they are to be stoned with stones till they are dead.

Easy English	Perhaps a person living in one of your towns may do something bad against the LORD your God. He has not done what he promised to do. He has not obeyed my words, because he has followed other gods. He has obeyed these gods, or he has prayed to the sun, moon or stars. If you hear about this, you must check the report. If this bad thing has happened in Israel, you must take the bad man or woman to the gate of the town. Then you must throw stones at that person until he or she dies.
Easy-to-Read Version–2001	"You might hear about an evil thing that happens in one of the cities that the Lord your God is giving you. You might hear that a man or woman in your group has sinned against the Lord. You might hear that they have broken the Agreement of the Lord--that they have worshiped other gods. Or maybe that they have worshiped the sun, the moon or the stars. That is against the Lord's command that I gave you. If you hear bad news like this, then you must check it carefully. You must learn if it is true that this terrible thing has really happened in Israel. If you prove that it is true, then you must punish the person that did that evil thing. You must take that man or woman out to a public place near the city gates and kill them with stones.
Easy-to-Read Version–2008	"You might hear about an evil thing that happens in one of the cities that the LORD your God is giving you. You might hear that a man or woman in your group has sinned against the LORD your God. You might hear that they have broken his agreement or that they have worshiped other gods or maybe the sun, the moon or the stars. I never told you to do that! If you hear bad news like this, you must check it carefully. You must learn if it is true that this terrible thing has really happened in Israel. If you prove that it is true, you must punish the person who did this evil thing. You must take that man or woman out to a public place near the city gates and kill them with stones.
Good News Bible (TEV)	"Suppose you hear that in one of your towns some men or women have sinned against the LORD and broken his covenant by worshiping and serving other gods or the sun or the moon or the stars, contrary to the LORD's command. If you hear such a report, then investigate it thoroughly. If it is true that this evil thing has happened in Israel, then take them outside the town and stone them to death.
<i>The Message</i>	If you find anyone within the towns that God, your God, is giving you doing what is wrong in God's eyes, breaking his covenant by going off to worship other gods, bowing down to them—the sun, say, or the moon, or any rebel sky-gods—look at the evidence and investigate carefully. If you find that it is true, that, in fact, an abomination has been committed in Israel, then you are to take the man or woman who did this evil thing outside your city gates and stone the man or the woman. Hurl stones at the person until dead.
Names of God Bible	In one of the cities Yahweh your Elohim is giving you, there may be a man or woman among you who is doing what Yahweh your Elohim considers evil. This person may be disregarding the conditions of Yahweh's promise by worshiping and bowing down to other gods, the sun, the moon, or the whole army of heaven. I have forbidden this. When you are told about it, investigate it thoroughly. If it's true and it can be proven that this disgusting thing has been done in Israel, then bring the man or woman who did this evil thing to the gates of your city, and stone that person to death.
NIRV	Someone living among you might do what is evil in the sight of the LORD your God. It might happen in one of the towns the Lord is giving you. That person is breaking the Lord's covenant. The person might have worshiped or bowed down to other gods. That person might have bowed down to the sun or moon or stars in the sky. I have commanded you not to do these things. When you hear that people have done something like that, check the matter out carefully. If it's true, an evil thing has been done in Israel. The LORD hates that.

New Simplified Bible »In one of the cities Jehovah your God is giving you, there may be a man or woman among you who is doing what Jehovah considers evil. This person may be disregarding the conditions of Jehovah's covenant.
 »Some worship and bow down to other gods, the sun, the moon, or the whole army of heaven. I have forbidden this.
 »If it is told you and you have heard of it, then you shall inquire thoroughly. If it is true and the thing certain that this detestable thing has been done in Israel,
 »Bring that man or woman who has done this evil deed out to your gates. Stone the man or the woman to death.

Thought-for-thought translations; paraphrases:

Common English Bible **Capital punishment**
 If someone, whether male or female, is found in your community—in one of the cities the Lord your God is giving you—who does evil in the Lord your God's eyes, by breaking God's covenant, by following and serving other gods, and by bowing down to them, to the sun or the moon or any of the heavenly bodies that I haven't permitted—and you hear news about it, then you must look into this situation very carefully. And if it's definitely true that this detestable thing was done in Israel, then you must bring out the man or woman who has done this evil thing to the gates of the city. Stone that person until he or she is dead.

Contemporary English V. The LORD your God is giving you towns to live in. But later, a man or a woman in your town may start worshiping other gods, or even the sun, moon, or stars. I have warned you not to worship other gods, because whoever worships them is disobeying the LORD and breaking the agreement he made with you. So when you hear that someone in your town is committing this disgusting sin, you must carefully find out if that person really is guilty. But you will need two or three witnesses--one witness isn't enough to prove a person guilty. Get rid of those who are guilty of such evil. Take them outside your town gates and have everyone stone them to death. But the witnesses must be the first to throw stones. Vv. 6–7 are included for context.

The Living Bible "If anyone, whether man or woman, in any village throughout your land violates your covenant with God by worshiping other gods, the sun, moon, or stars—which I have strictly forbidden—first check the rumor very carefully; if there is no doubt it is true, then that man or woman shall be taken outside the city and shall be stoned to death.

New Berkeley Version "If there is found among you in one of the towns which the LORD your God is granting you, a man or a woman who is doing evil in the sight of the LORD your God, transgressing His covenant — one who has sought out the served other gods [Israel's worship of false gods was the major trouble through much of her history.] and bowed down to them, the sun, the moon or any of the host of heaven, which I have forbidden you, and it is reported to you, then you must make searching inquiry. If the report is true and it is established that this abominable thing has been done in Israel, then you shall bring that man or that woman out to your gates and there stone that man or that woman to death.

New Century Version A man or woman in one of the towns the LORD gave you might be found doing something evil and breaking the Agreement. That person may have served other gods and bowed down to them or to the sun or moon or stars of the sky, which I have commanded should not be done. If someone has told you about it, you must look into the matter carefully. If it is true that such a hateful thing has happened in Israel, take the man or woman who has done the evil thing to the city gates and throw stones at that person until he dies.

New Life Version "You may find among you, within any of your towns the Lord your God gives you, a man or a woman who does what is sinful in the eyes of the Lord your God by

sinning against the Lord's agreement. If he has served other gods and worshiped them, or the sun, or the moon or the stars, which I have told him not to worship, and if someone told you about this, then you should do your best to find out if it is true. If it is true that this hated thing has been done in Israel, then bring that man or woman who has done this sinful act to your gates, and kill the man or woman with stones.

New Living Translation

"When you begin living in the towns the Lord your God is giving you, a man or woman among you might do evil in the sight of the Lord your God and violate the covenant. For instance, they might serve other gods or worship the sun, the moon, or any of the stars—the forces of heaven—which I have strictly forbidden. When you hear about it, investigate the matter thoroughly. If it is true that this detestable thing has been done in Israel, then the man or woman who has committed such an evil act must be taken to the gates of the town and stoned to death.

Partially literal and partially paraphrased translations:

American English Bible

'And if a man or a woman should ever be found among you (in any of the cities that Jehovah your God is giving to you) who chooses to do what is evil before Jehovah and sins against His Sacred Agreement by going and serving other gods, or by worshiping the sun, moon, or any of the stars in the skies (something that He has commanded you not to do), and someone tells you about it; you must inquire about it and investigate to see if this disgusting thing has really happened in IsraEl. [And if so], you must bring that man or woman outside [the city] and stone him/her to death with rocks.

International Standard V

Death to the Idolater

"You may discover that a man or woman living in one of your cities that the LORD your God is about to give you has done evil in the eyes of the LORD your God by transgressing his covenant. He may be following and serving other gods by bowing down to them—that is, to the sun, the moon, or to any of the heavenly host (something I did not command). When it is reported to you or you hear of it, then investigate it thoroughly. When the truth has been established that this detestable thing has been done in Israel, summon the man or the woman who did this evil thing to your city gates. Then stone the man or the woman to death.

New Advent (Knox) Bible

It may be that, in one of the cities the Lord thy God gives thee, men and women of thy race will be found so defiant, so false to his covenant, that they will forsake him, and enslave themselves to the worship of other gods, the sun and the moon and all the host of heaven, in contempt of my commandment. If this news is brought to thee, make careful enquiry into what thou hast heard; and if it proves that the report was true, and the foul deed was done among thy fellow-Israelites, away with such recreant men or women to the city gate; there let them be killed by stoning.

Today's NIV

If a man or woman living among you in one of the towns the LORD gives you is found doing evil in the eyes of the LORD your God in violation of his covenant, and contrary to my command has worshiped other gods, bowing down to them or to the sun or the moon or the stars in the sky, and this has been brought to your attention, then you must investigate it thoroughly. If it is true and it has been proved that this detestable thing has been done in Israel, take the man or woman who has done this evil deed to your city gate and stone that person to death.

Translation for Translators

Punishment for idolatry

"When you are living in any of the towns *in the land* that Yahweh our God is giving to you, suppose there is some man or woman who sins by disobeying the agreement that Yahweh has made with you. Suppose that person has worshiped and served other gods, or the sun, or the moon, or the stars. If someone tells you that some person has been doing that, you must investigate it thoroughly. If *you find out that* it is true that this detestable thing has happened in Israel, you must take

outside the town the man or woman who has done it. Then you must kill that person by throwing stones at him or her.

Mostly literal renderings (with some occasional paraphrasing):

- Ferrar-Fenton Bible If there should come out from any of your villages which your Ever-living God gives you, a man or a woman who does wrong in the sight of the Ever-living by slighting His Covenant, and going and serving other gods, and worshipping them, — or the sun, or the moon, or any of the hosts of the skies contrary to my command, — and it is reported to you ; when you hear it, then you should enquire carefully, and if the truth of the thing is confirmed, that such an outrage has been done in Israel, you shall bring out that man or that woman, who have done that wicked thing, in the village of the man or woman, and stone them to death with stones.
- God's Truth (Tyndale) If there be found among you in any of your cities which the Lord your God gives you man or woman that has wrought wickedness in the sight of the Lord your God, that they have gone beyond his appointment, so that they have gone and served strange gods and worshiped them, whether it be the son or moon or anything contained in heaven which I forbade, and it was told you and you have heard of it: Then you shall enquire diligently. And if it be true and the thing of a surety that such abomination is wrought in Israel, then you shall bring forth that man or that woman which have committed that wicked thing, unto your gates and shall stone them with stones and they shall die. At the mouth of two or three witnesses shall he that is worthy of death, die: but at the mouth of one witness he shall not die. And the hands of the witnesses shall be first upon him to kill him, and afterward the hands of all the people: so shall you put wickedness away from you.
- Lexham English Bible If there is found in one of your *towns* that Yahweh your God is giving to you a man or a woman that does evil in the eyes of Yahweh your God to transgress his covenant and by going and serving other gods and so he bows down to them and to the sun or to the moon or to any of the host of heaven *which I have forbidden*, and it is reported to you or you hear about it and you enquire about it thoroughly and, indeed, the trustworthiness of the deed has been established, *it has occurred*, this detestable thing, in Israel, then you shall bring out that man or that woman who has done this evil thing to your gates; that is, the man or the woman, and you shall stone them with stones *to death*.
- NIV, ©2011 If a man or woman living among you in one of the towns the Lord gives you is found doing evil in the eyes of the Lord your God in violation of his covenant, and contrary to my command has worshiped other gods, bowing down to them or to the sun or the moon or the stars in the sky, and this has been brought to your attention, then you must investigate it thoroughly. If it is true and it has been proved that this detestable thing has been done in Israel, take the man or woman who has done this evil deed to your city gate and stone that person to death.

Catholic Bibles (those having the imprimatur):

- Christian Community (1988) If there is among you, in any of the cities which Yahweh will give you, a man or a woman who does what is evil in the sight of Yahweh to the point of breaking his covenant, if they go to serve other gods and bow before them;^ato the sun, or the moon, or the stars of heaven;^awhich I have forbidden, and this has been reported to you or you learn of it, you shall begin to investigate the matter well. If you have proved that this abomination has indeed been committed in Israel, you shall bring to the gates of the city that man or woman who committed the misdeed, and you shall stone him or her to death.
- The Heritage Bible If there comes to be in your midst, within any of your gates which Jehovah, your God, gives you, man or woman who has done evil in the eyes of Jehovah, your

God, in crossing over against his covenant, And has walked and served other gods, and has prostrated himself to them, the sun, or moon, or any of the host of the heavens, which I have not commanded, And it stands out boldly to you, and you have attentively heard, and treaded seeking well, and behold, it is true, and the word is set up, this abomination is done in Israel, Then you shall bring out that man or that woman who has done that evil word to your gates, that man or that woman, and you shall stone them with stones, and they shall die.

- New American Bible—2001 "If there is found among you, in any one of the communities which the LORD, your God, gives you, a man or a woman who does evil in the sight of the LORD, your God, and transgresses his covenant, by serving other gods, or by worshiping the sun or the moon or any of the host of the sky, against my command; and if, on being informed of it, you find by careful investigation that it is true and an established fact that this abomination has been committed in Israel: you shall bring the man (or woman) who has done the evil deed out to your city gates and stone him to death. Out to your city gates: outside the gates in an unclean place; cf ⇒ Lev 24:14; ⇒ Numbers 15:36; ⇒ Acts 7:58; ⇒ Hebrews 13:12.
- New American Bible (2011) If there is found in your midst [Dt 13:2–19.], in any one of the communities which the LORD, your God, gives you, a man or a woman who does evil in the sight of the LORD, your God, and transgresses his covenant [Jos 7:11, 15; 23:16; Jgs 2:20; 2 Kgs 18:12; Jer 34:18; Hos 6:7; 8:1.], by going to serve other gods, by bowing down to them, to the sun or the moon or any of the host of heaven, contrary to my command [Dt 4:19; 2 Kgs 17:16; 21:3; 23:5; Jer 8:2; Ez 8:16.]; and if you are told or hear of it, you must investigate it thoroughly. If the truth of the matter is established that this abomination has been committed in Israel, you shall bring the man or the woman who has done this evil deed out to your gates and stone the man or the woman to death. **Out to your gates:** outside the gates, so as not to defile the city; cf. Lv 24:14; Nm 15:36; Acts 7:58; Heb 13:12.
- New Jerusalem Bible 'If there is anyone, man or woman, among you in any of the towns given you by Yahweh your God, who does what is wrong in the eyes of Yahweh your God by violating his covenant, who goes and serves other gods and worships them, or the sun or the moon or any of heaven's array -- a thing I have forbidden- and this person is denounced to you: if after careful enquiry it is found true and confirmed that this hateful thing has been done in Israel, you must take the man or woman guilty of this evil deed outside your city gates, and there you must stone that man or woman to death.
- Revised English Bible Should there be found among you, in any of the settlements which the LORD your God is giving you, a man or woman who does what is wrong in the eyes of the LORD your God, by violating his covenant and going to serve other gods, prostrating himself before them or before the sun and moon and all the host of heaven -- a thing that I have forbidden -- then, if it is reported to you or you hear of it, make careful enquiry. If the report proves to be true, and it is confirmed that this abominable thing has been done in Israel, then bring the man or woman who has done this wicked deed to the gate of the town to be stoned to death.

Jewish/Hebrew Names Bibles:

- Complete Jewish Bible "If there is found among you, within any of your gates [in any city] that ADONAI your God gives you, a man or woman who does what ADONAI your God sees as wicked, transgressing his covenant by going and serving other gods and worshipping them, the sun, the moon, or anything in the sky — something I have forbidden — and it is told to you, or you hear about it; then you are to investigate the matter diligently. If it is true, if it is confirmed that such detestable things are being done in Isra'el; then you are to bring the man or woman who has done this wicked thing to your city gates, and stone that man or woman to death.

exeGesés companion Bible

THE TORAH ON APOSTATES

If there be found among you,
 within any one of thy gates portals
 which the LORD Yah Veh thy God Elohim giveth thee,
 man or woman,
 that hath wrought wickedness worked evil
 in the sight eyes of the LORD Yah Veh thy God Elohim ,
 in transgressing trespassing his covenant,
 And hath gone and served other gods elohim ,
 and worshipped prostrated to them,
 either the sun, or moon,
 or any of the host of heaven the heavens ,
 which I have not commanded misvahed ;
 And it be told thee, and thou hast heard of it,
 and enquired diligently well , and, behold,
 it be true truth , and the thing certain word established ,
 that such abomination abhorrence
 is wrought worked in Israel Yisra El :
 Then shalt thou bring forth that man or that woman,
 which have committed worked
 that wicked thing evil word ,
 unto thy gates portals ,
 even that man or that woman,
 and shalt stone them with stones, till they die.

JPS (Tanakh—1985)

If there is found among you, in one of the settlements that the Lord your God is giving you, a man or woman who has affronted the Lord your God and transgressed His covenant— turning to the worship of other gods and bowing down to them, to the sun or the moon or any of the heavenly host, something I never commanded— and you have been informed or have learned of it, then you shall make a thorough inquiry. If it is true, the fact is established, that abhorrent thing was perpetrated in Israel, you shall take the man or the woman who did that wicked thing out to the public place, and you shall stone them, man or woman, to death.

Kaplan Translation

Penalties for Idolatry

[This is what you must do] when you discover a man or woman doing evil in the eyes of God your Lord in one of the settlements that God your Lord is giving you. [That person] will have violated [God's] covenant by going and worshiping or bowing down to the sun, moon or other heavenly bodies, whose [worship] I prohibited [Literally, 'which I did not command.']. When it is told to you, you must listen and carefully interrogate [the witnesses]. If the accusation is established [Nakhon in Hebrew; see Deuteronomy 13:15. Or, 'if the testimony [of the two witnesses] matches' (Rashi; HaKethav VeHaKabbalah).] to be true, and this revolting practice has been done in Israel, you shall take that man or woman who did the wicked act out to your gates [That is, the gate of the city where the sin was committed. However, if the majority of the city's population were gentile idolators, the penalty would be carried out within the confines of the court (Kethuvoth 45b; Yad, Sanhedrin 15:2; cf. Targum; Rashi; Sifri; HaKethav VeHaKabbalah).]. You shall then pelt the man or woman to death with stones.

Orthodox Jewish Bible

If there be found among you, within any of thy she'arim which Hashem Eloheicha giveth thee, ish or isha, that hath wrought wickedness in the sight of Hashem Eloheicha, in transgressing His Brit,
 And hath gone and served elohim acherim, and worshiped them, either the shemesh, or yarei'ach, or any of the tz'vah HaShomayim, which I have not commanded;

And it be told thee, and thou hast heard of it, and inquired diligently, and, hinei, it be emes, and the thing nakhon (certain, correct), that such to'evah (abomination) is wrought in Yisrael,

Then shalt thou bring forth that ish or that isha, which have committed that wicked thing, unto thy she'arim, even that ish or that isha, and shalt stone them with avanim, till they die.

The Scriptures 1998

“When there is found in your midst, in any of your cities which יהוה your Elohim is giving you, a man or a woman who does what is evil in the eyes of יהוה your Elohim, in transgressing His covenant, and has gone and served other mighty ones and bowed down to them, or to the sun or to the moon or to any of the host of the heavens, which I have not commanded, and it has been made known to you and you have heard, and has searched diligently. Then see, if true: the matter is confirmed that such an abomination has been done in Yisra’el, then you shall bring out to your gates that man or woman who has done this evil matter, and you shall stone to death that man or woman with stones.

Expanded/Embellished Bibles:

The Amplified Bible

“If there is discovered among you, within any of your cities, which the Lord your God is giving you, a man or a woman who does evil in the sight of the Lord your God, by transgressing (violating) His covenant, and has gone and served other gods and worshiped them, or the sun or the moon or any of the heavenly host, [doing these things] which I have commanded not to do, and if it is told to you and you hear about it, then you shall investigate thoroughly [all the charges]. If it is confirmed beyond doubt that this detestable thing has been done in Israel, then you shall bring that man or that woman who has done this evil thing to the gates [of your city] and you shall stone the man or the woman to death.

The Expanded Bible

A man or woman in one of the ·towns [·gates] the Lord gave you might be found doing something evil in the ·sight [·eyes] of the Lord your God and ·breaking [transgressing] the ·Agreement [Covenant; Treaty]. That person may have served other gods and bowed down to them or to the sun or moon or ·stars of the sky [any of the host of heaven], which I have commanded should not be done [4:19]. If someone has told you about it, you must look into the matter carefully. If it is true that such a ·hateful [detestable; abhorrent; abominable] thing has happened in Israel, take the man or woman who has done the evil thing to the city gates and ·throw stones at [stone] that person until he dies.

Kretzmann's Commentary

If there be found among you, within any of thy gates, in any city, that is, anywhere in the entire country, which the Lord, thy God, giveth thee, man or woman that hath wrought wickedness in the sight of the Lord, thy God, in transgressing His covenant, in setting aside any of the fundamental terms of the alliance which was in force between Jehovah and His people,

and hath gone and served other gods, and worshiped them, thus overthrowing the basic precept of the covenant Law, either the sun, or moon, or any of the host of heaven, the worship which was the curse of the heathen nations, Deut. 4:19, which I have not commanded;

and it be told thee, announcement being made to the proper authorities, and thou hast heard of it, and enquired diligently, made a most careful investigation, and, behold, it be true, and the thing certain, that such abomination is wrought in Israel, Deut. 13:12-14,

then shalt thou bring forth that man or that woman which have committed that wicked thing unto thy gates, to the open space within the city gates where court was held, even that man or that woman, and shalt stone them with stones till they die.

The execution was made outside the gates of the city, Lev. 24:14; Num. 15:36; Acts 7:58; Heb. 13:12.

NET Bible®

Suppose a man or woman is discovered among you – in one of your villages [*Heb* “gates.”] that the Lord your God is giving you – who sins before the Lord your God [*Heb* “does the evil in the eyes of the Lord your God.”] and breaks his covenant by serving other gods and worshiping them – the sun, moon, or any other heavenly bodies which I have not permitted you to worship [“which I have not commanded you.” The words “to worship” are supplied in the translation for clarification.]. When it is reported to you and you hear about it, you must investigate carefully. If it is indeed true that such a disgraceful thing⁹ is being done in Israel, you must bring to your city gates [*Heb* “gates.”] that man or woman who has done this wicked thing – that very man or woman – and you must stone that person to death [*Heb* “stone them with stones so that they die” (KJV similar); NCV “throw stones at that person until he dies.”].

The Voice

What if, in one of the towns the Eternal your God is giving you, a man or a woman does what He considers wrong and breaks His covenant by going and worshiping other gods, bowing down to them or the sun or moon or stars (which I’ve never commanded you to do)? *If you discover this*, if someone tells you about it, or if you hear about it; then conduct a careful investigation. If you establish conclusively that the report is true, that such a horrible thing has been done within Israel, then bring the man or woman who has done this evil thing out to the gates of your town, and stone that man or woman to death.

Literal, almost word-for-word, renderings:

Concordant Literal Version

In case there should be found among you, within one of your gates which Yahweh your Elohim is giving to you, a man or a woman who does evil in the eyes of Yahweh your Elohim so as to trespass against His covenant, and he goes and serves other elohim and bows himself down to them or to the sun or to the moon or to any of the host of the heavens, something that I have instructed not to do, and it has been told to you and you have heard it, then you will inquire diligently. And behold, if the truth of the matter is established that this abhorrence was done in Israel, then you must bring forth that man or that woman who did this evil thing to your gates, the man or the woman, and you will stone them with stones so that they die.

Context Group Version

If there is found in the midst of you, inside any of your gates which YHWH your God gives you, man or woman, that does that which is evil in the sight of YHWH your God, in transgressing his covenant, and has gone and served other gods, and bowed down in deference to them, or the sun, or the moon, or any of the army of the skies { or heavens }, which I haven't commanded; and it is told to you, and you have heard of it, then you shall inquire diligently; and see if it is true, and the thing certain, that such a disgusting thing is produced in Israel, then you shall bring out that man or that woman, who has done this evil thing, to your gates, even the man or the woman; and you shall stone them to death with stones.

NASB

“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, 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, 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, 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.

New King James Version

“If there is found among you, within any of your gates which the Lord your God gives you, a man or a woman who has been wicked in the sight of the Lord your God, in transgressing His covenant, who has gone and served other gods and

worshiped them, either the sun or moon or any of the host of heaven, which I have not commanded, and it is told you, and you hear of it, then you shall inquire diligently. And if it is indeed true and certain that such an abomination has been committed in Israel, then you shall bring out to your gates that man or woman who has committed that wicked thing, and shall stone to death that man or woman with stones.

Young’s Updated LT

“When there is found in your midst, in one of your cities which Jehovah your God is giving to you, a man or a woman who does the evil thing in the eyes of Jehovah your God by transgressing His covenant, and he does go and serve other gods, and does bow himself to them, and to the sun, or to the moon, or to any of the host of the heavens, which I have not commanded—and it has been declared to you, and you have heard, and have searched diligently, and lo, truth; the thing is established; this abomination has been done in Israel—Then you have brought out that man, or that woman, who has done this evil thing, unto your gates—the man or the woman—and you have stoned them with stones, and they have died.

The gist of this passage: If anyone is discovered to be worshiping false gods, then they must be put to death.

Deuteronomy 17:2a			
Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong’s Numbers
kîy (כי) [pronounced <i>kee</i>]	<i>for, that, because; when, at that time, which, what time</i>	explanatory or temporal conjunction; preposition	Strong's #3588 BDB #471
mâtsâ' (מצא) [pronounced <i>maw-TSAW</i>]	<i>to acquire, to be found, to be detected, to be discovered, to be present, to exist</i>	3 rd person masculine singular, Niphal imperfect	Strong's #4672 BDB #592
b ^e (ב) [pronounced <i>b^{eh}</i>]	<i>in, into, at, by, near, on, with, before, upon, against, by means of, among, within</i>	a preposition of proximity	Strong's #none BDB #88
qereb (קרֵב) [pronounced <i>KEH-re^{bv}</i>]	<i>midst, among, from among [a group of people]; an [actual, physical] inward part; the inner person with respect to thinking and emotion; as a faculty of thinking or emotion; heart, mind, inner being; entrails [of sacrificial animals]</i>	masculine singular noun with the 2 nd person masculine singular suffix	Strong's #7130 BDB #899
With the bêyth preposition, it means <i>in the midst of, among, into the midst of</i> (after a verb of motion).			
b ^e (ב) [pronounced <i>b^{eh}</i>]	<i>in, into, at, by, near, on, with, before, upon, against, by means of, among, within</i>	a preposition of proximity	Strong's #none BDB #88
'echâd (אחד) [pronounced <i>eh-KHAWD</i>]	<i>one, first, certain, only; each, every; but it can also mean a composite unity; possibly particular; anyone; same</i>	numeral adjective; construct form	Strong's #259 BDB #25

Deuteronomy 17:2a			
Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
sha'ar (שַׁעַר) [pronounced SHAH- gahr]	<i>gates [control of city can be implied]; entrance [through the gates]</i>	masculine plural noun with the 2 nd person masculine singular suffix	Strong's #8179 BDB #1044
'ăsher (אֲשֶׁר) [pronounced uh-SHER]	<i>that, which, when, who, whom; where; in that, in which, in what</i>	relative pronoun; sometimes the verb <i>to be</i> is implied	Strong's #834 BDB #81
YHWH (יהוה) [pronunciation is possibly yoh-WAH]	transliterated variously as <i>Jehovah, Yahweh, Y^ehowah</i>	proper noun	Strong's #3068 BDB #217
'Ēlōhîym (אֱלֹהִים) [pronounced el-o-HEEM]	<i>God; gods, foreign gods, god; rulers, judges; superhuman ones, angels; transliterated Elohim</i>	masculine plural noun with the 2 nd person masculine singular	Strong's #430 BDB #43
nāthan (נָתַן) [pronounced naw-THAHN]	<i>is giving, granting, is placing, putting, setting; is making</i>	Qal active participle	Strong's #5414 BDB #678
lâmed (ל) [pronounced l ^e]	<i>to, for, towards, in regards to</i>	directional/relational preposition with the 2 nd person masculine singular suffix	No Strong's # BDB #510

Translation: When [one] is found in your midst, in one of your cities [lit., *gates*] that Y^ehowah your Elohim will give to you,... This can be understood in two ways—*gates* is a metonym for *cities*; or this could be simply translated *within your gates*. That would mean, in the city proper.

At this point in time, the Israelites do not have any cities yet. The people of Israel are east of the Jordan listening to Moses teach them. So, these are cities that God would give to them when they go into the land to take it, which invasion is but weeks into the future.

Deuteronomy 17:2b			
Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
'îysh (אִישׁ) [pronounced eesh]	<i>a man, a husband; anyone; a certain one; each, each one, everyone</i>	masculine singular noun (sometimes found where we would use a plural)	Strong's #376 BDB #35
'ôw (אוּ) [pronounced oh]	<i>or, or rather, otherwise, also, and; if, perchance; except, or else; whether, not the least</i>	disjunctive conjunction	Strong's #176 BDB #14
'îshshâh (אִשָּׁה) [pronounced eesh-SHAW]	<i>woman, wife</i>	feminine singular noun	Strong's #802 BDB #61

Deuteronomy 17:2b

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
ʾăsher (אֲשֶׁר) [pronounced uh-SHER]	<i>that, which, when, who, whom; where; in that, in which, in what</i>	relative pronoun; sometimes the verb <i>to be</i> is implied	Strong's #834 BDB #81
ʿāsâh (עָשָׂה) [pronounced ġaw-SAWH]	<i>to do, to make, to construct, to fashion, to form, to prepare, to manufacture; accomplish</i>	3 rd person masculine singular, Qal imperfect	Strong's #6213 BDB #793
ʾêth (אֶת) [pronounced ayth]	untranslated generally; occasionally <i>to, toward</i>	indicates that the following substantive is a direct object	Strong's #853 BDB #84
raʿ (רָע) [pronounced rahġ]	<i>evil, bad, wicked; evil in appearance, deformed; misery, distress, injury; that which is displeasing [disagreeable, unhappy, unfortunate, sad]</i>	masculine singular adjective/noun; with the definite article	Strong's #7451 BDB #948
b ^e (ב) [pronounced b ^{eh}]	<i>in, into, at, by, near, on, with, before, against, by means of, among, within</i>	a preposition of proximity	No Strong's # BDB #88
ʾġynêy (עֵינָי) [pronounced ġee-NAY]	<i>eyes, two eyes, literal eye(s), spiritual eyes; face, appearance, form; surface</i>	feminine dual construct	Strong's #5869 (and #5871) BDB #744
Together, the bēyth preposition and the construct form ʾġynêy (עֵינָי) [pronounced ġee-NAY], literally mean <i>in the eyes of</i> ; it can be understood to mean <i>in the opinion of, in the thinking of, in the estimation of; as ___ sees things to be, in the sight of</i> .			
YHWH (יהוה) [pronunciation is possibly yhoh-WAH]	transliterated variously as <i>Jehovah, Yahweh, Y^ehowah</i>	proper noun	Strong's #3068 BDB #217
ʾĒlōhîym (אֱלֹהִים) [pronounced el-o-HEEM]	<i>God; gods, foreign gods, god; rulers, judges; superhuman ones, angels; transliterated Elohim</i>	masculine plural noun with the 2 nd person masculine singular	Strong's #430 BDB #43

Translation: ...a man or a woman who is doing evil in the sight of Y^ehowah your Elohim,... The concern is over a man or a woman who might be doing evil in the sight of Jehovah. Moses will then define exactly what this evil is that they are doing.

Matthew Poole: [T]he weakness and tenderness of that sex shall not excuse her sin, nor prevent her punishment.²⁸

²⁸ Matthew Poole, *English Annotations on the Holy Bible*; ©1685; from e-Sword, Deut. 17:2.

Deuteronomy 17:2c

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
lâmed (ל) [pronounced <i>l</i> ʰ]	<i>to, for, towards, in regards to</i>	directional/relational preposition	No Strong's # BDB #510
ʿâbar (עָבַר) [pronounced <i>gaw</i> ^b -VAHR]	<i>to pass over, to pass through, to pass on, to pass, to go over [beyond], to cross, to cross over; to go away, to depart; to violate [a law]</i>	Qal infinitive construct	Strong's #5674 BDB #716
b ^e rîyth (תִּיְרָב) [pronounced <i>b</i> ^e reeth]	<i>covenant; pact, alliance, treaty, alliance, contract</i>	feminine singular noun with the 3 rd person masculine singular suffix	Strong's #1285 BDB #136

Translation: ...to violate His covenant;... God has a covenant with the people of Israel: “They will be My people and I will be their God.” This is a two-way relationship that God establishes out of grace.

The specific evil deed which is referred to in this passage is to go against the Law of God. Like many *if-then* verses in the Bible, the protasis and the apodosis are split up.

Deuteronomy 17:3a

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
wa (or va) (ו) [pronounced <i>wah</i>]	<i>and so, and then, then, and; so, that, yet, therefore, consequently; because</i>	wâw consecutive	No Strong's # BDB #253
hâlak ^e (הָלַךְ) [pronounced <i>haw</i> -LAHK ^e]	<i>to go, to come, to depart, to walk; to advance</i>	3 rd person masculine singular, Qal imperfect	Strong's #1980 (and #3212) BDB #229
wa (or va) (ו) [pronounced <i>wah</i>]	<i>and so, and then, then, and; so, that, yet, therefore, consequently; because</i>	wâw consecutive	No Strong's # BDB #253
ʿâbad (עָבַד) [pronounced <i>gaw</i> ^b -VAHD]	<i>to work, to serve, to labor; to be a slave to</i>	3 rd person masculine singular, Qal imperfect	Strong's #5647 BDB #712
ʿêlôhîym (אֱלֹהִים) [pronounced <i>el-o</i> -HEEM]	<i>gods, foreign gods, god; God; rulers, judges; superhuman ones, angels; transliterated elohim, Elohim</i>	masculine plural noun	Strong's #430 BDB #43
ʿachêr (אַחֵר) [pronounced <i>ah</i> -KHEHR]	<i>another, following, next; other as well as foreign, alien, strange</i>	masculine plural, adjective/substantive	Strong's #312 BDB #29

Translation: ...and he has gone and served other gods [lit., *elohim*]... In the Hebrew, the word *gods* is exactly the same as the word *God*. It is context which determines which is meant. Previously, we have the phrase, *the Lord your God*; and here we have, *other gods*. Same exact word (with the addition of the word *another*), but it is clear which is meant.

Furthermore, when *Elohim* refers to God (or, more properly, the Godhead), it is accompanied by singular verbs (as we see in Gen. 1:1). Here, even though this is the exact same word, it is found with a *plural* descriptor.

This is the transgression, that this person has served other gods, other than Y^ehowah.

Deuteronomy 17:3b

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
wa (or va) (ו) [pronounced <i>wah</i>]	<i>and so, and then, then, and; so, that, yet, therefore, consequently; because</i>	wâw consecutive	No Strong's # BDB #253
shâchah (שָׁחָה) [pronounced <i>shaw-KHAW</i>]	<i>to bow down, to prostrate oneself, to do obeisance to; to honor [with prayers]; to do homage to, to submit to</i>	3 rd person masculine singular, Hithpael imperfect	Strong's #7812 BDB #1005
lâmed (ל) [pronounced <i>lê</i>]	<i>to, for, towards, in regards to, with reference to, as to, with regards to; belonging to; by</i>	directional/relational preposition with the 3 rd person masculine plural suffix	No Strong's # BDB #510

The meanings of the lâmed preposition broken down into groups: ❶ *to, towards, unto*; it is used both to turn one's heart *toward* someone as well as to sin *against* someone; ❷ *to, even to*; in this sense, it can be used with a number to indicate the upper limit which a multitude might approach (*nearly*). ❸ Lâmed can be equivalent to the Greek preposition eis (εἰς), meaning *into*, as in transforming *into* something else, changing *into* something else (Gen. 2:7). This use of lâmed after the verb hâyâh (הָיָה) [pronounced *haw-YAW*] (Strong's #1961 BDB #224) is one thing *becoming* another (Gen. 2:7). ❹ Its fourth use is the mark of a dative, after verbs of giving, granting, delivering, pardoning, consulting, sending, etc. This type of dative is broken down into several categories, but one includes the translation *by*, which would be apropos here. ❺ *With regards to, as to*. Similar to the Greek preposition eis (εἰς) plus the dative. [Numbering from Gesenius]. ❻ *On account of, because, propter*, used of cause and reason (*propter* means *because*; Gesenius used it). ❼ *Concerning, about*, used of a person or thing made the object of discourse, after verbs of saying. ❽ *On behalf of anyone, for anyone*. ❾ *As applied to a rule or standard, according to, according as, as though, as if*. ❿ When associated with time, it refers to *the point of time at which or in which* anything is done; or it can refer to *the space of time during which* something is done (or occurs); *at the time of*.

Translation: ...and he bows down to them... This person bows down before other gods, rather than to Y^ehowah. There was a great deal of idolatry in the land of Israel and in the surrounding lands at various time in their history. There was always an intense spiritual battle to change the spiritual focus of the children of Israel.

Application: We have similar worship today, but with very different expressions of faith, and whole different sets of inconsistencies. The *green movement* has essentially made a religion out of global warming/climate change/climate disruption. However, when there is a gathering of these folks, the rich ones gather by means of **jets** (many of them private) flying from all parts of the globe to some destination where there are meetings and activities (burning up gobs and **gobs of fossil fuel**); and the **poor climate enthusiasts** often leave behind a great mess, devastating the environment where they gather—at least for a time. In an era where they could have a very *green* sort of gathering (via computers), they insist on doing it the old fashioned way—flying by personal or national jets to popular international destinations.

Application: Many people are devoted to the earth, sustaining the planet, evolution, and to natural processes (in people, animals, and food); and yet, quite often, it is these same people who tout, support and extol the most unnatural activities of homosexuals and transgendered types.

Even if you have a natural appreciation of the earth, without irony or contradiction, it is God Who is to be admired, respected, and worshiped, not His creation.

Deuteronomy 17:3c

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
w ^e (or v ^e) (ו, or ו) [pronounced <i>weh</i>]	<i>and, even, then; namely; when; since, that; though; as well as</i>	simple wâw conjunction	No Strong's # BDB #251
lâmed (ל) [pronounced <i>leh</i>]	<i>to, for, towards, in regards to, with reference to, as to, with regards to; belonging to; by</i>	directional/relational preposition	No Strong's # BDB #510
shemesh (שֶׁמֶשׁ) [pronounced <i>SHEH-mesh</i>]	<i>sun; sunrise, sun-rising, east, sun-setting, west (of direction); openly, publically</i>	feminine singular noun with the definite article	Strong's #8121 BDB #1039

The NET Bible: *The MT reads "and to the sun," thus including the sun, the moon, and other heavenly spheres among the gods. However, Theodotion and Lucian read "or to the sun," suggesting perhaps that the sun and the other heavenly bodies are not in the category of actual deities.*²⁹

Translation: ...[\(or to the sun...](#) Some people of that era worshiped the sun, and they bowed down before it. Now, with the way the universe is designed, and barring God stepping in as a substitute, the sun provides us with our life—it heats us, it grows our food. We have no life apart from the sun. But, the sun is an object—it is a creation of God. It certainly has a purpose and a very specific design, but so does my air compressor, and I do not worship it.

Peter Pett: *The worship of the sun was unquestionably practised in Canaan, for at least one city was named 'the house of Shemesh' (Bethshemesh), while in Egypt Ra or Aten were sun gods who were seen as profoundly affecting things day by day (and in unseen battles at night).*³⁰

Deuteronomy 17:3d

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
'ôw (או) [pronounced <i>oh</i>]	<i>or, or rather, otherwise, also, and; if, perchance; except, or else; whether, not the least</i>	disjunctive conjunction	Strong's #176 BDB #14
lâmed (ל) [pronounced <i>leh</i>]	<i>to, for, towards, in regards to, with reference to, as to, with regards to; belonging to; by</i>	directional/relational preposition	No Strong's # BDB #510
yârêach (יָרֵאֵךְ) [pronounced <i>yaw-RAY-ahkh</i>]	<i>moon</i>	masculine singular noun with the definite article	Strong's #3394 BDB #437

Translation: ...[or to the moon...](#) People would see the moon every night, and some chose to worship it.

²⁹ From <https://bible.org/netbible/index.htm?deu17.htm> (footnote); accessed April 21, 2016.

³⁰ Dr. Peter Pett; *Commentary Series on the Bible*; from e-sword, Deut. 17:2–3.

Peter Pett: *Haran was a centre of moon-worship, and in Egypt Thoth was at one time a moon god. In Canaan Yerah was the moon god, possibly worshipped at 'Yeri-cho' (Jericho).*³¹

Again, we do not have many people today who worship the sun or the moon (or the heavenly bodies) but there are a surfeit of them who worship Mother Gaia (= earth).

Many have observed the many parallels between the Global warming/green movement and religion.

Global Warming as a Religion by W. A. Beatty

- Original sin: Mankind is responsible for the prophesied disasters, especially those of us who live in suburbs and drive our SUVs to strip malls and chain restaurants.
- The need for atonement and repentance: We must impose a carbon tax or cap-and-trade system, which will raise the cost of everything and stunt economic growth.
- Rituals: We must observe Earth Day, and we must recycle.
- Indulgences: Private jet-fliers like Al Gore and sitcom heiress Laurie David can buy carbon offsets to compensate for their carbon-emitting sins.
- Prophecy and faith in things unseen: Advocates say we must act now before it is too late.
- Hypocrisy—the private jets and crass indulgences by those who warn us about the crisis of global warming.



Photo of the Aftermath of the Earth Day Celebration in San Francisco 2014; originally at [Dignitas News Service](#), but no longer available apparently. Accessed May 14, 2016. This is typical, by the way. Go to a TEA party rally, where they are vilified by the Greenies, and they will leave the place better than when they found it. Go to any sort of a *green celebration/demonstration/whatever* and it will be a mess afterwards.

For the rest of this article, see the [American Thinker](#); accessed May 14, 2016 (appended).

[Chapter Outline](#)

[Charts, Graphics and Short Doctrines](#)

Deuteronomy 17:3e

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
’ôw (וַי) [pronounced oh]	<i>or, or rather, otherwise, also, and; if, perchance; except, or else; whether, not the least</i>	disjunctive conjunction	Strong's #176 BDB #14
lâmed (ל) [pronounced l’]	<i>to, for, towards, in regards to, with reference to, as to, with regards to; belonging to; by</i>	directional/relational preposition	No Strong's # BDB #510

³¹ Dr. Peter Pett; *Commentary Series on the Bible*; from e-sword, Deut. 17:2–3.

Deuteronomy 17:3e			
Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
kôl (כֹּל) [pronounced kohl]	every, each, all of, all; any of, any	masculine singular construct not followed by a definite article	Strong's #3605 BDB #481
tsâbâ' (צָבָא) [pronounced tsaw ^p -VAW]	that which goes forth, army, war, warfare, host; army, host; host (of organized army); host (of angels); of sun, moon, and stars; of whole creation; war, warfare, service, go out to war; service	masculine singular construct	Strong's #6635 BDB #838
shâmayîm (שָׁמַיִם) [pronounced shaw-MAH-yim]	heaven, heavens, skies; the visible heavens, as in as abode of the stars or as the visible universe, the sky, atmosphere, etc.; Heaven (as the abode of God)	masculine dual noun with the definite article	Strong's #8064 BDB #1029

Translation: ...or to the host of the heavens),... The *host of the heavens* refers to the stars in the skies. For some, it is only natural to look up, see the stars, the sun and the moon, and to worship those things. But the God of Israel created them all. You do not worship the creation; you worship only the Creator.

Peter Pett: *The term 'host of heaven' was well known in Israel (see 1Kings 22:19; compare Deut. 33:2) and the concept as old as, and older than, Gen. 32:2. It originally referred to heavenly beings. But every night men around the world would look up and see the stars, and various aspects of them would be worshipped, which was why in some places learned men tracked their movements. So recognition of them as Yahweh's hosts, an easy step to make, could easily turn to worship of them as the host of heaven. Gen. 1:16 with its 'and made the stars also' would appear to have been a deliberate attempt to play the stars down. Worship of sun, moon and stars goes back into the mists of time. They had a fascination for men and were mysteries that drew men's veneration.*³²

Matthew Poole: *Those glorious creatures, which are to be admired as the wonderful works of God, but not to be set up in God's stead, nor worshipped as gods: see Job. 31:26. By condemning the most specious and reasonable of all idolaters, he intimates how absurd a thing it is to worship stocks and stones, the works of men's hands.*³³

We find the worship of the sun, moon and stars mentioned in Deut. 4:19 17:3 Jer. 8:2.

Israel fell into the sort of worship from time to time. 2Kings 21:3 [Manasseh] rebuilt the high places that 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.

By the way, when I made the connection between false worship and homosexuality, you may have thought that I might be stretching things to suit my own personal preferences. I was not. Paul made a similar connection in Romans 1:18–32 **For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth. For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. For His invisible attributes, namely, His eternal power and divine nature, have**

³² Dr. Peter Pett; *Commentary Series on the Bible*; from e-sword, Deut. 17:2–3.

³³ Matthew Poole, *English Annotations on the Holy Bible*; ©1685; from e-Sword, Deut. 17:3.

been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse. For although they knew God, they did not honor Him as God or give thanks to Him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened. Claiming to be wise, they became fools, and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man and birds and animals and creeping things. Therefore God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, to the dishonoring of their bodies among themselves, because they exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever! Amen. For this reason God gave them up to dishonorable passions. For their women exchanged natural relations for those that are contrary to nature; and the men likewise gave up natural relations with women and were consumed with passion for one another, men committing shameless acts with men and receiving in themselves the due penalty for their error. And since they did not see fit to acknowledge God, God gave them up to a debased mind to do what ought not to be done. They were filled with all manner of unrighteousness, evil, covetousness, malice. They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, maliciousness. They are gossips, slanderers, haters of God, insolent, haughty, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents, foolish, faithless, heartless, ruthless. Though they know God's righteous decree that those who practice such things deserve to die, they not only do them but give approval to those who practice them. (ESV; capitalized)

Deuteronomy 17:3f

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
ʾăsher (אֲשֶׁר) [pronounced uh-SHER]	<i>that, which, when, who, whom; where; in that, in which, in what</i>	relative pronoun; sometimes the verb <i>to be</i> is implied	Strong's #834 BDB #81
lôʾ (לֹא or לוֹא) [pronounced low]	<i>not, no</i>	negates the word or action that follows; the absolute negation	Strong's #3808 BDB #518
tsâvâh (צִוָּה) [pronounced tsaw-VAW]	<i>to commission, to mandate, to appoint; to ordain; to lay charge upon, to give charge to, charge [command, order]; to instruct [as in, giving an order]</i>	1 st person singular, Piel perfect	Strong's #6680 BDB #845

Translation: ...which I have instructed [you] not [to do];... It is Moses who is speaking, and Moses has instructed this people not to engage in idolatry.

God has made it very clear that the sons of Israel were not to worship any other god. There is one God, Y^ehowah, and He created all that we see. What God created is not to be worshiped. God revealed to them everything that was necessary for them to know to believe in and then to worship God. I often refer to Him as the **Revealed God**, as He did not come out of anyone's imagination, but as God chose to reveal Himself to mankind (and principally to and through the Jewish people).

This particular sentence was broken down into four different verses. Vv. 2–4 form the protasis and v. 5 is the apodosis. The person named in this verse bows himself down to other gods or worships nature. God created the sun and the moon—they are not even living creatures. **And God made the two great lights, the greater light to rule over the day and the lesser light to rule over the night; the stars as well** (Gen. 1:16). As far back as the time of Job, this type of idolatry was understood to be wrong. **"If I have looked at the sun when it shone or the moon going in splendor, and my heart became secretly enticed and my hand a kiss of homage from my mouth—that too would have been an iniquity [requiring] judgment."** (Job 31:27–28). In our time, this is the evolutionist. He may not go through any sort of a religious practice concerning *mother nature*, but he ascribes essentially supernatural powers as the forces of nature and worships, so to speak, at the gates of natural selection, the favorable mutation and the hopeful monster.

At its very worst, idolatry involved child sacrifice: “And they have built the high places of Topheth, which is in the valley of the son of Hinnom, to burn their sons and their daughters in the fire, which I did not command, and it did not come into My mind.” (Jer. 7:31). In any case, it was a clear departure from the God of Israel (see 2Kings 17:14–18 21:3–9 23:4–10).

Deut. 17:2–3 When [one] is found in your midst, in one of your cities [lit., *gates*] that Y^ehowah your Elohim will give to you, a man or a woman who is doing evil in the sight of Y^ehowah your Elohim, to violate His covenant; and he has gone and served other gods [lit., *elohim*] and he bows down to them (or to the sun or to the moon or to the host of the heavens), which I have instructed [you] not [to do];...

Forbidding the Worship of the Sun, Moon and Stars (Several Commentators)

Joseph Parker: *Only two parties are named in the covenant—God and the sinner himself. Observe the definiteness of God’s command. There is to be no counterfeit; there is to be no pretence. Even the sun is not to be worshipped, nor the fair moon, nor any of the stars that make night rich. The temptation is very strong. If anything visible might be worshipped, surely it would be the sun, at any point of what we call his career—in the whitening east, in the dazzling noontide, in the solemn westering of that day-making glory. God foresaw this. It was dangerous to make a sun: it looks so like a God. Other spirits might find in the soft moon somewhat of motherliness and gentleness, and condescending interest in the affairs of men—a sweet, sweet light that has come out in the darkness, that is never seen in the mid-day glory; a seeking mother, a solicitous sister, a gentle friend that may and dare come out in the night;—who could fail to fall down and say,—Bless thee, thou spirit of light, thou art at least a symbol of the living God? And some of the stars seem to speak: they glitter so; their sparkling is so vivid; their appeal so direct, as if we must answer such voices. God has said,—Sun, moon, and the host of heaven are not to be worshipped. So much for nature-homage; so much for the altar of the universe, as represented by things bright and beautiful and most alluring in their tenderness. All altars, but one, are thrown down. Those who believe the Bible have, therefore, no alternative. They hear poems about nature, about sunlight and moon-light, and babbling brooks, and sparkling dew, and bending corn, and birds trilling out their very throats in song; and they say,—If the Bible had not spoken so definitely, we might have been persuaded to halt and build a tabernacle and worship the host of heaven and the singing tenants of the air and all the beauty of the bespangled carpet under our feet; but the Bible is emphatic and definite: we are not to stop at the creature, but to go up to the Creator.*³⁴

Peter Pett: *[Idolatrous worship] would have broken the covenant and done what Yahweh had not commanded. Indeed He had commanded that they should not do it. They must therefore face the judgment of His justices and officials.*³⁵

J. Orr: *The crime here ordained to be punished by death was sabaeism, or the worship of the heavenly bodies. Though this was in some respects the noblest, as it seems to have been the most ancient, form of idolatry—the purest in its ritual, the most elevating in its influence, the least associated with vice, it was not to be tolerated in Israel. Its apparent sublimity made it only the more seductive and dangerous. It was a departure, though at first a very subtle and scarcely recognizable one, from pure monotheism—the beginning of a course of declension which speedily led in Egypt, Phoenicia, Babylonia, India, and most other nations to the grossest abominations. That the seductive influence of sun and star worship was powerfully felt by the ancients appears from Job 31:26–27. In Egypt, according to M. de Rouge (quoted by Renouf, ‘Hibbert Lecture’), “the pure monotheistic religion passed through the phase of sabseism; the sun, instead of being considered as the symbol of life, was taken as the manifestation of God himself.” Max Muller tells us that the “oldest prayer in the world” (?) is one in the Rig-Veda, addressed to the sun. The term for God, which is common to the Indo-Germanic races (*deva, daeva, theos, deus, etc.*), proves that the conception of the Divine among them was formed from that of light, and that the objects of their religious worship were the effects and appearances of light. All ancient mythologies turn, as their principal subject, on the sunrise and sunset, the battle between light and darkness, etc.*³⁶

³⁴ From <http://biblehub.com/commentaries/parker/deuteronomy/17.htm> accessed May 11, 2016.

³⁵ Dr. Peter Pett; *Commentary Series on the Bible*; from e-sword, Deut. 17:2–3.

³⁶ *The Pulpit Commentary*; 1880-1919; by Joseph S. Exell, Henry Donald Maurice Spence-Jones, from e-sword, Deut. 17:3.

Chapter Outline

Charts, Graphics and Short Doctrines

The Bible—particularly the Law of Moses—is very specific when it comes to the kind of worship prescribed for the children of Israel. Primarily, every religious symbol, act, and all things connected to the worship mandated for the Jews, all looked forward either to Jesus Christ and His death on the cross, or to their future history. When man would deviate from that, then that parallels between what would happen in the future were no longer. Every religious act is related to the future; they are typical of future events or future doctrines which would be made known. The Jews participated in the worship which were shadows of things to come. Heb. 10:1–2 **For since the law has but a shadow of the good things to come instead of the true form of these realities, it can never, by the same sacrifices that are continually offered every year, make perfect those who draw near. Otherwise, would they not have ceased to be offered, since the worshipers, having once been cleansed, would no longer have any consciousness of sins?** Col. 2:16–17 **Therefore let no one pass judgment on you in questions of food and drink, or with regard to a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath. These are a shadow of the things to come, but the substance belongs to Christ.** Because we now know the reality, there is no reason to follow the old systems of worship from the Mosaic Law. We no longer haul in a lamb from our flock and slaughter it in front of the congregation; we no longer participate in the festivals of the Mosaic Law; we no longer observe the Sabbath (which is *Saturday*); we are no longer restricted with regards to food and drink.

In any case, when it came to worship, there was such a plethora of activities prescribed in Scripture that the Jews did not need new activities; they did not need new gods or new ceremonies—they had quite a few which took up all of their religious life.

When the Jews went outside the realm of the Mosaic Law, there was a problem with that. This was treated like any serious breach of the law in our society today.

Deuteronomy 17:4a

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
w ^e (or v ^e) (ו, or ו) [pronounced <i>weh</i>]	<i>and, even, then; namely; when; since, that; though; as well as</i>	simple wâw conjunction	No Strong's # BDB #251
nâgad (נָגַד) [pronounced <i>naw-GAHD</i>]	<i>to be made conspicuous, to be made known, to be expounded, to be explained, to be declared, to be informed</i>	3 rd person masculine singular, Hophal perfect	Strong's #5046 BDB #616
The Hophal is the passive of the Hiphil (causative stem) and the rarest of the seven stems. There is never a hint of reflexive in this stem and the agent of the verb is often not given in the immediate context. Most grammar books call it simply the causative passive stem.			
lâmed (ל) [pronounced <i>leh</i>]	<i>to, for, towards, in regards to</i>	directional/relational preposition with the 2 nd person masculine singular suffix	No Strong's # BDB #510

Translation: ...and [this idolatry] has been made known to you... At this point, we are back considering the person who is worshiping a false god. It has been found out that Charlie Brown is worshiping the sun; this is made known to those in authority in the city.

Deuteronomy 17:4b

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
w ^e (or v ^e) (ו, or ו) [pronounced <i>weh</i>]	<i>and, even, then; namely; when; since, that; though; as well as</i>	simple wâw conjunction	No Strong's # BDB #251
shâma ^c (שמע) [pronounced <i>shaw-MAHG</i>]	<i>to listen [intently], to hear, to listen and obey, [or, and act upon, give heed to, take note of], to hearken to, to be attentive to, to listen and be cognizant of</i>	2 nd person masculine singular, Qal perfect; pausal form	Strong's #8085 BDB #1033

Translation: ...and you have heard [a credible report about it]... And/or, the person to whom Moses is speaking (he is just speaking generally to the 2nd person masculine singular), that person has heard about this idolatry.

Deuteronomy 17:4c

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
w ^e (or v ^e) (ו, or ו) [pronounced <i>weh</i>]	<i>and, even, then; namely; when; since, that; though; as well as</i>	simple wâw conjunction	No Strong's # BDB #251
dârash (דָּרַשׁ) [pronounced <i>daw-RASH</i>]	<i>to seek, to make inquiries concerning, to consult, to investigate, to study, to follow, to inquire; to require</i>	2 nd person masculine singular, Qal perfect	Strong's #1875 BDB #205
yâṭab (יָטַב) [pronounced <i>yaw-TA^{BV}</i>]	<i>in doing well, rightly; well, accurately; fitly; acting [or, living] well [honestly, rightly]; honestly, rightly</i>	Hiphil infinitive absolute	Strong's #3190 BDB #405

In Deut. 17:4, Owen translates this *diligently*. In this case, *properly* might be a good translation.

Translation: ...and you have diligently investigated [this matter];... However, this accusation cannot simply stand. You might hear that Charley Brown worships the sun, but you cannot just take him out and stone him because Lucy Van Pelt told you about it. You have to properly investigate these claims. Those in charge of the public trust must be careful not to execute people simply as examples, apart from their actual guilt.

Today, such investigations (often made by prosecutors and defendants) are standard operating procedure. We take it for granted that, when an alleged criminal has been arrested, that investigations prior to and subsequent to the arrest take place. No one wants an innocent man to be convicted of a crime; and no one wants a criminal to go free; so investigations must take place. This is what Moses tells us here, 3500 years ago (here and Deut. 13:12–14 19:18).

Deuteronomy 17:4d

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
w ^e (or v ^e) (ו, or ו) [pronounced <i>weh</i>]	<i>and, even, then; namely; when; since, that; though; as well as</i>	simple wâw conjunction	No Strong's # BDB #251
hinnêh (הִנֵּה) [pronounced <i>hin-NAY</i>]	<i>lo, behold, or more freely, observe, look here, look, listen, note, take note; pay attention, get this, check this out</i>	interjection, exclamatory particle, demonstrative particle	Strong's #2009 (and #518, 2006) BDB #243
An argument could be made that this wâw conjunction plus the demonstrative could be translated <i>and suddenly...</i> ; or, <i>and he saw that...</i> , or, <i>he observed [that]...</i> , or, <i>he realized [that]...</i> In Gen. 40:16, Owens translates this, <i>there were</i> .			
'emeth (אֱמֶת) [pronounced <i>EH-meth</i>]	<i>firmness, faithfulness, truth, certainty, stability, perpetuity, fidelity, reliable, stable, dependable</i>	feminine singular noun	Strong's #571 BDB #54
kûwn (כּוּן) [pronounced <i>koon</i>]	<i>is firmly established, is being set up, being established, is being prepared, is being made ready; confirming, setting up, maintaining, founding [a city]</i>	Niphal participle	Strong's #3559 BDB #465
With verbs of perception and knowledge, we may translate this <i>to know with certainty, to confirm</i> . See points on 1Sam. 26:4.			
dâbâr (דָּבָר) [pronounced <i>daw^b-VAWR</i>]	<i>word, saying, doctrine, thing, matter, command; business, occupation; case; something; manner</i>	masculine singular noun with the definite article	Strong's #1697 BDB #182

Translation: ...and if [lit., *behold*] **the thing is established [as] true**,... So, the claims are investigated and it turns out that there is an idolater among the people of Israel. Then Moses requires very strict action.

Deuteronomy 17:4e

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
'âsâh (עָשָׂה) [pronounced <i>gaw-SAWH</i>]	<i>to be done [made, produced]; to be offered, to be observed, to be used; was made [constructed, fashioned], to be formed, to be prepared</i>	3 rd person feminine singular, Niphal perfect	Strong's #6213 BDB #793
tôw'êvâh (תּוֹעֵבָה) [pronounced <i>to-gay-VAWH</i>]	<i>disgusting act, an abomination, abhorrent, abhorrence, an abhorrent act</i>	feminine singular noun with the definite article	Strong's #8441 BDB #1072

Deuteronomy 17:4e

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
The NET Bible: <i>The Hebrew word תְּבַעוּת (to'evah, "an abomination"; cf. NAB) describes persons, things, or practices offensive to ritual or moral order.</i> ³⁷			
zeh (זֶה) [pronounced zeh]	<i>here, this, this one; thus; possibly another</i>	masculine singular demonstrative adjective with a definite article	Strong's #2088, 2090 (& 2063) BDB #260
b ^e (ב) [pronounced b ^{eh}]	<i>in, into, at, by, near, on, with, before, against, by means of, among, within</i>	a preposition of proximity	No Strong's # BDB #88
Yis ^e râ'êl (יִשְׂרָאֵל) [pronounced yis-raw-ALE]	<i>God prevails; contender; soldier of God; transliterated Israel</i>	masculine proper noun; God-given name to Jacob; and national name for the Jewish people	Strong's #3478 & #3479 BDB #975

Translation: ...[that] this abomination has been done in Israel;... Someone has been accused of committing idolatry, and it turns that is true, that it has been done in Israel.

V. 4 is extremely important. The activity is not just told to you by someone that you generally trust so now the suspect is remanded into custody and dealt with. V. 4 indicates that a careful and thorough investigation of the matter takes place. In any capital crime—and, in the dispensation of Israel in the land of Israel, idolatry was a capital crime—all investigations were to be thorough (see Deut. 13:14). There must be more than simple alleged idolatry.

Since vv. 2–5 all are the same sentence: vv. 2–3, the idolatry crime is stated; v. 4 it is investigated carefully and it turns out to be true; and, finally, v. 5 gives the resultant penalty.

Deut. 17:2–5 If it is discovered that a man or a woman in your midst is doing evil in the sight of Jehovah your God in one of the cities that your God will give to you—which act violates His covenant—and this person is serving other gods so that he bows down to them (or worships the sun, the moon or all the stars)—which I have instructed should not be done—and this has been made known to you—you have heard about it and then you diligently investigated the matter—and if this thing turns out to be true, that this abomination has been done in Israel; then you will bring this man or this woman to the gates of your city and you will stone them to death.

Idolatry and False Worship (Commentators on Deuteronomy 17:2–4)

Gill: *[Idolatry] in any country was abominable, but much more so in the land of Israel, among the professing people of God, who had the knowledge of the true God, and had had so many proofs of his deity, his power and providence, as well as received so many favours and blessings from him, and had such laws and statutes given them as no other people had.*³⁸

Peter Pett: *False worship struck at the very root of the covenant. It replaced Yahweh as Supreme. It was totally unacceptable. It was something that Yahweh was against with all His being. It was 'abominable'. And yet even that must be subject to fair trial.*³⁹

³⁷ From <https://bible.org/netbible/index.htm?deu17.htm> (footnote); accessed April 21, 2016.

³⁸ Dr. John Gill, *John Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible*; from e-Sword, Deut. 17:4.

³⁹ Dr. Peter Pett; *Commentary Series on the Bible*; from e-sword, Deut. 17:4–5.

Idolatry and False Worship (Commentators on Deuteronomy 17:2–4)

John Wesley: *Those glorious creatures, which are to be admired as the wonderful works of God, but not to be set up in God's stead. By condemning the most specious of all idolaters, he intimates, how absurd a thing it is to worship stocks and stones, the works of men's hands. I have not commanded - That is, I have forbidden. Such negative expressions are emphatical.*⁴⁰

Chapter Outline

Charts, Graphics and Short Doctrines

This doctrine is culled from several sources and a portion of it is original as well.

Idolatry (Ancient, Modern, and Tribulational)

1. Idolatry defined: American College dictionary: "An image or other material object representing a deity to which religious worship is addressed." "A false god"
2. Idolatry is forbidden in the Bible. Exodus 23:24, Deut 4:28, Deut 5:7-8; 6:14; 7:16; 8:19. In the Ten Commandments, the first commandment prohibits mental idolatry and the second prohibits overt idolatry.
3. Principles of Idolatry:
 - 1) Idolatry is a satanic attempt to substitute false gods and concepts for God's Person and plan. His purpose is to blind mankind with respect to God's plan. He does this by setting up a series of counterfeits. 2Cor.4:3,4 cp.11:14
 - 2) Idolatry results in negative volition to the gospel. Rom.1:18-25
 - (1) This produces false concepts introducing soul idolatry. Rom.1:18-21
 - (2) This leads to overt idolatry. Rom.1:22-23
4. Ancient Idolatry:
 - 1) Whatever form of idolatry that pre-existed the Noachic flood was wiped out leaving only believers in Noah and his family.
 - 2) The first recorded clear example of idolatry is found in Gen.11:1-9
 - 3) The time: immediately after the flood.
 - 4) The place: historical Babylon. Gen.10:8-10; 11:9
 - 5) The human instigators: Cush, Nimrod and Samerimus and the Samaritans (Shinar). Gen.10:8-12; Gen.11:1-9
 - 6) The images of idolatry: the city and the tower. Gen.11:4
 - 7) The city = political idolatry; the tower = religious idolatry.
 - 8) The concept: One world order and a one-world religion.
 - 9) The one world political order is further depicted in Jer.51:7 and Rev.18 under the code name Babylon.
 - 10) The one world religion is further depicted in Rev.17 esp. vss.1,4,5 under the code name Babylon.
 - 11) The distinctive characteristics of the cult: mother son. She was known as the goddess of love (Ashtarti, Isis, Diana, Venus, Mary, the queen of heaven). Nimrod (Baal, Brahma, Osirus, Jupiter, Bacchus). Salvation by works, many holidays, prayers for the dead and purgatory, false priesthoods; this organization sponsored the phallic cult.
5. Idolatry currently in the United States:
 - 1) We do not have the same sort of idolatry in the United States today as Israel faced 2000–3000 years ago.
 - 2) There is the great worship of money in the United States, and people will steal it, act dishonestly to get it, or spend most of their lives with money accumulation as their goal. This does not mean that they will dump \$100,000 in hundred dollar bills onto their bed and roll around in it. Nor does this mean that any person would typically be involved an ancient worship practices but have them directed toward currency, silver or gold. One has to be careful here, because the accumulation of

⁴⁰ John Wesley; *Explanatory Notes on the Whole Bible*; courtesy of e-sword, Deut. 17:3.

Idolatry (Ancient, Modern, and Tribulational)

- money (or precious metals) is not, in itself, sinful; nor is it sinful to work long hours. The key to whether someone is idolatrous or not is based upon what is in the soul of the person making (or taking) the money.
- 3) Much of what could be seen as idolatry in the 20th and 21st centuries can merely be a removal of the controls of the lust pattern of the soul. Some lust have money and wealth; others might lust after sex (of various kinds) or fame or power. When these things are seen as first and foremost in a person's life, then idolatry is the condition of the soul.
 - 4) There is Gaia (earth) worship today; as well as a religion of climate change/global warming/climate disruption.
 - (1) People who would reject the worship of God and all organized Christian worship might engage in the worship of the earth, often in somewhat of a pagan celebration.
 - (2) People do have a fairly complex system of worship associated with climate change. Their religion has unbelievers (called *climate change deniers*); there is a religious hierarchy, with climate scientists and political leaders at the very top; there is a system of penance (buying indulgences, known as carbon credits); and pretty much **everything is seen to be associated with climate change**, from floods, to hurricanes, to diseases, to revolutions.
 - 5) When Christians desire to find happiness apart from God's plan, which is consistent, daily, prayer and Bible study they will become saturated with the cheap substitutes of life. Eph 4:17-19; 5:1-5; Gal 5:16-23 Unhappy, miserable, frustrated Christians will, apart from God's plan, search for satisfaction either in lasciviousness or asceticism. Lasciviousness: involvement in overt, corporeal tangible lustful activities. Lust for approval; lust for material possessions, lust for power, lust for fornication, lust for uncleanness (lewdness); lust for rivalries, strife, seditions and heresies. Asceticism: one who practices religious austerities; strict in religious practices. One who either emphasizes the things he doesn't do (self-denial and pride) or emphasizes what he does (religious virtues and pride) Often there is the worship of religious experiences or the worship of important personalities.
 6. Idolatry will continue to exist in the last half of the Tribulation. Rev.13
 - 1) It centers on the unholy trinity of Satan, the beast and false prophet.
 - 2) It promotes a system of economic coercion.
 - 3) Will include mass murder of many.
 - 4) It is inclusive of miracles as deluding influences. Rev.13:13,14; 2The.2:9-12

Portions of this were taken from:

Ken Reed pastor of the Lake Erie Bible Church (I no longer have the link to this; and he may have revised the doctrine since I saved this from the church website). Idolatry from the Grace Bible Church

<http://www.gracebiblechurchbaytown.org/uploads/1/0/1/6/10165395/idolatry.pdf> accessed April 2, 2015. From <http://lakeeriebiblechurch.org/doctrine/word/IDOLATRY.doc> accessed April 24, 2016.

Chapter Outline

Charts, Graphics and Short Doctrines

Deuteronomy 17:5a

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
w ^e (or v ^e) (ו, or ו) [pronounced <i>weh</i>]	<i>and, even, then; namely; when; since, that; though; as well as</i>	simple wâw conjunction	No Strong's # BDB #251
yâtsâ' (יָצָא) [pronounced <i>yaw-TZAWH</i>]	<i>to cause to go out, to lead out, to bring out, to carry out, to draw out, to take out [of money]; to put forth, to lay out, to exact; to promulgate; to produce</i>	2 nd person masculine singular, Hiphil perfect	Strong's #3318 BDB #422

Deuteronomy 17:5a

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
'êth (אֵת) [pronounced <i>ayth</i>]	untranslated generally; occasionally <i>to, toward</i>	indicates that the following substantive is a direct object	Strong's #853 BDB #84
'îysh (אִישׁ) [pronounced <i>eesh</i>]	<i>a man, a husband; anyone; a certain one; each, each one, everyone</i>	masculine singular noun (sometimes found where we would use a plural); with the definite article	Strong's #376 BDB #35
hûw' (אוּ) [pronounced <i>hoo</i>]	<i>that; this; same</i>	masculine singular, demonstrative pronoun with a definite article	Strong's #1931 BDB #214
Although the KJV renders this word as <i>this</i> most of the time, BDB gives this usage with the definite article as properly <i>that</i> .			
You will note that this is identical to the 3 rd person masculine singular, personal pronoun.			
'ôw (אוּ) [pronounced <i>oh</i>]	<i>or, or rather, otherwise, also, and; if, perchance; except, or else; whether, not the least</i>	disjunctive conjunction	Strong's #176 BDB #14
'êth (אֵת) [pronounced <i>ayth</i>]	untranslated generally; occasionally <i>to, toward</i>	indicates that the following substantive is a direct object	Strong's #853 BDB #84
'îshshâh (אִשָּׁה) [pronounced <i>eesh-SHAW</i>]	<i>woman, wife</i>	feminine singular noun with the definite article	Strong's #802 BDB #61
hîy' (אִיהָ) [pronounced <i>hee</i>]	<i>she, it; also used as a demonstrative pronoun: that, this (one)</i>	3 rd person feminine singular, personal pronoun; sometimes the verb <i>is</i> , is implied; with the definite article	Strong's #1931 BDB #214
'âsher (אֲשֶׁר) [pronounced <i>uh-SHER</i>]	<i>that, which, when, who, whom; where; in that, in which, in what</i>	relative pronoun; sometimes the verb <i>to be</i> is implied	Strong's #834 BDB #81
'âsâh (עָשָׂה) [pronounced <i>gaw-SAWH</i>]	<i>to do, to make, to construct, to fashion, to form, to prepare, to manufacture; accomplish</i>	3 rd person plural, Qal perfect	Strong's #6213 BDB #793
'êth (אֵת) [pronounced <i>ayth</i>]	untranslated generally; occasionally <i>to, toward</i>	indicates that the following substantive is a direct object	Strong's #853 BDB #84
dâbâr (דָּבָר) [pronounced <i>daw^b-VAWR</i>]	<i>word, saying, doctrine, thing, matter, command; business, occupation; case; something; manner</i>	masculine singular noun with the definite article	Strong's #1697 BDB #182

Deuteronomy 17:5a

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
ra' (רָע) [pronounced rahg']	<i>evil, bad, wicked; evil in appearance, deformed; misery, distress, injury; that which is displeasing [disagreeable, unhappy, unfortunate, sad]</i>	masculine singular adjective/noun; with the definite article	Strong's #7451 BDB #948
zeh (זֶה) [pronounced zeh]	<i>here, this, this one; thus; possibly another</i>	masculine singular demonstrative adjective with a definite article	Strong's #2088, 2090 (& 2063) BDB #260
'el (לְ) [pronounced eh]	<i>unto; into, among, in; toward, to; against; concerning, regarding; besides, together with; as to</i>	directional preposition (respect or deference may be implied)	Strong's #413 BDB #39
sha'ar (שַׁעַר) [pronounced SHAH-gahr]	<i>gates [control of city can be implied]; entrance [through the gates]</i>	masculine plural noun with the 2 nd person masculine singular suffix	Strong's #8179 BDB #1044

Translation: ...then you will bring [out] this man or this woman, who has done this evil thing, to your gates... The person who has committed idolatry will be brought to the gates of the city. This is where all legal business was transacted, and this would include transgressions of the law and the punish for these transgressions.

The Cambridge Bible: *the usual place for stoning was outside the gate, so that the city might not be polluted (cp. Lev. 24:14, Num. 15:36); where also Stephen was stoned (Acts 7:58) under this law.*⁴¹

Deuteronomy 17:5b

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
'eth (אֵת) [pronounced ayth]	untranslated generally; occasionally <i>to, toward</i>	indicates that the following substantive is a direct object	Strong's #853 BDB #84
'iysh (אִישׁ) [pronounced eesh]	<i>a man, a husband; anyone; a certain one; each, each one, everyone</i>	masculine singular noun (sometimes found where we would use a plural); with the definite article	Strong's #376 BDB #35
'ow (וּ) [pronounced oh]	<i>or, or rather, otherwise, also, and; if, perchance; except, or else; whether, not the least</i>	disjunctive conjunction	Strong's #176 BDB #14
'eth (אֵת) [pronounced ayth]	untranslated generally; occasionally <i>to, toward</i>	indicates that the following substantive is a direct object	Strong's #853 BDB #84

⁴¹ *The Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges*; 1882-1921; by Cambridge University Press; General Editor J. J. S. Perowne, from e-sword, Deut. 17:5 (slightly edited).

Deuteronomy 17:5b

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
ʾīshshâh (אִשָּׁה) [pronounced eesh-SHAW]	woman, wife	feminine singular noun with the definite article	Strong's #802 BDB #61

Translation: ...—the man or the woman—... Properly speaking, because of the sign of the direct object, these would be on the receiving end of the punishment in the final portion of v. 5.

Deuteronomy 17:5c

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
w ^e (or v ^e) (וּ, or ו) [pronounced weh]	and, even, then; namely; when; since, that; though; as well as	simple wâw conjunction	No Strong's # BDB #251
çâqal (צָקַל) [pronounced saw-KAHL]	to throw stones, to stone, to overwhelm with stones; possibly to heap stones on the dead [as a disgrace]	2 nd person masculine singular, Qal perfect with the 3 rd person masculine plural suffix	Strong's #5619 BDB #709
b ^e (ב) [pronounced b ^{eh}]	in, into, at, by, near, on, with, before, against, by means of, among, within	a preposition of proximity	No Strong's # BDB #88
ʿeben (אֶבֶן) [pronounced EH ^B -ven]	a stone [large or small] [in its natural state, as a building material]; stone ore; used of tablets, marble, cut stone; used of a tool or weapon; a precious stone, gem; rock; a weight of the balance	feminine plural noun with the definite article	Strong's #68 BDB #6
w ^e (or v ^e) (וּ, or ו) [pronounced weh]	and, even, then; namely; when; since, that; though; as well as	simple wâw conjunction	No Strong's # BDB #251
mûwth (מוּת) [pronounced mooth]	to die; to perish, to be destroyed; to be put to death; to die prematurely [by neglect of wise moral conduct]	3 rd person plural, Qal perfect	Strong's #4191 BDB #559

Translation: ...and you will stone them with stones until [lit., and] they die. The man or the woman who is guilty of idolatry will be executed for idolatry.

An execution was more than just public in the times of Israel—it involved public participation. In order for this to take place, a large area was required, so first the accused was tried. Although one source claimed that he would be taken to a large open area near the gates (substantiating this with Neh. 8:1 Job 29:7), where his trial was held, these passages are not enough reason to assume this was always done this way nor was this recommended by the Law. However, then the criminal would be taken outside the gates of the city to be stoned (we find this in Acts 7:58 when Stephen was stoned). It became customary for all executions to be held outside the city gates (Deut. 22:24 Heb. 13:12).

“He who sacrifices to the gods other than to Y^ehowah alone will be placed under the ban (i.e., utterly destroyed).” (Ex. 22:20). As we have seen, the preferred method of execution was stoning, as we have seen in Lev. 24:14, 16 Deut. 13:10 Joshua 7:25. This is because, for an early Israel, stones were readily available. This does not mean that stoning is God’s preferred method of execution for all time.

In a land ruled directly by Y^ehowah God, the God of the Universe, idolatry is absolutely forbidden. In our time, when no nation is under the direct rulership of God, this type of crime and punishment cannot take place. It does not matter if you can prove beyond the shadow of a doubt that someone is a nature worshiper—we do not, under our economy, have the right or the duty to execute idolaters. When you have large groups of people who are loyal to *the church*, as it were, but who have little or no correct training in God’s Word, they inevitably persecute those who should not be persecuted. We have hundreds of years where Bible believing Christians were persecuted by unbelievers in the name of Christianity. This is not God’s plan for our life nor it is God’s plan for our nation, no matter what percentage of Christians our nation has. This is not a matter of the changing influence of the world, this is a matter of clear Bible doctrine and the change of dispensations from Israel, a nation ruled directly by God, and the church, a body of believers who may or may not have any political power.

A similar passage, also found in this discourse by Moses, reads: “If your brother, your mother’s son, or your son or daughter, or the wife of your heart, or your friend who is in your soul, entice you secretly, saying, ‘Let us go and serve other gods’ (whom neither you nor your fathers have known, of the gods of the peoples who are around you, near you or far from you, from one end of the earth to the other end). But you will certainly kill him; your hand will be first against him to put him to death, and afterwards the hand of the people. So you will stone him with stones because he has sought to seduce you from Y^ehowah your God Who brought you out from the land of Egypt, out of the house of slaves.” (Deut. 13:6–11). This first passage in Deuteronomy emphasizes that even when this is the closest of relative or friend, that if they try to seduce you away from Jesus Christ, the God of Israel, they are to be stoned. This latter passage deals with anyone who is purported to steal the heart of Israel from God.

Now, this is clearly an area where things have changed. In a theocracy, where God was over Israel, there was no idolatry that was tolerated. However, in a nation today, there is not a similar requirement. No one in the state has the responsibility of determining who is guilty of idolatry and then executing same.

Deut. 17:2–5 If it is discovered that a man or a woman in your midst is doing evil in the sight of Jehovah your God in one of the cities that your God will give to you—which act violates His covenant—and this person is serving other gods so that he bows down to them (or worships the sun, the moon or all the stars)—which I have instructed should not be done—and this has been made known to you—you have heard about it and then you diligently investigated the matter—and if this thing turns out to be true, that this abomination has been done in Israel; then you will bring this man or this woman to the gates of your city and you will stone them to death.

The Execution of Idolaters (Commentators on Deuteronomy 17:2–5)

Dr. Thomas Constable: *God specified the method of execution as stoning for idolaters as well as other capital offenders. Rocks were, and still are, present everywhere in Canaan.*⁴²

D. Davies: *In proportion to the greatness of the crime must be the carefulness of investigation, No punishment is to be inflicted on the ground of suspicion or prejudice. Human life is to be accounted precious, but the interests of righteousness are more precious still. On both these grounds, the scrutiny must be thorough. To prevent any injury to the sacred cause of justice, through error, or incompetence, or malice, one witness must be incompetent to obtain a verdict. Security against injustice comes from corroborated testimony and from independent witnesses. While every man is bound, in his sphere, to think and act righteously towards his neighbors, he must safeguard himself against hasty judgments and against the whispers of slanderers. In many positions in life we are called to act in the place of God.*

⁴² Dr. John Constable *The Expository Notes of Dr. Constable*; ©2012; from e-sword, Deut. 17:1–7.

The Execution of Idolaters (Commentators on Deuteronomy 17:2–5)

Davies continues: *It was death by stoning. In that early age, and especially in the desert, there were no mechanical contrivances for suddenly extinguishing life. They were largely the children of nature, and possessed but few inventions of civilized life. The sagacity of Supreme Wisdom had placed frail man among natural forces, which might easily be employed in terminating bodily life. This arrangement impresses men with a sense of dependence. His bodily life succumbs to a stone. The unit must be sacrificed to the well-being of the community.*⁴³

Jamieson, Fausset and Brown: *No rank or sex could palliate this crime. Every reported case, even a flying rumor of the perpetration of so heinous an offense, was to be judicially examined; and if proved by the testimony of competent witnesses, the offender was to be taken without the gates and stoned to death, the witnesses casting the first stone at him. The object of this special arrangement was partly to deter the witnesses from making a rash accusation by the prominent part they had to act as executioners, and partly to give a public assurance that the crime had met its due punishment.*⁴⁴

Keil and Delitzsch: *“Bring him out to thy gates,” i.e., to one of the gates of the town in which the crime was committed. By the gates we are to understand the open space near the gates, where the judicial proceedings took place (cf. Neh. 8:1, Neh. 8:3; Job. Deut. 29:7), the sentence itself being executed outside the town (cf. Deut. 22:24; Acts 7:58; Heb. 13:12), just as it had been outside the camp during the journey through the wilderness (Lev. 24:14; Num. 15:36), to indicate the exclusion of the criminal from the congregation, and from fellowship with God.*⁴⁵

Whedon: *The punishment was to be in public before the whole people. By the gate is to be understood the open space near the gate, where in Eastern cities judicial proceedings take place. Comp. Neh. 8:1; Neh. 8:3; Job. 29:7. The sentence was to be carried into execution outside of the city, as in Acts 7:58; Heb. 13:12, as in the wilderness it had been outside of the camp: to denote that the criminal was excluded from the congregation.*⁴⁶

Peter Pett: *On the case being proved, the man or woman who had done this evil was to be brought forth to the gates, to the place of justice, and once the case was satisfactorily proved, the man or woman was to be stoned to death with stones, the first stones being thrown by the witnesses. Stoning was always the penalty for this crime in Israel, for it prevented anyone having to touch those who had been defiled.*⁴⁷

[Chapter Outline](#)

[Charts, Graphics and Short Doctrines](#)

Capitol punishment will be discussed in greater detail in v. 6.

What follows are good laws for all crimes. They particularly apply in context to spiritual adultery; but are reasonably applied to the determination of guilt in all crimes.

⁴³ *The Pulpit Commentary*; 1880-1919; by Joseph S. Exell, Henry Donald Maurice Spence-Jones, from e-sword, Deut. 17:2–7.

⁴⁴ Robert Jamieson, A. R. Fausset and David Brown; *Commentary Critical and Explanatory on the Whole Bible*; 1871; from e-sword, Deut. 17:2–7.

⁴⁵ Keil and Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament*; from e-Sword; Deut. 17:2–7.

⁴⁶ *Whedon's Commentary on the Old and New Testaments*; Editor: Daniel D. Whedon, D.D. L.L.D.; ©1874–1909; from E-sword; Deut. 17:5.

⁴⁷ Dr. Peter Pett; *Commentary Series on the Bible*; from e-sword, Deut. 17:4–5.

Upon a mouth of two witnesses or three witnesses has been put to death the dying one; he will not be put to death upon a mouth of a witness, one. Deuteronomy 17:6 **The criminal [lit., *the dying one*] will be put to death on the basis of two or three witnesses; he will not be executed on the basis of one witness.**

Criminals are to be executed on the basis of two or three witnesses; you will not execute someone based upon the testimony of one person.

Here is how others have translated this verse:

Ancient texts:

Masoretic Text (Hebrew)	Upon a mouth of two witnesses or three witnesses has been put to death the dying one; he will not be put to death upon a mouth of a witness, one.
Targum of Onkelos	Upon the word of two witnesses or of three he shall die who is guilty of death ; they shall not be put to death on the word of one witness.
Revised Douay-Rheims	By the mouth of two or three witnesses shall he die that is to be slain. Let no man be put to death, when only one bears witness against him.
Peshitta (Syriac)	On the testimony of two witnesses or three witnesses shall he that is worthy of death be put to death; but on the testimony of one witness he shall not be put to death.
Septuagint (Greek)	He shall die on the testimony of two or three witnesses; a man who is put to death shall not be put to death for one witness.

Significant differences: The Hebrew has something like, *the dying one will be put to death*; the Greek leaves out *the dying one*; the Syriac calls this one who is *worthy of being slain*.

Limited Vocabulary Translations:

Bible in Basic English	On the word of two or three witnesses, a man may be given the punishment of death; but he is not to be put to death on the word of one witness.
Easy English	But two or three people must agree that he has done the bad thing. You must never kill anyone because of the words of only one person.
Easy-to-Read Version–2001	But a person should not be punished with death if only one witness says that person did the evil thing. But if two or three witnesses say it is true, then the person must be killed.
God's Word™	The person can only be sentenced to death on the testimony of two or three witnesses, but no one should ever be sentenced to death on the testimony of only one witness.
NIRV	Two or three witnesses are required to put someone to death. No one can be put to death because of what only one witness says. Two or three witnesses are required.

Thought-for-thought translations; paraphrases:

Common English Bible	Capital punishment must be decided by two or three witnesses. No one may be executed on the basis of only one testimony.
The Living Bible	However, never put a man to death on the testimony of only one witness; there must be at least two or three.
New Berkeley Version	It must be on the testimony of two or more witnesses that the one condemned is executed; no one shall die on the testimony of but a single witness.
New Life Version	If two or three people tell what they know against this person, he who is to die must be put to death. But he should not be put to death if only one person speaks against him.

Partially literal and partially paraphrased translations:

American English Bible	'The person must be put to death if there are two or three witnesses to testify against him. But, no one should be put to death on the testimony of just one witness.
Beck's American Translation	<i>He should be killed on the statement of two or three witnesses but not on the statement of one witness.</i>
International Standard V	Based on the testimony [Lit. <i>mouth</i>] of two or three witnesses, they must surely die. But they are not to die based on the testimony of one person.
New Advent (Knox) Bible	But there must be two witnesses or more if the death penalty is inflicted; one witness will not suffice when a man's life is in question.
Translation for Translators	But you are allowed to execute such people only if at least two witnesses testify that they saw them <i>doing that</i> . They must not be executed if there is only one witness.

Mostly literal renderings (with some occasional paraphrasing):

Lexham English Bible	<i>On the evidence of two or three witnesses the person shall be put to death. The person shall not be put to death by the mouth of one witness.</i>
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Catholic Bibles (those having the imprimatur):

Christian Community (1988)	But you will need the testimony of two or three witnesses to condemn a person to death. No one will be condemned by the accusation of only one witness.
New American Bible (2002)	The testimony of two or three witnesses is required for putting a person to death; no one shall be put to death on the testimony of only one witness.
New American Bible (2011)	Only on the testimony of two or three witnesses shall a person be put to death; no one shall be put to death on the testimony of only one witness. Dt 19:15; Nm 35:30; Jn 8:17; 2 Cor 13:1.
New Jerusalem Bible	A death sentence may be passed only on the word of two witnesses or three; and no one must be put to death on the word of one witness alone.
Revised English Bible	Sentence of death is to be carried out on the testimony of two or of three witnesses: no one must be put to death on the testimony of a single witness.

Jewish/Hebrew Names Bibles:

exeGesés companion Bible	At the mouth of two witnesses, or three witnesses, shall he that is worthy of death to be deathified be put to death deathified ; but at the mouth of one witness he shall not be put to death deathified.
JPS (Tanakh—1985)	A person shall be put to death only on the testimony of two or more witnesses; he must not be put to death on the testimony of a single witness.—
Kaplan Translation	The accused shall be put to death only through the testimony of two or three witnesses. He shall not be put to death through the testimony of one witness. This indicates that if there are three witnesses they must be interrogated the same as two (Ralbag). Moreover, if the testimony of the third witness does not agree with the two, the entire testimony must be rejected (Makkoth 5b; Rashi).
Orthodox Jewish Bible	At the mouth of shneyim edim, or shloshah edim, shall he that is worthy of death be put to death; but at the mouth of ed echad (one witness) he shall not be put to death.

Expanded/Embellished Bibles:

The Amplified Bible	On the evidence of two or three witnesses, he who is to die shall be put to death; he shall not be put to death on the evidence of [only] one witness.
The Expanded Bible	There must be two or three witnesses that it is true before the person is put to death; if there is only one witness, the person should not be put to death [Num. 35:30].
Kretzmann's Commentary	At the mouth of two witnesses or three witnesses, that is, on the basis of their testimony, shall he that is worthy of death be put to death; but at the mouth of one witness he shall not be put to death, Num. 35:30. Cf Matt. 18:16; 2Cor. 13:1; 1Tim. 5:19.
The Voice	But for someone to be executed on a charge <i>such as this</i> , there must be testimony from at least two or three witnesses. No one is to be executed on the testimony of just one witness.

Literal, almost word-for-word, renderings:

English Standard Version	On the evidence of two witnesses or of three witnesses the one who is to die shall be put to death; a person shall not be put to death on the evidence of one witness.
Green's Literal Translation	At the mouth of two witnesses or three witnesses shall he that is to die be put to death. He shall not be put to death at the mouth of one witness.
New King James Version	Whoever is deserving of death shall be put to death on the testimony of two or three witnesses; he shall not be put to death on the testimony of one witness.
Third Millennium Bible	At the mouth of two witnesses or three witnesses shall he that is worthy of death be put to death, but at the mouth of one witness he shall not be put to death.
Webster's Bible Translation	At the mouth of two witnesses, or three witnesses, shall he that is worthy of death be put to death; but at the mouth of one witness he shall not be put to death.
Young's Updated LT	On the evidence of two witnesses or of three witnesses the one who is to die shall be put to death; a person shall not be put to death on the evidence of one witness.

The gist of this passage: The death penalty cannot be applied if there is but one witness.

Deuteronomy 17:6a

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
ʿal (עַל) [pronounced <i>gahʿl</i>]	<i>upon, beyond, on, against, above, over, by, beside</i>	preposition of relative proximity	Strong's #5921 BDB #752
peh (פֶּה) [pronounced <i>peh</i>]	<i>mouth [of man, animal; as an organ of speech]; opening, orifice [of a river, well, etc.]; edge; extremity, end</i>	masculine singular construct	Strong's #6310 BDB #804
This combination of words literally means <i>upon the mouth of, on the mouth of</i> . These words are translated: <i>at the bidding of, at the commandment of, according to the word of, according to the mouth of, according to the command of; upon the testimony of; on the basis of; as had said</i> .			
sh ^e nayîm (שְׁנַיִם) [pronounced <i>sh^en-AH-yim</i>]	<i>two, a pair; a second [time]; again; a repetition, a repeating; cognate of a verb which means to repeat</i>	dual numeral substantive	Strong's #8147 BDB #1040

Deuteronomy 17:6a

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
ʿêd (עֵד) [pronounced <i>gayde</i>]	<i>witness, testimony, solemn testimony, evidence; a statement of truth, something which stands as a testimony or memorial to a fact (e.g., Gen. 31:48 Deut. 31:19)</i>	masculine plural noun	Strong's #5707 BDB #729
ʾôw (אוּ) [pronounced <i>oh</i>]	<i>or, or rather, otherwise, also, and; if, perchance; except, or else; whether, not the least</i>	disjunctive conjunction	Strong's #176 BDB #14
sh ^l ôwshâh (שְׁלוֹשָׁה) [pronounced <i>shiloh-SHAW</i>]	<i>a three, a trio, a triad, a threesome</i>	feminine numeral construct	Strong's #7969 BDB #1025
ʿêd (עֵד) [pronounced <i>gayde</i>]	<i>witness, testimony, solemn testimony, evidence; a statement of truth, something which stands as a testimony or memorial to a fact (e.g., Gen. 31:48 Deut. 31:19)</i>	masculine plural noun	Strong's #5707 BDB #729
mûwth (מוּת) [pronounced <i>mooth</i>]	<i>to be executed, to be killed, to be assassinated</i>	3 rd person masculine singular, Hophal perfect	Strong's #4191 BDB #559
mûwth (מוּת) [pronounced <i>mooth</i>]	<i>dying, perishing; one who is dying [perishing]</i>	masculine singular, Qal active participle with the definite article	Strong's #4191 BDB #559

The Pulpit Commentary: *Worthy of death be put to death; i.e. adjudged or appointed to death; literally, the dead man shall die.* מוּת, the part. of מוּת, to die, is here equivalent to בֶּן מוּת, son of death (1Sam. 20:31), or אִישׁ מוּת, a man of death (1Kings 2:26), i.e. one assigned to death, already the property of death, and so as good as dead.⁴⁸

Translation: The criminal [lit., the dying one] will be put to death on the basis of two or three witnesses;... Moses emphasizes that you can only put people to death on the basis of 2 or 3 witnesses, which confirms what we have read back in Num. 35:30.

Deut. 17:6 Criminals are to be executed on the basis of two or three witnesses; you will not execute someone based upon the testimony of one person.

According to 2 or 3 witnesses (Commentators on Deuteronomy 17:6)

Clarke: *One might be deceived, or be prejudiced or malicious; therefore God required two substantial witnesses for the support of the charge.*⁴⁹

⁴⁸ The Pulpit Commentary; 1880-1919; by Joseph S. Exell, Henry Donald Maurice Spence-Jones, from e-sword, Deut. 17:6-7.

⁴⁹ Adam Clarke, *Adam Clarke's Commentary on the Bible*; from e-Sword, Deut. 17:6.

According to 2 or 3 witnesses (Commentators on Deuteronomy 17:6)

David Guzik: *There was never to be capital punishment unless there was evidence from at least two independent, unimpeachable sources.*⁵⁰

Matthew Henry: *How [ever] heinous and dangerous soever the crime is, yet they must not punish any for it, unless there were good proof against them, by two witnesses at least. They must not, under pretence of honouring God, wrong an innocent man.*⁵¹

Matthew Poole: *[T]o wit, credible and competent witnesses. The Jews rejected the testimonies of madmen, children, women, servants, familiar friends, or enemies, persons of dissolute lives and evil fame.*⁵²

Ron Daniel: *Knowing how fallible man is, one witness was not sufficient to put someone to death. It is always possible that one witness is mistaken, has a grudge, or is being partial. It greatly increases the odds of accuracy when you hear from two or three witnesses.*⁵³

See also Num. 35:30 Deut. 19:15 Matt. 18:16 2Cor. 13:1 1Tim. 5:19 Heb. 10:28.

[Chapter Outline](#)

[Charts, Graphics and Short Doctrines](#)

In Deut. 19:15–21, the quality of the witness would be an issue. That is, one needed to take into account whether a particular witness had an ax to grind (see also 1Kings 21:10, 13). In our modern court system, we hear from a witness, and both sides are able to question the witness, to determine if he appears to have a bias and to determine just how credible he is.

Deuteronomy 17:6b

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
lô' (לא or לוּל) [pronounced low]	<i>not, no</i>	negates the word or action that follows; the absolute negation	Strong's #3808 BDB #518
mûwth (תּוּמ) [pronounced mooth]	<i>to be executed, to be killed, to be assassinated</i>	3 rd person masculine singular, Hophal imperfect	Strong's #4191 BDB #559
'al (עַל) [pronounced gah]	<i>upon, beyond, on, against, above, over, by, beside</i>	preposition of relative proximity	Strong's #5921 BDB #752
peh (פֶּה) [pronounced peh]	<i>mouth [of man, animal; as an organ of speech]; opening, orifice [of a river, well, etc.]; edge; extremity, end</i>	masculine singular construct	Strong's #6310 BDB #804

This combination of words literally means *upon the mouth of, on the mouth of*. These words are translated: *at the bidding of, at the commandment of, according to the word of, according to the mouth of, according to the command of; upon the testimony of; on the basis of; as had said*.

⁵⁰ David Guzik's *Commentary on the Old Testament*; courtesy of e-sword; ©2006; Deut. 17:6–7.

⁵¹ Matthew Henry, *Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible*; from e-Sword, Deut. 17:1–7.

⁵² Matthew Poole, *English Annotations on the Holy Bible*; ©1685; from e-Sword, Deut. 17:6.

⁵³ From <http://rondaniel.com/library/05-Deuteronomy/Deuteronomy1618.php> accessed May 10, 2016.

Deuteronomy 17:6b

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
ʿêd (עֵד) [pronounced <i>gayde</i>]	<i>witness, testimony, solemn testimony, evidence; a statement of truth, something which stands as a testimony or memorial to a fact</i> (e.g., Gen. 31:48 Deut. 31:19)	masculine singular noun	Strong's #5707 BDB #729
ʿechâd (אֶחָד) [pronounced <i>eh-KHAWD</i>]	<i>one, first, certain, only; each, every; but it can also mean a composite unity; possibly particular; anyone; same</i>	numeral adjective	Strong's #259 BDB #25

Translation: ...he will not be executed on the basis of one witness. You cannot execute someone based upon the testimony of one witness. Although the context of this statement is the idolater of the previous verses, this is a general principle which is true, regardless of the charge.

At this point, Moses begins to discuss more general judicial procedures. Vv. 2–5 dealt specifically with the crime of idolatry; however, although this is still in the context of the punishment of the crime of idolatry, the requirement of two or three witnesses, as found in this verse, is a general requirement for all criminal cases. The verses to follow will also have more general application.

By the mouth could be rendered more accurately as *upon the mouth*; it means, *upon the testimony* or *based upon the testimony*. It is essential to a just system to require corroborating evidence. “If anyone kills a person, the murdered will be put to death at the mouth of witness; but no person will be put to death on the testimony of one witness.” (Num. 35:30; see also Deut. 19:15). This does not mean that when a murder takes place, if only one person witnesses the murder, the killer goes free. *Witness* does not mean that they are necessarily eyewitnesses to the actual crime, although that is, of course, the best of all worlds. If, for instance, stealing was the motivation, a witness that the defendant was selling the victim’s property would be a witness against the defendant.

Almost all of you have enemies and there may even be some who would lie in order to see you executed (or harmed in some way). However, such a false charge would be difficult to corroborate independently. Important details would be obscure or contradictory. A good newspaper person looks to have independent corroboration for a story to avoid printing that which is false. A criminal trial looks to have the evidence stack up incontrovertibly against the defendant in order to convict him; without this, without a preponderance of evidence crying out that the defendant is guilty, he is proclaimed innocent. The best part of our justice system has its origins in God’s Word.

This particular verse has a world of applications, one of which is found in Matt. 18:16. Here, a fellow believer has sinned and you confront him with it. This does not mean that you follow believers around looking for them to screw up, but this is a pretty obvious sin. If he does not believe you, you bring the witness of two or three others; then the witness of the local church. If he persists in whatever sin this is, then he is to be ostracized. Our Lord applied this same verse in another way, claiming that He bore witness of Himself and His Father, God the Father, bore witness of Him as well—confirming that he is the Son of God, the light of the world (John 8:17). Again, it is not your business to follow other Christians around, catch them in a sin, and then band a group together to follow them around.

Let me give a concrete example. In any church over 100 people, there are going to be males with some attraction to other males. Maybe they have given into this lust or not; we don’t know. However, as long as this is not apparent, it is not up to us to follow members of a congregation around to determine what their lusts and failures

are. On the other hand, if such a person brings his boyfriend to church and they hold hands or demonstrate personal affection in some other overt way, they would be warned, and then removed from the church if they do not heed the warning (or, if while being warned, they become argumentative).

Similarly, a prostitute may attend your church. As long as you do not know that she is a prostitute, there is no problem. Furthermore, it is not up to you to follow her around if you suspect what she is. But, if she plies her trade in the parking lot, then, by the witness of 2 or 3, she might be purged from the church.

A person might look to find marks in a church to work; to steal money from—perhaps they offer up some phoney, can't fail, business scheme. It's one thing if they do that on their own—it's not right, but it is not up to you to follow them around and figure out what they are doing (unless, of course, you're a cop). But, if they begin to fleece people in the congregation, and lure them into various monetary schemes, that would be a call to dis-fellowship such a one (and, if they are involved in illegal activity, they might be turned over to the law).

Every person in a church has a sin nature and has sinned and continues to sin. If we eliminated all sinners from a church, then no one would be there. On the other hand, where there are clear mandates from Scripture, a church should not tolerate those who blatantly, before 2 or more witnesses, commit overt sins; they might be purged from the church.

Paul also applied this verse to his several visits to the Corinthians, claiming that his three visits—two prior and one to come—were equivalent to the testimony of two or three witnesses (2Cor. 13:1). This indicates that we can get a lot of mileage out of this verse. That is, there are several applications (1Tim. 5:19 Heb. 10:28).

For instance, when it comes to Bible verses and certain doctrines, the major doctrines can be confirmed in a dozen to several dozen passages. However, when it comes down to the nitty gritty, then any doctrine of secondary importance should be confirmed with two or three other passages. If this cannot be so confirmed, then I would not personally put a lot of weight in it. A passage which comes to mind immediately is: **There remains a Sabbath for the people of God** (Heb. 4:9). I recall one leader of a cult quoting that passage, reading it with great vigor and imploring his listeners to read it for themselves in their own Bibles. His point was that we should be keeping the Sabbath today as the Jews kept it two thousand years ago. Whereas, he was right that the Sabbath is Saturday and not Sunday—he was completely off-base with his application. Not only do we not have a supporting passage in the New Testament epistles, but a careful reading of the context reveals that this does not mean what it is taken to mean by the superficial. By itself, Heb. 4:9 seems to mean one thing; but in context, it means something entirely different.

This particular verse and its multifarious applications helps us understand the reason for Deuteronomy. There is a fair amount of repetition found in Deuteronomy, as we have noticed. However, this helps us to (1) recognize the importance of repetition in teaching and, (2) this allows certain doctrines of the Law to find their confirmation by a second and third witness.

Application: Personally, I have to deal with applications for rent houses. I do not simply take all of the information provided on their applications as gospel; I confirm this information through other sources (for instance, I might confirm the names of the applicants with their driver's licenses; I might check the tax records to confirm the name of their previous landlords; etc.). The preponderance of evidence must agree with their application in order to be considered. The witness of the applicant is not enough; but if I find another witness that corroborates the claims of the applicant, then I am more inclined to believe them.

J. Vernon McGee: Notice how carefully God protects the innocent. A man couldn't rush to the authorities because he didn't like one of his neighbors and accuse his neighbor of worshiping the sun god or Ashtaroth, the Babylonian god, or Baal or Aphrodite or any of the false gods. There had to be two or more witnesses to condemn a man. In our society, one witness could send a man to the gas

*chamber or the electric chair. I personally think this should not be permitted. God always required two or more witnesses. God is very fair in His dealings.*⁵⁴

The death penalty was applied much more liberally in the Scriptures than it is in our society. A man can murder another man and not be executed in today's society. In fact, in some states, a person can do nearly anything, and, even if his guilt is not in question, he will not be executed. The Bible is a bit more severe in the Mosaic economy.

The Death Penalty in the Mosaic Economy (The Apologetics Press)

Crimes Against Fellow Man

1. Under the law of Moses, the death penalty was required in cases of premeditated murder (Exodus 21:12-14,22-23; Leviticus 24:17, 21; Numbers 35:16-21). This regulation even included the situation in which two men might be fighting and, in the process, cause the death of an innocent bystander or her unborn infant. It did not include accidental homicide, which we call "manslaughter."
2. Kidnapping was a capital crime under the Old Testament (Exodus 21:16; Deuteronomy 24:7). One movie, which was based on an actual incident, depicted the kidnapping of a seven-year-old boy as he was walking home from school. The man who stole him kept him for some seven years, putting the child through emotional and sexual abuse, before the boy, at age fifteen, was finally returned to his parents. He was a different child, and never again would be the same. God would not tolerate such a thing in the Old Testament, and much of the same would be stopped in America if such crimes were taken more seriously.
3. A person could be put to death for striking or cursing his parents (Exodus 21:15,17; Leviticus 20:9). Jesus alluded to this point in Matthew 15:4 and Mark 7:10.
4. Incurable rebelliousness was punishable by death (Deuteronomy 17:12). For example, a stubborn, disobedient, rebellious son who would not submit to parents or civil authorities was to be stoned to death (Deuteronomy 21:18-21).

Death Penalty for Spiritual Crimes/Crimes Against God

5. Sacrificing to false gods was a capital crime in the Old Testament (Exodus 22:20).
6. Violating the Sabbath brought the death penalty (Exodus 35:2; Numbers 15:32-36).
7. Blasphemy, or cursing God, warranted the death penalty (Leviticus 24:10-16,23).
8. The false prophet, specifically one who tried to entice the people to idolatry, was to be executed (Deuteronomy 13:1-11), as were the people who were so influenced (Deuteronomy 13:12-18). Also Deuteronomy 18:20.
9. Human sacrifice was a capital crime (Leviticus 20:2). The Israelites were tempted to offer their children to false pagan deities, like Molech. But such was despicable to God.
10. Divination, or the dabbling in the magical arts, was a capital crime. Consequently, under Mosaic law, witches, sorcerers, wizards, mediums, charmers, soothsayers, diviners, spiritists, and enchanters were to be put to death (Exodus 22:18; Leviticus 19:26,31; 20:27; Deuteronomy 18:9-14 1Samuel 28:9).
- 11.

Crimes of a Sexual Nature:

12. Adultery was punishable by death under the Old Testament (Leviticus 20:10-21; Deuteronomy 22:22). Can you imagine what would happen in our own country if adultery brought the death penalty? Most of Hollywood would be wiped out, as well as a sizeable portion of the rest of our population!
13. Bestiality, i.e., having sexual relations with an animal, was punishable by death (Exodus 22:19; Leviticus 20:17).
14. Incest was a capital offense in the Old Testament (Leviticus 18:6-17; 20:11-12,14,17,19-21).
15. Homosexuality was a capital crime (Leviticus 18:22; 20:13).
16. Premarital sex brought the death penalty (Leviticus 21:9; Deuteronomy 13:5 22:20-21).
17. Rape of an engaged or married woman was a capital crime in the Old Testament (Deuteronomy 22:25-27). Again, imagine what would happen in this country if rape brought the death penalty! Much of the unconscionable treatment of women now taking place would be terminated.

⁵⁴ From http://archive.org/stream/05_Deuteronomy/05-DEUTERONOMY_djvu.txt (Chapter 17); accessed May 10, 2016.

The Death Penalty in the Mosaic Economy (The Apologetics Press)

18. Prostitution by a priest's daughter (Leviticus 21:9).
19. False claim of a woman's virginity at time of marriage (Deuteronomy 22:13-21)

Legal Process Crimes:

20. A judge who disobeys the ruling of a higher court would be put to death. Deut. 17:8–13
21. Perjury in capital cases (Deuteronomy 19:16-19)

Various other crimes:

22. Failure to confine a dangerous animal, resulting in death (Exodus 21:28-29)

Death Penalty in the Old Testament (a graphic); from [Slide Share](#); accessed May 13, 2016.

In Deut. 17, the death penalty is given to the idolater—even a female idolater—and later, to a judge who rejects the authority of the court which is over him.

The list to the right is not a complete list of all the crimes which result in the death penalty; however, it a reasonably good list of most of them.

The Death Penalty in the Old Testament

1. Murder (Ex. 21:12)
2. Contemptuous act against a judge (Deut. 17:12)
3. Causing a miscarriage (Ex. 21:22-25)
4. Lying in a capital crime (Deut. 19:16-19)
5. Negligence in animal that kills people (Ex. 21:19)
6. Idolatry (Ex. 22:20)
7. Blasphemy (Lev. 24:15-16)
8. Witchcraft/sorcery (Ex. 22:18)
9. False prophet (Deut. 18:20)
10. Sabbath breaking (Ex. 31:14)
11. Homosexuality (Lev. 20:13)
12. Bestiality (Lev. 20:15-16)
13. Adultery (Lev. 20:10)
14. Rape (Deut. 22:25)
15. Apostasy (Lev. 20:2)
16. Incest (Lev. 20:11)
17. Cursing parents (Deut. 5:16)
18. Kid's rebellion (Ex. 21:15, 17)
19. Kidnapping (Ex. 21:16)
20. Drunkenness (Lev. 10:8-9)
21. Touching temple's holy furnishings (Num. 4:15)



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[Chapter Outline](#)

[Charts, Graphics and Short Doctrines](#)

The Death Penalty in the New Testament (from Gotquestions.org)

From *Got Questions?* 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

The Death Penalty in the New Testament (from Gotquestions.org)

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.

It should be noted that the woman caught in adultery is a disputed passage.

There are others. I found many in Wikipedia and on another website, but the way that the crimes were described indicated a definite bias towards the criminal in question.

Bear in mind that when Paul writes, **An officer does not bear his sword in vain**; he is speaking of an executioner.

Sources:

From <https://apologeticspress.org/apcontent.aspx?category=7&article=683> accessed April 22, 2016.

From http://www.christianbiblereference.org/faq_CapitalPunishment.htm accessed April 22, 2016.

From <http://www.gotquestions.org/death-penalty.html> accessed April 22, 2016.

[Chapter Outline](#)

[Charts, Graphics and Short Doctrines](#)

This is an example of just how far gone some judges are today.

How some judges are confused about the death penalty and the Bible (Ron Daniel)

Just south of us, down in Brighton, Colorado, this was proven this May. A man named Robert Harlan forced a woman off the road, murdered her, and then shot and paralyzed a woman who came to her aid. He was found guilty, and the jury gave him the death penalty. Unfortunately, in deciding this, it was reported that the consulted a Bible passage in Leviticus:

Lev. 24:20-21 **fracture for fracture, eye for eye, tooth for tooth; just as he has injured a man, so it shall be inflicted on him. Thus the one who kills an animal shall make it good, but the one who kills a man shall be put to death.**

When Judge John J. Vigil discovered this, he threw out the death sentence, saying that using the Bible meant that the death penalty was imposed in an unconstitutional manner. He said, "Jury resort to biblical code has no place in a constitutional death penalty proceeding."

Not Listening To The Priest

Interestingly, the Law says that to be so presumptuous as to not listen to the priest meant the death penalty for that judge as well. Judge John J. Vigil will one day stand before the Judge of the Universe and have to answer for his presumption.

From <http://rondaniel.com/library/05-Deuteronomy/Deuteronomy1618.php> accessed May 10, 2016.

[Chapter Outline](#)

[Charts, Graphics and Short Doctrines](#)

A hand of the witnesses will be against him in the first to put him to death; and a hand of all the people in the afterward and you have purged the evil from your midst.

Deuteronomy
17:7

The hand of the witnesses will be against him; [they will be] the first to put him to death; and the hand of all the people [will be against the criminal] afterward. [By this,] you have purged [this] evil from your midst.

The ones who cast the first stones will be the witnesses against the idolater. Then the rest of the people will join in on the execution afterward. By doing this, you will be purging evil from your midst.

Here is how others have translated this verse:

Ancient texts:

Masoretic Text (Hebrew)	A hand of the witnesses will be against him in the first to put him to death; and a hand of all the people in the afterward and you have purged the evil from your midst.
Targum of Onkelos	The bands of the witnesses shall be first upon him to kill him, and afterward the hands of all (any of) the people; and so shall you bring down the evil <u>doer</u> among you.
Revised Douay-Rheims	The hands of the witnesses shall be first upon him to kill him, and afterwards the hands of the rest of the people: that you may take away the evil out of the midst of you.
Peshitta (Syriac)	And the hand of the witnesses shall be the first against him to put him to death, and afterward the hands of all the people. So you shall destroy the evil <u>doers</u> from among you.
Septuagint (Greek)	And the hand of the witnesses shall be upon him among the first to put him to death, and the hand of the people at the last; so shall you remove the evil <u>one</u> from among yourselves.
Significant differences:	The targum, the Syriac and the Greek all add <i>doer(s)</i> to the end of <i>evil</i> .

Limited Vocabulary Translations:

Easy English	These people must throw the first stones at the bad person. Then everyone else must throw stones. You must completely remove this very bad thing from among you.
Easy-to-Read Version–2001	The witnesses must throw the first stones to kill that person. Then the other people should throw stones to finish killing him. In this way, you will remove that evil from your group.
Easy-to-Read Version–2008	The witnesses must throw the first stones to kill that person. Then the other people should throw stones to finish killing that person. In this way you will remove this evil from your group.
God's Word™	The witnesses must start the execution, then all the other people will join them in putting the person to death. You must get rid of this evil.
Good News Bible (TEV)	The witnesses are to throw the first stones, and then the rest of the people are to stone them; in this way you will get rid of this evil.
The Message	The witnesses must throw the first stones in the execution, then the rest of the community joins in. You have to purge the evil from your community.
NIRV	The witnesses must throw the first stones. Then the rest of the people must also throw stones. Get rid of that evil person.

Thought-for-thought translations; paraphrases:

Common English Bible	In the execution, the hands of the witnesses must be against the guilty person from the start; the hand of all the people will be involved at the end. Remove such evil from your community!
New Berkeley Version	The hand of the witnesses shall cast the first stone, and after them the hands of all the people. So you shall root out the evil from among you.
New Century Version	The witnesses must be the first to throw stones at the person, and then everyone else will follow. You must get rid of the evil among you.
New Living Translation	The witnesses must throw the first stones, and then all the people may join in. In this way, you will purge the evil from among you.

Partially literal and partially paraphrased translations:

American English Bible	And then those who testify against him must be the first to put him/her to death... they must [throw their rocks] in front of the rest, and you must remove the evil person from among yourselves.
International Standard V	Let the witnesses [Lit. <i>the hands of the witnesses</i>] be the first to begin executing them, then the rest of [Lit. <i>the hand of all</i>] the people shall follow. By doing this you will purge evil from among you.”.
New Advent (Knox) Bible	First the witnesses, then the rest of the people must put a hand to the deed, and so thou wilt rid thyself of the plague that infects thy company.
Translation for Translators	The witnesses/ones who saw them doing it must be the first ones to throw stones at them. Then the other people [MTY] <i>should throw stones at them</i> . By doing that, you will get rid of this evil practice from among you.”.

Mostly literal renderings (with some occasional paraphrasing):

Ferrar-Fenton Bible	The hands of the witnesses shall be first upon them, to kill them ; — then the hands of all the People afterwards. You shall thus burn that wickedness from among you.
Lexham English Bible	The hand of the witnesses shall be first against the person to kill the person, and afterward the hands of all the people, and so you shall purge the evil from your midst.
NIV – UK	The hands of the witnesses must be the first in putting that person to death, and then the hands of all the people. You must purge the evil from among you.

Catholic Bibles (those having the imprimatur):

Christian Community (1988)	The hands of the witnesses shall throw the first stones to kill the accused. Afterwards all the people shall stone him. In this way, you will make the evil disappear from your midst.
The Heritage Bible	The hands of the witnesses shall be first on him to put him to death, and all the hands of all the people afterward. And you shall consume evil from your midst.
New American Bible (2002)	At the execution, the witnesses are to be the first to raise their hands against him; afterward all the people are to join in. Thus shall you purge the evil from your midst.
New American Bible (2011)	The hands of the witnesses shall be the first raised to put the person to death, and afterward the hands of all the people. Thus shall you purge the evil from your midst. Dt 13:6, 10.
New Jerusalem Bible	The witnesses' hands must strike the first blow in putting the condemned to death, the rest of the people following. You must banish this evil from among you.
New RSV	The hands of the witnesses shall be the first raised against the person to execute the death penalty, and afterwards the hands of all the people. So you shall purge the evil from your midst.
Revised English Bible	The first stones are to be thrown by the witnesses and then all the people must follow; so you will get rid of the wickedness in your midst.

Jewish/Hebrew Names Bibles:

Complete Jewish Bible	The witnesses are to be the first to stone him to death; afterwards, all the people are to stone him. Thus you will put an end to this wickedness among you.
exeGeses companion Bible	The hands of the witnesses shall be first upon him to put him to death deathify him , and afterward the hands of all the people. So thou shalt put burn the evil away from among you.
JPS (Tanakh—1985)	Let the hands of the witnesses be the first against him to put him to death, and the hands of the rest of the people thereafter. Thus you will sweep out evil from your midst.
Kaplan Translation	The hand of the witness shall be against him first to put him to death, and only then shall the hand of all the other people [be set against him]. You shall thus rid yourselves of evil.
Orthodox Jewish Bible	The hands of the edim shall be first upon him to put him to death, and afterward the hands of kol haAm. So thou shalt put harah (the evil) away from among you.

Expanded/Embellished Bibles:

The Expanded Bible	The hands of the witnesses must be the first to ·throw stones at [stone] the person, and then everyone else will follow. You must get rid of the evil among you.
Kretzmann's Commentary	The hands of the witnesses shall be first upon him to put him to death, Deut. 13:9, in order thus openly to manifest their firm conviction of the guilt of the accused, and afterward the hands of all the people, for the transgression was one affecting the entire nation. So thou shalt put the evil away from among you, Deut. 13:5. The same holy zeal should be found in every Christian congregation in putting flagrant sinners out of their midst.
NET Bible®	The witnesses [<i>Heb</i> “the hand of the witnesses.” This means the two or three witnesses are to throw the first stones (cf. NCV, TEV, CEV, NLT).] must be first to begin the execution, and then all the people [<i>Heb</i> “the hand of all the people.”] are to join in afterward. In this way you will purge evil from among you.
The Voice	The witnesses must throw the first deadly stones, and then everyone else must join in. Expel the wicked from your own community.

Literal, almost word-for-word, renderings:

Concordant Literal Version	The hands of the witnesses shall come to be the first against him to put him to death and then the hands of all the people afterward. Thus you will eradicate the evil from among you.
English Standard Version	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.
Green's Literal Translation	The hand of the witnesses shall be first on him, to put him to death; and the hand of all the people last. And you shall put away the evil from among you.
World English Bible	The hand of the witnesses shall be first on him to put him to death, and afterward the hand of all the people. So you shall remove the evil from among you.
Young's Updated LT	The hand of the witnesses is on him, in the first place, to put him to death, and the hand of all the people last; and you have put away the evil thing out of your midst.

The gist of this passage: Those who were witnesses against the idolater are to throw the first stones; then the rest of the people join in. This removes that evil from their midst.

Deuteronomy 17:7a			
Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
yâd (יָד) [pronounced yawd]	<i>hand; figuratively for strength, power, control</i>	feminine singular construct	Strong's #3027 BDB #388
'êd (עֵד) [pronounced gayde]	<i>witness, testimony, solemn testimony, evidence; a statement of truth, something which stands as a testimony or memorial to a fact (e.g., Gen. 31:48 Deut. 31:19)</i>	masculine plural noun with the definite article	Strong's #5707 BDB #729
hâyâh (הָיָה) [pronounced haw-YAW]	<i>to be, is, was, are; to become, to come into being; to come to pass</i>	3 rd person feminine singular, Qal imperfect	Strong's #1961 BDB #224
b ^e (ב) [pronounced b ^{eh}]	<i>in, into, through; at, by, near, on, upon; with, before, against; by means of; among; within</i>	a preposition of proximity with the 3 rd person masculine singular suffix	No Strong's # BDB #88

Translation: *The hand of the witnesses will be against him;...* This means that those who testified against the idolater will be the first to cast stones against them. Recall that there had to be 2 or 3 witnesses whose testimony needed to agree; and then they would be the first to cast stones against the guilty person. Quite obviously, even if people dislike you, it would be quite unlikely to find 2 or 3 of them willing to testify falsely against you and then throw the first stones to kill you.

Deuteronomy 17:7b			
Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
b ^e (ב) [pronounced b ^{eh}]	<i>in, into, through; at, by, near, on, upon; with, before, against; by means of; among; within</i>	a preposition of proximity	No Strong's # BDB #88
rîshônâh (רִשׁוֹנָה) [pronounced ree-show-NAW]	<i>first [in time, in degree, chief, former [in time], ancestors, former things; foremost; beginning</i>	feminine singular adjective with the definite article	Strong's #7223 BDB #911
With the bêyth preposition, rîshônâh means <i>first, in front, in the first rank; before, formerly, previously, aforetime.</i>			
lâmed (ל) [pronounced l ^e]	<i>to, for, towards, in regards to, with reference to, as to, with regards to; belonging to; by</i>	directional/relational preposition	No Strong's # BDB #510
mûwth (מוֹת) [pronounced mooth]	<i>to kill, to cause to die, to put to death, to execute</i>	Hiphil infinitive construct with the 3 rd person masculine singular suffix	Strong's #4191 BDB #559

Translation: *...[they will be] the first to put him to death;...* These are the ones who cast the first stones. This is a further protection for the criminal. Moses does not want some witnesses to give testimony that may not be true.

They must participate in the execution. Now, your friend might convince you to bear false witness against another person; but this would be much more difficult, if you know that you will begin the execution process. What is clear to most people is, lying and then throwing the first stones against an innocent person—that is murder.

Ron Daniel: *Someone who has no problem repeating a lie when there are no consequences would have to think twice when they were called on the carpet to deal the death blow.*⁵⁵

Deut. 17:6–7 Criminals are to be executed on the basis of two or three witnesses; you will not execute someone based upon the testimony of one person. The ones who cast the first stones will be the witnesses against the idolater. Then the rest of the people will join in on the execution afterward. By doing this, you will be purging evil from your midst.

He who casts the first stone (commentators on Deuteronomy 17:7)

Matthew Henry: *The place of execution must be the gate of the city, that the shame might be the greater to the criminal and the warning the more public to all others. The hands of the witnesses, in this as in other cases, must be first upon him, that is, they must cast the first stone at him, thereby avowing their testimony, and solemnly imprecating the guilt of his blood upon themselves if their evidence were false. This custom might be of use to deter men from false-witness bearing. The witnesses are really, and therefore it was required that they should be actually, the death of the malefactor.*⁵⁶

Jamieson, Fausset and Brown: *Every reported case, even a flying rumor of the perpetration of so heinous an offense, was to be judicially examined; and if proved by the testimony of competent witnesses, the offender was to be taken without the gates and stoned to death, the witnesses casting the first stone at him. The object of this special arrangement was partly to deter the witnesses from making a rash accusation by the prominent part they had to act as executioners, and partly to give a public assurance that the crime had met its due punishment.*⁵⁷

Calvin: *He assigned this part to the witnesses, chiefly because there are so many whose tongue is so slippery, not to say good for nothing, that they would boldly strangle a man with their words, when they would not dare to touch him with one of their fingers. It was the best remedy, therefore, that could be tried for restraining such levity, to refuse to admit the testimony of any man who was not ready to execute judgment with his own hand.*⁵⁸

Peter Pett: *There must be at least two or three witnesses. Then the hand of the witnesses were to throw the first stones, something which if they had spoken truly they would not hesitate to do, after which all the people were to take part. As all would have been affected by it so must all be involved in the punishment. So care was taken against false accusations, and against mob rule. But the finally important thing was that the evil would be put away from among them.*⁵⁹

The Pulpit Commentary: *[T]he hand of the witnesses was to be first against him to put him to death—a rule which would tend to prevent accusations being lightly adduced, as none would venture to witness against any one unless so deeply convinced of his guilt that they were willing to assume the responsibility of inflicting on him the last penalty with their own hands.*⁶⁰

Payne: *The evidence must be adequate and credible; and anyone ready to make a serious accusation must be prepared to be executioner as well as witness.*⁶¹

⁵⁵ From <http://rondaniel.com/library/05-Deuteronomy/Deuteronomy1618.php> accessed May 10, 2016.

⁵⁶ Matthew Henry, *Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible*; from e-Sword, Deut. 17:1–7.

⁵⁷ Robert Jamieson, A. R. Fausset and David Brown; *Commentary Critical and Explanatory on the Whole Bible*; 1871; from e-sword, Deut. 17:2–7.

⁵⁸ Keil and Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament*; from e-Sword; Deut. 17:2–7.

⁵⁹ Dr. Peter Pett; *Commentary Series on the Bible*; from e-sword, Deut. 17:6–7.

⁶⁰ *The Pulpit Commentary*; 1880-1919; by Joseph S. Exell, Henry Donald Maurice Spence-Jones, from e-sword, Deut. 17:6–7.

⁶¹ Dr. John Constable *The Expository Notes of Dr. Constable*; ©2012; from e-sword, Deut. 17:1–7.

People can lie in court, and separate themselves from the actual execution. People can execute a criminal, assuming that everything was properly done in court. However, if the witness against the suspect is also the person who throws the first stone, he knows that he is a murderer himself if he testimony was false in the first place.

Justice was of the utmost importance to God; and therefore, a system was put into place where there would be the least chance for a miscarriage of justice.

[Chapter Outline](#)

[Charts, Graphics and Short Doctrines](#)

Deuteronomy 17:7c

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
w ^e (or v ^e) (וּ, or ו) [pronounced <i>weh</i>]	<i>and, even, then; namely; when; since, that; though; as well as</i>	simple wâw conjunction	No Strong's # BDB #251
yâd (יָד) [pronounced <i>yawd</i>]	<i>hand; figuratively for strength, power, control</i>	feminine singular construct	Strong's #3027 BDB #388
kôl (כֹּל) [pronounced <i>kohl</i>]	<i>the whole, all of, the entirety of, all; can also be rendered any of</i>	masculine singular construct followed by a definite article	Strong's #3605 BDB #481
‘am (עַם) [pronounced <i>gahm</i>]	<i>people; race, tribe; family, relatives; citizens, common people; companions, servants; entire human race; herd [of animals]</i>	masculine singular collective noun with the definite article	Strong's #5971 BDB #766
b ^e (ב) [pronounced <i>b^{eh}</i>]	<i>in, into, through; at, by, near, on, upon; with, before, against; by means of; among; within</i>	a preposition of proximity	No Strong's # BDB #88
’achărôwn (אַחֲרָיוֹן) [pronounced <i>ah-kha-ROHN</i>]	<i>coming after, behind, later, following, last; end</i>	feminine singular adjective (or substantive) with the definite article	Strong's #314 BDB #30

This is translated variously as: *afterward* (Owens);

Translation: ...and the hand of all the people [will be against the criminal] afterward. After the witnesses begin stoning the idolater, Then the rest of the people will join in with them.

This would also have the effect of, if someone has exculpatory evidence, it would be very difficult for them to stone this person, as that would be murder.

R. M. Edgar: *Directions are given for the solemn execution. The witnesses, of whom there must be a plurality at least, are first to lay their hands upon the head of the idolater, then the whole people, doubtless through their representative elders, showing their acquiescence in the severe sentence; and then he is to be stoned to death.*⁶²

⁶² *The Pulpit Commentary*; 1880-1919; by Joseph S. Exell, Henry Donald Maurice Spence-Jones, from e-sword, 17:1-7.

L. M. Grant: [T]he witness [testifying against the accused] would be required to be first in putting the offender to death... This would make people slow to witness if they were not persuaded fully of the guilt of the accused.⁶³

Deuteronomy 17:7d			
Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
w ^e (or v ^e) (וּ, or ו) [pronounced <i>weh</i>]	<i>and, even, then; namely; when; since, that; though; as well as</i>	simple wâw conjunction	No Strong's # BDB #251
bâ'ar (רָעַב) [pronounced <i>baw-GAHR</i>]	<i>to burn; to completely consume; to de-pasture; to take away, to [utterly] remove, to purge; to devour, to devastate</i>	2 nd person masculine singular, Piel perfect	Strong's #1197 BDB #128
ra' (עָרָ) [pronounced <i>rahg'</i>]	<i>evil, bad, wicked; evil in appearance, deformed; misery, distress, injury; that which is displeasing [disagreeable, unhappy, unfortunate, sad]</i>	masculine singular adjective/noun; with the definite article	Strong's #7451 BDB #948
min (מִן) [pronounced <i>min</i>]	<i>from, off, out from, of, out of, away from, on account of, since, than, more than</i>	preposition of separation	Strong's #4480 BDB #577
qereb (בְּרֵקָ) [pronounced <i>KEH-re^bv</i>]	<i>midst, among, from among [a group of people]; an [actual, physical] inward part; the inner person with respect to thinking and emotion; as a faculty of thinking or emotion; heart, mind, inner being; entrails [of sacrificial animals]</i>	masculine singular noun with the 2 nd person masculine singular suffix	Strong's #7130 BDB #899

This appears to mean, *from among you, from your midst*.

Translation: [By this,] you have purged [this] evil from your midst. By following this lawful process, evil is removed from the Land of Promise.

Many translations spoke of purging the *evil one* or *evil person* from Israel's midst. The true evil here is idolatry; and it is idolatry that Moses wants removed. There are many forms of evil, and God gave the death penalty to remove people and their evil sins from society.

Not only do those who witness against the idolater have to have corroborating testimony, but they must be the ones who begin the execution process—this is after a fair trial the rendering of an impartial verdict. In a capital murder trial, the witnesses against the defendant must be so convinced of what they have seen that they will execute the criminal themselves. A witness who came forward in a capital trial must either have the greatest certainty or the greatest depravity.⁶⁴ Therefore, it was commanded for those who witnessed a serious transgression of the Law to also participate in the execution of the convicted person (Lev. 24:14 Deut. 13:9).

⁶³ From <http://www.studyight.org/commentaries/lmg/deuteronomy-17.html> accessed May 9, 2016.

⁶⁴ Paraphrased from Keil & Delitzsch's *Commentary on the Old Testament*; ©1966 Hendrickson Publishers, Inc.; Vol. I, p. 925. They were quoting a source (I think), *Schnell, das isr. Recht*.

One of the important aspects of this verse is the purging evil from your midst. Whereas there is no separating from the world, per se, as every person sins and we are witnesses to them. There is a true **Doctrine of Separation**:

Christians are easily confused about the concept of separation, who want to apply this doctrine to unbelievers whose sins shock them. Cult leaders use separation in order to isolate their members from family and former friends. Too often, separation is used in order to separate the Christian from everything that is non-Christian.

Robby Dean's Appended Doctrine of Separation

1. What separation is not:
 - 1) First of all, we are not examining the doctrine of separation for Israel, which is expressed several times with the phrase **"You be holy [= set apart, separate] for I am holy"** (where God is speaking—Lev. 11:44–45 19:2 20:7, 25). This is a related but different topic.
 - 2) Nor are we speaking of a function of self-righteousness, where you are, quite frankly, just too good to be hanging out with Charlie Brown.
 - 3) Separation is not the means of taking a new believer and pulling him away from his family or friends. Although this is often a sign of a cult, some regular churches do this as well.
2. The concept of separation is based upon the fact that we are in this world, but not of this world. In John 17:15–17, Jesus prayed: **"I have given them Your Word, and the world has hated them because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. I do not pray for You to take them out of the world, but for You to keep them from the evil. They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. Sanctify them through Your truth. Your Word is truth."** We are positionally separate from this world because we are in Christ, and He is separate from this world. *Being taken out of the world* is death or complete isolationism—Jesus prayed for this not to happen. Jesus prayed for us to be separated from evil (which is different than sin; evil is the thinking and philosophy of Satan, which can include human good).
3. Separation begins with a mental attitude that results in removing from our lives things and people that are either distractions, or may become distractions, in our own spiritual advance.
 - 1) When Peter brings **"You be holy because I am holy"** into the New Testament (1Peter 1:16, taking this from Lev. 11:44), he is speaking of a mental attitude based upon Bible doctrine (**Therefore, getting your minds ready for action and being self-disciplined, place your confidence completely on the grace to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ**—1Peter 1:13).
 - 2) So, although the passages in Leviticus speak of an actual separation between Israel and her heathen neighbors, the context of the passage in 1Peter says nothing about physical separation from believers or unbelievers. All that we are to think, according to Peter, is based upon understanding that **we were not ransomed from [our former] empty manner of life inherited from our forefathers with perishable things such as silver or gold, but we were purchased with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot** (1Peter 1:18–19).
 - 3) Separation, in the context of this passage where this phrase is brought into the New Testament, is based upon spiritual growth which is a result of thinking divine viewpoint which has its foundation in the revelation of Jesus Christ (i.e., learning Bible doctrine).
 - 4) In other words, the separation that Peter speaks about is in your thinking, which is based upon Bible doctrine. You separate yourself by thinking divine viewpoint.
 - 5) The believer becoming entangled in human viewpoint is involvement with evil, which Jesus prayed that we not fall into.
 - 6) Let me remind you of Satan's 2 fundamental strategies: (1) keep the unbeliever from the gospel and (2) keep the believer thinking human viewpoint.
4. Separation, then, begins in the believer's personal life as he learns and applies doctrine. The Bible says that separation starts in relation to the sin nature. Romans 6:11 **So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus.** Remember that death is Scripture doesn't always mean *cessation of existence*, in Romans, it means *separation from*. Romans 8:13 **If you live according to flesh [according to the sin nature], you are going to die [temporal spiritual death]. But if you put to death, by means of the Spirit, the practices of the body, then you will live.**
 - 1) This is all about spiritually versus carnality.

Robby Dean's Appended Doctrine of Separation

- 2) Prior to salvation, we are all under spiritual death. We have no innate ability to make contact with God.
 - 3) At the moment of salvation, we are both baptized and filled with the Holy Spirit.
 - 4) However, after salvation, we fall into carnality, which means, we sin and lose the filling of the Holy Spirit.
 - 5) This verse is talking about the fact that, if you are a believer and operating in carnality, then all of the blessings of the abundant Christian life are not yours. Even though you have eternal life you might as well be dead since you are no longer living the Christian life because you are living in carnality (carnal death).
 - 6) After salvation, it is an *either-or* situation: we are either filled with the Holy Spirit and separated from sin or we are carnal and associated with sin. This is a status, not some emotional high of some sort.
 - 7) **But if by the Spirit you put to death the practices of the body, then you will live.** We are to put to death the deeds of the body, which represent sin. That is a calling for separation in the believer's life from sin.
 - 8) This separation is caused by naming one's sins to God (1John 1:9). That restores our fellowship with God and temporally separates us from sin.
5. Separation involves separation from human viewpoint thinking.
- 1) It is not just the sin nature that is influencing the life but also all that human viewpoint garbage that is floating around in the soul. All of the ideas we have grown up with need to be excised by the scalpel of the Word of God. We need to have that stuff flushed out of our system.
 - 2) When you are saved by believing in Jesus Christ, this does not mean that your thinking has changed. The potential for a real change in thinking is there, but the actuality is not.
 - 3) This is what Paul is talking about in Romans 12:1–2 **Therefore, I call upon you, [my] brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies [as] a living sacrifice, holy [set apart, separated], pleasing to God, which is your reasonable service. And do not be conformed to this world [cosmic thinking], but be transformed by the renovation of your thinking, in order to prove [demonstrate] by (means of) you what is that good and pleasing and perfect will of God.** This is what happens as we advance spiritually: we renovate our own thinking, learning Bible doctrine, and the Holy Spirit changes us from the inside out.
 - 4) In this way, the Holy Spirit produces the fruit of the Spirit, the character of Christ in our lives. Furthermore, this change of thinking demonstrates that the will of God is good and acceptable and perfect. We become a living, walking testimony of the grace of God in the angelic conflict.
 - 5) Therefore, this calls for separation from human viewpoint thinking. So the first two categories of separation has to do with what is going on in the believer's soul and the believer's thinking. They don't have to do with what is going on necessarily in the world around him. In other words, the thinking of the believer is to be renovated so that the believer no longer thinks in human viewpoint. They *separate* their thinking from human viewpoint.
6. If the world around the believer is producing temptations where he easily succumbs to sin, then that means he has to make some choices about where he goes, whom he associates with, or the things he does. Therefore, the believer needs to recognize that if he is in an environment that easily leads him to sin then he needs to change this environment. That is, there are times for us to physically separate from certain people and situations.
7. We are commanded to separate from certain kinds of carnal believers, such as backslidden, reversionistic believers. This is because there are certain types of carnality that are contagious to certain believers.
- 1) However, as a corollary to this, we do not invade the privacy of various believers, to determine what evil things it is that they do, so that we separate from them.
 - 2) If we separated from all believers who sin, that would mean that we would be separating from all believers on this planet.
 - 3) Bear in mind that self-righteousness can be very contagious.
8. We are to separate from believers who reject sound doctrine.
- 1) If there is anything that can destroy our own spiritual life, it is when we closely associate with people

Robby Dean's Appended Doctrine of Separation

who do not hold to sound doctrine. They say, "Well you know, there are a lot of different views in evangelicalism. There are folks who believe this and there are folks who believe that, but we can all just get along and we don't have to draw these doctrinal distinctions." There is an embedded blasphemy there, and that is the idea that God does not communicate clearly enough for us to take strong positions on doctrine. Wishy-washy people don't really think God communicated things clearly, so you can think it means this and I can think it means that, and somebody else thinks it means something else, so we can all just put our arms together and emote on our common experience that Jesus loves us. Then we'll all go home and be happy that we went to church this morning!

- 2) This is not the biblical view. 2Thessalonians 3:6 **Now we command you, brothers, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you withdraw yourselves from every brother who walks disorderly, and not after the teaching which he received from us.** This isn't tradition for tradition's sake, this is the apostolic doctrine contained in the Scripture. This is a mandate. Vv. 14–15 **And if anyone does not obey our word by this letter, mark that one and have no company with him, that he may be ashamed. Yet do not count him as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother.** Notice that we are speaking of a believer who has clearly rejected legitimate authority (Paul's authority in the teaching of Bible doctrine).
- 3) The goal is restoration, not exclusion; but if there is no response then there is no option other than to go separate ways.
- 4) Let me give you an example: homosexuality, which is clearly identified as a sin in the Bible (Rom. 1:24–27 1Cor. 6:9 1Tim. 1:10). Certain believers may struggle with homosexuality as a sin and, at times, give in to this lust. It is not our business to follow such believers around to determine whether or not we ought to separate from them. However, when a believer touts his homosexuality as normal and acceptable, that calls for separation from such a one.
- 5) From time to time, a church has to remove a troublemaker (or a small group of troublemakers) who have rejected the authority of the pastor-teacher. Quite obviously, if you are in a church where you cannot accept the authority of your pastor, then you should quietly remove yourself—you do not owe anyone an explanation, nor should you stand out in the parking lot and tell everyone else why they should leave the church. You simply leave and find a pastor whose authority you can accept. More often than not, your inability to accept a pastor's authority is a problem in your soul, not in his.
- 6) By accepting the authority of a pastor, this does not mean this pastor follows you around and tells you what to do.
- 7) As an aside, this is not a call to self-righteousness, nor is this a call to separate from family members simply because they do not think like you think.
- 8) Cults often twist the doctrine of separation into removing you from your friends and family *to your real family*. If you find yourself in a church, and they encourage you to cut off your friends and family, it is time to separate from that church.
- 9) Jesus said, **"Do not think that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I have not come to bring peace, but a sword. For I have come to set a man against his father, and a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law. And a person's enemies will be those of his own household."** (Matt. 10:34–36). There will be some natural separation which occurs, but not because the believer has initiated it. Throughout the ages, there have been some Jewish Christians who have been virtually disowned from their families because they believe in Jesus. We know just how much hate can exist between Arabs and Jews; there have been times in history that this has existed between Christians and Jews as well (even though, we ought to be natural political allies).
- 10) However, without going too far afield, the point here is, there are times when a believer will separate from his family—but that is a rare exception and not the rule. Jesus is not calling upon us to raise a sword against family members; nor is He requiring us to separate from family members because of different beliefs. Again, that is characteristic of a cult, but not of the Christian faith.
- 11) Although Wikipedia represents a bastion of human viewpoint, there is an article [here](#) on the **cult checklist**. Although every list is not completely accurate, there are enough trends which these various lists point to in order to keep you out of a cult.

Robby Dean's Appended Doctrine of Separation

9. We are to separate from believers who make their own internal lust patterns the motivation for their lives. Romans 16:17–18 **And I summon you, brothers, to take note of those making divisions and offenses contrary to the doctrine which you have learned, and avoid them. For they who are such do not serve our Lord Jesus Christ, but they serve their own belly [lust patterns]; and by good words and fair speeches, they deceive the hearts of the gullible.**
10. Separation from the immoral social scene where one's norms and standards are gradually eroded through peer pressure. 1Peter 4:4 **In these things they are surprised, that you are not running with them into the same excess of riot, blaspheming.** Proverbs 1:10-19 **My son, if sinners lure you, do not be willing. If they say, "Come with us, let us lie in wait for blood, we will watch secretly for the innocent without cause; let us swallow them up alive as the grave, and whole, as those who go down into the pit; we shall find all precious goods; we shall fill our houses with plunder; cast in your lot among us, and let us have one purse." My son, do not walk in the way with them! Keep back your foot from their path, for their feet run to evil and make haste to shed blood. Surely in vain the net is spread in the sight of any bird, and they lie in wait for their own blood; they watch secretly for their own lives. So are the ways of everyone who gains unjust gain; it takes away its owners' life.** As an aside, communism and socialism are a national codification of this attitude.
11. 1Corinthians 15:33 **Do not be deceived; evil companionships corrupt good habits.** The idea here is, believers can be corrupted by certain other believers and unbelievers with regards to certain activities. This is an individual decision to be made relative to the strengths and weaknesses of the individual believer. As believers, we need to develop good positive habits in our spiritual lives. If we find certain associations compromising these habits, then that is an association which must be broken off or dialed back.
12. However, we simply do not separate from gross sin and gross immorality because we are offended. We should be able to witness to people of all different stripes of sinfulness. 1Cor. 5:9–11 **I wrote to you in my letter not to associate with sexually immoral people--not at all meaning the sexually immoral of this world, or the greedy and swindlers, or idolaters, since then you would need to go out of the world. But now I am writing to you not to associate with anyone who bears the name of brother if he is guilty of sexual immorality or greed, or is an idolater, reviler, drunkard, or swindler--not even to eat with such a one.** Paul is talking about separation from a believer, at the end, who knows the truth, and yet is clearly and observably out of line with his actions.
13. We need to exercise a form of separation from unbelievers to avoid having our doctrine compromised. 2 Corinthians 6:14 **Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers; for what fellowship does righteousness have with lawlessness? And what partnership does light have with darkness?** This involves some types of business partnerships, not necessarily all. It involves marriage, dating, intimate social life. We are to separate from unbelievers where their influence can affect our own doctrine decisions. This is not a call for the believer to avoid unbelievers altogether or whenever possible.
14. We need to separate from believers who are enmeshed in religious modes of operation and apostasy. See 2Corinthians 6:14–17 2Timothy 3:2–6.

I should add that there is much more to the doctrine of separation than this. Although we began this New Testament doctrine above, there is a great deal of separation described in the New Testament which has absolutely nothing to do with the relative geography of you and anyone that you are to separate from (for example: John 5:24 8:12 2Cor. 6:17–18 1Thess. 4:7 1Peter 2:24). We will cover this at another time.

The basic points are taken from <http://phrasearch.com/Trans/DBM/setup/Genesis/Gen068.htm> , which is Lesson #68 of Robby Dean's study of Genesis. This study was extensively edited and appended.

For additional study see:

<http://www.versebyverse.org/doctrine/separation.html> (Maranatha Church)

<http://www.realttime.net/~wdoud/topics/separation.html> (Grace Notes)

<http://www.westbankbiblechurch.com/LGMerrittBooks/Doctrine%20of%20Separation0112.pdf> (L.G. Merritt)

<http://lakeeriebiblechurch.org/doctrine/pdf/DOCTRINE%20OF%20SEPARATION.pdf> (Lake Erie Bible Church)

Chapter Outline

Charts, Graphics and Short Doctrines

Purging evil from a particular region is very similar to separation.

Deut. 17:7 The hand of the witnesses will be against him; [they will be] the first to put him to death; and the hand of all the people [will be against the criminal] afterward. [By this,] you have purged [this] evil from your midst. (Kukis mostly literal); the ESV (capitalized) is used below:

Purging evil from your midst

Scripture	Text/Commentary
<p>Deut. 13:5 But that prophet or that dreamer of dreams shall be put to death, because he has taught rebellion against the LORD your God, Who brought you out of the land of Egypt and redeemed you out of the house of slavery, to make you leave the way in which the LORD your God commanded you to walk. So you shall purge the evil from your midst.</p>	<p>False prophets were to be removed from Israel. They were executed. A prophet had to be accurate 100% of the time; and he had to adhere to the know Word of God up to that point in time.</p>
<p>Deut. 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.</p>	<p>The evil being purged here is an idolater in the land of Israel. Israel, as a theocracy, was to have Y^ehowah only as its God.</p>
<p>Deut. 17:12 The man who acts presumptuously by not obeying the priest who stands to minister there before the LORD your God, or the judge, that man shall die. So you shall purge the evil from Israel.</p>	<p>When a judge takes a case to a higher court because he cannot make a just decision, he must abide by that decision and carry it out. If he does not, the judge himself is subject to execution. He is the evil being purged from Israel.</p>
<p>Deut. 19:16–20 If a malicious witness arises to accuse a person of wrongdoing, then both parties to the dispute shall appear before the LORD, before the priests and the judges who are in office in those days. The judges shall inquire diligently, and if the witness is a false witness and has accused his brother falsely, then you shall do to him as he had meant to do to his brother. So you shall purge the evil from your midst. And the rest shall hear and fear, and shall never again commit any such evil among you.</p>	<p>False witnesses were to be executed in Israel (or subject to the same penalty a defendant would have been subjected to). Many times, this purging was a warning to others; he was an example to others (Deut. 17:13 19:20).</p>
<p>Deut. 24:7 "If a man is found stealing one of his brothers of the people of Israel, and if he treats him as a slave or sells him, then that thief shall die. So you shall purge the evil from your midst."</p>	<p>An Israelite was not to treat a fellow Israelite shamefully. He could not sell a fellow citizen into slavery. An Israelite is not to steal from a fellow Israelite. If they do, they will be executed.</p>
<p>Judges 20:13–14 Now therefore give up the men, the worthless fellows in Gibeah, that we may put them to death and purge evil from Israel." But the Benjaminites would not listen to the voice of their brothers, the people of Israel. Then the people of Benjamin came together out of the cities to Gibeah to go out to battle against the people of Israel.</p>	<p>What had happened was a Levite had gotten his mistress, and they were in Gibeah in transit, and she was raped until she died (there is more to the narrative than just this in Judges 19). The people of Israel gathered against Gibeah to demand that these rapists be put to death (to purge this evil from Israel); and if not handed over, there would be war against Gibeah.</p>

Purging evil from your midst

Scripture

Text/Commentary

1Cor. 5:11–13 But now I am writing to you not to associate with anyone who bears the name of brother if he is guilty of sexual immorality or greed, or is an idolater, reviler, drunkard, or swindler—not even to eat with such a one. For what have I to do with judging outsiders? Is it not those inside the church whom you are to judge? God judges those outside. "Purge the evil person from among you." (Deut. 17:7)

Even in the New Testament, there were to be purges within the local church. We have to be careful here, as every person has a sin nature. However, when a person's actions become known to the church as a whole (by his actions, not through gossip), then that person must be purged from the church.

In all of these cases, the idea of purging evil is removing it so that it does not continue to infect the entire nation (or city or region). This is under the principle that [a little leaven leavens the whole lump](#).

[Chapter Outline](#)

[Charts, Graphics and Short Doctrines](#)

The Catholic Church does something which is called excommunication. This does have a Biblical basis (unlike many of the things the Catholic Church does). Certain sins when practiced regularly by those in your periphery can have a detrimental effect upon the local church. A simple example which we have seen in our lifetimes is the effect which gangs have had upon their members. A person may enter a gang for a lot of various psychological reasons, but not necessarily because he is a criminal. However, criminal activity and immoral behavior soon become a way of life for a new gang member because they are constantly in his environment.

When persons attending a church commit overt sins in full view of the congregation, they must be removed; otherwise, it appears as if the church accepts and condones their behavior.

[Chapter Outline](#)

[Charts, Graphics and Short Doctrines](#)

Laws of Higher Courts

A **chiasm** organizes a passage, so that there is a parallel with the beginning of the chiasm with the end of it; the second portion of the passage finds its match in the second to the last portion of the passage; etc. ([Chiasm example](#)) ([Thomas B. Clarke](#)) ([Brad McCoy](#))

Peter Pett's Chiasm for Deuteronomy 17:8–13

- a If there arise a matter too hard for you in judgment, between blood and blood, between plea and plea, and between stroke and stroke, being matters of controversy within your gates (Deut. 17:8 a).
- b Then shall you arise, and get yourself up to the place which Yahweh your God shall choose (Deut. 17:8 b).
- c And you shall come to the priests the Levites, and to the judge that shall be in those days, and you shall enquire, and they will show you the sentence of judgment, and you shall do according to the tenor of the sentence which they shall show you from that place which Yahweh shall choose (Deut. 17:9–10 a).
- c And you shall observe to do according to all that they shall teach you, according to the tenor of the law which they shall teach you, and according to the judgment which they shall tell you, you shall do. You shall not turn aside from the sentence which they shall show you, to the right hand, nor to the left (Deut. 17:10–11).
- b And the man who does presumptuously, in not listening to the priest who stands to minister there

Peter Pett's Chiasmus for Deuteronomy 17:8–13

before Yahweh your God, or to the judge (Deut. 17:12 a).

- a Even that man shall die, and you shall put away the evil from Israel, and all the people shall hear, and fear, and no more act presumptuously (Deut. 17:12–13).

This is more progressive than chiasmus. But in 'a' the method of judgment for difficult cases is laid out, and in the parallel the warning given that not to accept the verdict of that court (the court being seen to be fair) will mean being put to death so that all may fear and give due respect to the court which meets before Yahweh. For to dispute the sacred court is doing evil in Israel by encouraging anarchy. In 'b' they arise and go to the place which Yahweh their God chooses and in the parallel they are to heed the ones who minister there before Yahweh their God. In 'c' they enquire and receive the verdict and are to do according to the tenor of the sentence, and in the parallel they must receive the sentence which has been according to the tenor of Yahweh's Instruction and not divert from it.

Dr. Peter Pett; *Commentary Series on the Bible*; from e-sword, Deut. 17:8–13.

Chapter Outline

Charts, Graphics and Short Doctrines

When is extraordinary from you a word to the verdict between blood to blood, between dispute to dispute, and between injury to injury, words of disputations in your gates, and you have risen up and you have ascended unto the place chooses Y^ehowah your Elohim in him; and you have come unto the priests the Levites and unto a judge who is in the days the those and you have made inquiries and they have made known to you a word of the verdict, and you have done upon a mouth of the word which they have made known to you from the place the that which chooses Y^ehowah. And you have guarded to do as all which they instructed you. Upon a mouth of the torah which they instructed you and upon the verdict which they say to you, you will do; you will not turn aside from the word which they declare to you, to the right and to the left.

Deuteronomy
17:8–11

When a case [requiring] a verdict is more extraordinary than you—whether two sides of a murder, whether two sides of a legal dispute, or two sides of an injury case—disputed words within your city—then you will rise up and you will go to a place chosen by Y^ehowah your Elohim in it. And you will go to the Levitical priests, or to a judge who is [in office] in those days, and you will inquire [as to their opinion on this case]. Then they will make known the judicial verdict, then you will do according to the word that they have made known to you from that place which was chosen by Y^ehowah. Then you will be careful to do all that they instructed you [to do]. According to the word of the law which they instruct [or, *direct*] you and based upon the verdict that they tell you, [that] you will do, [and] you will not deviate either to the left or to the right of the word that they declare to you.

Now and again, there will be a verdict which you are unable to determine, whether this is a murder or a legal dispute or an injury case—whatever might be disputed within your city—then you will rise up with the witnesses and go to the place chosen by Jehovah your God. You will present this case before the Levitical priests or before the presiding judge, and they will determine the outcome of the case. When you have heard the verdict, you will do exactly as they have instructed you, exactly according to the law which they have spoken to you, and you will not veer from the decision to modify it in any way.

Here is how others have translated this verse:

Ancient texts:

Masoretic Text (Hebrew)

When is extraordinary from you a word to the verdict between blood to blood, between dispute to dispute, and between injury to injury, words of disputations in your gates, and you have risen up and you have ascended unto the place chooses

Y^ehowah your Elohim in him; and you have come unto the priests the Levites and unto a judge who is in the days the those and you have made inquiries and they have made known to you a word of the verdict, and you have done upon a mouth of the word which they have made known to you from the place the that which chooses Y^ehowah. And you have guarded to do as all which they instructed you. Upon a mouth of the torah which they instructed you and upon the verdict which they say to you, you will do; you will not turn aside from the word which they declare to you, to the right and to the left.

Targum of Onkelos

If there be with you an extraordinary matter for judgment between unclean and clean blood, cases of life or of money, or between a plague of leprosy or of the scall, with words of controversy in your beth din, then you shall arise and go up to the place which the Lord your God will choose; and you shall come to the priests of the tribe of Levi, and to the judge who will be in those days, and inquire of them, and they will show you the process of judgment. Then shall you do according to the word of the custom of the law that they will show you at the place the Lord will choose, and observe to do whatsoever they teach you. [JERUSALEM. When a matter is too occult for you, in setting judgment in order between the blood of murder and innocent blood, between leprosy and the scall, with words of contention in your cities, then shall you arise and go up to the place which the Lord your God will choose.] According to the word of the law that they will teach you, and the manner of judgment they pronounce, you shall do. You shall not turn aside from the sentence they will show you, to the right or to the left.

Revised Douay-Rheims

If you perceive that there be among you a hard and doubtful matter in judgment between blood and blood, cause and cause, leprosy and leprosy: and you see that the words of the judges within your gates do vary: arise, and go up to the place, which the Lord your God shall choose. And you shall come to the priests of the Levitical race, and to the judge, that shall be at that time: and you shall ask of them, and they shall shew you the truth of the judgment. And you shall do whatsoever they shall say, that preside in the place, which the Lord shall choose, and what they shall teach you, According to his law; and you shall follow their sentence: neither shall you decline to the right hand nor to the left hand.

Peshitta (Syriac)

If there arise a matter which is too difficult for you to judge, between murder and murder, between lawsuit and lawsuit, and between a sore of leprosy and a sore of leprosy, any matters of controversy within your towns; then you shall arise and go to the place which the LORD your God shall choose for himself; And you shall come to the priest, or the Levite, or to the judge who shall be in those days, and inquire; and they shall show you the sentence of judgment; And you shall do according to the decision which they of that place shall show you, as the LORD has commanded; and you shall observe to do according to all that they teach you; According to the sentence of the law which they shall declare to you, and according to the judgment which they shall tell you, you shall do; you shall not swerve from the sentence which they shall show you, neither to the right hand nor to the left.

Septuagint (Greek)

And if a matter shall be too hard for you in judgment, between blood and blood, and between cause and cause, and between stroke and stroke, and between contradiction and contradiction, matters of judgment in your cities; then you shall arise and go up to the place which the Lord your God shall choose, and you shall come to the priests the Levites, and to the judge who shall be in those days, and they shall search out the matter and report the judgment to you. And you shall act according to the thing which they shall report to you out of the place which the Lord your God shall choose, and you shall observe to do all whatsoever shall have been by law appointed to you. You shall do according to the law and to the judgment which they shall declare to you: you shall not swerve to the right hand or to the left from any sentence which they shall report to you.

Significant differences: In the very first phrase, the Latin adds *you perceive*. In the first phrase, the targum adds *clean* and *unclean* to blood. For the second and third type of case, the targum gets pretty imaginative. The second kind of case in the Greek is between *contradiction and contradiction*; and the Greek adds a 4th set of cases to consider.

For the third type of case, the Syriac, Latin and targum all speak of leprosy. Gill comments on this: *Jewish writers generally interpret it of the plague, or stroke of leprosy; so the Targums of Jonathan and Jerusalem; but the examination of such a case did not belong to the civil magistrate, but to a priest; nor was such a person had up to Jerusalem to be searched, but was shut up in a house until further evidence could be got; and, besides, the signs of the leprosy are so distinctly given, that at waiting a proper time, there was seldom or ever any difficulty about determining it.*⁶⁵ Matthew Poole goes into great detail on this point; but let me present his point of view briefly: when it comes to leprosy, a priest can look at it and recognize it; he does not need to appeal to a higher court; and those with leprosy were not to be sent wandering all over Israel. They were to be quarantined.⁶⁶

For Himself is missing from the targum and the Latin. The remainder is reasonably close.

Limited Vocabulary Translations:

Bible in Basic English	If you are not able to give a decision as to who is responsible for a death, or who is right in a cause, or who gave the first blow in a fight, and there is a division of opinion about it in your town: then go to the place marked out by the Lord your God; And come before the priests, the Levites, or before him who is judge at the time: and they will go into the question and give you a decision: And you are to be guided by the decision they give in the place named by the Lord, and do whatever they say: Acting in agreement with their teaching and the decision they give: not turning to one side or the other from the word they have given you.
Easy English	It may be difficult for the judges in your towns to decide between good things and bad things. This may happen when one person has attacked another person. It may happen when people cannot agree about a house or some fields. You must bring those people to the place that the LORD your God will choose. You must go to the priests from the tribe of Levi and to the judge that you have chosen. Ask them to decide for you. Then you must obey them, in the place that the LORD will choose. Be careful to obey all their words. You must do the things that they teach you. You must agree to what they decide. Obey their words completely.
Easy-to-Read Version–2001	"There might be some problems that are too hard for your courts to judge. It might be a murder case or an argument between two people. Or it might be a fight in which someone was hurt. When these cases are argued in your towns, your judges there might not be able to decide what is right. Then you must go to the special place that the Lord your God will choose. The priests are from the Levi family group. You must go to those priests and to the judge on duty at that time. Those men will decide what to do about that problem. There at the Lord's special place they will tell you their decision. You must do whatever they say. Be sure to do all the things they tell you to do. You must accept their decision and follow their instructions exactly. You must do exactly what they tell you to do--don't change anything!
Easy-to-Read Version–2008	"There might be some problems that are too hard for your courts to judge. It might be a murder case or an argument between two people. Or it might be a fight in

⁶⁵ Dr. John Gill, *John Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible*; from e-Sword, Deut. 17:8.

⁶⁶ Paraphrased from Matthew Poole, *English Annotations on the Holy Bible*; ©1685; from e-Sword, Deut. 17:8.

Good News Bible (TEV)	<p>which someone was hurt. When these cases are argued in your towns, your judges there might not be able to decide what is right. Then you must go to the special place that the LORD your God will choose. You must go to the priests who are Levites and to the judge on duty at that time. They will decide what to do about that problem. There at the LORD'S special place they will tell you their decision. You must do whatever they say. Be sure to do everything they tell you to do. You must accept their decision and follow their instructions exactly--don't change anything!</p> <p>"It may be that some cases will be too difficult for the local judges to decide, such as certain cases of property rights or of bodily injury or those cases that involve a distinction between murder and manslaughter. When this happens, go to the one place of worship chosen by the LORD your God, and present your case to the levitical priests and to the judge who is in office at that time, and let them decide the case. They will give their decision, and you are to do exactly as they tell you. Accept their verdict and follow their instructions in every detail.</p>
<i>The Message</i>	<p>When matters of justice come up that are too much for you—hard cases regarding homicides, legal disputes, fights—take them up to the central place of worship that God, your God, has designated. Bring them to the Levitical priests and the judge who is in office at the time. Consult them and they will hand down the decision for you.</p> <p>Then carry out their verdict at the place designated by God, your God. Do what they tell you, in exactly the way they tell you. Follow their instructions precisely: Don't leave out anything; don't add anything. Anyone who presumes to override or twist the decision handed down by the priest or judge who was acting in the Presence of God, your God, is as good as dead—root him out, rid Israel of the evil. Everyone will take notice and be impressed. That will put an end to presumptuous behavior. Vv. 12–13 are included for context.</p>
Names of God Bible	<p>There may be a case that is too hard for you to decide. It may involve murder, assault, or a dispute—any case which may be brought to court in your cities. Take this case to the place that Yahweh your Elohim will choose. Go to the Levitical priests and the judge who is serving at that time. Ask for their opinion, and they will give you their verdict at the place that Yahweh will choose. Do what they tell you. Follow all their instructions carefully, and do what they tell you to do in their verdict. Do exactly what they tell you to do in their decision.</p>
NIRV	<p>Law Courts</p> <p>People will bring their cases to your courts. But some cases will be too hard for you to judge. They might be about murders, attacks or other crimes. Then take those hard cases to the place the Lord your God will choose. Go to a priest, who is a Levite. And go to the judge who is in office at that time. Ask them for their decision. They will give it to you. They'll hand down their decisions at the place the Lord will choose. You must do what they decide. Be careful to do everything they tell you to do. Act according to whatever they teach you. Accept the decisions they give you. Don't turn away from what they tell you. Don't turn to the right or the left.</p>
Thought-for-thought translations; paraphrases:	
Common English Bible	<p>Legal disputes</p> <p>If some legal dispute in your cities is too difficult for you to decide—say, between different kinds of bloodshed, different kinds of legal ruling, or different kinds of injury—then take it to the location the Lord your God selects. Go to the levitical priests and to the head judge in office at that time and look into things there. They will announce to you the correct ruling. You must then act according to the ruling they announced to you from that location, the one the Lord selects. You must follow very carefully everything they instruct you to do. Act precisely according to the</p>

instruction they give you and the ruling they announce to you. Don't deviate even a bit from the word they announce.

Contemporary English V.

It may be difficult to find out the truth in some legal cases in your town. You may not be able to decide if someone was killed accidentally or murdered. Or you may not be able to tell whether an injury or some property damage was done by accident or on purpose. If the case is too difficult, take it to the court at the place where the LORD your God chooses to be worshiped. This court will be made up of one judge and several priests who serve at the LORD's altar. They will explain the law to you and give you their decision about the case. Do exactly what they tell you, or you will be put to death. V. 12 is included for context.

The Living Bible

"If a case arises that is too hard for you to decide—for instance, whether someone is guilty of murder when there is insufficient evidence, or whether someone's rights have been violated—you shall take the case to the sanctuary of the Lord your God, to the priests and Levites, and the chief judge on duty at the time will make the decision. His decision is without appeal and is to be followed to the letter. The sentence he imposes is to be fully executed.

New Berkeley Version

"When a case at law arises too difficult for you to decide between one degree of bloodshed and another; one plea for right and another — one type of bodily injury and another, matters of disagreement in your town — then you must go to the place which the LORD your God shall choose and there seek out the Levitical priests and the judge [The passing on of difficult cases began with Moses at Jethro's suggestion. Ex. 18:13–36. From early times administration of justice by both priestly and civil heads of the community seems to have prevailed. 2Chron. 19:8–11 tells of the setting up of a double court by king Jehoshaphat.] who shall be in office in those days, and you shall inquire of them, and they will tell you of their decision, you must act according to the decision they announce at that place which the LORD shall choose, and you must be careful to follow their instructions to the letter. Carry out their decision, and be sure not to depart from their verdict in any way.

New Century Version

Courts of Law

Some cases that come before you, such as murder, quarreling, or attack, may be too difficult to judge. Take these cases to the place the Lord your God will choose. Go to the priests who are Levites and to the judge who is on duty at that time. Ask them about the case, and they will decide. You must follow the decision they give you at the place the Lord your God will choose. Be careful to do everything they tell you. Follow the teachings they give you, and do whatever they decide, exactly as they tell you.

New Life Version

"There may be a problem too hard for you to decide, between two kinds of killing, between two kinds of questions about the law, between two kinds of hurting, problems argued about in your courts. Then get up and go to the place which the Lord your God chooses. Go to the Levite religious leader or the judge who is at work at that time. Ask them, and they will tell you what they decide. Then do what should be done by what they tell you they have decided at that place which the Lord chooses. Be careful to do all they tell you. Do what they teach you about the Law and about what they decide. Do not turn aside from what they tell you to do, to the right or to the left.

New Living Translation

"Suppose a case arises in a local court that is too hard for you to decide—for instance, whether someone is guilty of murder or only of manslaughter, or a difficult lawsuit, or a case involving different kinds of assault. Take such legal cases to the place the Lord your God will choose, and present them to the Levitical priests or the judge on duty at that time. They will hear the case and declare the verdict. You must carry out the verdict they announce and the sentence they prescribe at the place the Lord chooses. You must do exactly what they say. After they have

interpreted the law and declared their verdict, the sentence they impose must be fully executed; do not modify it in any way.

Partially literal and partially paraphrased translations:

American English Bible	<p>'Now, whenever a matter is too difficult for you to judge in your cities (as between blood and blood, cause and cause, stroke and stroke, and contradiction and contradiction); you must take the matter before the Levite priests who will then be at the place which Jehovah your God will choose, and have them judge the case. They must perform their own investigation and report their findings to you, and you must do whatever they have decided in the place that Jehovah your God will choose. You must be sure to do whatever the Law tells you to do.</p> <p>'You must always follow the Law and abide by any judgments that are handed down! Don't deviate to the right or the left from any decisions that are reached.</p>
Beck's American Translation	<p><i>Priest, Judge, King</i></p> <p>"If there is a case too hard for you to decide, whether it involve murder, legal rights, assault, or any matters you disagree on in your town, then go up to the place the LORD your God chooses. When you come to the priests descended from Levi and the man who is judge at that time, ask them, and they will tell you what is right. Be guided by the decision of those who are at the place the LORD chooses, and carefully do just as they teach you. Do what they teach you and tell you is right, and don't turn right or left from what they tell you.</p>
International Standard V	<p><i>Deciding Difficult Cases</i></p> <p>"If a case is too difficult for you to decide with respect to bloodshed, [Lit. blood versus blood] civil claims, [Lit. justice versus justice] assault and battery, [Lit. wound versus wound] or other matters of dispute within your courts, [Lit. gates] bring [Lit. stand and go up] it to the place that the Lord your God will choose. Present the case [The Heb. lacks Present the case] to the Levitical priest or the judge at that time. When you have inquired and they have announced the verdict, carry out the verdict that was declared to you at the place that the Lord will choose. Carefully observe all of their instructions to you in accordance with what the Law says, and in accordance with the verdict that will be handed to you. You must not deviate from the verdict that they declare to you either to the right or to the left.</p>
New Advent (Knox) Bible	<p>It may be that some matter of law will be too hard for thy unravelling; was it killing or murder? Is this claim just or that? Was the infection leprous or not? There is no agreement between the judges at thy own city gate. Up, then, make thy way to the place the Lord thy God has chosen, and have recourse to the priests of Levi's race, to the judge who then holds office; thou hast but to ask them, and they will make the right decision known to thee. Thou must needs give effect to the sentence they pronounce, these officers of the Lord's chosen sanctuary; when they have told thee what the divine law prescribes, thou shalt abide by their award, without swerving to right or left.</p>
Today's NIV	<p><i>Law Courts</i></p> <p>If cases come before your courts that are too difficult for you to judge—whether bloodshed, lawsuits or assaults—take them to the place the LORD your God will choose. Go to the Levitical priests and to the judge who is in office at that time. Inquire of them and they will give you the verdict. You must act according to the decisions they give you at the place the LORD will choose. Be careful to do everything they instruct you to do. Act according to whatever they teach you and the decisions they give you. Do not turn aside from what they tell you, to the right or to the left.</p>
Translation for Translators	<p>Judging difficult cases</p> <p>"Sometimes it will be very difficult for the judges to decide what really happened. He might be trying to decide whether, when someone injured or killed another person,</p>

he did it accidentally or deliberately. Or he might be trying to decide if some person is suing another person unfairly. If in some town it is very difficult to know what really happened, with the result that the judge cannot decide it, you should go to the place that Yahweh our God has chosen for you *to worship him*. There you should present the case to the descendants of Levi who are the priests, and to the judge who is serving at that time, and they should decide what should be done. After they make their decision, you must do what they tell you to do. Accept what they have decided, and do what they say that you should do. Do not try to change in any way what they have decided [IDI].

Mostly literal renderings (with some occasional paraphrasing):

Ferrar-Fenton Bible	If a case should occur among you difficult to decide between blood and blood, between right and right, and between stroke and stroke, — an affair of a contention in your gates, — you shall remove it, and take it up to the place which your Ever-living God has chosen for Himself, and go to the priests, to the Levites, and to the Judge who may be in your times, and appeal and report the matter to the Chief Judge, and act upon the decision which he pronounces. You shall not turn from the order that he communicates to you, to the right or to the left.
God’s Truth (Tyndale)	If a matter be too hard for you in judgement between blood and blood, plea and plea, *plage and plage in matters of strife within your cities. Then arise and get you up unto the place which the Lord your God has chosen, and go unto the priests the Levites, and unto the judge that shall be in those days, and ask, and they shall show you how to judge. And see that you do according to that which they of that place (which the Lord has chosen) show you, and see that you observe to do according to all that they inform you.
HCSB	Difficult Cases “If a case is too difficult for you—concerning bloodshed, lawsuits, or assaults—cases disputed at your gates, you must go up to the place the Lord your God chooses. You are to go to the Levitical priests and to the judge who presides at that time. Ask, and they will give you a verdict in the case. You must abide by the verdict they give you at the place the Lord chooses. Be careful to do exactly as they instruct you. You must abide by the instruction they give you and the verdict they announce to you. Do not turn to the right or the left from the decision they declare to you.
Lexham English Bible	“If a matter is too difficult for you, for example disputes between blood and blood, between legal claim and legal claim and between assault and assault and between matters of discernment in your towns, then you shall get up and you shall go to the place that Yahweh your God will choose; then you shall go to the priests and the Levites and to the judge who will be in office in those days, and you shall enquire, and they shall announce to you the verdict. “And you shall carry out exactly the decision that they announced to you from that place that Yahweh will choose, and you shall diligently observe according to all that they instruct you. And so according to the instruction of the law that they teach you and according to the decisions that they say to you, you shall do; you shall not turn from the word that they tell you to the right or to the left.
NIV – UK	Law courts If cases come before your courts that are too difficult for you to judge – whether bloodshed, lawsuits or assaults – take them to the place the Lord your God will choose. Go to the Levitical priests and to the judge who is in office at that time. Enquire of them and they will give you the verdict. You must act according to the decisions they give you at the place the Lord will choose. Be careful to do everything they instruct you to do. Act according to whatever they teach you and

the decisions they give you. Do not turn aside from what they tell you, to the right or to the left.

Tree of Life Version

“Suppose a matter arises that is too hard for you to judge—over bloodshed, legal claims or assault—matters of controversy within your gates. Then you should go up to the place Adonai your God chooses, and come to the Levitical kohanim and the judge in charge at that time. And you will inquire, and they will tell you the sentence of judgment. You are to act according to the sentence they tell you from that place Adonai chooses, and take care to do all that they instruct you. You are to act according to the instruction they teach you and the judgment they tell you—you must not turn aside from the sentence they tell you, to the right or to the left.

Catholic Bibles (those having the imprimatur):

Christian Community (1988) If a very difficult case is presented to you which you cannot resolve in the city tribunal, either about murder, a legal dispute or a quarrel because of injuries, you shall go up to the place chosen by Yah weh, your God; you shall approach the Levite priests and the judge in office at that time. You shall consult them and they will point out to you the decision on the case. You shall carry out the decision that they have made for you in that place chosen by Yahweh, and you shall act in accordance with what they have instructed you. You shall follow the instructions or the verdict they have given you without turning aside either to the right or to the left from the decision they made for you.

The Heritage Bible

If there is a word too difficult for you in judgment, between blood and blood, between plea and plea, and between stroke and stroke, being words of a controversy within your gates, then you shall call aloud, and go up into the place which Jehovah, your God, shall choose, And you shall come to the Levitical priests and to those judging that shall be in those days, and tread seeking; and they shall cause the word of judgment to stand out boldly to you; And you shall do according to the word, which they of that place which Jehovah shall choose shall cause to stand out boldly to you, and you shall hedge about to do according to all that they cause to flow to you. You shall do according to the mouth of the law which they shall cause to flow to you and according to the judgment which they shall say to you; you shall not turn away from the word which they shall cause to stand out boldly to you, to the right hand, nor to the left.

New American Bible (2002)

"If in your own community there is a case at issue which proves too complicated for you to decide, in a matter of bloodshed or of civil rights or of personal injury, you shall then go up to the place which the LORD, your God, chooses, to the levitical priests or to the judge who is in office at that time. They shall study the case and then hand down to you their decision. According to this decision that they give you in the place which the LORD chooses, you shall act, being careful to do exactly as they direct. You shall carry out the directions they give you and the verdict they pronounce for you, without turning aside to the right or to the left from the decision they hand down to you.

New American Bible (2011)

Judges.

If there is a case for judgment which proves too baffling for you to decide, in a matter of bloodshed or of law or of injury, matters of dispute within your gates, you shall then go up to the place which the LORD, your God, will choose, to the levitical priests or to the judge who is in office at that time [Ex 18:13–26.]. They shall investigate the case and then announce to you the decision [Dt 21:5; 2 Chr 19:8; Ezr 7:25.]. You shall act according to the decision they announce to you in the place which the LORD will choose, carefully observing everything as they instruct you. You shall carry out the instruction they give you and the judgment they pronounce, without turning aside either to the right or left from the decision they announce to you.

New Jerusalem Bible	<p>'If a case comes before you which is too difficult for you, a case of murder, conflicting claims, damage to property -- any kind of dispute -- in your towns, you must make your way to the place chosen by Yahweh your God, and approach the levitical priests and the judge then in office. They will hold an enquiry and let you know their sentence. You must abide by the verdict which they give you in this place chosen by Yahweh, and you will take care to carry out all their instructions. You will abide by the decision which they give you and by the sentence which they pronounce, not deviating to right or to left from the verdict which they have given you.</p>
New RSV	<p>If a judicial decision is too difficult for you to make between one kind of bloodshed and another, one kind of legal right and another, or one kind of assault and another—any such matters of dispute in your towns—then you shall immediately go up to the place that the Lord your God will choose, where you shall consult with the levitical priests and the judge who is in office in those days; they shall announce to you the decision in the case. Carry out exactly the decision that they announce to you from the place that the Lord will choose, diligently observing everything they instruct you. You must carry out fully the law that they interpret for you or the ruling that they announce to you; do not turn aside from the decision that they announce to you, either to the right or to the left.</p>
Revised English Bible	<p>When the issue in any lawsuit that is disputed in your courts is beyond your competence, whether it be a case of accidental or premeditated homicide, civil rights, or personal injury, then resort without delay to the place which the LORD your God will choose. Appear before the levitical priests or the judge then in office and seek guidance; they will give you the verdict. Act on the pronouncement which they make from the place chosen by the LORD, and see that you carry out all their instructions. Act on the instruction they give you, or on the precedent they cite; do not deviate from the decision they hand down to you, either to right or to left.</p>

Jewish/Hebrew Names Bibles:

Complete Jewish Bible	<p>"If a case comes before you at your city gate which is too difficult for you to judge, concerning bloodshed, civil suit, personal injury or any other controversial issue; you are to get up, go to the place which Adonai your God will choose, and appear before the cohanim, who are L'vi'im, and the judge in office at the time. Seek their opinion, and they will render a verdict for you. You will then act according to what they have told you there in that place which Adonai will choose; you are to take care to act according to all their instructions. In accordance with the Torah they teach you, you are to carry out the judgment they render, not turning aside to the right or the left from the verdict they declare to you.</p>
exeGesés companion Bible	<p><u>THE TORAH ON JUDGMENT</u> If there arise a matter word too hard for that marveleth thee in judgment, between blood and blood, between plea and plea, and between stroke plague and stroke plague , being matters words of controversy dispute within thy gates portals : then shalt thou arise, and get thee up ascend into the place which the LORD Yah Veh thy God Elohim shall choose; And thou shalt come unto the priests the Levites Leviym , and unto the judge that shall be in those days, and enquire; and they shall shew tell thee the sentence word of the mouth judgment :</p>

And thou shalt do work
 according to the sentence word of judgment his mouth ,
 which they of that place
 which the LORD Yah Veh shall choose
 shall shew tell thee;
 and thou shalt observe guard to do work
 according to all that they inform point out to thee:
 According to the sentence mouth of the law torah
 which they shall teach point out to thee,
 and according to the judgment which they shall tell thee,
 thou shalt do work :
 thou shalt not decline turn aside
 from the sentence word which they shall shew tell thee,
 to the right hand , nor to the left.

JPS (Tanakh—1985)

If a case is too baffling for you to decide, be it a controversy over homicide, civil law, or assault—matters of dispute in your courts—you shall promptly repair to the place that the Lord your God will have chosen, and appear before the levitical priests, or the magistrate in charge at the time, and present your problem. When they have announced to you the verdict in the case, you shall carry out the verdict that is announced to you from that place that the Lord chose, observing scrupulously all their instructions to you. You shall act in accordance with the instructions given you and the ruling handed down to you; you must not deviate from the verdict that they announce to you either to the right or to the left.

Kaplan Translation

The Supreme Court

If you are unable to reach a decision [Pala in Hebrew. Or, 'if it is concealed' (Targum; Rashi), 'separated' (Targum Yonathan), 'with a hidden answer' (Saadia), or, 'too difficult' (Septuagint)] in a case involving capital punishment [Literally, 'blood.' Or, '[clean and unclean] blood' (Sanhedrin 87a; Niddah 19a; Targum Yonathan; Ramban); cf. Leviticus 15:19, 25.], litigation, leprous marks [Nega in Hebrew. Or, 'damages for injury' (Ibn Ezra; Septuagint).], [or any other case] where there is a dispute [Or, 'or any other dispute in your settlements' (Ramban; Septuagint).] in your territorial courts, then you must set out and go up to the place that God your Lord shall choose. You must approach the Levitical priests [Or, 'Levites [and] priests,' indicating that both should preferably be members of the supreme court (Sifri; Yad, Sanhedrin 2:2). Cf. 2 Chronicles 19:8. Or, 'the supreme court [associated with] the Levitical priests,' indicating that for the court to have full authority, the priesthood must also be functioning (Sanhedrin 52b; Yad, Sanhedrin 14:11). The priests were associated with the court because they were supported by the community (see Deuteronomy 18:1), and could therefore devote their entire time to Torah study (Abarbanel).] [and other members of] the supreme court [Or, literally, 'judge.' However, by tradition, this is speaking of the council of 70 elders, the first of which was appointed by Moses; cf. Numbers 11:16, 24 (Yad, Sanhedrin 1:3). Also see Exodus 24:1. In Talmudical times, this supreme court was known as the Sanhedrin. Besides being a court, this body also had legislative powers, see Deuteronomy 17:11.] that exists at the time. When you make inquiry, they will declare to you a legal decision. Since this decision comes from the place that God shall choose, you must do as they tell you, carefully following their every decision. [Besides this, in general,] you must keep the Torah as they interpret it for you, and follow the laws that they legislate for you. Do not stray [This is a negative commandment, that also includes legislation (Berakhoth 19b; Shabbath 23a; Sefer HaMitzvoth, Negative 312; Chinukh 496). However, some say that these commandments apply only to decisions and not to legislation (Ramban on Sefer HaMitzvoth, Shoresh 1, 4a ff.)] to the right or left from the word that they declare to you.

Orthodox Jewish Bible

If there arise a matter too hard for thee in mishpat, between dahm and dahm, between din and din, and between nega and nega, being matters of controversy within thy she'arim, then shalt thou arise, and get thee up into the place which Hashem Eloheicha shall choose;

And thou shalt come unto the kohanim, who are the Levi'im, and unto the Shofet that shall be in those days, and inquire; and they shall show thee the devar hamishpat (word of judgment);

And thou shalt do according to the devar, which they of that place which Hashem shall choose shall show thee; and thou shalt be shomer to do according to all that they teach thee;

According to the pi hatorah which they shall teach thee, and according to the mishpat which they shall tell thee, thou shalt do; thou shalt not turn aside from the devar which they shall show thee, to the right hand, nor to the left.

The Scriptures 1998

“When any matter arises which is too hard for you to judge, between blood and blood, between plea and plea, or between stroke and stroke – matters of strife within your gates – then you shall rise and go up to the place which יהוה your Elohim chooses, and shall come to the priests, the Lēwites, and to the judge who is in those days, and shall inquire. And they shall declare to you the word of right-ruling, and you shall do according to the word which they declare to you from that place which יהוה chooses. And you shall guard to do according to all that they instruct you.

“Do according to the Torah in which they teach you, according to the right-ruling which they say to you. You do not turn to the right or to the left from the word which they declare to you.

Expanded/Embellished Bibles:*The Amplified Bible*

“If any case is too difficult for you to judge—between one kind of homicide and another, between one kind of lawsuit and another, between one kind of assault and another, being controversial issues in your courts—then you shall arise and go to the place which the Lord your God chooses. So you shall come to the Levitical priests or to the judge who is in office at that time, and you shall consult them and they will declare to you the verdict in the case. You shall act in accordance with the terms of the verdict which they declare to you from that place which the Lord chooses. You shall be careful to act in accordance with all of their instructions. “You shall act in accordance with the law which they teach you and the judgment which they tell you. You shall not turn aside from their verdict, to the right or to the left.

The Expanded Bible

Courts of Law

Some cases that come before you, ·such as murder [between one kind of bloodshed and another; ^cintentional or unintentional], ·quarreling [between one kind of right and another], or ·attack [^lbetween one kind of assault and another; Ex. 21:18–21], may be too difficult to judge. Take these cases to the place the Lord your God will choose [12:4–7]. Go to the priests who are Levites and to the judge who is ·on duty at that time [in office in those days]. ·Ask them about the case [Make inquiry], and they will decide. You must follow the decision they give you at the place the Lord your God will choose. Be careful to do everything they ·tell [^lteach] you. Follow the ·teachings [laws; instructions] they give you, and do whatever they decide, ·exactly as they tell you [^lyou must not turn aside from the thing they tell you to the right or to the left].

Kretzmann's Commentary

Verses 8-13

Difficult Questions to be Decided by the Priest

If there arise a matter too hard for thee in judgment, one beyond the ability of the ordinary judge or officer to decide, between blood and blood, between plea and plea, and between stroke and stroke, where the legal enactments concerning a

bodily injury, Ex. 21:12 ff. concerning civil cases, and concerning quarrels are not clear enough for the officers before whom the matter is brought, being matters of controversy within thy gates, **then shalt thou arise, namely, the men in authority in the individual cities or towns, and get thee up into the place which the Lord, thy God, shall choose**, for there would always be priests on duty at the central Sanctuary;

and thou shalt come unto the priests, the Levites, the children of Levi, and unto the judge that shall be in those days, a sort of chief justice by the side of the high priest, and enquire; and they shall show thee the sentence of judgment, interpret the law which would find its application in that case, if necessary, after consulting the Lord directly, 1Sam. 28:6;

and thou shalt do according to the sentence which they of that place which the Lord shall choose shall show thee; and thou shalt observe to do according to all that they inform thee, the priests here coming into consideration as teachers of the Law; according to the sentence of the Law which they shall teach thee, and according to the judgment which they shall tell thee, thou shalt do, conform exactly to the decision of the supreme court; thou shalt not decline from the sentence which they shall show thee, to the right hand nor to the left, since the decision would rest upon the Law of Jehovah, with which the priests were to have a perfect acquaintance.

NET Bible®

Appeal to a Higher Court

If a matter is too difficult for you to judge – bloodshed [*Heb* “between blood and blood.”], legal claim [*Heb* “between claim and claim.”], or assault [*Heb* “between blow and blow.”] – matters of controversy in your villages [*Heb* “gates.”] – you must leave there and go up to the place the Lord your God chooses [Several Greek recensions add “to place his name there,” thus completing the usual formula to describe the central sanctuary (cf. Deut 12:5, 11, 14, 18; 16:6). However, the context suggests that the local Levitical towns, and not the central sanctuary, are in mind.]. You will go to the Levitical priests and the judge in office in those days and seek a solution; they will render a verdict. You must then do as they have determined at that place the Lord chooses. Be careful to do just as you are taught. You must do what you are instructed, and the verdict they pronounce to you, without fail. Do not deviate right or left from what they tell you.

The Voice

If one person in your town brings a complaint against another to be judged at the city gate, and it's just too difficult for you to decide *what a fair resolution would be—if you can't determine* whether a killing was premeditated, or *if you can't decide* who in a dispute makes the best argument, or *if you can't tell* whether someone was injured accidentally or intentionally—then adjourn your proceedings and go to the place the Eternal your God will choose. Bring your case to the Levitical priests and to the judge who is serving at the time, and they will give you a verdict. You must carry out their verdict exactly as they stated it because it was delivered in the place the Eternal chose, *and it has His authority behind it*. Follow each word of the law as they interpret it for you; do everything they've told you to do, as they've explained it, without deviating from it at all.

Literal, almost word-for-word, renderings:

Concordant Literal Version

In case a matter for judgment should be too difficult for you, between blood and blood, between adjudication and adjudication and between assault and assault, any matters of contentions in your gates, then you will arise and ascend to the place which Yahweh your Elohim shall choose. And you will come to the priests, the Levites, and to the judge who shall come to be in those days; they will inquire and tell you the word of judgment. Then you must act in accordance with the word that they shall tell you from that place that Yahweh your Elohim shall choose. You must observe to act according to all that they shall direct you. In accordance with the law

by which they shall direct you and according to the judgment that they shall deliver to you, you shall act. You shall not withdraw from the word that they shall tell you, neither to the right nor left.

Context Group Version

If there arises a matter too hard for you in judgment, between blood and blood, between plea and plea, and between stroke and stroke, being matters of controversy inside your gates; then you shall arise, and go up to the place which YHWH your God shall choose; and you shall come to the priests the Levites, and to the judge that shall be in those days: and you shall inquire; and they shall show you the sentence of judgment. And you shall do according to the tenor of the sentence which they shall show you from that place which YHWH shall choose; and you shall observe to do according to all that they shall teach you: according to the tenor of the law which they shall teach you, and according to the judgment which they shall tell you, you shall do; you shall not turn aside from the sentence which they shall show you, to the right hand, nor to the left.

English Standard V. – UK

Legal Decisions by Priests and Judges

“If any case arises requiring decision between one kind of homicide and another, one kind of legal right and another, or one kind of assault and another, any case within your towns that is too difficult for you, then you shall arise and go up to the place that the Lord your God will choose. And you shall come to the Levitical priests and to the judge who is in office in those days, and you shall consult them, and they shall declare to you the decision. Then you shall do according to what they declare to you from that place that the Lord will choose. And you shall be careful to do according to all that they direct you. According to the instructions that they give you, and according to the decision which they pronounce to you, you shall do. You shall not turn aside from the verdict that they declare to you, either to the right hand or to the left.

Modern English Version

Courts of Law

If there arises a matter too difficult for you in judgment, between one kind of bloodshed and another, between one kind of lawsuit and another, and between one kind of assault and another, matters of controversy within your gates, then you must arise and go up to the place where the Lord your God shall choose. You must go to the Levitical priests or to the judge in office those days, and inquire, and they will show you the verdict of judgment. You shall do according to the verdict which they declare to you from the place where the Lord will choose to show you, and you must be careful to do all that they instruct you to do. You must do according to the terms of the law which they instruct you and according to the verdict which they tell you. You must not deviate from the sentence which they show you, to the right or to the left.

NASB

“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. 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. 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. 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.

New European Version

Judging

If there arises a matter too hard for you in judgment, between blood and blood, between plea and plea and between stroke and stroke, being matters of controversy within your gates, then go up to the place which Yahweh your God shall choose, and come to the priests the Levites and to the judge who shall be in those days and

ask. They shall show you the sentence of judgment. You must do according to the sentence which they shall show you from that place which Yahweh shall choose, and you must observe to do according to all that they shall teach you; according to the law which they shall teach you and according to the judgment which they shall tell you, that you shall do. You must not turn aside from the sentence which they shall show you, to the right hand or to the left.

New King James Version

“If a matter arises which is too hard for you to judge, between degrees of guilt for bloodshed, between one judgment or another, or between one punishment or another, matters of controversy within your gates, then you shall arise and go up to the place which the Lord your God chooses. 9 And you shall come to the priests, the Levites, and to the judge there in those days, and inquire of them; they shall pronounce upon you the sentence of judgment. 10 You shall do according to the sentence which they pronounce upon you in that place which the Lord chooses. And you shall be careful to do according to all that they order you. 11 According to the sentence of the law in which they instruct you, according to the judgment which they tell you, you shall do; you shall not turn aside to the right hand or to the left from the sentence which they pronounce upon you.

Young’s Updated LT

“When anything is too hard for you for judgment, between blood and blood, between plea and plea, and between stroke and stroke—matters of strife within your gates—then you have risen, and gone up unto the place on which Jehovah your God does fix, and have come in unto the priests, the Levites, and unto the judge who is in those days, and have inquired, and they have declared to you the word of judgment, and you have done according to the tenor of the word which they declare to you (they of that place which Jehovah does choose); and you have observed to do according to all that they direct you. According to the tenor of the law which they direct you, and according to the judgment which they say to you, [that] you will do; you will not turn aside from the word which they declare to you, right or left.

The gist of this passage:

If a case comes up which is too difficult for the judge to render a decision, there will be higher courts that he can go to. He will allow them to pronounce a verdict and then he must adhere to that verdict exactly.

Vv. 8–13 discuss the provision that Moses made for higher courts following his demise.

The Pulpit Commentary: *So long as Moses was with the people, they had in him one to whom, in the last resort, cases might be brought for decision which were found too difficult for the ordinary judges (Ex. 18:19–26). But, as he was not to be always with them, it was needful to provide a supreme court, to which such cases might be carried when they could no longer be decided by him; and such a court is here appointed to be held at the sanctuary.*⁶⁷

Deuteronomy 17:8a

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong’s Numbers
kîy (כִּי) [pronounced kee]	<i>for, that, because; when, at that time, which, what time</i>	explanatory or temporal conjunction; preposition	Strong's #3588 BDB #471

⁶⁷ *The Pulpit Commentary*; 1880-1919; by Joseph S. Exell, Henry Donald Maurice Spence-Jones, from e-sword, Deut. 17:8–13.

Deuteronomy 17:8a

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
pâlâ' (פָּלֵא) [pronounced paw-LAW]	<i>to do that which is extraordinary [marvelous, incredible], to do that which is unusually difficult [which may or may not be a miracle], to do an extraordinary thing</i>	3 rd person masculine singular, Niphal imperfect	Strong's #6381 BDB #810
The Niphal also includes the following meanings, if the context does not point to a particular action: <i>to be beyond one's power, be difficult [nearly impossible] to do; to be difficult to understand; to be wonderful, be extraordinary.</i>			
min (מִן) [pronounced min]	<i>from, off, out from, of, out of, away from, on account of, since, than, more than</i>	preposition of separation with the 2 nd person masculine singular suffix	Strong's #4480 BDB #577
dâbâr (דָּבָר) [pronounced daw ^b -VAWR]	<i>word, saying, doctrine, thing, matter, command; business, occupation; case; something; manner</i>	masculine singular noun	Strong's #1697 BDB #182
lâmed (ל) [pronounced l ^e]	<i>to, for, towards, in regards to, with reference to, as to, with regards to; belonging to; by</i>	directional/relational preposition	No Strong's # BDB #510
mîsh ^e pâṭ (מִשְׁפָּט) [pronounced mish ^e -PAWT]	<i>judgement, justice, a verdict rendered by a judge, a judicial decision, a judicial sentence, a verdict, a judgement of the court</i>	masculine singular noun with the definite article	Strong's #4941 BDB #1048

Translation: When a case [requiring] a verdict is more extraordinary than you... Moses does not say, "Give me a moment to speak to the judges right now..." and then launch into this section of Deuteronomy. He simply refers to those listening to him using the 2nd person masculine singular suffix. Some of these men sitting (or standing) before him are not judges now, but would be judges. Furthermore, all the people present needed to be aware of the existence of a higher court.

D. Davies: *When piety declines, a man becomes the slave of his senses. He is moved or terrified only by what is visible. He is afraid of a human frown; he is impervious to the Divine displeasure. The lamb which is unfit for barter, and which is scarce fit for food, will be deemed good enough for sacrifice.*⁶⁸

Now and again, a case will arise that is too difficult for a local judge. Perhaps he is too close to one of the participants; perhaps he is unable to make a judgment between the two parties. Whatever, a judge has come to a point where he does not feel that he can render a fair and just verdict.

The word found here, pâlâ' (פָּלֵא) [pronounced paw-LAW], is often associated with amazing things, things often done by God. However, the Niphal also includes the following meanings, if the context does not point to a particular action: *to be beyond one's power, be difficult [nearly impossible] to do; to be difficult to understand; to be wonderful, be extraordinary.*

⁶⁸ *The Pulpit Commentary*; 1880-1919; by Joseph S. Exell, Henry Donald Maurice Spence-Jones, from e-sword, Deut. 17:2-7.

Matthew Poole: [Moses] speaks to the inferior magistrates, who were erected in several cities, as appears by the opposition of these to them at Jerusalem. If, says he, you have not skill or confidence to determine so weighty and difficult a cause.⁶⁹

The Preacher's Complete Homiletical Commentary: Cases were often complicated and obscure, too hard for inferior judges to decide.⁷⁰

Deuteronomy 17:8b

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
bêyn (בֵּינַי) [pronounced <i>bane</i>]	<i>in the midst of, between, among;</i> when found twice, it means <i>between</i>	preposition	Strong's #996 BDB #107
dâm (דָּם) [pronounced <i>dawm</i>]	<i>blood, often visible blood;</i> <i>bloodshed, slaughter; bloodguilt;</i> <i>blood of the grape [wine]</i>	masculine singular noun	Strong's #1818 BDB #196
lâmed (ל) [pronounced <i>l'</i>]	<i>to, for, towards, in regards to</i>	directional/relational preposition	No Strong's # BDB #510
Bêyn (בֵּינַי) [pronounced <i>bane</i>] followed by lâmed (ל) [pronounced <i>l'</i>] can mean <i>between, an interval...unto, a difference between</i> . Used disjunctively to mean <i>whether...or</i> . This is often used with verbs of dividing, judging, knowing, teaching, etc. where distinguishing between two things is required.			
dâm (דָּם) [pronounced <i>dawm</i>]	<i>blood, often visible blood;</i> <i>bloodshed, slaughter; bloodguilt;</i> <i>blood of the grape [wine]</i>	masculine singular noun	Strong's #1818 BDB #196

Translation: ...—*whether two sides of a murder,...* I have taken a great deal of liberty here with the text, and am anxious to see what other translators did with this text. The first case suggested is a murder. Literally, this reads: *...between a murder to a murder...* Obviously, this does not make much sense, but this had to make sense to the people hearing Moses. I think what is being emphasized here is, there are two sides to this murder, innocent or guilty, premeditated or accidental; and the judge is unable to render a verdict.

In this verse, we have bêyn (בֵּינַי) [pronounced *bane*] followed by a word, followed by a lâmed (ל) [pronounced *l'*] followed by the repetition of that word. Here is how several very literal translations dealt with that. The passage in question reads, literally, *between a blood to [for] a blood*.

Translating “Between ___ to [for] ___.”

The Expanded Bible

Some cases that come before you, ·such as murder [between one kind of bloodshed and another; ^cintentional or unintentional], ·quarreling [between one kind of right and another], or ·attack [^lbetween one kind of assault and another; Ex. 21:18–21], may be too difficult to judge.

The Voice

If one person in your town brings a complaint against another to be judged at the city gate, and it's just too difficult for you to decide *what a fair resolution would be—if you can't determine* whether a killing was premeditated, or *if you can't decide* who in a dispute makes the best argument, or *if you can't tell* whether someone was injured accidentally or intentionally—then adjourn your proceedings

⁶⁹ Matthew Poole, *English Annotations on the Holy Bible*; ©1685; from e-Sword, Deut. 17:8 (slightly edited).

⁷⁰ *The Preacher's Complete Homiletical Commentary*; edited by Joseph S. Exell, 1892; from e-sword, Deut. 17:8–13.

Translating “Between ____ to [for] ____.”

Context Group Version	and go to the place the Eternal your God will choose.
English Standard V. – UK	If there arises a matter too hard for you in judgment, between blood and blood,...
Modern English Version	“If any case arises requiring decision between one kind of homicide and another,...
New King James Version	If there arises a matter too difficult for you in judgment, between one kind of bloodshed and another,...
	“If a matter arises which is too hard for you to judge, between degrees of guilt for bloodshed,...

Basically, the translator either makes an attempt to give this a literal translation; or they interpret what Moses is saying here, ignoring the actual words which are found here.

Chapter Outline

Charts, Graphics and Short Doctrines

Nearly every translation I can think of understands *blood* to refer to a homicide. Either a translation or the interpretation provided by the translator will be found below:

Interpreting “Between blood to blood”

First of all, this was difficult even from the beginning. The targum of Onkelos renders this: **judgment between unclean and clean blood...** So they give a translation which does not deal with homicide, per slightly edited.

Most literal translations have rendered this *between blood and blood* (the Revised Douay-Rheims, Greek LXX, AEB).

Some translations which give us an interpretation rather than a translation:

Bible in Basic English	If you are not able to give a decision as to who is responsible for a death,...
Easy English	It may be difficult for the judges in your towns to decide between good things and bad things.
Easy-to-Read Version–2001	"There might be some problems that are too hard for your courts to judge. It might be a murder case or an argument between two people.
Easy-to-Read Version–2008	"There might be some problems that are too hard for your courts to judge. It might be a murder case...
<i>The Message</i>	When matters of justice come up that are too much for you—hard cases regarding homicides,...

Quite a number of translations were very similar to the Message and the Easy-to-Read—2008; where essentially, there is just a murder case of some sort before the judge that he cannot determine a judgment for. God’s Word™, NIRV, NCV, ISV, HCSB, etc.

Some translations simply present this as a matter of guilt versus innocence:

The Living Bible	“If a case arises that is too hard for you to decide—for instance, whether someone is guilty of murder when there is insufficient evidence,...
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Some translations suggest that we are making a judgment between types of homicides (basically, between voluntary and involuntary manslaughter):

Common English Bible	If some legal dispute in your cities is too difficult for you to decide—say, between different kinds of bloodshed,...
Contemporary English V.	It may be difficult to find out the truth in some legal cases in your town. You may not be able to decide if someone was killed accidentally or murdered.
New Life Version	"There may be a problem too hard for you to decide, between two kinds of killing,...
New Living Translation	“Suppose a case arises in a local court that is too hard for you to decide—for instance, whether someone is guilty of murder or only of manslaughter,...

Interpreting “Between blood to blood”

Translation for Translators	“Sometimes it will be very difficult for the judges to decide what really happened. He might be trying to decide whether, when someone injured or killed another person, he did it accidentally or deliberately.
New RSV	If a judicial decision is too difficult for you to make between one kind of bloodshed and another,...
Other translations which agree here: the Knox Bible, the REB, the Amplified Bible, the Expanded Bible, and the ESV.	

I would think that all of these opinions are in view. A Bible translation cannot spend a lot of time interpreting every single phrase, or Bibles would be 2x or even 5x their size today. One Bible translation which attempts to do this is the NET Bible (more or less); and it is about 3x the size of a simple translation (the Expanded Bible Translation is another).

What Moses is doing is just giving some general examples of cases which there is a case too difficult for the judge to make a determination. Did Charley Brown commit a murder? If Charley Brown killed Linus, was it intentional or was this involuntary manslaughter? In other words, what we find here does not limit the cases which might be taken to a higher court; they are simply examples of such cases that may confound a good judge.

[Chapter Outline](#)

[Charts, Graphics and Short Doctrines](#)

Matthew Poole: *[This refers to] capital causes in matter of bloodshed, whether it be wilful or casual murder, whether punishable or pardonable by those laws, Ex. 21:13,20,22,28 22:2 Num. 35:11,16,19 Deu 19:4,10.*⁷¹ So Poole allows for the two primary interpretations.

This list of citations above by Poole gives us most of the times that murder and/or manslaughter are discussed, as this was a very important consideration. We understand murder, today, to include *intent*. There are, of course, exceptions to intent. For instance, if you recklessly endanger the lives of others (drive a vehicle under the influence of an intoxicant; or you engage in a robbery with a gun), then you will generally receive a harsher sentence from a person who kills purely by accident with no intent whatsoever (such a person might even receive no sentence).

There are certain natural exceptions to intent. If you are protecting your home or family, many times killing a thief or someone who breaks into your home is allowed (depending upon the state in which you live, of course). However, this was certainly allowed in the Mosaic economy. Killing someone as a member of the military was also exempt from charges of murder.

Deuteronomy 17:8c

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
bêyn (בֵּין) [pronounced <i>bane</i>]	<i>in the midst of, between, among;</i> when found twice, it means <i>between</i>	preposition	Strong's #996 BDB #107
dîyn (דִּין) [pronounced <i>deen</i>]	<i>judgment; cause, plea;</i> <i>condemnation, judgment;</i> <i>dispute, legal suit, strife;</i> <i>government</i>	masculine singular noun	Strong's #1779 BDB #192

⁷¹ Matthew Poole, *English Annotations on the Holy Bible*; ©1685; from e-Sword, Deut. 17:8.

Deuteronomy 17:8c

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
lâmed (ל) [pronounced <i>leh</i>]	<i>to, for, towards, in regards to</i>	directional/relational preposition	No Strong's # BDB #510
Bêyn (בין) [pronounced <i>bane</i>] followed by lâmed (ל) [pronounced <i>leh</i>] can mean <i>between, an interval...unto, a difference between</i> . Used disjunctively to mean <i>whether...or</i> . This is often used with verbs of dividing, judging, knowing, teaching, etc. where distinguishing between two things is required.			
dîyn (דין) [pronounced <i>deen</i>]	<i>judgment; cause, plea; condemnation, judgment; dispute, legal suit, strife; government</i>	masculine singular noun	Strong's #1779 BDB #192
This is also spelled dûwn (דין) [pronounced <i>door</i>]. The noun and verb are spelled the same.			
NRSV, "one kind of legal right and another"; TEV, "certain cases of property rights"; NJB, "conflicting claims"; REB, "civil rights"; JPSOA, "civil law"; NET Bible, "legal claim"; NIV, "lawsuits" ⁷²			

Translation: ...whether two sides of a legal dispute,... The case at hand might be a simple legal dispute or a civil action of one person against another.

The Cambridge Bible⁷³ suggests that these are questions of property.

Gill: ...between plea and plea; of the plaintiff on one side and of the defendant on the other, and both have so much to say in their own cause, that it is hard to decide which is in the right and which is in the wrong, whether in capital or pecuniary cases.⁷⁴

Matthew Poole: [This would be a reference to] civil causes or suits between plaintiffs and defendants about words or estates.⁷⁵

Deuteronomy 17:8d

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
w ^e (or v ^e) (ו, or ו) [pronounced <i>weh</i>]	<i>and, even, then; namely; when; since, that; though; as well as</i>	simple wâw conjunction	No Strong's # BDB #251
bêyn (בין) [pronounced <i>bane</i>]	<i>in the midst of, between, among; when found twice, it means between</i>	preposition	Strong's #996 BDB #107
nega ^c (עגה) [pronounced <i>NEH-gahg</i>]	<i>bruise, injury, wound; swelling, eruption [on the skin]; mark [from a plague]; stripes [from beating]</i>	masculine singular noun	Strong's #5061 BDB #619

⁷² Dr. Bob Utley, Copyright © 2014 Bible Lessons International; www.freebiblecommentary.org; from e-sword; Deut. 17:8–13.

⁷³ *The Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges*; 1882-1921; by Cambridge University Press; General Editor J. J. S. Perowne, from e-sword, Deut. 17:8.

⁷⁴ Dr. John Gill, *John Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible*; from e-Sword, Deut. 17:8.

⁷⁵ Matthew Poole, *English Annotations on the Holy Bible*; ©1685; from e-Sword, Deut. 17:8.

Deuteronomy 17:8d

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
lâmed (ל) [pronounced l ^e]	<i>to, for, towards, in regards to</i>	directional/relational preposition	No Strong's # BDB #510
Bêyn (בין) [pronounced <i>bane</i>] followed by lâmed (ל) [pronounced l ^e] can mean <i>between, an interval...unto, a difference between</i> . Used disjunctively to mean <i>whether...or</i> . This is often used with verbs of dividing, judging, knowing, teaching, etc. where distinguishing between two things is required.			
nega ^c (עגב) [pronounced NEH-gahg ^h]	<i>bruise, injury, wound; swelling, eruption [on the skin]; mark [from a plague]; stripes [from beating]</i>	masculine singular noun	Strong's #5061 BDB #619
Some believe that this refers to leprosy; and this is discussed at the beginning of the translations. This interpretation will not be discussed below.			

Translation: *...or two sides of an injury case...* Someone might be injured—whether this is intentional or accidental might be what is being discussed. Guilt or innocence may be in play as well.

The Cambridge Bible⁷⁶ suggests that this is determining the proper compensation for physical injury.

Gill: *...and between stroke and stroke; blow or wound which one man received from another, and for which he commences a suit of law upon it, Ex. 21:18 or for assault and battery.*⁷⁷

As before, these are examples that came to Moses's mind. He has settled a number of disputes, but he was not giving a number of limiting examples.

Keil and Delitzsch give this looser translation: *[If there is to you a matter] too hard for you to decide according to what legal provisions a fatal blow, or dispute on some civil matter, or a bodily injury, is to be settled.*⁷⁸

Deuteronomy 17:8e

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
d ^e bârîym (דְּבָרִים) [pronounced daw ^b -vawr-EEM]	<i>words, sayings, doctrines, commands; things, matters, affairs; reports</i>	masculine plural construct	Strong's #1697 BDB #182
rîyb (רִיב) [pronounced ree ^b v]	<i>strife, dispute, controversy, legal contention, forensic cause; an argument used in a public discussion or debate</i>	masculine plural noun	Strong's #7379 BDB #936

⁷⁶ *The Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges*; 1882-1921; by Cambridge University Press; General Editor J. J. S. Perowne, from e-sword, Deut. 17:8.

⁷⁷ Dr. John Gill, *John Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible*; from e-Sword, Deut. 17:8.

⁷⁸ Keil and Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament*; from e-Sword; Deut. 17:8–9.

Deuteronomy 17:8e

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
Rîyb can also mean, <i>litigation, lawsuits</i> . ⁷⁹			
b ^e (ב) [pronounced b ^{eh}]	<i>in, into, at, by, near, on, with, before, upon, against, by means of, among, within</i>	a preposition of proximity	Strong's #none BDB #88
sha'ar (שַׁעַר) [pronounced SHAH- gahr]	<i>gates [control of city can be implied]; entrance [through the gates]</i>	masculine plural noun with the 2 nd person masculine singular suffix	Strong's #8179 BDB #1044

Translation: ...—disputed words within your city—... Whatever disputation is in court in your city, in the city gates (literally). Our court cases are tried in courtrooms; their court cases were tried in the open air by the gates of the city.

This is simply a general catch-all phrase, to take in any sort of dispute which is brought before the court.

Gill: *[This] phrase is general, as Aben Ezra observes, and takes in everything in which anything difficult might occur.*⁸⁰

Gary North: *The settlement of disputes between men is supposed to reflect the final settlement of disputes between God and man. In God's court, there will be a final settlement. Every case will be brought to a conclusion. There will be either reconciliation or permanent separation between the Judge and the judged.*⁸¹

North then brings up the matter of settling disputes today within the church. In individual local churches, sometimes disputes between members or between fellow Christians can be resolved by the hierarchy of that church. Ideally speaking, believers ought to try to work out things together. I recall working out a dispute with a neighbor of mine—a dispute which involved money—not very much today, but a lot to either of us then. We were both Christians and his son claimed to work about twice the hours than he really worked (from my point of view); and the father believed that the kid actually worked those hours. The father relinquished the \$35 in dispute (which was significant to both of us at that time); and I donated that amount to a Christian organization.

Next step would have been to try to settle this matter in a local church. This should be the way that believers interact with one another, recognizing that, even when dealing with money, that agreements can be reached. We ought not spend our time in civil courts suing other believers.

Some people have an almost innate ability to read others when they are speaking. They can look at them and make reasonably good judgments as to their speaking the truth or not. Some people are very attuned to what a person says, and are able to hear each word and each phrase, and recognize when something is being said that clearly contradicts the basic story. Some know how to take two people in a trial and cause them to interact in such a way as to be able to see who is lying and who is telling the truth. Solomon did this with the two women, each of whom claimed to be the mother of the disputed child in **1Kings 3** ([HTML](#)) ([PDF](#)) ([WPD](#)). However, despite having such acute observational skills along with the understanding of human behavior, there will be times when a judge recognizes that he cannot decide a case justly. That is the purpose of the section of Deut. 17.

⁷⁹ *The Pulpit Commentary*; 1880-1919; by Joseph S. Exell, Henry Donald Maurice Spence-Jones, courtesy of e-sword, Deut. 1:12.

⁸⁰ Dr. John Gill, *John Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible*; from e-Sword, Deut. 17:8.

⁸¹ From <http://www.garynorth.com/Deuteronomy2.pdf> (p. 629); accessed May 15, 2016.

No pope required: Although this never occurred to me, the Preacher's Complete Homiletical Commentary says that this is *not* about matters of doctrine.⁸² Although I think that the context and the verbiage used is clear about that, I add this just in case someone is reading this and somehow comes to that conclusion. This passage is all about court cases and nothing more. Apparently there is a good reason to make this distinction:

Dr. Cumming: *[W]hen there is a controversy, it is not the high priest that is to decide it; but it is the priest or the Levite—a layman—or the judge—a layman also. Therefore if they will quote this passage as a precedent for Papal infallibility, deciding doctrinal discussions and expelling them that will not submit to it, they ought to quote fully; and if they quote fully, they will see it is not controversy about doctrine, but about civil matters; and next, that the controversy is to be appealed not to an ecclesiastic only, but to a layman as well.*⁸³

There is absolutely no justification anywhere in Scripture for papal infallibility (including this passage). In fact, there is no justification whatsoever in Scripture for a pope. The New Testament allows for the pastor of a local church to be the authority in that local church (and he is subject to the Scriptures). And, if the congregation do not like what he is teaching, be it right or wrong, they can walk right out that door and never come back. There is no justification for the psychological tactics of some cults, which separate their members from family and friends, and require them (physically or psychologically) to remain a part of their group.

There is one true church today, and that is the *body* of believers. Some of them may actually be Catholic; some may be Baptists; some may have renounced their faith. The body of Christ, the Living Church, is simply made up of all those who have believed in Jesus Christ at some point in their lives.

Now, there are local churches, which is a subgroup of believers in a similar geographical area who gather to receive the teaching of the Word of God. The teaching might be outstanding and it might be lousy; the congregation might be large, medium or very small.

As you can see, none of this requires a pope to function. None of this requires an amazing-looking church building to attend. Like many others, I enjoy great architecture, and this is certainly found in many religious buildings. When I visited Thailand, I enjoyed the variety of architecture, including that of the religious buildings there. I can even understand how a person entering into a beautifully designed church might be cowed by the atmosphere, or might *feel* just a little more holy. However, you can have the most beautiful building ever with a marvelous choir, and yet, there is little by way of good teaching in that beautiful building. Similarly, you might have a typical tract house, 5 blocks away, tucked into a quiet neighborhood, and excellent teaching might be provided there for a small group of 5 or 10 (either in person, by FX hookup or by use of MP3 files or the internet). Spiritual growth occurs in that quiet, unassuming house (assuming that the teaching is good); and no spiritual growth occurs in amazingly designed and built church 5 blocks away (if the teaching there is inaccurate).

Apparently, this passage is misapplied to suggest papal infallibility; so let's explore the pope question further:

Steve Rudd: Why Peter was not a good choice for the first pope

20 reasons why Peter Not A Good Choice For The First Pope

1. Peter was just one of the 12 apostles (Mt. 10:1-2; Mk. 3:13-19; Lk. 6:13-16).
2. Peter was just one of the three close friends of Jesus (Mt. 17:1; 26:36-37).
3. Peter denied the Lord Jesus three times (Mt. 26:69-75; Lk. 22:54-62).
4. Peter was a married man: 1 Cor. 9:5; Matthew 8:14
5. Peter was rebuked by the Lord (Mt. 16:23; Jn. 21:20-22).

⁸² *The Preacher's Complete Homiletical Commentary*; edited by Joseph S. Exell, 1892; from e-sword, Deut. 17:8–13.

⁸³ *The Preacher's Complete Homiletical Commentary*; edited by Joseph S. Exell, 1892; from e-sword, Deut. 17:8–13.

Steve Rudd: Why Peter was not a good choice for the first pope

6. Peter was rebuked by Paul (Gal. 2:11).
7. Peter never accepted reverence (Acts 10:25-26); (No man should, Rev. 19:10; 22:9).
8. Peter was not superior to the other apostles (Mt. 18:18; 2 Cor. 11:5; 12:11).
9. Peter and the other apostles, in consideration of their demise, wrote letters preserving their combined God-given revelations for all time (2 Pet. 1:12-15; 3:1-2; Eph. 3:3-5.).
10. Peter along with the other apostles were to "sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel" (Mt. 19:28).
11. Peter was not the head of the church - Jesus is the only head of His church (Eph. 1:22-23; Col. 1:19)
12. Peter was not selected to be the Vicar of Christ on earth (no references in the Bible).
13. Peter never talked about any "successors" to him.
14. Peter and Paul never wore any of the many titles of the modern Popes (2 Pet. 3:15).
15. Peter and no other disciple(s) were to be "the greatest in the kingdom" (Mt. 18:1-4; 20:20-28); rather, they were to be equal.
16. Peter's name in the Greek is Petros (a detached stone, Jn. 1:42) but Jesus said the church would be built upon the "rock" or Petra (a mass of rock) - Mt. 16:18.
17. Matthew 16:18 Peter is masculine gender and rock in feminine gender; in context they cannot refer to the same thing.
18. Peter and Paul declared that Jesus was "the chief cornerstone" (Acts 4:12; Eph. 2:20).
19. Peter and the other apostles were merely the layers of the foundation Stone - Jesus (Acts 4:11-12; Eph. 2:19-20).
20. Finally, Jesus Himself said that "all authority" was given to Him both "in heaven and on earth" (Mt. 28:18-20).

From <http://www.bible.ca/catholic-infallibility.htm> accessed April 29, 2016.

[Chapter Outline](#)

[Charts, Graphics and Short Doctrines](#)

For further study.

Links to Further Study on the Pope

The false doctrine of Roman Catholic papal infallibility by Steve Rudd.

<http://www.bible.ca/catholic-infallibility.htm> Rudd examines this question from a doctrinal perspective.

Was Saint Peter the first pope? From gotquestions.org (which is generally a pretty good website).

<http://www.gotquestions.org/Peter-first-pope.html> Basic question; good answer.

Did Jesus really make Peter pope? William Saunders examines exactly the claims made about Peter being pope. <https://www.ewtn.com/library/ANSWERS/PETPOPE.HTM>

The "Pope Peter" Fraud from Ex-Catholics for Christ.

<http://www.excatholicsforchrist.com/articles.php?PageURL=Peter.htm> This looks at the question from an historical perspective.

Was Peter the First Pope? by Moisés Pinedo

<https://www.apologeticspress.org/apcontent.aspx?category=11&article=2561> This approach seems to be centered on logic and the application of Scriptures.

Changing one's mind of a deeply held religious belief is quite difficult. One has to make the decision on whether to accept the authority of Scripture over what one deeply already believes.

[Chapter Outline](#)

[Charts, Graphics and Short Doctrines](#)

Continuing on this series of tangents: I made the decision quite early in my Christian life as to what would be my authority. My best friend and my ex-wife's best friend were both charismatics; two of my brothers were in the charismatic movement. I realized that I need to be able to make a determination here about my own spiritual future; and that it required me to firmly establish the authority for my life, which I decided would have to be the Word of God. Given that, I spent a great deal of time studying the gift of tongues and the charismatic movement, resulting in one of the more thorough early [studies](#).

So that there is no misunderstanding, I did not become a perfect believer after making this decision (the decision that the Bible would be my highest authority)—anything but—however, this at least pointed me in the right direction as a believer.

Deuteronomy 17:8f

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
w ^e (or v ^e) (וּ, or ו) [pronounced <i>weh</i>]	<i>and, even, then; namely; when; since, that; though; as well as</i>	simple wâw conjunction	No Strong's # BDB #251
qûwm (קוּם) [pronounced <i>koom</i>]	<i>to stand, to rise up, to get up; to establish, to establish a vow, to cause a vow to stand, to confirm or to fulfill a vow</i>	2 nd person masculine singular, Qal perfect	Strong's #6965 BDB #877
w ^e (or v ^e) (וּ, or ו) [pronounced <i>weh</i>]	<i>and, even, then; namely; when; since, that; though; as well as</i>	simple wâw conjunction	No Strong's # BDB #251
'âlâh (אָלַח) [pronounced <i>gaw-LAWH</i>]	<i>to go up, to ascend, to come up, to rise, to climb</i>	2 nd person masculine singular, Qal perfect	Strong's #5927 BDB #748
'el (אֶל) [pronounced <i>eh</i>]	<i>unto; into, among, in; toward, to; against; concerning, regarding; besides, together with; as to</i>	directional preposition (respect or deference may be implied)	Strong's #413 BDB #39
mâqôwm (מִקוּמָם) [pronounced <i>maw-KOHH</i>]	<i>place, situated; for a soldier, it may mean where he is stationed; for people in general, it would be their place of abode (which could be their house or their town)</i>	masculine singular noun with the definite article	Strong's #4725 BDB #879
bâchar (בָּחַר) [pronounced <i>baw-KHAHR</i>]	<i>to choose; Gesenius also lists to prove, to try, to examine, to approve, to choose, to select; to love, to delight in [something], to desire</i>	3 rd person masculine singular, Qal imperfect	Strong's #977 BDB #103
YHWH (יהוה) [pronunciation is possibly <i>yhoh-WAH</i>]	transliterated variously as <i>Jehovah, Yahweh, Y^ehowah</i>	proper noun	Strong's #3068 BDB #217
'Ēlôhîym (אֱלֹהִים) [pronounced <i>el-o-HEEM</i>]	<i>God; gods, foreign gods, god; rulers, judges; superhuman ones, angels; transliterated Elohim</i>	masculine plural noun with the 2 nd person masculine singular	Strong's #430 BDB #43

Deuteronomy 17:8f

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
b ^e (ב) [pronounced b ^{eh}]	<i>in, into, through; among, in the midst of; at, by, near, on, before, in the presence of, upon; with; to, unto, upon, up to; in respect to, on account of; by means of, about, concerning</i>	primarily a preposition of proximity; however, it has a multitude of functions; with the 3 rd person masculine singular suffix	No Strong's # BDB #88

Translation: ...then you will rise up and you will go to a place chosen by Y^ehowah your Elohim in it. God will have set up appellant courts, but they do not work quite like our appellant courts. That is, one party does not appeal the case, and it goes up to the next court. The judge himself has determined that he cannot render a fair and just verdict, so the case goes to a higher court. Essentially, the judge recuses himself, but not necessarily for the same reasons a judge would recuse himself today.

Gill: *[This would be] to Jerusalem, to the great sanhedrim or court of judicature, to which the inferior judges were to apply themselves, in matters of moment and difficulty, for instruction, information, and direction; it being supposed that in such a court such like cases may have been brought before them, and they were expert and understanding in them.*⁸⁴

V. 8 reads: *When a case [requiring] a verdict is more extraordinary than you—whether two sides of a murder, whether two sides of a legal dispute, or two sides of an injury case—disputed words within your city—then you will rise up and you will go to a place chosen by Y^ehowah your Elohim in it.* Back in Deut. 16:18, Moses provided for judges and other officials to be set up in each city, *and they were empowered to hear and determine causes according to law.*⁸⁵ However, if, for any reason, a case came before them that they were unable to make, in their own opinion, a just decision, then they could take this case to a higher court. There is no dishonor attached to making such a decision to defer to a higher court.

Higher Courts in the Land of Israel (Deuteronomy 17:8)

Pâlâ' (פָּלֵא) [pronounced paw-LAW] is a verb which means *to do that which is extraordinary, to do that which is unusually difficult.* This is often used to describe God's most unusual works (Ex. 3:20 34:10 Joshua 3:5). Strong's #6381 BDB #810. There are several reasons which would cause a case to be taken to a higher court. The judge may not feel qualified to render a verdict so that it is in keeping with the Law of Moses. That is, there is a point of law in God's Word which the judge does not feel entirely comfortable with—he does not fully understand it. Therefore, this case would go to a priest to interpret God's Word. A second reason is that the judge, having heard all of the facts of the case, may not feel qualified to render a verdict. When there is a strong disagreement between two parties and the testimony of the witnesses is contradictory, a local judge may not feel competent to determine who is lying or mistaken in their testimony. A third reason to send a case to a higher court would be local prejudice. Certain people are well-known and popular in a local area; they are often given preferential treatment in the court system over a stranger. If the local judge feels he cannot render an impartial verdict, again he make excuse himself and allow a higher court to make the decision.

There will be court cases which are difficult to determine. We have already covered in several passages what is to be done in the case of involuntary manslaughter. God would set apart several cities of refuge throughout the kingdom of Israel and the person who has accidentally killed another is to flee to one of these cities (Num. 35:11–28). We have three matters mentioned here, which are not necessarily exhaustive, but the bulk of the reasons to go to a higher court. Whether an assault is completely attributable to one person or another

⁸⁴ Dr. John Gill, *John Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible*; from e-Sword, Deut. 17:8.

⁸⁵ Matthew Henry, *Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible*; from e-Sword, Deut. 17:8–13.

Higher Courts in the Land of Israel (Deuteronomy 17:8)

([between stroke and stroke](#)), whether a homicide is the result of premeditation ([between blood and blood](#)) or whether it was accidental, whether one person's legal right supercedes another's ([between plea and plea](#)). These are all difficult matters and there will always be cases which are not clear-cut. A precedent had already been set for going to a higher court.

Jethro (Moses' very influential father-in-law) suggested to Moses to set up a court system which he, Moses, would oversee and be the final word of appeal. The lower judges took the bulk of the cases and the difficult ones would be brought to Moses (Ex. 18:17–23). Moses, when a case or a question was beyond his ability to render a decision, he would take the case to the supreme court of heaven (Lev. 27:5).

Note that this is quite different from our appellant court system. If a convicted criminal wants another shot, he can often take his case to an appellant court. Unfortunately, often new evidence is not the criterion, but some legal mistake is often the reason a case is allowed to be appealed. In God's system designed for Israel, the local court itself could opt out of the proceedings if they did not feel as though they could render a just verdict. Therefore, strictly speaking, these were not appellant courts as we understand them to be.

Sometimes the problem is simply the fact that a crime or event has taken place within a city's gates. If such an altercation takes place between one who is well-known and a stranger, it is difficult to render a fair and impartial decision. What is important is not who your friends are, but what the law is and whether or not it has been transgressed. For those who belong to gangs or organizations or families where you stick by someone from your group no matter what they have done, to the point of lying and covering up or withholding evidence, then your thinking is in direct opposition to God's Word.

Chapter Outline

Charts, Graphics and Short Doctrines

Deuteronomy 17:9a

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
ו ^e (or ו ^e) (ו, or ו) [pronounced <i>weh</i>]	<i>and, even, then; namely; when; since, that; though; as well as</i>	simple wâw conjunction	No Strong's # BDB #251
בֹּהֵן (בוה) [pronounced <i>boh</i>]	<i>to come in, to come, to go in, to go, to enter, to advance; to attain</i>	2 nd person masculine singular, Qal perfect	Strong's #935 BDB #97
עַל (אל) [pronounced <i>eh</i>]	<i>unto; into, among, in; toward, to; against; concerning, regarding; besides, together with; as to</i>	directional preposition (respect or deference may be implied)	Strong's #413 BDB #39
כֹּהֵן (כה) [pronounced <i>koh-HANE</i>]	<i>priest; principal officer or chief ruler</i>	masculine plural noun with the definite article	Strong's #3548 BDB #463
לְוִיִּים (לויים) [pronounced <i>l^e-vee-YIM</i>]	<i>joined to, attached; garland, crown; and is transliterated Levites</i>	plural gentilic adjective with the definite article	Strong's #3881 BDB #532

Translation: *And you will go to the Levitical priests,...* The appellant court might be staffed by those of the Levite tribe. Not all of the Levites were priests; but most of the Levites had a job related to the spiritual aspects of Israel.

This is the first time in Scripture where the priests and the Levites are possibly spoken of as being one and the same. They are not, but that impression can be given here. Let's cover the language first. This reads, literally, [and coming unto the priests the Levites and unto the judge who is in those days...](#) The words *the Levites* can be taken in two ways: (1) this is a list of different people who can be appealed to. As the times change for Israel, the system of government will change somewhat; and those who are spiritually discerning will change from time to time. This allows us three possible places to go to appeal court cases. (2) The other interpretation is that *the Levites* is modifying *priests*. Judge is in the singular, but priests and Levites are both plural; and only priests and judge are preceded by a preposition and a conjunction. This linguistic construction would tend to indicate that *Levites* modifies *priests*. Furthermore, *priests* and *Levites* are both preceded by a definite article. This is the common way, in the Hebrew, of modifying a noun (the adjective usually comes second⁸⁶). This is why some translations render this [unto the Levitical priest \(s\) and unto the judge](#) (*The Amplified Bible*, the NASB and the RSV are similar here). The NIV renders this *the priests who are Levites*. The KJV, *Young's Translation* and *The Emphasized Bible* all translate this quite literally (as I have), inserting commas which are not a part of the Hebrew or Greek languages. However, that does not mean that *priests* and *Levites* are synonymous terms. All priests are Levites, as all priests are descended from Aaron and Aaron is a Levite. However, not all Levites are priests. Levites were given by God to assist the Aaronic priesthood. We will see a similar construction in Deut. 17:18 and 24:8, indicating that the two would be grouped together. Still, this does not mean that there is any mixture or confusion of duties nor does this mean that every Levite is a priest.

The Amplified Bible has this to say: *The Levites were divided into three groups, the descendants of Levi's three sons, Gershon, Kohath, and Merari. But only those Israelites could be priests who were descendants of Levi through Kohath's grandson Aaron. The priesthood was made hereditary in the family of Aaron and restricted to it; however, even some of these were debarred by legal disabilities (Lev. 21:16ff). The other families of Levi's descendants, the Gershonites and Meraites and those Kohathites who were not descended from Aaron were charged with the care of the sanctuary. The priests ministered at the altar.*⁸⁷

Ideally speaking, the priests would be the ones who best know the Word of God.⁸⁸

J. Orr: *The duty of the priest was not to invent laws, but to interpret the existing Law of God.*⁸⁹

Clarke: *These directions are given to the common magistrates, who might not be able to judge of or apply the law in all cases that might be brought before them. The priests and Levites, who were lawyers by birth and continual practice, were reasonably considered as the best qualified to decide on difficult points.*⁹⁰

This is a topic discussed in the staffing of Solomon's cabinet in [1Kings 4 \(HTML\)](#) ([PDF](#)) ([WPD](#)) and I think that the word *priest* ought to always be associated with a spiritual position, and that it does not mean simply *officer* or something along those lines. This is an assertion made by several commentators because they were confused by the number of men called *priests* in Solomon's cabinet. However, that should not be seen as a problem; nor should it cause any confusion.

Because Israel was a theocracy, it is reasonable for there to be an overlap between spiritual and political positions. These Levitical priests apparently have, to some degree, an office which involves them making judgments in court cases.

The Levites who are priests actually come from a particular family of the priests; they are those descended from Aaron (the priesthood is based upon a family line, something which does not quite fit with the present-day Catholic

⁸⁶ I cannot recall a single exception to this.

⁸⁷ *The Amplified Bible*, The Lockman Foundation; ©1965 by Zondervan Publishing House; p. 282.

⁸⁸ By the time of the incarnation, these people became the greatest distorters of the Law.

⁸⁹ *The Pulpit Commentary*; 1880-1919; by Joseph S. Exell, Henry Donald Maurice Spence-Jones, from e-sword, Deut. 17:8-13.

⁹⁰ Adam Clarke, *Adam Clarke's Commentary on the Bible*; from e-Sword, Deut. 17:8.

priest). Aaron is in the line of Levi (as is, obviously, his brother Moses). I am not sure if there are any priests outside of the Aaronic line; however, the sons of Levi did have positions in Israel which were related to Israel's relationship with God. It is unclear whether the word *priest* would have been applied to these other positions.

Aaron had 4 sons, Nadab, Abihu, Eleazar, and Ithamar (Ex. 6:23). The first two died the sin unto death (Lev. 10:12 Num. 3:4 1Chron. 24:2); and the priests (including the High Priest) came from the latter two lines, as per Ex. 28:1 ("Then bring near to you Aaron your brother, and his sons with him, from among the people of Israel, to serve me as priests—Aaron and Aaron's sons, Nadab and Abihu, Eleazar and Ithamar."). See *The Kings, Prophets and Priests of Judah* (chart) in **1Chron. 6** ([HTML](#)) ([PDF](#)) ([WPD](#)). Most of the priests in Israel were known to come from Eleazar or Ithamar.

King, Prophet, Priest (a graphic); from [Windows in the Word](#); accessed May 13, 2016.

Speaking of *kings, prophets and priests*; these are 3 offices with the Lord Jesus Christ holds simultaneously and uniquely.

Although we have the words *Levite* and *priest(s)* associated together in many Scriptures (Joshua 3:31 8:33. 2Chron. 30:27 Neh. 11:20 Isa. 66:21 Jer. 33:21 Ezek. 44:15); this does not contradict any of what is written above, as Aaron (and therefore, his sons) is from the tribe of Levi.

Far more important than exactly which line the priests are descended from is that their primary purpose was to teach the people: Deut. 33:10

Lev. 10:11 ("[Y]ou [Levites] are to teach the people of Israel all the statutes that the LORD has spoken to them by Moses.") Ezra 7:10 Jer. 18:18 Hag. 2:11–12 Mal. 2:7 (For the lips of a priest should guard knowledge, and people should seek instruction from his mouth, for he is the messenger of the LORD of hosts).⁹¹ (ESV)



The priesthood is important to us in the Church Age for two primary reasons: (1) the High Priest represented Jesus Christ; they were a type of Christ, and their ceremonies were related to the work of Jesus; (2) we are priests in the Church Age. That is, all believers in the Church Age are priests. What does that mean? In the Old Testament, a believer had to go to a priest to offer up sacrifices and to obtain forgiveness from God (at least ceremonially). We represent ourselves to God directly in the Church Age, acting as our own priests.

Ultimately, the work for this doctrine probably came from R. B. Thieme, Jr. Unfortunately, Bible Doctrine Resource has not yet credited the authors with the doctrines that they have collected. This particular examination of the priesthood appears to be the work of Pastor Jack M. Ballinger of Maranatha Church in Oklahoma (I originally found it at Bible Doctrine Resources, but then traced it back to Ballinger). I am assuming that Ballinger received a great deal of his training from R. B. Thieme, Jr.

Doctrine of the Priesthood (Ballinger, Thieme)

- I. Preliminary considerations and terminology.
 - A. Definition: a priest is one who is authorized to perform the sacred rites of a religion, whether heathen (Gen.41:45; Acts.14:13) or Biblical (Mt.8:4; 1Pet.2:5,9).
 - B. The basic Hebrew word is כֹּהֵן *cohen*; the Greek term is ἱερεὺς, *hierous*; also ἀρχιερεὺς, *archieurus*: high priest.
 - C. Essential features of a Biblical priesthood include:

⁹¹ Scriptures from E. W. Bullinger, *Companion Bible Notes*; 1909 in the Public Domain; from e-Sword, Deut. 17:11.

Doctrine of the Priesthood (Ballinger, Thieme)

1. Membership in the human race (Heb.5:1 “For every high priest taken from men”; Heb.2:17 “Therefore, He had to be made like His brethren in all things”).
 2. Divine appointment (Heb.5:4 “And no one takes the honor to himself, but receives it when He is called by God, even as Aaron was”).
 3. Representation (Heb.5:1 “appointed on behalf of men”). The stones on Aaron’s shoulders were inscribed with the names of the 12 tribes.
 4. Sacrifice (Heb.5:1; 8:3).
 5. Compassion for those he represents (Heb.5:2; cp. 2:18; 4:15).
- D. Categories of priesthood authorized by God include:
1. Individual priesthood – the only recorded example is that of one Melchizedek, King of ancient Salem (Heb.7:1-3; Gen.14:18-20).
 2. Levitical priesthood, which involved a regular priestly succession within the tribe of Levi and was authorized by the Mosaic Covenant (Ex.28:1; 32:25-29; Num.8:5-22).
 3. The High Priesthood of Jesus Christ, which superseded the Levitical priesthood and is patterned after the order of Melchizedek (Ps.110:4; Heb.5:10).
 4. Royal and universal priesthood of believers of the Church Age, which partakes of the priesthood of Christ (1Pet.2:9; Rev.1:6).
 5. The nation of Israel as a whole, which acted as the representative of God to the Gentile nations until temporarily replaced by the Church (Ex.19:6; Mt.21:33-46).
- II. The Levitical priesthood.
- A. Some essential features of the Levitical priesthood include:
1. They administered the ceremonial code of the Mosaic Covenant (Heb.8:4,5; 9:1-6).
 2. They taught the people the Law (Heb.7:11; Neh.8:7-9; 2Chr.17:8,9;
 3. They had to be without physical defect to serve (Lev.21:17-21), and their office ended with death (Heb.7:16,23).
 4. The family of Aaron supplied the nation with the high priest based on hereditary succession (Ex.28:1; 40:15).
 5. They had no allotted territory, but were given 48 cities within Israel (Num.35:1-8).
 - a. This fulfilled Jacob’s dying prophecy that Levi would be “scattered” (Gen.49:7).
 - b. Thus “scattered”, they could carry out their teaching ministry more effectively (Deut.33:10).
 - c. Included were 6 cities of refuge, accessible to those seeking legal protection (Num.35:6).
- B. Some factors in the selection of Levi’s descendants for their special role in Israel.
1. The selection of Moses and Aaron, who were descendants of Kohath, one of Levi’s 3 sons (Ex.2:1-10; 6:14-27; Num.26:59), conferred on Levi an honor that was recognized by the other tribes.
 2. An event of transcending importance at Mt. Sinai (Ex.32:25-29) gave to the Levites as a tribe their place of privilege and responsibility in God’s plan. This event transmuted the curse of Jacob’s prophecy (Gen.49:5-7) into the blessing of Moses’ prophecy (Deut.33:8-11).
 3. This choice was confirmed by a very similar event when an individual Levite, one Phinehas, stayed the plague of Num.25:1-13 that was about to decimate the nation.
- C. Some of the purposes which served the divine plan in their selection.
1. Their selection was a reward for their faithfulness and zeal during operation “golden calf” (Ex.32:25-29).
 2. The doctrine of substitution was illustrated, for although God claimed the firstborn males of all the tribes on the basis of the law of the firstborn, God graciously allowed the Levites to be substitutes for their brethren (Num.3:9,11-14,40-51; 8:14-19).
 3. Israel’s separation and selection from all the nations was further intensified and illustrated by the separation of one tribe from the rest (Num.8:5-22).
 4. Life without an inheritance for Levi, making the Lord their inheritance, illustrates that no matter what our condition in the cosmos, the Lord is our inheritance (Num.18:20-24; 26:62;

Doctrine of the Priesthood (Ballinger, Thieme)

Deut.10:9; 12:12; 14:27).

- D. A three-fold organization is discernible.
 1. Aaron and his sons occupied the top echelon; these alone were priests in the restricted sense. These priests belonged to the family of Kohath.
 2. The middle echelon included all other Kohathites who were not of Aaron's family; to them were given certain privileges in bearing the most sacred parts of the Tabernacle (Num.3:27-32; 4:4-15; 7:9).
 3. The bottom echelon comprised all members of the families of Gershon and Merari; to them lesser duties were prescribed (Num.3:21-26,33-37).
 - E. Priests and Levites.
 1. The priests must come from Aaron's family; the Levites came from the larger family of Levi. A priest was a Levite, but a Levite was not necessarily a priest.
 2. Priests were consecrated (Ex.29:1-37); Levites were purified (Num.8:5-22).
 3. Levites were considered a gift to Aaron and his sons (Num.3:5-13; 8:19; 18:1-7).
 4. A fundamental difference was that only a priest had the right to minister at the altar and to enter the Most Holy Place (Ex.28:1; 29:9; Num.3:10,38; 4:15,19ff; 18:1-7; 25:10-13).
 - F. The rebellion of Korah, a Kohathite (Num.16:1), against the uniqueness of Aaron's priesthood illustrated, in the manner in which it was subdued, the heinous nature of attempting to enter the priesthood without the necessary prerequisites (Num.16). The choice of Aaron was further confirmed by the budding of his rod (Num.17:1-11; Heb.9:4). Other attempted intrusions included King Saul (1Sam.13:9,13,14) and King Uzziah (2Chr.26:16-21).
 1. The settlement in Canaan necessarily curtailed some of the Levites' duties, as the Tabernacle no longer needed transportation.
 2. David introduced innovations in the service of the Levites (1Chr.23-26). Certain Levites became musicians and, like Asaph, wrote some of the Psalms (1Chr.6:39,43; 15:16ff; 16:4ff; 25:1-9; Ps.50,73-83).
 3. In the disruption of the United Kingdom, many Levites from the North sought refuge in Judah (2Chr.11:13-16; 13:9-12; 15:9), but some were involved in the apostasy of the Northern Kingdom (Ezek.44:10-15).
 4. In the post-exilic period, Levites did not return from Babylon in the same proportion as the priests (Ezra.2:36-42; Neh.7:39-45). Later a special effort was required to get the Levites to return (Ezra.8:15-19). They were still considered teachers and musicians (Ezra.8:15ff; 2:40ff; 3:10ff; Neh.7:43ff).
 5. Only a few Levites are mentioned in the New Testament (Lk.10:32; Jn.1:19; Acts.4:36).
 - G. Since the Levitical priesthood could not bring in perfection, it was required that another priest arise, from a different tribe and in a different order (Heb.7:11-17; Ps.110:4).
- III. The High Priesthood of Jesus Christ.
- A. It is the subject of Messianic prophecy, establishing Christ's priesthood in the divine decrees (Ps.110:4; Zech.6:13).
 - B. It is the principal theme of the book of Hebrews, especially chapters 5-10.
 - C. It is after the order of Melchizedek, the priest-king of Salem (Ps.110:4; Heb.5:5,6,10; 6:20; 7:11,15,17,21).
 - D. It is superior to the order of Aaron, as the patriarch Levi was seminally in Abraham when Abraham paid tithes to Melchizedek (Heb.7:4-10).
 - E. It is superior to Aaronic and Levitical orders for these reasons:
 1. It is based on a divine oath, whereas Aaron's was based on law (Heb.7:20-22,28).
 2. It is permanent because it is centered in the eternal resurrected Son of God, whereas Old Testament priests' offices ended with their death (Heb.7:23-25).
 3. It partakes of the perfection of Christ who had no need to be purged of sin, as did the sons of Aaron (Heb.7:26-28).
 4. It continues in heaven where God Himself has erected the true sanctuary, of which Moses' tent was but "a copy and a shadow" (Heb.8:1-7).

Doctrine of the Priesthood (Ballinger, Thieme)

5. It is the fulfillment of a superior and New Covenant (Heb.8:8-13).
 6. Its sacrifice needs no repeating, but was rendered “once for all” (Heb.7:29; 9:12).
 7. Its offering was not “the blood of bulls and goats”, unable to take away sins, but “the body of Jesus Christ”, through which believers are sanctified (Heb.10:4,10).
 8. Its result is full and regular access to God for all Christians, not just a priestly order (Heb.10:11-22).
- F. It is the source of the highest motivation to hold fast to Bible Doctrine, produce divine good, and to have faithfulness under face-to-face teaching in light of the return of Christ (Heb.9:28; 10:23-25).
 - G. Its effectiveness in our lives is guaranteed by Christ’s constant intercession for us (Heb.7:25).
- IV. The universal priesthood of believers.
- A. The Scriptures documenting it are 1Pet.2:9 and Rev.1:6.
 - B. The extent of it is that every believer in the Church Age is a priest, so it is wrong to designate only certain persons as “priest”.
 - C. Its nature is that it is a royal priesthood partaking of Christ’s high priesthood, which is patterned after Melchizedek’s (Ps.110:4).
 - D. The offerings of our priesthood are those things we are commanded to offer up to God (1Pet.2:5; cp. Rom.12:1; Heb.13:15,16).
 - E. The duration of our priesthood is forever, as we partake of Christ (Heb.3:14), who exists as high priest forever (Heb.7:17).

From http://gracebiblechurchwichita.org/?page_id=444 accessed March 22, 2016.

From <http://www.versebyverse.org/doctrine/priesthood.pdf> accessed March 22, 2016.

[Chapter Outline](#)

[Charts, Graphics and Short Doctrines](#)

Apparently, the use of the term *Levitical priests* is claimed by some to indicate that Moses did not write Deuteronomy (he did). I have yet to see any strong proof to suggest that anyone other than Moses wrote Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy.

This was a little dense to me, and I did not fully understand their reasoning. It seems to be that, when Aaron was alive, it was reasonable to call his sons and grandsons *priests of Aaron*; but when he died, they reverted to calling them *Levitical Priests* (Aaron formed a subgroup of Levites).

Keil and Delitzsch why it is the Levitical Priesthood rather than the Aaronic Priests

The expression “the priests the Levites” (Levitical priests), which also occurs in Deut. 17:18; Deut. 18:1; Deut. 21:5; Deut. 24:8; Deut. 27:9; Deut. 31:9, instead of “sons of Aaron,” which we find in the middle books, is quite in harmony with the time and character of the book before us. As long as Aaron was living with his sons, the priesthood consisted only of himself and his sons, that is to say, of one family. Hence all the instructions in the middle books are addressed to them, and for the most part to Aaron personally (vid., Ex 28 and 29; Lev 8–10; Num. 18:1, etc.). This as all changed when Aaron died; henceforth the priesthood consisted simply of the descendants of Aaron and his sons, who were no longer one family, but formed a distinct class in the nation, the legitimacy of which arose from its connection with the tribe of Levi, to which Aaron himself had belonged. It was evidently more appropriate, therefore, to describe them as sons of Levi than as sons of Aaron, which had been the title formerly given to the priests, with the exception of the high priest, viz., Aaron himself. – In connection with the superior court, however, the priests are introduced rather as knowing and teaching the law (Lev. 10:11), than as actual judges.

Keil and Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament*; from e-Sword; Deut. 17:8–9.

[Chapter Outline](#)

[Charts, Graphics and Short Doctrines](#)

Deut. 17:8–9a When a case [requiring] a verdict is more extraordinary than you—whether two sides of a murder, whether two sides of a legal dispute, or two sides of an injury case—disputed words within your city—then you will rise up and you will go to a place chosen by Y^ehowah your Elohim in it. And you will go to the Levitical priests,...

Commentators on the term *Levitical Priests*

Wordsworth suggested this: *Moses, now about to depart, should desire to appease all jealousies between priests and Levites; and for this purpose he could not use a more healing phrase than that now before us, the priests the Levites.*⁹² I do not know if such a jealousy existed or if this would have been a healing phrase, but it is an interesting theory.

Peter Pett: *This is the first mention in Deuteronomy of the levitical priests ('the priests the Levites') under that title. The phrase is found regularly in Deuteronomy (Deut. 17:9, 18 18:1 24:8 27:9) in contrast with 'the Levite(s)' (Deut. 12:12, 18–19 14:27, 14:29 16:11, 14 18:7 26:11–13 27:14 Deut. 31:25) and is used regularly by others who certainly separate between priests and Levites (2Chron. 23:18 30:27 Ezek. 43:19 44:15 48:13). It is also found in Jer. 33:18 Joshua 3:3 8:33.*⁹³

I think that Lange gave a better explanation: *The lapse of time, and the events which had occurred between the earlier books and Deuteronomy, afford an easy and natural explanation of the difference. The position of the priests was now established. No Levite would question the fact that the priesthood attached to the family of Aaron. It was more important now, and more in accordance with the popular character of Deuteronomy, to bring out their popular tribal relations. The Levites, too, were in a sense a priestly tribe. They had in important respects a priestly position, and had priestly functions. They stood between the people and God.*⁹⁴

[Chapter Outline](#)

[Charts, Graphics and Short Doctrines](#)

John Wesley points out that the priests had the advantage of turning to Urim and Thummim in order to make decisions.⁹⁵ It is not clear that this was used a lot nor is there an instance that I can think of when this was used for a court case.

Deuteronomy 17:9b

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
w ^e (or v ^e) (וּ, or ו) [pronounced <i>weh</i>]	<i>and, even, then; namely; when; since, that; though; as well as</i>	simple wâw conjunction	No Strong's # BDB #251
'el (אל) [pronounced <i>ehl</i>]	<i>unto; into, among, in; toward, to; against; concerning, regarding; besides, together with; as to</i>	directional preposition (respect or deference may be implied)	Strong's #413 BDB #39
shâphaṭ (שָׁפַט) [pronounced <i>shaw-FAHT</i>]	<i>judging, governing; a judge, governor</i>	Qal active participle with the definite article	Strong's #8199 BDB #1047

⁹² *Whedon's Commentary on the Old and New Testaments*; Editor: Daniel D. Whedon, D.D. L.L.D.; ©1874–1909; from E-sword; Deut. 17:9.

⁹³ Dr. Peter Pett; *Commentary Series on the Bible*; from e-sword, Deut. 17:8–11.

⁹⁴ The Rev. Dr. John P. Lange, *Lange's Commentary*; 1857–1864; in the Public Domain; from E-sword; Deut. 17:8–13.

⁹⁵ John Wesley; *Explanatory Notes on the Whole Bible*; courtesy of e-sword, Deut. 17:9.

Deuteronomy 17:9b

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
ʾăsher (אֲשֶׁר) [pronounced uh-SHER]	<i>that, which, when, who, whom; where; in that, in which, in what</i>	relative pronoun; sometimes the verb <i>to be</i> is implied	Strong's #834 BDB #81
hâyâh (הָיָה) [pronounced haw-YAW]	<i>to be, is, was, are; to become, to come into being; to come to pass</i>	3 rd person masculine singular, Qal imperfect	Strong's #1961 BDB #224
b ^e (ב) [pronounced b ^{eh}]	<i>in, into, at, by, near, on, with, before, upon, against, by means of, among, within</i>	a preposition of proximity	No Strong's # BDB #88
yâmîym (יָמִים) [pronounced yaw-MEEM]	<i>days, a set of days; time of life, lifetime; a specific time period, a year</i>	masculine plural noun with the definite article	Strong's #3117 BDB #398
hêm (הֵם) [pronounced haym]	<i>those, these [with the definite article]</i>	masculine plural demonstrative adjective	Strong's #1992 BDB #241

These 3 words simply mean *in those days*.

Translation: ...or to a judge who is [in office] in those days,... The person might be a judge who is in this higher court. Perhaps he has more experience; perhaps he is better at reading people. This could refer to someone like Samuel, Gideon or Othniel.

In those days could refer to a judge with a specific term of office; and it could simply refer to someone other than a Levite who is in charge of the court, depending upon what is going on at the time.

D. Davies on the position of judge: *To be the administrator of justice, to adjudicate between right and wrong, is the highest office which men can fill. No position is more responsible; none more honorable. For all practical purposes, his decision must be regarded as the decision of God. Otherwise, there will be no termination to litigation and strife. From the verdict of the highest human judge, there is but one court of appeal, viz. the court of heaven. Without doubt, many judicial decisions on earth will be reversed by the Great Judge of all. This is sweet solace to the injured now.*⁹⁶

There is a discussion by some commentators that the judge might be seen as over the priests, but that is the wrong way to look at this. These higher courts were not yet set up (apart from Moses having the last say for difficult controversies); and, just like any kind of case might be brought to a higher court for further adjudication; there might be a variety of higher courts in the future, some of them staffed by Aaronic priests and some of them headed up by a judge. Moses is not indicating that there is some kind of priority here, but just allowing for different sorts of higher courts.

Matthew Poole, who is normally an excellent commentator, attempted to nail down exactly the structure here. However, Moses is not defining structures, he is giving principles. He is *not* saying *what* the higher courts look like specifically; he understands the concept of the higher court (as he himself was the higher court), but he is not saying what exactly these higher courts would look like. Just as Moses did not define specifically the cases which could be taken to a higher court, similarly he is not defining a specific structure for the higher courts. They might be staffed by Levites; they might be headed over by a single judge. It all depends upon where you live, where the incident took place, and which court ends up being defined as the next higher court.

⁹⁶ *The Pulpit Commentary*; 1880-1919; by Joseph S. Exell, Henry Donald Maurice Spence-Jones, from e-sword, Deut. 17:8–13.

Deuteronomy 17:9c

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
w ^e (or v ^e) (ו, or וּ) [pronounced <i>weh</i>]	<i>and, even, then; namely; when; since, that; though; as well as</i>	simple wâw conjunction	No Strong's # BDB #251
dârash (דָּרַשׁ) [pronounced <i>daw-RASH</i>]	<i>to seek, to make inquiries concerning, to consult, to investigate, to study, to follow, to inquire; to require</i>	2 nd person masculine singular, Qal perfect	Strong's #1875 BDB #205

The NET Bible writes: *The verb דָּרַשׁ (darash) means “to seek, inquire,” and “to address someone, be concerned about something” (cf. Deut 11:12; Jer 30:14,17). Job wants the day to perish from the mind of God.⁹⁷ The problem is that, this understanding is reasonable in Deut. 11:12; but it is harder to make that case for the Jeremiah passages.*

Translation: ...and you will inquire [as to their opinion on this case]. The judge appears to play a part in the proceedings. He inquires directly. It would seem likely that both side of the dispute would put on their cases as well, but that is not spoken of here.

Deut. 17:8–9 When a case [requiring] a verdict is more extraordinary than you—whether two sides of a murder, whether two sides of a legal dispute, or two sides of an injury case—disputed words within your city—then you will rise up and you will go to a place chosen by Y^ehowah your Elohim in it. And you will go to the Levitical priests, or to a judge who is [in office] in those days, and you will inquire [as to their opinion on this case].

Several Commentators on the Appellant Courts of Moses

Matthew Henry: *These difficult cases, which hitherto had been brought to Moses, according to Jethro's advice, were, after his death, to be brought to the supreme power, wherever it was lodged, whether in a judge (when there was such an extraordinary person raised up and qualified for that great service, as Othniel, Deborah, Gideon, etc.) or in the high-priest (when he was by the eminency of his gifts called of God to preside in public affairs, as Eli).⁹⁸ Henry is making a reference back to Ex. 8:25–26 (which will be quoted later on in this exegesis). With 2 million people, Moses could not be their only judge; so he set up other judges below him; and they could bring the more difficult cases before him.*

Keil and Delitzsch point out: *Moses did not directly institute a superior tribunal at the place of the sanctuary on this occasion, but rather assumed...its establishment and existence in the future.*

Keil and Delitzsch continue: *[Moses] gives no minute directions concerning the organization of the different local courts, but leaves this to the natural development of the judicial institutions already in existence, so he also restricts himself, so far as the higher court is concerned, to general allusions, which might serve as a guide to the national rulers of a future day, to organize it according to the existing models.*

Then Keil and Delitzsch make an interesting observation: *The simple fact, that the judicial court at the place of the national sanctuary is described in such general terms, furnishes a convincing proof that we have here the words of Moses, and not those of some later prophetic writer who had copied the superior court at Jerusalem of the times of the kings, as Riehm and the critics assume.⁹⁹*

⁹⁷ From: <http://bible.org/netbible/index.htm?job3.htm> (footnote); accessed June 6, 2013.

⁹⁸ Matthew Henry, *Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible*; from e-Sword, Deut. 17:8–13.

⁹⁹ Keil and Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament*; from e-Sword; Deut. 17:8–9.

In other words, Moses is not describing a system which is in place, or about to be set up; but one that will eventually arise out of necessity—a network of courts, headed by various and sundry men, with a clear hierarchy which would allow for these mandates to take place. Jehoshaphat, for instance, set up higher courts with this in mind (2Chron. 19:8–10).

Chapter Outline

Charts, Graphics and Short Doctrines

There already was an organization for each family, an organization which has allowed for the people to number those of a military age for each tribe. These tribes had elders; Moses had already organized some courts among the people (Deut. 1:17 Ex. 18:26); and the Levites had various religious tasks which they had been sorting out.

In other words, before Moses was not some disorganized mob,¹⁰⁰ wandering about with no concept of authority or institutions. There were problems among his people; but from these people would come great organization. Moses was their leader at present, but he would be replaced by Joshua; and provision had been made for that. They will all enter the land (sans Moses) and take the land from the heathen Canaanites who lived there. Then they will look forward into time, organizing armies with which to conquer the land, and developing an understanding of authority and its importance.

Deuteronomy 17:9d

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
w ^e (or v ^e) (ו, or ו) [pronounced <i>weh</i>]	<i>and, even, then; namely; when; since, that; though; as well as</i>	simple wâw conjunction	No Strong's # BDB #251
nâgad (נָגַד) [pronounced <i>naw-GAHD</i>]	<i>to make conspicuous, to make known, to expound, to explain, to declare, to inform, to confess, to make it pitifully obvious that</i>	3 rd person masculine plural, Hiphil perfect	Strong's #5046 BDB #616
lâmed (ל) [pronounced <i>le</i>]	<i>to, for, towards, in regards to</i>	directional/relational preposition with the 2 nd person masculine singular suffix	No Strong's # BDB #510
'êth (אֶת) [pronounced <i>ayth</i>]	untranslated generally; occasionally <i>to, toward</i>	indicates that the following substantive is a direct object	Strong's #853 BDB #84
dîyn (דִּין) [pronounced <i>deen</i>]	<i>judgment; cause, plea; condemnation, judgment; dispute, legal suit, strife; government</i>	masculine singular construct	Strong's #1779 BDB #192
mîsh ^e pâṭ (מִשְׁפָּט) [pronounced <i>mish^e-PAWT</i>]	<i>judgement, justice, a verdict rendered by a judge, a judicial decision, a judicial sentence, a verdict, a judgement of the court</i>	masculine singular noun with the definite article	Strong's #4941 BDB #1048

Translation: Then they will make known the judicial verdict,... This new court will render a verdict. They will determine guilt or innocence, intentional or accidental, etc.

¹⁰⁰ Partially taken from Keil and Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament*; from e-Sword; Deut. 17:8–9.

What may be of some limited interest: v. 10 in the middle verse of Deuteronomy.¹⁰¹

So, what is happening is, a judge is not comfortable with rendering a verdict over any sort of case, be it civil, murder or mayhem; the judge is flummoxed. So, he takes this case to a higher court. This is not an appellant court as we understand them to be. There are no appellant courts in the Mosaic Law, to the best of my recollection. But there are higher courts, and cases which cannot be decided by a lower court are taken to these higher courts.

This is a sign of spiritual maturity, when you recognize a matter cannot be resolved by yourself, that you do not have the facts or you are not unbiased enough to render a decision—you take the matter to someone who can.

Deuteronomy 17:10a

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
w ^e (or v ^e) (ו, or ו) [pronounced <i>weh</i>]	<i>and, even, then; namely; when; since, that; though; as well as</i>	simple wâw conjunction	No Strong's # BDB #251
ʿâsâh (עָשָׂה) [pronounced <i>gaw-SAWH</i>]	<i>to do, to make, to construct, to fashion, to form, to prepare, to manufacture; accomplish</i>	2 nd person masculine singular, Qal perfect	Strong's #6213 BDB #793
ʿal (עַל) [pronounced <i>gahl</i>]	<i>upon, beyond, on, against, above, over, by, beside</i>	preposition of relative proximity	Strong's #5921 BDB #752
peh (פֶּה) [pronounced <i>peh</i>]	<i>mouth [of man, animal; as an organ of speech]; opening, orifice [of a river, well, etc.]; edge; extremity, end</i>	masculine singular construct	Strong's #6310 BDB #804
This combination of words literally means <i>upon the mouth of, on the mouth of</i> . These words are translated: <i>at the bidding of, at the commandment of, according to the word of, according to the mouth of, according to the command of; upon the testimony of; on the basis of; as had said</i> .			
dâbâr (דָּבָר) [pronounced <i>daw^b-VAWR</i>]	<i>word, saying, doctrine, thing, matter, command; business, occupation; case; something; manner</i>	masculine singular noun with the definite article	Strong's #1697 BDB #182
ʾâsher (אֲשֶׁר) [pronounced <i>uh-SHER</i>]	<i>that, which, when, who, whom; where; in that, in which, in what</i>	relative pronoun; sometimes the verb <i>to be</i> is implied	Strong's #834 BDB #81
nâgad (נָגַד) [pronounced <i>naw-GAHD</i>]	<i>to make conspicuous, to make known, to expound, to explain, to declare, to inform, to confess, to make it pitifully obvious that</i>	3 rd person masculine plural, Hiphil imperfect	Strong's #5046 BDB #616
lâmed (ל) [pronounced <i>l^e</i>]	<i>to, for, towards, in regards to</i>	directional/relational preposition with the 2 nd person masculine singular suffix	No Strong's # BDB #510

¹⁰¹ E. W. Bullinger, *Companion Bible Notes*; 1909 in the Public Domain; from e-Sword, Deut. 17:10.

Deuteronomy 17:10a

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
min (מִן) [pronounced <i>min</i>]	<i>from, off, out from, of, out of, away from, on account of, since, than, more than</i>	preposition of separation with the 2 nd person masculine singular suffix	Strong's #4480 BDB #577
mâqôwm (מִקוֹמ) [pronounced <i>maw-KOHM</i>]	<i>place, situated; for a soldier, it may mean where he is stationed; for people in general, it would be their place of abode (which could be their house or their town)</i>	masculine singular noun with the definite article	Strong's #4725 BDB #879
hûw' (אוּהוּ) [pronounced <i>hoo</i>]	<i>that; this; same</i>	masculine singular, demonstrative pronoun with a definite article	Strong's #1931 BDB #214
'ăsher (אֲשֶׁר) [pronounced <i>uh-SHER</i>]	<i>that, which, when, who, whom; where; in that, in which, in what</i>	relative pronoun; sometimes the verb <i>to be</i> is implied	Strong's #834 BDB #81
bâchar (בָּחַר) [pronounced <i>baw-KHAHR</i>]	<i>to choose; Gesenius also lists to prove, to try, to examine, to approve, to choose, to select; to love, to delight in [something], to desire</i>	3 rd person masculine singular, Qal imperfect	Strong's #977 BDB #103
YHWH (יהוה) [pronunciation is possibly <i>yhoh-WAH</i>]	transliterated variously as <i>Jehovah, Yahweh, Y^ehowah</i>	proper noun	Strong's #3068 BDB #217

Translation: ...then you will do according to the word that they have made known to you from that place which was chosen by Y^ehowah. This verse begins literally with *And you [singular] will do...* This is followed by the preposition 'al (עַל) [pronounced *gahl*], which means *upon, beyond, in accordance with, because of, on account of*. Strong's #5920-5921 BDB #752. This is followed by *peh* (פֶּה) [pronounced *peh*], which means *mouth* (referring to that which is spoken); perhaps a reference to a general pronouncement or decision rather than to one which comes out of God's Word. Strong's #6310 BDB #804. *Mouth* is in the construct and it is followed by the oft-used Hebrew word, *word*. This is followed by the relative pronoun (referring back to *the mouth of the word*) and the Hiphil imperfect of a verb which means *to publish, to [publicly] proclaim* (among other things). So this now reads: *and you will do according to the mouth of the word which they cause to be proclaimed...* It might be reasonable to translate *mouth of the word* by *rendered verdict*. The middle portion of the verse is fairly straightforward: *from that place which Y^ehowah will choose*.

The person from the lower court (here, just referred to mostly by the 2nd person masculine singular verbs), will do what he is instructed to do. He will be given a verdict, he will be told what to do (incarcerate the criminal, let the innocent person go, collect a fine, execute a criminal, etc.). It is up to that person to make sure that the sentence is carried out; or the person is let go and determined to be innocent.

Gill: *The judges of the inferior courts were to return and proceed on the difficult case according to the judgment of the great court at Jerusalem, and follow the directions and instructions they should give them.*¹⁰² Let me add that, the higher court is not necessarily the court at Jerusalem.

¹⁰² Dr. John Gill, *John Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible*; from e-Sword, Deut. 17:10.

We have (or used to have) in the United States a very well-defined set of functions for our judicial and executive branches (which are generally defined by the Constitution of the United States and then mirrored by state, city and county governments). So, when a judge makes a ruling, then it is up to the executive branch to uphold that ruling; the judge himself does not go out and enforce his rulings in court. However, this distinction was not as clear in Israel. So the judge who brought a case to a higher court would also be the one who enforced the ruling of the higher court. He would be the one who would enforce his own ruling, had he made one.

Deuteronomy 17:10b

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
w ^e (or v ^e) (ו, or ו) [pronounced <i>weh</i>]	<i>and, even, then; namely; when; since, that; though; as well as</i>	simple wâw conjunction	No Strong's # BDB #251
shâmar (שמר) [pronounced <i>shaw-MAR</i>]	<i>to keep, to guard, to protect, to watch, to preserve</i>	2 nd person masculine singular, Qal perfect	Strong's #8104 BDB #1036
All of the BDB Qal definitions: <i>to keep, have charge of; to keep, guard, keep watch and ward, protect, save life; watch, watchman (participle); to watch for, wait for; to watch, observe; to keep, retain, treasure up (in memory); to keep (within bounds), restrain; to observe, celebrate, keep (sabbath or covenant or commands), perform (vow); to keep, preserve, protect; to keep, reserve.</i>			
lâmed (ל) [pronounced <i>l</i>]	<i>to, for, towards, in regards to</i>	directional/relational preposition	No Strong's # BDB #510
‘âsâh (עשה) [pronounced <i>gaw-SAWH</i>]	<i>to do, to make, to construct, to fashion, to form, to prepare, to manufacture; accomplish</i>	Qal infinitive construct	Strong's #6213 BDB #793
kaph or k ^e (כ) [pronounced <i>k^e</i>]	<i>like, as, according to; about, approximately</i>	preposition	No Strong's # BDB #453
kôl (כָּל) [pronounced <i>kohl</i>]; also kol (כֹּל) [pronounced <i>kol</i>]	<i>all, all things, the whole, totality, the entirety, everything</i>	masculine singular noun without the definite article	Strong's #3605 BDB #481
’âsher (אשר) [pronounced <i>ash-ER</i>]	<i>that, which, when, who, whom; where</i>	relative pronoun	Strong's #834 BDB #81
K ^e kôl asher (כָּל אֲשֶׁר) appears to mean <i>as all, according to all that, just as all that, just as, exactly as, exactly as all which.</i>			
yârâh (הָרַח) [pronounced <i>yaw-RAWH</i>]	<i>to cast, to shoot; to sprinkle, to water, to send out the hand, to teach, to instruct</i>	3 rd person masculine plural, Hiphil imperfect with the 2 nd person masculine singular suffix	Strong's #3384 BDB #434
The alternate spelling appears to be yârâ (אָרַח) [pronounced <i>yaw-RAW</i>].			

Translation: Then you will be careful to do all that they instructed you [to do]. Then we have the 2nd person masculine singular, Qal perfect of shâmar (שמר) [pronounced *shaw-MAR*] which I often translate as *take responsibility*. This is followed by the prefixed lâmed preposition and the Qal infinitive construct of *to do*. Then we have *all which* and the 3rd person masculine plural, Hiphil imperfect of yârâh (הָרַח) [pronounced *yaw-RAWH*], which means *to throw, to shoot*. I would think that *to throw down* (Gen. 31:51 Joshua 18:6) or *to throw out* (Ex. 15:4) would better suit this verb. In the Hiphil, this is almost a different word. It is generally translated *teach, instruct, enumerate* (Ex. 24:12 Deut. 33:10 Judges 13:8); or *inform* might be a good translation. Strong's #3384

BDB #434. Yârâh carries with it a 2nd person, masculine suffix. This leaves us with: *And you will do according to the rendered verdict [or, mouth of the word] which they cause to be [publicly] proclaimed from that place which Y^ehowah will choose and you will take the responsibility to do according to all which they have informed you.* The interpretation is easy enough. The verdict is placed in the hands of an appellant court (actually, just a higher court and not strictly an appellant court as we know them); that court makes a decision and the listener is implored to take the responsibility to carry out the sentencing requirements or to do whatever the rendered verdict specifies.

The judge of the lower court must be careful to follow all of the instructions; to do exactly as he has been instructed. When the lower court judge gives up his sovereignty over a case, then he cannot come back and modify the sentence of the higher court judge.

Gill further suggests that whatever the higher court rules sets precedence: *[They will] not only observe and take notice of what they say, but put it in practice, and not in some things and some circumstances only, but in all and everything they should give them information about relating to the case in question.*¹⁰³

Although Gill's viewpoint seems reasonable, I don't know that this is what the passage is instructing the lower court. It appears that this is more about obedience in this particular case, rather than about setting precedence.

Jamieson, Fausset and Brown: *In all civil or criminal cases, where there was any doubt or difficulty in giving a decision, the local magistrates were to submit them by reference to the tribunal of the Sanhedrim – the supreme council, which was composed partly of civil and partly of ecclesiastical persons. "The priests and Levites," should rather be "the priests – the Levites"; that is, the Levitical priests, including the high priest, who were members of the legislative assembly; and who, as forming one body, are called "the judge." Their sittings were held in the neighborhood of the sanctuary because in great emergencies the high priest had to consult God by Urim (Num. 27:21). From their judgment there was no appeal.*¹⁰⁴ I am not certain that this is exactly how the higher court was composed for each and every subsequent generation; but, no doubt, it matched this description fairly closely on many occasions.

Not only must be able to recognize when you cannot render a correct decision yourself, but you must be willing to accept the ruling of the court which is higher up than you. You must abide by that decision. You may be thinking, *Duh!* Let me explain; the purpose of sending this case to another court is that the court at hand is unable to render a verdict which they are comfortable with. They simply cannot determine guilt or innocence for whatever the reason. So the case is kicked upstairs to a higher court. However, you must bear in mind that men with old sin natures will be under this law and they will always be looking for some way to corrupt God's Law. A judge may not want to render a particular verdict because he is concerned that it will make him unpopular or cause a public uprising against him. So, instead of rendering a verdict which he knows is correct, he sends the case upstairs so that they can take the heat for making the decision. We have seen throughout the last dozen decades hundreds of cases which were determined by a judge on the basis of political expediency—the verdict was rendered in order to keep one group from rioting. Or a punishment was given which did not fit the crime, either being too strict or too lenient, all given more for the purposes of political expediency as opposed to justice. There are certainly some difficult judicial decisions which could be accurate but are not—one way to deal with this is have someone else make the decision. However, this context tells us that once the case is sent to a higher court, then, except for executing the punishment or upholding the decision, it is completely out of the hands of the lower court and the lower court cannot under any circumstances reverse the judgment of the higher court.

Let me try to explain this in another way. Judge Joe Bob of the lower court knows that verdict A is the correct verdict, but he may lose his judgeship over rendering that verdict. However, he cannot, for whatever reason, render verdict B; his soul will just not allow that. So he tells High Priest Billy Bob to render a verdict, expecting Billy Bob to render verdict A. For Joe Bob, this is the best of all worlds—he gets the verdict he wants and Billy Bob takes

¹⁰³ Dr. John Gill, *John Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible*; from e-Sword, Deut. 17:10.

¹⁰⁴ Robert Jamieson, A. R. Fausset and David Brown; *Commentary Critical and Explanatory on the Whole Bible*; 1871; from e-sword, Deut. 17:8–13.

all the heat for the decision. However, let's say that High Priest Billy Bob is under similar constraints and renders verdict B—Joe Bob cannot now change his mind and revise Billy Bob's verdict. My point here, is that on the surface, this passage seems rather straightforward and in fact redundant—however, it is a guard against political expediency and passing the buck.

Deuteronomy 17:11a

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
ʿal (עַל) [pronounced <i>gahl</i>]	<i>upon, beyond, on, against, above, over, by, beside</i>	preposition of relative proximity	Strong's #5921 BDB #752
peh (פֶּה) [pronounced <i>peh</i>]	<i>mouth [of man, animal; as an organ of speech]; opening, orifice [of a river, well, etc.]; edge; extremity, end</i>	masculine singular construct	Strong's #6310 BDB #804
This combination of words literally means <i>upon the mouth of, on the mouth of</i> . These words are translated: <i>at the bidding of, at the commandment of, according to the word of, according to the mouth of, according to the command of; upon the testimony of; on the basis of; as had said</i> .			
tōwrah (הַרְוֵה אוֹת הַרְוֵה) [pronounced <i>TOH-rah</i>]	<i>instruction, doctrine; [human and divine] law, direction, regulations, protocol; custom; transliterated Torah</i>	feminine singular noun with the definite article	Strong's #8451 and #8452 BDB #435
ʾāsher (אֲשֶׁר) [pronounced <i>ash-ER</i>]	<i>that, which, when, who, whom; where</i>	relative pronoun	Strong's #834 BDB #81
yârâh (יָרָה) [pronounced <i>yaw-RAWH</i>]	<i>to cast, to shoot; to sprinkle, to water, to send out the hand, to teach, to instruct</i>	3 rd person masculine plural, Hiphil imperfect with the 2 nd person masculine singular suffix	Strong's #3384 BDB #434

The Cambridge Bible suggests that this be translated *direct*, pointing out that this is the verb from which *Torah* is derived.¹⁰⁵

Translation: [According to the word of the law which they instruct](#) [or, *direct*] you... There is a verdict, and this verdict must be adhered to. The lower court judge has deferred to the higher court; and so, he no longer has a say in the decision.

Deuteronomy 17:11b

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
w ^e (or v ^e) (וּ, or וַ) [pronounced <i>weh</i>]	<i>and, even, then; namely; when; since, that; though; as well as</i>	simple wâw conjunction	No Strong's # BDB #251

¹⁰⁵ *The Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges*; 1882-1921; by Cambridge University Press; General Editor J. J. S. Perowne, from e-sword, Deut. 17:11.

Deuteronomy 17:11b

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
‘al (אֲל) [pronounced <i>gahl</i>]	<i>upon, beyond, on, against, above, over; on the ground of, because of, according to, on account of, on behalf of, with, by, besides, in addition to, to, toward, together with, in the matter of, concerning, as regards to</i>	preposition of relative proximity	Strong's #5921 BDB #752
mîsh ^e pâṭ (מִשְׁפָּט) [pronounced <i>mish^e-PAWT</i>]	<i>judgement, justice, a verdict rendered by a judge, a judicial decision, a judicial sentence, a verdict, a judgement of the court</i>	masculine singular noun with the definite article	Strong's #4941 BDB #1048
’ăsher (אֲשֶׁר) [pronounced <i>ash-ER</i>]	<i>that, which, when, who, whom; where</i>	relative pronoun	Strong's #834 BDB #81
’âmar (אָמַר) [pronounced <i>aw-MAHR</i>]	<i>to say, to speak, to utter; to say [to oneself], to think; to command; to promise; to explain; to intend; to decide; to answer</i>	3 rd person masculine plural, Qal imperfect	Strong's #559 BDB #55
lâmed (ל) [pronounced <i>l^e</i>]	<i>to, for, towards, in regards to</i>	directional/relational preposition with the 2 nd person masculine singular suffix	No Strong's # BDB #510
‘âsâh (עָשָׂה) [pronounced <i>gaw-SAWH</i>]	<i>to do, to make, to construct, to fashion, to form, to prepare, to manufacture; accomplish</i>	2 nd person masculine singular, Qal imperfect	Strong's #6213 BDB #793

Translation: ...and based upon the verdict that they tell you, [that] you will do,... He is instructed to do exactly what the higher court tells him to do.

Our system in the United States is somewhat different. The courts can order that things be done, but it is the executive branch of a city, state, country or of the federal government that enforces these orders. In ancient Israel, there was not a distinction between these branches of government; so the very court that gives the order would also be in charge of carrying out those orders.

Deuteronomy 17:11c

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
lô' (לֹא or לוֹא) [pronounced <i>low</i>]	<i>not, no</i>	negates the word or action that follows; the absolute negation	Strong's #3808 BDB #518

Deuteronomy 17:11c

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
çûwr (סור) [pronounced soor]	<i>to turn aside, to depart, to go away; deviate</i>	2 nd person masculine singular, Qal imperfect	Strong's #5493 (and #5494) BDB #693
min (מן) [pronounced min]	<i>from, off, out from, of, out of, away from, on account of, since, than, more than</i>	preposition of separation with the 2 nd person masculine singular suffix	Strong's #4480 BDB #577
dâbâr (דָּבָר) [pronounced daw ^b -VAWR]	<i>word, saying, doctrine, thing, matter, command; business, occupation; case; something; manner</i>	masculine singular noun with the definite article	Strong's #1697 BDB #182
’âsher (אֲשֶׁר) [pronounced ash-ER]	<i>that, which, when, who, whom; where</i>	relative pronoun	Strong's #834 BDB #81
nâgad (נָגַד) [pronounced naw-GAHD]	<i>to make conspicuous, to make known, to expound, to explain, to declare, to inform, to confess, to make it pitifully obvious that</i>	3 rd person masculine plural, Hiphil imperfect	Strong's #5046 BDB #616
lâmed (ל) [pronounced l ^e]	<i>to, for, towards, in regards to</i>	directional/relational preposition with the 2 nd person masculine singular suffix	No Strong's # BDB #510
yâmîyn (יְמִינִי) [pronounced yaw-MEEN]	<i>[to] the right hand, the right side, on the right, at the right; the south</i>	feminine singular noun	Strong's #3225 BDB #411
w ^e (or v ^e) (וּ, or ו) [pronounced weh]	<i>and, even, then; namely; when; since, that; though; as well as</i>	simple wâw conjunction	No Strong's # BDB #251
s ^e mô’l (שְׂמֹאל) [pronounced s ^e MOHL]	<i>[to] the left, the left hand, the left side; north [when facing east]</i>	masculine singular noun	Strong's #8040 BDB #969

There is an alternate spelling of this word: s^emô’wl (שְׂמֹאלוֹ) [pronounced s^eMOHL].

Translation: ...[and] you will not deviate either to the left or to the right of the word that they declare to you. There is no latitude. The lower court judge cannot listen to the verdict and decide that there is some merit in the decision, and he agrees with it mostly, but he will modify the verdict here and there. Can't do that. He has taken himself off the case. At this point, he acts only to execute whatever sentence or verdict is rendered by the higher court.

We are supposed to have a similar relationship between the executive and the other two branches of our government. The Congress writes laws, which the executive branch is supposed to execute; the judicial branch renders verdict, which the executive branch is supposed to uphold. The problem in our most recent administration is, our current president has decided that **he will enforce the laws** that he likes and **not enforce those** with which he disagrees. By doing this, the president has become both the legislative branch and the executive branch all **rolled into one**. By stacking the court with enough liberal judges, whatever he does can get the a-okay from his appointed liberal judges.

In our example given by Moses, the higher court dictates the final result and the lower court is to enforce all aspects of their decision.

V. 11 reads: *According to the word of the law which they instruct [or, direct] you and based upon the verdict that they tell you, [that] you will do, [and] you will not deviate either to the left or to the right of the word that they declare to you.* Sometimes ancient Jewish writings can illuminate a passage; but often, they get goofy about a passage.

From Gill: *[The lower court is to] embrace things the most absurd and unreasonable, as Jarchi suggests; who says, that their sense was to be abided by, even if they should say that the right hand is the left, and the left hand the right.*¹⁰⁶

Even though the sense is, the lower court is to obey the higher court exactly; the problem is not about a final decision seeming absurd. That is not what is being taught here. It is simply that the higher court has accepted the case, given a ruling, and that ends the matter. What they rule stands, regardless of any second thoughts of the judge of the lower court.

In a situation such as this, you must follow the directions of your superior to the letter. They are to give this pronouncement the same regard that they would for instructions from God. *“So you will take the responsibility to do just as Y^ehowah your God has commanded you; you will not turn aside to the right or to the left.”* (Deut. 3:32). No matter how you feel about the decision, you were unable to render a decision, therefore it is placed in another’s hands and you must carry out the punishment or you must release the defendant. Or you must make a ruling in favor of whichever person was chosen by the appellant court.

In vv. 10–11 (*And you shall do according to the word which they declare to you from that place which Jehovah shall choose. And you shall be careful to do according to all that they direct you. You shall do according to the mouth of the law which they direct you, and according to the judgment which they deliver to you. You shall not turn aside from the word which they declare to you, right or left.—ESV*), we have four verbs of communication and just as many nouns and substantive phrases referring to information which has been communicated. This would be a good pair of verses to examine all of these words together.

Here is a less literal, more colloquial version of vv. 8–11: *Now and again, there will be a verdict which you are unable to determine, whether this is a murder or a legal dispute or an injury case—whatever might be disputed within your city—then you will rise up with the witnesses and go to the place chosen by Jehovah your God. You will present this case before the Levitical priests or before the presiding judge, and they will determine the outcome of the case. When you have heard the verdict, you will do exactly as they have instructed you, exactly according to the law which they have spoken to you, and you will not veer from the decision to modify it in any way.*

Peter Pett summarizes: *If any case proved too hard for the local elders to judge, whether it be a question of differentiation between murder and other forms of manslaughter, or between the approach to be taken on one type of plea as against another, or between grievous bodily harm and lesser violence, with the case producing differing views among the elders as they judged the matter within the gate. Then they must rise up and take the details of the case to the Central Sanctuary, to the place where Yahweh was pleased to dwell. They must come to the levitical priests and the judge of that day, and enquire there as to what to do...Whatever decision or sentence was passed by this body at the place where Yahweh had chosen to dwell they must observe to do. This would be the place of final appeal. This would apply whether the matter was one of interpreting teaching or of passing judgment. Once decided there was to be no avoiding it, and no seeking to give it different meanings. It was in fact important that once a final decision had been reached the matter was seen as closed.*¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁶ Dr. John Gill, *John Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible*; from e-Sword, Deut. 17:11.

¹⁰⁷ Dr. Peter Pett; *Commentary Series on the Bible*; from e-sword, Deut. 17:8–11.

Moses had a similar system in place as per Ex. 8:25–26 (Moses chose able men out of all Israel and made them heads over the people, chiefs of thousands, of hundreds, of fifties, and of tens. And they judged the people at all times. Any hard case they brought to Moses, but any small matter they decided themselves.); as did Jehoshaphat many years later in 2Chron. 19:5–11 ([Jehoshaphat] appointed judges in the land in all the fortified cities of Judah, city by city, and said to the judges, "Consider what you do, for you judge not for man but for the LORD. He is with you in giving judgment. Now then, let the fear of the LORD be upon you. Be careful what you do, for there is no injustice with the LORD our God, or partiality or taking bribes." Moreover, in Jerusalem Jehoshaphat appointed certain Levites and priests and heads of families of Israel, to give judgment for the LORD and to decide disputed cases. They had their seat at Jerusalem. And he charged them: "Thus you shall do in the fear of the LORD, in faithfulness, and with your whole heart: whenever a case comes to you from your brothers who live in their cities, concerning bloodshed, law or commandment, statutes or rules, then you shall warn them, that they may not incur guilt before the LORD and wrath may not come upon you and your brothers. Thus you shall do, and you will not incur guilt. And behold, Amariah the chief priest is over you in all matters of the LORD; and Zebadiah the son of Ishmael, the governor of the house of Judah, in all the king's matters, and the Levites will serve you as officers. Deal courageously, and may the LORD be with the upright!"). (ESV; capitalized)

The Law is not cited in the 2Chronicles passage; however, because this is Jehoshaphat, seen as a good king, it seems most reasonable that he set up a court system similar to what he read in Scripture.

And the man who does in insolence, to not listen unto the priest, the one taking a stand to serve with Y^ehowah your Elohim, or unto the judge; and dies the man the this. And you have purged the evil from Israel.

Deuteronomy
17:12

But, the man who acts arrogantly, to not listen to the priest (the one who stands up to serve before [lit., *with*] Y^ehowah your Elohim), [or who does not listen] to the judge—that man will die. Thus, you will purge [this] evil from Israel.

However, if the judge from the lower court acts arrogantly and ignores the ruling of the priest (the man who stands before Jehovah your God) or ignores the judge from the higher court, then you will execute the lower court judge and thus purge this evil from Israel.

Here is how others have translated this verse:

Ancient texts:

Masoretic Text (Hebrew)	And the man who does in insolence, to not listen unto the priest, the one taking a stand to serve with Y ^e howah your Elohim, or unto the judge; and dies the man the this. And you have purged the evil from Israel.
Targum of Onkelos	And the man who will act with presumption, and not obey the judge or the priest who standeth there to minister before the Lord your God, that man shall be put to death; so shalt you put down the doer of evil from Israel,...
Revised Douay-Rheims	But he that will be proud, and refuse to obey the commandment of the priest, who ministers at that time to the Lord your God, and the decree of the judge, that man shall die, and you shall take away the evil from Israel:...
Peshitta (Syriac)	And the man who will do presumptuously, and will not hearken to the priest who stands to minister there before the LORD your God, or to the judge, that man shall be put to death; you shall destroy the evildoers from Israel.
Septuagint (Greek)	And the man whoever shall act in haughtiness, so as no to listen to the priest who stands to minister in the name of the Lord your God, or the judge who shall preside in those days, that man shall die, and you shall remove the evil one out of Israel.
Significant differences:	The targum has some of the phrases in a different order. The Latin is <i>will not obey to commandment of</i> ; and the Hebrew has only, <i>will not listen to</i> .

Limited Vocabulary Translations:

Bible in Basic English	And any man who, in his pride, will not give ear to the priest whose place is there before the Lord your God, or to the judge, is to be put to death: you are to put away the evil from Israel.
Easy English	You must kill any man who will not obey the judge or the priest. The judge and the priest stand near the LORD your God and do what he says. So you will completely remove bad things from Israel.
Easy-to-Read Version–2001	"You must punish any person that refuses to obey the judge or the priest that is there at that time serving the Lord your God. That person must die. You must remove that evil person from Israel.
Easy-to-Read Version–2008	"You must punish anyone who refuses to obey the judge or the priest who is there at that time serving the LORD your God. That person must die. You must remove this evil person from Israel.
<i>God's Word</i> TM	If anyone deliberately disobeys the priest (who serves Yahweh your Elohim) or the judge, that person must die. You must get rid of this evil in Israel.
Good News Bible (TEV)	Anyone who dares to disobey either the judge or the priest on duty is to be put to death; in this way you will remove this evil from Israel.
<i>The Message</i>	Anyone who presumes to override or twist the decision handed down by the priest or judge who was acting in the Presence of God, your God, is as good as dead—root him out, rid Israel of the evil.
NIRV	Someone might show that they don't respect the judge. Or they will show that they don't respect the priest. The priest will serve the Lord your God at the place God will choose. If anyone doesn't show respect for these people, that person must be put to death. Remove that evil person from Israel.

Thought-for-thought translations; paraphrases:

Common English Bible	And whoever acts rashly by not listening to the priest who is in office serving the Lord your God or to the head judge will die. Remove such evil from Israel!
The Living Bible	If the defendant refuses to accept the decision of the priest or judge appointed by God for this purpose, the penalty is death. Such sinners must be purged from Israel.
New Berkeley Version	The man who shall act presumptuously in such cases and declines to listen to the priest ministering there before the LORD your God, or to the judge, that man shall die, and you shall clear Israel of such evil.
New Century Version	The person who does not show respect for the judge or priest who is there serving the Lord your God must be put to death. You must get rid of that evil from Israel.
New Life Version	The man must die who does foolish things and will not listen to the judge or the religious leader who serves the Lord your God. You must get rid of sin from Israel.
New Living Translation	Anyone arrogant enough to reject the verdict of the judge or of the priest who represents the Lord your God must die. In this way you will purge the evil from Israel.

Partially literal and partially paraphrased translations:

New Advent (Knox) Bible	If anyone is contumacious, rejecting the authority of the priest who then ministers to the Lord thy God, and the judge's sentence, his life must pay for it. Rid Israel of this plague.
Translation for Translators	You must execute anyone who proudly/arrogantly disobeys the judge or the priest who stands there in the presence of Yahweh and decides what should be done . By doing that, you will get rid of this evil practice from among you.

Mostly literal renderings (with some occasional paraphrasing):

Ferrar-Fenton Bible	And the person who acts insolently against the decree of the priest appointed to serve your EVER-LIVING God there, and the Chief Judge, — that man shall die !.
God's Truth (Tyndale)	According to the law which they teach you and manner of judgement which they tell you, see that you do and that you bow not from that which they show you, neither to the right hand nor to the left.
HCSB	The person who acts arrogantly, refusing to listen either to the priest who stands there serving the Lord your God or to the judge, must die.
Lexham English Bible	And the man who treats with contempt so as not to listen to the priest who is standing to minister on behalf of Yahweh your God or to the judge, that man shall die; so you shall purge the evil from Israel.
NIV – UK	Anyone who shows contempt for the judge or for the priest who stands ministering there to the Lord your God is to be put to death. You must purge the evil from Israel.
Tree of Life Version	The man who acts presumptuously by not listening to the kohen who stands to serve there before Adonai your God, or to the judge, that man must die. So you are to purge the evil from Israel.

Catholic Bibles (those having the imprimatur):

Christian Community (1988)	He who dares to act in another way and does not listen to the priest who stands there in the service of Yahweh, or to the judge, that man will die. You shall banish evil from Israel.
The Heritage Bible	And the man who will do arrogantly, and fails to attentively hear the priest who stands to minister there to Jehovah, your God, or to the one who judges, even that man shall be put to death, and you shall consume the evil from Israel.
New American Bible (2002)	Any man who has the insolence to refuse to listen to the priest who officiates there in the ministry of the LORD, your God, or to the judge, shall die. Thus shall you purge the evil from your midst. The priest: the high priest; the judge: a layman. The former presided over the court in cases which directly concerned religion, the latter in cases of a more secular nature; cf → 2 Chron 19:8-11.
New American Bible (2011)	Anyone who acts presumptuously and does not obey the priest [The priest: the high priest; the judge: a layman. The court system here, involving lay and priestly officials, resembles the one whose establishment is attributed to King Jehoshaphat in 2 Chr 19:8–11 (cf. Ex 18:17–23 and Dt 1:17).] who officiates there in the ministry of the LORD, your God, or the judge, shall die. Thus shall you purge the evil from Israel.
New Jerusalem Bible	If anyone presumes to disobey either the priest who is there in the service of Yahweh your God, or the judge, that person must die. You must banish this evil from Israel.
Revised English Bible	Anyone who presumes to reject the decision either of the priest ministering there to the LORD your God, or of the judge, is to be put to death; thus you will purge Israel of wickedness.

Jewish/Hebrew Names Bibles:

exeGesés companion Bible	And the man that will do presumptuously shall work arrogance , and will shall not hearken unto the priest that standeth to minister there before the LORD at the face of Yah Veh thy God Elohim , or unto the judge, even that man shall die: and thou shalt put burn away the evil from Israel Yisra El.
JPS (Tanakh—1985)	Should a man act presumptuously and disregard the priest charged with serving there the Lord your God, or the magistrate, that man shall die. Thus you will sweep

out evil from Israel: all the people will hear and be afraid and will not act presumptuously again. V. 13 is included for context.

Kaplan Translation

If there is any man [Actually, only a man who is duly ordained and fit to sit on the supreme court, and is thus normally able to reach a decision as in Deuteronomy 17:8 (Sanhedrin 87a). Such a person is known as a 'rebellious elder' (zaken mamre).] who rebels [Zyd in Hebrew. Or, 'acts wickedly' (Targum), 'acts purposely' (Targum Yonathan); or, 'acts in haughtiness' (Septuagint).] and refuses to listen to the priest or other judge who is in charge of serving God your Lord there [as leader of the supreme court], then that man must be put to death, thus ridding yourselves of evil in Israel.

Orthodox Jewish Bible

And the ish that will do presumptuously, and will not give heed unto the kohen that standeth to minister there before Hashem Eloheicha, or unto the Shofet, even that ish shall die; and thou shalt put away harah from Yisroel.

Expanded/Embellished Bibles:

The Amplified Bible

The man who acts presumptuously and insolently by not listening to the priest who stands there to serve the Lord your God, nor to the judge, that man shall die; so you shall remove the evil from Israel.

The Expanded Bible

The person who does not show respect for [presumes not to listen to] the judge or priest who is there serving the Lord your God must be put to death. You must get rid of [banish; purge] that evil from Israel.

Kretzmann's Commentary

And the man that will do presumptuously, act with haughty insolence, and will not hearken unto the priest that standeth to minister there before the Lord, thy God, acting as mediator between Jehovah and His worshipers whenever a sacrifice was made, or unto the judge, even that man shall die, for the rebellious behavior was in reality an offense against God, in whose name judgment had been given; and thou shalt put away the evil from Israel.

NET Bible®

The person who pays no attention [*Heb* "who acts presumptuously not to listen" (cf. NASB).] 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.

The Voice

If anyone is so arrogant that he won't listen to the priest who serves right there in the presence of the Eternal your God or to the judge of *the tribunal*, that person must be executed to expel this kind of wickedness from Israel.

Literal, almost word-for-word, renderings:

Concordant Literal Version

Yet the man who acts with arrogance by not hearkening at all to the priest (who is standing to minister in the name of Yahweh your Elohim) or to the judge, that man must die. Thus you will eradicate the evil from Israel,...

English Standard Version

The man who acts presumptuously by not obeying the priest who stands to minister there before the LORD your God, or the judge, that man shall die. So you shall purge the evil from Israel.

Green's Literal Translation

And the man who acts with pride so as not to listen to the priest who is standing to serve Jehovah your God there, or to the judge, even that man shall die; and you shall put away evil from Israel.

New King James Version

Now the man who acts presumptuously and will not heed the priest who stands to minister there before the Lord your God, or the judge, that man shall die. So you shall put away the evil from Israel.

World English Bible

The man who does presumptuously, in not listening to the priest who stands to minister there before Yahweh your God, or to the judge, even that man shall die. You shall put away the evil from Israel.

Young's Updated LT

And the man who acts with presumption, so as not to hearken unto the priest (who is standing to serve there Jehovah your God), or unto the judge, even that man has died, and you have put away the evil thing from Israel.

The gist of this passage: A judge who refuses to carry out the directives of a higher judge or priest will himself be executed.

Deuteronomy 17:12a

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
w ^e (or v ^e) (ו, or ו) [pronounced <i>weh</i>]	<i>and, even, then; namely; when; since, that; though; as well as</i>	simple wâw conjunction	No Strong's # BDB #251
ʾîysh (אִישׁ) [pronounced <i>eesh</i>]	<i>a man, a husband; anyone; a certain one; each, each one, everyone</i>	masculine singular noun (sometimes found where we would use a plural); with the definite article	Strong's #376 BDB #35
ʾăsher (אֲשֶׁר) [pronounced <i>ash-ER</i>]	<i>that, which, when, who, whom; where</i>	relative pronoun	Strong's #834 BDB #81
ʿâsâh (עָשָׂה) [pronounced <i>gaw-SAWH</i>]	<i>to do, to make, to construct, to fashion, to form, to prepare, to manufacture; accomplish</i>	3 rd person masculine singular, Qal imperfect	Strong's #6213 BDB #793
The full set of Qal meanings from BDB: <i>to do, work, make, produce; to do; to work; to deal (with); to act, act with effect, effect; to produce; to prepare; to make (an offering); to attend to, put in order; to observe, celebrate; to acquire (property); to appoint, ordain, institute; to bring about; to use; to spend, pass.</i> It is possible that this ought to be <i>to provide for</i> .			
b ^e (ב) [pronounced <i>b^{eh}</i>]	<i>in, into, at, by, near, on, with, before, upon, against, by means of, among, within</i>	a preposition of proximity	No Strong's # BDB #88
zâdôwn (זָדוֹן) [pronounced <i>zaw-DOHN</i>]	<i>insolence, arrogance, swelling, pride; presumptuousness</i>	masculine singular noun	Strong's #2087 BDB #268
lâmed (ל) [pronounced <i>l^e</i>]	<i>to, for, towards, in regards to, with reference to, as to, with regards to, belonging to</i>	preposition	No Strong's # BDB #510
bil ^e tîy (לֹא) pronounced <i>bill^e-TEE</i>	<i>not</i>	adverb/particle of negation	Strong's #1115 BDB #116
This combination means <i>in that not, so that this [will not happen], so as not</i> .			
shâma ^c (שָׁמַע) [pronounced <i>shaw-MAHÇ</i>]	<i>to listen [intently], to hear, to listen and obey, [or, and act upon, give heed to, take note of], to hearken to, to be attentive to, to listen and be cognizant of</i>	Qal infinitive construct	Strong's #8085 BDB #1033
ʾel (אֶל) [pronounced <i>ehl</i>]	<i>unto; into, among, in; toward, to; against; concerning, regarding; besides, together with; as to</i>	directional preposition (respect or deference may be implied)	Strong's #413 BDB #39

Deuteronomy 17:12a

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
kôhên (כֹּהֵן) [pronounced koh-HANE]	<i>priest; principal officer or chief ruler</i>	masculine singular noun with the definite article	Strong's #3548 BDB #463

Translation: *But, the man who acts arrogantly, to not listen to the priest...* The lower court judge has decided, on his own volition, to bring this case to a higher court judge—in this case, to a priest. So he is willingly submitting to the higher court. However, perhaps the higher court—the priest—gives a ruling with which the lower court judge disagrees. To do anything other than to carry out the instructions of the higher court is arrogance. To choose to disobey the priest (to not listen to him), that is arrogant and evil.

In this circumstance, the priest has a higher position of authority than the judge in the lower court. The Bible is very attuned to the concept of authority throughout.

Deuteronomy 17:12b

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
'âmad (עָמַד) [pronounced gaw-MAHD]	<i>the one taking a stand, him standing [nearby]; the enduring one; the one waiting, the one remaining</i>	Qal active participle with the definite article	Strong's #5975 BDB #763
lâmed (ל) [pronounced le]	<i>to, for, towards, in regards to</i>	directional/relational preposition	No Strong's # BDB #510
shârath (שָׂרַת) [pronounced shaw-RAHTH]	<i>to serve, to minister; to attend</i>	Piel infinitive construct	Strong's #8334 BDB #1058
shâm (שָׁמָּה) [pronounced shawm]	<i>there; at that time, then; therein, in that thing</i>	adverb of place	Strong's #8033 BDB #1027
'êth (אֶת) [pronounced ayth]	untranslated generally; occasionally <i>to, toward</i>	indicates that the following substantive is a direct object	Strong's #853 BDB #84
Could this be the preposition instead?			
'êth (אֶת) [pronounced ayth]	<i>with, at, near, by, among, directly from</i>	preposition (which is identical to the sign of the direct object)	Strong's #854 BDB #85
This preposition can also refer to being in one's possession or in one's keeping. This can also mean <i>to proceed from someone</i> . The key to this word is <i>close association with, close proximity to</i> beyond simple geographical proximity.			
YHWH (יהוה) [pronunciation is possibly yoh-WAH]	transliterated variously as <i>Jehovah, Yahweh, Y^ehowah</i>	proper noun	Strong's #3068 BDB #217

Deuteronomy 17:12b

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
ʿĒlōhîym (אֱלֹהִים) [pronounced <i>el-o-HEEM</i>]	<i>God; gods, foreign gods, god; rulers, judges; superhuman ones, angels; transliterated Elohim</i>	masculine plural noun with the 2 nd person masculine singular	Strong's #430 BDB #43

Translation: ...[\(the one who stands up to serve before \[lit., with\] Y^ehowah your Elohim\),...](#) The priest is there to serve God. He stands before God serving Him. So, where does the lower court judge get off not listening to the priest?

Also, bear in mind, the lower court judge brought the matter before the higher court in the first case.

Deuteronomy 17:12c

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
ʾōw (או) [pronounced <i>oh</i>]	<i>or, or rather, otherwise, also, and; if, perchance; except, or else; whether, not the least</i>	disjunctive conjunction	Strong's #176 BDB #14
ʾel (אל) [pronounced <i>ehl</i>]	<i>unto; into, among, in; toward, to; against; concerning, regarding; besides, together with; as to</i>	directional preposition (respect or deference may be implied)	Strong's #413 BDB #39
shâphaṭ (שָׁפֵט) [pronounced <i>shaw-FAHT</i>]	<i>judging, governing; a judge, governor</i>	Qal active participle with the definite article	Strong's #8199 BDB #1047

Translation: ...[\[or who does not listen\] to the judge—...](#) Or, the court he takes the case to might be headed by a judge, and the arrogant lower court judge does not listen to that higher judge.

Now, this may confuse you. You may ask, *how could a judge kick a case up to a higher court, and then disobey their decision? Does that not imply that the judge had already decided on the way to rule?* There are times when Charley Brown may not want to rule this or that way on a case, for fear that it may make him unpopular or cause a rift between himself and someone else of his village. So, instead, he puts the responsibility on someone else, even though he knows how he himself would rule. Now, if the higher court decides the other direction, that would cause the judge in the lower court to not want to go along with the new ruling.

Surely, you have known someone in authority, but has a difficult exercising that authority; and looks for someone else on which to hang the decision on? That is what is happening here; but this can occur with any authority.

I found this sort of thing in the classroom all the time. The student would say, “Well, Mrs. Morgan down the hall let’s us....” The teacher able to exercise his own authority would say, “I’m not Mrs. Morgan.” The teacher who was unable to exercise authority would then want to standardize the way teachers act on this or that matter.

Deuteronomy 17:12d

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
w ^e (or v ^e) (ו, or ו) [pronounced <i>weh</i>]	<i>and, even, then; namely; when; since, that; though; as well as</i>	simple wâw conjunction	No Strong's # BDB #251
mûwth (מוּת) [pronounced <i>mooth</i>]	<i>to die; to perish, to be destroyed; to be put to death; to die prematurely [by neglect of wise moral conduct]</i>	3 rd person masculine singular, Qal perfect	Strong's #4191 BDB #559
ʾîysh (אִישׁ) [pronounced <i>eesh</i>]	<i>a man, a husband; anyone; a certain one; each, each one, everyone</i>	masculine singular noun (sometimes found where we would use a plural); with the definite article	Strong's #376 BDB #35
hûw' (אוּהוּ) [pronounced <i>hoo</i>]	<i>that; this; same</i>	masculine singular, demonstrative pronoun with a definite article	Strong's #1931 BDB #214

Translation: ...that man will die. The judge, the one not listening to the higher court (that is, disobeying the higher court); he is to be executed. He has disobeyed God's servants, and for that, he has become the criminal.

This is completely apart from the guilt or innocence of the original person (or persons) brought before the court. That is an unrelated issue.

Deuteronomy 17:12e

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
w ^e (or v ^e) (ו, or ו) [pronounced <i>weh</i>]	<i>and, even, then; namely; when; since, that; though; as well as</i>	simple wâw conjunction	No Strong's # BDB #251
bâ'ar (רָעַב) [pronounced <i>baw-GAHR</i>]	<i>to burn; to completely consume; to de-pasture; to take away, to [utterly] remove, to purge; to devour, to devastate</i>	2 nd person masculine singular, Piel perfect	Strong's #1197 BDB #128
ra' (רָעָה) [pronounced <i>rahg</i>]	<i>evil, bad, wicked; evil in appearance, deformed; misery, distress, injury; that which is displeasing [disagreeable, unhappy, unfortunate, sad]</i>	masculine singular adjective/noun; with the definite article	Strong's #7451 BDB #948
min (מִן) [pronounced <i>min</i>]	<i>from, off, out from, of, out of, away from, on account of, since, than, more than</i>	preposition of separation	Strong's #4480 BDB #577
Yis'ra'êl (יִשְׂרָאֵל) [pronounced <i>yis-raw-ALE</i>]	<i>God prevails; contender; soldier of God; transliterated Israel</i>	masculine proper noun; God-given name to Jacob; and national name for the Jewish people	Strong's #3478 & #3479 BDB #975

Translation: Thus, you will purge [this] evil from Israel. Ignoring the system of authority in Israel is evil; disobeying God's instituted authority is evil. God removes this evil from Israel by requiring the execution of the lower court judge. The lower court judge disobeys authority; he disregards the Law. One of the tenets of law in the United States came from the Bible: *no one is above the law*.

God set up systems of authority and He allowed for man to set up systems of authority. Disobeying an authority is tantamount to disobeying God.

When a verdict is read, and consequences are placed upon those involved, then these instructions are to be followed to the letter. The interpretation of the law by a priest or the determination of a verdict by a higher judge was final. The appeal to the higher judge or to a priest is analogous to appealing to the supreme court of heaven. As was mentioned in the previous verse, the rendered verdict and its related instructions are to be followed as though spoken by God. This is authority orientation. A person who has listened to what the priest has to say or the judge, both of whom are acting in place of God in their positions of authority, and then does not do what they have directed him to do or he does not abstain from doing that which they forbid has committed a very criminal act. This is a person who is anti-authority and who is rightly called *the evil* in this context.

Deut. 17:12 However, if the judge from the lower court acts arrogantly and ignores the ruling of the priest (the man who stands before Jehovah your God) or ignores the judge from the higher court, then you will execute the lower court judge and thus purge this evil from Israel.

Respecting the Authority of the Higher Court (Commentators on Deut. 17:12)

Adam Clarke: *The man who refused to abide by this final determination forfeited his life, as being then in a state of rebellion against the highest authority, and consequently the public could have no pledge for his conduct.*¹⁰⁸

Guzik: *The authority of the judges had to be respected, therefore contempt of court was a capital crime. God thought it essential that the courts and the judges be respected by the people of Israel.*¹⁰⁹

D. Davies: *To despise the verdict of the judge is to weaken the authority of the State—is to sow the seeds of anarchy and ruin. Defective administration of law is better than none. "Rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as idolatry." Yet, if contempt of human authority be accounted a capital crime, how much more criminal must be contumacy against God!*¹¹⁰

Jamieson, Fausset and Brown: *if a person were so perverse and refractory as to refuse obedience to their sentences, his conduct, as inconsistent with the maintenance of order and good government, was then to be regarded and punished as a capital crime.*¹¹¹

Keil and Delitzsch: *No one was to resist in pride, to refuse to listen to the priest or to the judge. Resistance to the priest took place when any one was dissatisfied with his interpretation of the law; to the judge, when any one was discontented with the sentence that was passed on the basis of the law. Such refractory conduct was to be punished with death, as rebellion against God, in whose name the right had been spoken (Deut. 1:17).*¹¹²

¹⁰⁸ Adam Clarke, *Adam Clarke's Commentary on the Bible*; from e-Sword, Deut. 17:12.

¹⁰⁹ David Guzik's *Commentary on the Old Testament*; courtesy of e-sword; ©2006; Deut. 17:8–13.

¹¹⁰ *The Pulpit Commentary*; 1880-1919; by Joseph S. Exell, Henry Donald Maurice Spence-Jones, from e-sword, Deut. 17:8–13.

¹¹¹ Robert Jamieson, A. R. Fausset and David Brown; *Commentary Critical and Explanatory on the Whole Bible*; 1871; from e-sword, Deut. 17:8–13.

¹¹² Keil and Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament*; from e-Sword; Deut. 17:12–13.

Respecting the Authority of the Higher Court (Commentators on Deut. 17:12)

Peter Pett: *Anyone who openly rejected the final verdict of the court pronounced by the Judge and 'the Priest', the court having consisted of 'the judge' and the priests, whether it be the accused or the justices, was to be put to death, for it would be to attack the very authority on which justice was based. It would be to act evilly against the highest religious and civil authorities acting together. For the point was that 'the Priest' ministered before Yahweh, and was therefore appointed to act in His name, while the Judge was appointed over the people. But there would be no distinction between cases. All would be seen as covenant law.*¹¹³

Joe Guglielmo: *If the case was too tough then the judges could bring it before the priest and they could decide. You see, they had a better understanding of God's Word. Now here's the thing. When the priest gave his verdict that was it. There was not a second hearing. The case was closed. Contempt of court you might say was a capital crime. If there is no respect for the court or the judges then there will be anarchy and that is what we are seeing happening in our country today. We see unrighteous judges and those who disrespect the court system and thus, people try to get away with murder!*¹¹⁴

The act of disobeying the higher court was every bit as evil as whatever person was being tried in the first place.

[Chapter Outline](#)

[Charts, Graphics and Short Doctrines](#)

Deut. 17:12 **However, if the judge from the lower court acts arrogantly and ignores the ruling of the priest (the man who stands before Jehovah your God) or ignores the judge from the higher court, then you will execute the lower court judge and thus purge this evil from Israel. The concept of authority is taught throughout Scripture.**

This doctrine is found in **2Samuel 24** ([HTML](#)) ([PDF](#)) ([WPD](#)) and in **Proverbs 1** ([HTML](#)) ([PDF](#)) ([WPD](#)). (along with the links which follow).

Grace Bible Church's "Doctrine of Authority"

1. Definition: The right to command or act. The power to enforce obedience. A person in control.
2. Biblically: Authority is the legal power delegated by God under the laws of His Will where people have responsibility and obligation of submissiveness. The Greek noun is kuriotes (κυριότης) which means Authority. It is God's plan that there be Authority in the Universe. Col. 3:18; I Tim.6:1-2; Eph. 5:22.
3. Important words describing Authority: hupotasso (ὑποτάσσω) and hupakouo (ὑπακούω).
 - 1) Hupotasso (to stand under authority) is used in Eph.5:21,22; Col.3:18; James 4:17; Rom.8:7,20; Rom.13:5; I Cor.14:32-34; I Cor.15:27 and used for the pastor in I Pet.5:5.
 - 2) Hupakouo (to hear under authority) is used in Matt.8:27; Luke 8:25; Rom.6:16; Eph.6:1; Col.3:20,22 and I Pet.3:6.
4. There are areas in which Authority must exist and which authority must be fulfilled.
 - 1) The word Kuriotes (κυριότης) in Jude 8 means Authority and not domination.
 - 2) The Word of God is constituted Authority.
 - 3) In the Local Church the communicator has Authority.
 - 4) The Husband is the Authority in Marriage.
 - 5) Parents are the Authority in the Family.
 - 6) Local laws and leadership is the Authority under the Laws of Divine Institution.
 - 7) In the Academic World there is Authority. In the classroom at school or college one is to submit to the Authority of leadership.
 - 8) In Athletics the Coach is the Authority and the student submits.
 - 9) In the business World there must be Authority: President, executive, boss. etc.
 - 10) In the Armed services there must be a commanding officer.

¹¹³ Dr. Peter Pett; *Commentary Series on the Bible*; from e-sword, Deut. 17:12.

¹¹⁴ From <http://www.ccmanitowoc.org/index.php/media1/messages/message/deuteronomy-17-18> accessed May 11, 2016.

Grace Bible Church's "Doctrine of Authority"

5. Rejection of Authority is always a sign of Apostasy. Eve rejected Authority of God's Word and accepted Satanic influence. She also failed to listen to the authority of her husband, 1Tim. 2:11,12. When Eve began to have social communication with Satan, she was refusing the authority of her companion and committing spiritual, mental and social unfaithfulness.
6. Rejection of the Word of God and the proclamation of the Word is also an attack upon Biblically designed Authority. 1Thess. 5:12,13 Heb.13:7,17 When a person is not willing to listen to and learn from God's communicator he does not really have awe and respect for the Lord Jesus Christ.
7. The necessity of obedience to Authority is emphasized by the many imperatives of the Bible: Deut 11:27 1Sam 15:22 Jer. 7:23 Jer 11:4,7 Zech 6:15 1Cor 16:16 2Cor 10:8.
8. Authority of God over nature is revealed in Matt 8:23-27 Mark 4:35-41 Luke 8:22-25.
9. Parental Authority is established by the Word of God – Eph 6:1 Col 3:20. Disobedience to parents is named among the dark sins of the unsaved of reprobate minds. Rom 1:23-32 This sin is also listed as extremely evil and is a picture of last days in 2Tim 3:2
10. The Bible presents the necessity of Authority in the business world. Col.3:22 Eph.6:5 1Tim.6:1-8.
11. In Marriage, the Word of God emphasizes the man as the one with Authority. Eph.5:22 Col.3:18.
12. In the example of this chapter (2Sam. 24), even though David's authority in the land is nearly absolute (he is, quite obviously subject to the Mosaic Law), it is not absolute with regards to God. God gave prophets to Israel in order to guide His rulers and His people. David had to be submissive to the words of the prophets.
13. Jesus Christ the God-man, in His Humanity was totally submissive to His Heavenly Father. Phil.2:5-11. In the dateless past God made a proclamation that Jesus Christ in His humanity would be under subjection to the Father. Deity agreed to that! Therefore, the happiness and security of Christ in humanity was related to submission. It was not bad but good; not degrading but elevating. An all-wise, sovereign, omnipotent God has not set up a degrading system. When children are submissive to parents it is not degrading but elevating. When a woman is submissive to her husband it is not degrading but elevating. When students respect the authority of their professor it is not degrading but elevating. When a body of believers respect the authority of the communicator of God's message, it is not degrading but elevating. GOD HAS A MAGNIFICENT PLAN OF AUTHORITY!!

From <http://www.gracebiblechurchbaytown.org/uploads/1/0/1/6/10165395/authority.pdf> accessed May 18, 2014.

[Chapter Outline](#)

[Charts, Graphics and Short Doctrines](#)

Although I did not study these extensively, there did not appear to be repeats from the list below.

Links to Doctrines of Authority

Doctrine of Authority from [Maranatha Church](#)

This has all the related Greek words and a lot more sub-points.

Authority, God's Chain of Command from [Grace Notes](#) (probably originally from R. B. Thieme, Jr.).

Word document which will open up in Word on your computer.

The Authority of God from [Cherreguine Bible Doctrine Ministries](#).

Fairly short; not many passages quoted from Scripture.

Doctrine of Authority and Leadership Principles ([HTML](#)) ([PDF](#)) ([Doc](#)) from Lake Erie Bible Church.

This is a rather extensive doctrine, with all the Greek and Hebrew words; 8 pages.

Related to this are the **Laws of Divine Establishment** ([HTML](#)) ([PDF](#)) ([WPD](#)).

[Chapter Outline](#)

[Charts, Graphics and Short Doctrines](#)

Let me give the exception to the authority from above: if you are prevented from sharing the gospel of Jesus Christ or if you are prevented from assembling to hear the Word of God, that authority can be ignored. Bear in mind,

you do not have this ability to disregard just any authority with regards to these issues. When you are at work, although you may share the gospel on occasion, it should not be that, everyone who comes to your cash register hears the gospel of Jesus Christ first, and then, “May I take your order?” When you are working for someone, they are not paying you to evangelize. On occasion, during working hours, you may find yourself in a one-on-one conversation where presenting the sacrifice of Jesus Christ is appropriate—but you must use your careful discretion when you make such a decision.

Similarly, with an assembled Bible study. In most workplaces, you are not going to assemble a Bible study. However, there are some jobs where you might be there 24 or 48 hours at a time. Then you might organize a Bible study, but with the allowance of those in charge.

Another exception is, when a higher authority requires you to sin. You may disobey that order.

Obedience to authority is the order of the day about 99% (or more) of the time. The more doctrine that you know, the better you are able to judge when that 1% exception is before you.

One of those interesting cases is when a young female soldier put up a little portion of paper near her desk that read, “**No weapon formed against me will prosper.**” She did not even reference where this came from (it is from the Bible). It is very likely that, if she had put up a small, inspiration quotation from someone outside of the Bible, it would have never been an issue. **She was given a bad conduct discharge** for this. This illustrates just how much the world hates God’s Holy Word (and, unfortunately, how negative our military has become towards the Word of God). .

Our military has been turning against the Bible more and more. At the end of WWII, **General Douglas MacArthur called for missionaries and Bibles to be sent to Japan**, where he was their interim ruler. As a result of the honorable actions of the United States and the spiritual impact of the Word of God, Japan has become a solid ally of the United States. This does not mean that Japan responded as enthusiastically as South Korea, but enough people in Japan became believers in Jesus Christ as to form a pivot, which has been the basis of their prosperity.

However, in this era, **the military has turned against the Bible**. There have been Bibles produced particularly for the military, which military approval has been **revoked**. President **Obama** has been particularly negative towards the Word of God; but such negativity against evangelization by soldiers occurred under the **Bush administration** as well.

I write this in 2016 in the midst of a presidential election unlike any one that I have ever seen before. One candidate has touted that he will make great deals and that we will receive compensation for all that we do around the world. However, this is not as important as our military ending its hostility toward the Bible; and allowing our soldiers to evangelize on their own time. Our relationship with Japan, with the administration of General Douglas MacArthur, was not a relationship where we got our fair share out of the deal; but a relationship which turned a bitter enemy into a close ally. What we did in Japan could not be quantified originally as a good deal. However, the end results for both Japan and the United States have been spectacular.

<p>And all the people will hear and fear and they will not act presumptuously again.</p>	<p>Deuteronomy 17:13</p>	<p>Consequently, all the people will hear [about this] and they will fear [the consequences of the law] and they will not act presumptuously again.</p>
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Consequently, the people will hear about what has happened, and they will properly fear to break the law, and they will not act with such arrogance again.

Here is how others have translated this verse:

Ancient texts:

Masoretic Text (Hebrew)	And all the people will hear and fear and they will not act presumptuously again.
Targum of Onkelos	...and all the people will hear, and be afraid, and not do wickedly again.
Revised Douay-Rheims	And all the people hearing it shall fear, that no one afterwards <u>swell with pride</u> .
Peshitta (Syriac)	And all the people shall hear, and fear, and do no more presumptuously.
Septuagint (Greek)	And all the people shall hear and fear, and shall no more commit impiety.

Significant differences: The Hebrew has *act presumptuously*; the Latin has *swell with pride*.

Limited Vocabulary Translations:

Bible in Basic English	And all the people, hearing of it, will be full of fear and put away their pride.
Easy English	Then all the people will hear about it and they will be afraid. They will not refuse to listen to the judge or priest again.
Easy-to-Read Version–2001	All the people will hear about this punishment and be afraid. And they will not be stubborn any more.
Good News Bible (TEV)	Then everyone will hear of it and be afraid, and no one else will dare to act in such a way.
<i>The Message</i>	Everyone will take notice and be impressed. That will put an end to presumptuous behavior.
Names of God Bible	When all the people hear about it, they will be afraid and will never defy God's law again.
NIRV	All the Israelites will hear about it. And they will be afraid to disrespect a judge or priest again.

Thought-for-thought translations; paraphrases:

Contemporary English V.	When other Israelites hear about it, they will be afraid and obey the decisions of the court.
The Living Bible	Then everyone will hear about what happened to the man who refused God's verdict, and they will be afraid to defy a court's judgment.
New Berkeley Version	All the people shall hear of it and fear, and never again act so recklessly.
New Century Version	Then everyone will hear about this and will be afraid, and they will not show disrespect anymore.
New Life Version	Then all the people will hear and be afraid. They will not act in a foolish way again.

Partially literal and partially paraphrased translations:

American English Bible	For, any man who acts so haughtily that he won't listen to the priests who stand and serve in the Name of your God Jehovah, or to a presiding judge, must be put to death. You must remove that evil person from Israel; then everyone will hear about it and be afraid to show so little respect in the future! V. 12 is included for context.
Beck's American Translation	When all the people hear about it, they will be afraid and not show such rebellion again.
New Advent (Knox) Bible	...so that all the people may take warning when they hear it, and there may be no contumacy thenceforward.
Translation for Translators	Then/Because <i>after that person is executed</i> , all the people will hear about it, and they will be afraid, and none of them will act that way anymore."

Mostly literal renderings (with some occasional paraphrasing):

Ferrar-Fenton Bible	Thus you shall burn that evil out of Israel, and all the People will hear, and fear, and no longer be contumacious. A portion of v. 12 is included for context.
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HCSB	You must purge the evil from Israel. Then all the people will hear about it, be afraid, and no longer behave arrogantly. A portion of v. 12 is included for context.
NIV – UK	All the people will hear and be afraid, and will not be contemptuous again.

Catholic Bibles (those having the imprimatur):

Christian Community (1988)	So all the people upon knowing this shall fear and not make decisions without the right to do so.
The Heritage Bible	And all the people shall attentively hear and fear, and not boil over any more.
New American Bible (2002)	And all the people, on hearing of it, shall fear, and never again be so insolent.
New American Bible (2011)	And all the people, on hearing of it, shall fear, and will never again act presumptuously. Dt 13:12.
Revised English Bible	Then all the people when they hear of it will be afraid, and never again show such presumption.

Jewish/Hebrew Names Bibles:

Complete Jewish Bible	Anyone presumptuous enough not to pay attention to the cohen appointed there to serve Adonai your God or to the judge — that person must die. Thus you will exterminate such wickedness from Isra'el —all the people will hear about it and be afraid to continue acting presumptuously. V. 12 is included for context.
exeGesés companion Bible	And all the people shall hear, and fear awe , and do no more presumptuously not seethe.
Kaplan Translation	When all the people hear about it, they will fear and will not rebel again.
Orthodox Jewish Bible	And kol haAm shall hear, and fear, and do no more presumptuously.
<i>The Scriptures</i> 1998	“And let all the people hear and fear, and no longer do arrogantly.

Expanded/Embellished Bibles:

The Expanded Bible	Then everyone will hear about this and will be afraid, and they will not show disrespect [be presumptuous] anymore.
Kretzmann's Commentary	And all the people shall hear, and fear, and do no more presumptuously, be deterred from choosing a similar insolent course. Christian pastors should remember that it is their duty to teach their congregation the Word of God, to make Holy Writ both the norm of doctrine and the rule of life.
The Voice	Everyone will hear about it, and no one will dare to be so arrogant, for they will be afraid.

Literal, almost word-for-word, renderings:

Concordant Literal Version	...and all the people shall hear and fear, and not act arrogantly again.
English Standard Version	And all the people shall hear and fear and not act presumptuously again.
NASB	Then all the people will hear and be afraid, and will not act presumptuously again.
<i>Young's Literal Translation</i>	And all the people do hear and fear, and do not presume any more.”

The gist of this passage: The people will hear of a judge being put to death, and this will cause them to respect the law even more.

Deuteronomy 17:13a

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
w ^e (or v ^e) (וּ, or ו) [pronounced <i>weh</i>]	<i>and, even, then; namely; when; since, that; though; as well as</i>	simple wâw conjunction	No Strong's # BDB #251
kôl (כֹּל) [pronounced <i>kohl</i>]	<i>the whole, all of, the entirety of, all; can also be rendered any of</i>	masculine singular construct followed by a definite article	Strong's #3605 BDB #481
'am (עַם) [pronounced <i>gahm</i>]	<i>people; race, tribe; family, relatives; citizens, common people; companions, servants; entire human race; herd [of animals]</i>	masculine singular collective noun with the definite article	Strong's #5971 BDB #766
shâma' (שָׁמַעַ) [pronounced <i>shaw-MAHÇ</i>]	<i>to listen [intently], to hear, to listen and obey, [or, and act upon, give heed to, take note of], to hearken to, to be attentive to, to listen and be cognizant of</i>	3 rd person masculine plural, Qal imperfect	Strong's #8085 BDB #1033

Translation: *Consequently, all the people will hear [about this]...* Everyone is subject to the law, even the judges. The people of Israel, and the judges of Israel, will hear and know about this.

Obviously, if today you heard of a judge who was summarily given the death penalty for improperly using his authority, you would know about it.

Deuteronomy 17:13b

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
w ^e (or v ^e) (וּ, or ו) [pronounced <i>weh</i>]	<i>and, even, then; namely; when; since, that; though; as well as</i>	simple wâw conjunction	No Strong's # BDB #251
yârê' (יָרַעַ) [pronounced <i>yaw-RAY</i>]	<i>to fear, to be afraid; to fear-respect, to reverence, to have a reverential respect</i>	3 rd person masculine plural, Qal imperfect	Strong's #3372 BDB #431

Translation: *...and they will fear [the consequences of the law]...* One of the aspects of the correct application of the law is fear of punishment; fear of consequences. How many of us have been angry, even to the point of thinking, "If so-and-so was dead, that would solve many of my problems." Well, you have never had that thought, I am sure; but many people do. However, they are stopped by two things: (1) their own conscience and (2) by a fear of lawful retribution. Who does not fear an execution today or being put in jail today? This is designed to make us to act in accordance with the law. We hear the consequences of the law and we fear.

John Gill: *[You will execute] the evil man that is rebellious against the supreme legislature of the nation, and the evil of contumacy he is guilty of, deterring others from it by his death.*¹¹⁵

¹¹⁵ Dr. John Gill, *John Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible*; from e-Sword, Deut. 17:12.

God's Word clearly teaches that capital punishment has the influence of dissuading others from a life of evil—in this context, acting against the established authorities. If capital punishment is administered justly and fairly, then it will act as a deterrent. We do not need case study statistics to tell us that. I used to experience this on a daily basis: for several years, I substitute taught in California when the discipline was quite poor and I had to come down hard on those children in order to teach anything. One of my ploys, a common behavior management tool of many teachers, is in first period, during the first twenty minutes, I would take the least respectful, loudest mouth, and send him out to the principal's office (this was back in the day when sending a kid to the principal's had effective consequences). This approach, 95% of the time, would curtail the majority of my discipline problems for the rest of the day. Once and awhile, in extreme cases of malcontent, I would have to send two or three children out of a classroom. This immediate administration of justice acted as a deterrent to other children. If there were no consequences, they would continue being belligerent and disrespectful—however, when certain and just consequences became a part of the picture, proper order and discipline was achieved.

Moses was personally a big fan of the fact that properly applied capital punishment acts as a deterrent. We have already seen this mentioned in Deut. 13:11 and we will see it again in Deut. 19:20. Now, I realize that there are statistical studies which show that capital punishment does not act as a deterrent (not all studies are honest). However, these studies do not take all the other contributing factors into consideration. Furthermore, when capital punishment is re-instated and then only applied to a half a dozen people when there are several thousand convicted murderers in the system and several hundred murders a year in that state, then this is not capital punishment. This is merely a ploy to placate the overwhelming public majority which supports capital punishment. A person who commits a capital offense under these circumstances has an even chance of either winning the lottery or being executed.¹¹⁶

People are often foolish in the crusades which they represent. They suffer a personal injustice and then go on some crusade intending to wipe out that injustice, often when that injustice affects less than one-thousandth of one percent of the court cases or criminal matters. The system laid out by Moses was not designed to eliminate crime. As long as man possesses an old sin nature, there will be crime. Nor would this eliminate inequities or incorrect verdicts. Given the fact that everyone has an old sin nature, that there will always be criminal activity and that some judicial decisions will be wrong, this is the best system of justice for Israel for that period of time. This would keep criminal behavior to a minimum and it would ensure that the vast majority of the verdicts rendered by the courts would be just and fair.

When making laws and applying them, those in authority need to realize that, people have sin natures, and what they are doing is not going to end this or that crime, but add a level of stability and lawfulness to society. If these laws do not do this, then they should be repealed.

Deuteronomy 17:13c

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
w ^e (or v ^e) (ו, or ו) [pronounced <i>weh</i>]	<i>and, even, then; namely; when; since, that; though; as well as</i>	simple wâw conjunction	No Strong's # BDB #251
lô' (לא or לוּא) [pronounced <i>low</i>]	<i>not, no</i>	negates the word or action that follows; the absolute negation	Strong's #3808 BDB #518
zûd (זָד) [pronounced <i>zood</i>]	<i>to cook; to seethe, to act proudly, to act presumptuously, to act with insolence [or, arrogantly]</i>	3 rd person masculine plural, Hiphil imperfect	Strong's #2102 BDB #267

¹¹⁶ Yes, I fully realize that statement is statistically unsound; I said it for effect.

Deuteronomy 17:13c

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
ʿōwd (עוּד) [pronounced <i>gohd</i>]	<i>a going around; a continuing, a continuance; a repeating</i>	adverb/substantive	Strong's #5750 BDB #728

Translation: ...and they will not act presumptuously again. Obviously, the executed judge will not act arrogantly, because he has been executed; but other judges will also fear to act outside of the guidelines given them by the Law.

Gary North: *An execution or two every few years would have sent a very clear message to all Israel regarding the costs of resistance to the law. This was the intent of this law: “And all the people shall hear, and fear, and do no more presumptuously”*

North continues: *When large numbers of people fear the civil law, their actions become more predictable whenever the courts are predictable. The law becomes more predictable when the courts become more predictable. An increase in the predictability of the law reduces the costs of decision-making. People know generally what the law requires. They also know that the judges will impose the specified sanctions attached to the law.*¹¹⁷

The North makes the point: *With greater legal predictability, society reduces its costs of production. When men know what the law requires, and when they know that convicted law-breakers in the society have a great incentive to comply, they can more easily predict the actions of others. This increases the predictability of other decision-makers in society. This in turn decreases the cost of cooperation.*¹¹⁸ It is simply cheaper for a society to have a predictable court system. Therefore, such a system should have reasonably simple laws with outcomes that conform to the law and not to political influence. Or, in other words, justice is less costly than injustice.

What has been done is, preeminence has been given to the Law over man. This is revolutionary. In pretty much every kingdom, if a person was related to the king in some way or a part of his cabinet, or acting on behalf of the king, then he could not be harmed for most of his actions (apart from rebelling against the king, of course). So he might do things which are outside the law, but they would be ignored because of his relationship to the king.

Application: We have a similar situation playing out in the 2016 election, and no one has any idea what will happen (I write this in 2016). The leading Democrat candidate (Hillary Clinton) improperly set up her own computers servers as Secretary of State, and used them to communicate by email as a normal part of her office rather than use the prescribed government servers. This exposed everything that she wrote to outside cyber attacks and it is very likely that everything that she wrote was known to the Russians, the Chinese and to anyone else who hacked into her servers. This showed a flagrant disregard for the protocol established in order to protect our national secrets, which actions were illegal. We had a top general prosecuted and removed from office for a similar but much less important security breach. So, at least half of America is watching, wondering whether the law or her position in government will prevail here. She and her husband are also involved in an income scheme, which is shady at best. She gives 20–45 minutes speeches and collects a quarter million for each speech (and she is not that good as a speaker). Also, she and her husband have established a charity fund which governments and ruling powers all over the world have contributed to; which fund actually distributes perhaps 4–10% of its revenue to charitable causes (this is very difficult to determine, I understand, because of the way that the finances are constructed for this “charity”). Much of this is the fault of the American people, many of whom know about 1 or more of these things, yet still vote for her in the primary and will vote for her in the general election

¹¹⁷ From <http://www.garynorth.com/Deuteronomy2.pdf> (p. 633); accessed May 15, 2016.

¹¹⁸ From <http://www.garynorth.com/Deuteronomy2.pdf> (p. 634); accessed May 15, 2016.

(if she is the candidate; the FBI investigation is the only thing which might stand in her way—and I don't think that it will—I write this in April/May 2016).

As an aside on the previous paragraph, what happens and how the government reacts is often a result of the outrage of the people, which is often ginned up by our 4th estate. However, most news sources seem to be quite uninterested in Hillary Clinton's flagrant disregard for the law. As a result, and the way that this news is covered, many people simply think that this is a Republican attack on the former Secretary of State.

Application: This past administration has shown the most flagrant disregard for the law, where the president executes the laws with which he agrees, and does not execute those with which he disagrees. His staff has lied innumerable occasions to the public; and they have found that, *slow-walking* scandals has worked well for them, because the press will not pursue over even report on most of the scandals (except to call them tactics of the other party). Now, whereas many people would like to see both Clinton and Obama put in jail, I personally disagree. Clinton does belong in jail, but Obama ought to receive a pardon from the next president, just as Ford gave a pardon to Nixon (this set the precedent). However, all of Obama's underlings should be investigated and sent to prison for any clear crimes that they have committed (but not for process crimes or crimes which require the law be convoluted in order to convict them). **Then the people would hear and they will fear [the consequences of the law] and not act with such arrogance again.** Do you see how much meaning this verse has now? We used to be a nation where the law was the standard and not a person's relationship to government. What happens with this illustration will inform us as to which is more preeminent.

God uses harsh examples sometimes to guide us. We have seen many examples of those who have died the sin unto death: the two sons of Judah; first two sons of Aaron, Annanias and Saphira. These may have struck us as being unduly harsh (particularly in light of the awful things which we ourselves have done). This is something which I have observed in my study of Scripture, and have wondered about. However, God does this, so that we will observe and fear, and, hopefully, not commit the same sorts of sins. Many times, these sins are committed at the beginning of something quite important. For Judah, it was the line of Judah which would lead to the Lord Jesus Christ; and it was all about Judah acting with integrity as the son who would inherit the authority which did not go to his 3 older brothers.¹¹⁹ With Aaron, the priesthood of God was being established, and his sons took it lightly...so they died. Finally, with Annanias and Saphira, the church was being established, the principles of grace and giving were being established, and they acted like the pharisees before them—it was all for show. In the Church Age, the believers walk is not simply for show. There has to be a reality to it; and claiming that you did something when you did not is just a show, a false front; it is only acting.

When we are told to *work out your own salvation with fear and trembling*; this does not mean that we could stumble and lose our salvation at any time. This means, we are saved, we are always saved, but God may remove us from this life for misbehavior. Your gossip, your adultery, your head being filled with mental attitude sins—or even your life of crime (criminals have believed in Jesus Christ), could result in your life being cut short.

All of v. 13 reads: **Consequently, the people will hear about what has happened, and they will properly fear to break the law, and they will not act with such arrogance again.**

*Peter Pett: The result of the death sentence on anyone who openly attacked the decision of the final court of appeal, whether the accused or the justices, would be that all Israel would hear about it, and fear, and not act presumptuously in the same way. The purpose of the death sentence was, of course, to dissuade anyone from taking up such a position, thus establishing the final authority of the court. The hope was that it would never need to be carried out.*¹²⁰

As a final note, the court system herein is described in general terms; this would be more likely the words of Moses than those of a later writer. A later writer would have gone into much more detail, describing with more precision the court system of his own day.

¹¹⁹ Judah was anything but a great man; but, when it came to protecting his younger half-brother Benjamin, Judah finally showed the protection that an older brother should show, which is a great moment in the arc of the life of Judah.

¹²⁰ Dr. Peter Pett; *Commentary Series on the Bible*; from e-sword, Deut. 17:13.

Similar passages: Deut. 13:11 19:20.

Chapter Outline

Charts, Graphics and Short Doctrines

Laws for a Future King

We have a seemingly abrupt change of topic here, moving away from the courts and suddenly looking at the idea of Israel having a king. However, the common thread is the requirement for a judge to carry out the sentence imposed by a higher court; which is the executive action. This leads Moses to think about kings. He goes from one authority, which will be established by his word, to another authority, which the people will demand.

Functions of Government (a graphic); from **Slide Player**; accessed May 13, 2016.

Functions of Government - Bible

1. Justice/Judgment
Gen 9:5-6; Ex 18:13-16; Deut 17:8-13; Rm 13:3-4;
1 Peter 2:13-14
2. Research
Pro 25:2

Chapter Outline

Charts, Graphics and Short Doctrines

Pett presents this final section as a chiasm.

Dr. Peter Pett's Chiasm of Deuteronomy 17:14–20

- a When you are come to the land which Yahweh your God gives you, and shall possess it, and shall dwell in it, and shall say, "I will set a king over me, like all the nations that are round about me (Deut. 17:14).
- b You shall surely set him king over you, whom Yahweh your God shall choose, one from among your brethren shall you set king over you. You may not put a foreigner over you, who is not your brother (Deut. 17:15).
- c Only he shall not multiply horses to himself, nor cause the people to return to Egypt, to the end that he may multiply horses, forasmuch as Yahweh has said to you, "You shall henceforth return no more that way" (Deut. 17:16).
- c Nor shall he multiply wives to himself, that his heart turn not away, nor shall he greatly multiply to himself silver and gold (Deut. 17:17).
- b And it shall be, when he sits on the throne of his kingdom, that he shall write him a copy of this law in a book, out of that which is before the priests the Levites, and it shall be with him, and he shall read in it all the days of his life, that he may learn to fear Yahweh his God, to keep all the words of this law and these statutes, to do them (Deut. 17:18–19).
- a That his heart be not lifted up above his brethren, and that he turn not aside from the commandment, to the right hand, or to the left, to the end that he may prolong his days in his kingdom, he and his children, in the midst of Israel (Deut. 17:20).

Note in 'a' his expectation and foreboding that when they are established in the land they will want a king over them, thus in the parallel he warns against appointing someone whose heart will be lifted up above his fellow-citizens, who may then not walk within Yahweh's covenant requirements ('the commandment') and may then not prolong his days in the kingdom. In 'b' he commands them to set over them only one whom Yahweh will choose, a true worshipper of Yahweh circumcised within the covenant, and in the parallel he declares that once such a one takes up his position he must be totally guided by God's word and covenant (law), and rule by the law provided for him in the 'book' which was in the hands of the priests and Levites, the scrolls or tablets of the

Dr. Peter Pett's Chiasm of Deuteronomy 17:14–20

Testimony. In 'c' he declares that they must not appoint someone who multiplies horses to himself, lest this beguile him to seek to Egypt, and in the parallel that he is not to be someone who multiplies wives to himself or silver and gold. In other words it must be someone whose only concern is to please Yahweh and wants no grandeur out of his appointment.

Dr. Peter Pett; *Commentary Series on the Bible*; from e-sword, Deut. 17:14–20.

[Chapter Outline](#)

[Charts, Graphics and Short Doctrines](#)

This is fairly tricky. No king on the horizon for at least 350 years; and Moses has a view of Israel separated from them actually going into the land.

Commentators Regarding a Future King; Introducing Deuteronomy 17:14–20

D. Davies: *[Ideally speaking,] A king is the creation of a nation's will. The nation does not exist for the king, but the king exists for the nation. His proper aim is not personal glory, but the widest public good.*¹²¹

Jamieson, Fausset and Brown: *In the following passage Moses prophetically announces a revolution which should occur at a later period in the national history of Israel. No sanction or recommendation was indicated; on the contrary, when the popular clamor had effected that constitutional change on the theocracy by the appointment of a king, the divine disapproval was expressed in the most unequivocal terms (1Sam. 8:7).*¹²²

Matthew Henry: *It is here supposed that the people would, in process of time, be desirous of a king, whose royal pomp and power would be thought to make their nation look great among their neighbours. Their having a king is neither promised as a mercy nor commanded as a duty (nothing could be better for them than the divine regimen they were under), but it is permitted them if they desired it... Though something irregular is supposed to be the principle of the desire, that they might be like the nations (whereas God in many ways distinguished them from the nations), yet God would indulge them in it, because he intended to serve his own purposes by it, in making the regal government typical of the kingdom of the Messiah.*¹²³

The Pulpit Commentary: *Israel, being under a theocracy, did not need an earthly king; but neither was this thereby precluded, provided the king chosen by the people were one whom Jehovah would approve as his vicegerent.*¹²⁴

The Pulpit Commentary continues: *In this paragraph we have directions to be attended to in case Israel should, in the course of time, desire a king. As things were, the Lord God was their King; and it would be a sinful discontent with the Divine arrangements if they wished any change in that respect in their national constitution. It would show an envious desire to be like unto the nations round about, and a craving after the pomp and display of the heathen world. Still, if such a wish should spring up, they are not to be violently coerced into the maintenance of the theocracy. They are to have their way. A dangerous permission this, but maybe it is a necessary one, to educate the people out of their perversity.*¹²⁵

¹²¹ *The Pulpit Commentary*; 1880-1919; by Joseph S. Exell, Henry Donald Maurice Spence-Jones, from e-sword, Deut. 17:14–20.

¹²² Robert Jamieson, A. R. Fausset and David Brown; *Commentary Critical and Explanatory on the Whole Bible*; 1871; from e-sword, Deut. 17:14.

¹²³ Matthew Henry, *Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible*; from e-Sword, Deut. 17:14–20.

¹²⁴ *The Pulpit Commentary*; 1880-1919; by Joseph S. Exell, Henry Donald Maurice Spence-Jones, from e-sword, Deut. 17:14–20.

¹²⁵ *The Pulpit Commentary*; 1880-1919; by Joseph S. Exell, Henry Donald Maurice Spence-Jones, from e-sword, Deut. 17:14–20.

Commentators Regarding a Future King; Introducing Deuteronomy 17:14–20

G. Campbell Morgan: *The king must be chosen of God and be of the people's own nation. He was not to multiply horses, wives, silver, or gold. All these things were characteristic of the kings of the nations round about them, and it was provided that Israel's king must live a simpler life for the fulfillment of a higher ideal, Moreover, he must be a student and doer of the law.*¹²⁶

Expositor's Bible Commentary: *From the very first moment of Israel's national existence therefore, from the moment that it passed the Red Sea, Yahweh was acknowledged as King, and Moses was simply His representative...The king's position was entirely dependent upon Yahweh. He was to be chosen by Yahweh, he was to act for Yahweh, and no king could rightly fill his place in Israel who was not loyal to that conception. It is in this sense that David was the man after God's own heart. He, in contrast to Saul and to many of the later kings, accepted with entire loyalty, notwithstanding his great natural powers, the position of viceroy for Yahweh.*¹²⁷

The College Press Bible Study: *God divinely anticipates the evil into which Israel would degenerate and makes provision for it. See another example of this in 1Sam. 8:4–22; 1Sam. 12:12. He does not condone or endorse all he allows—or all he foreknows. Their desire for a king would represent a degeneration and corruption of Israel's Theocracy. But God was still their father, and Israel was still his nation, and he was not about to forsake them on this account. So the regulatory laws we have here. As we will see, even these were soon broken!*

College Press continues: *Because God knew ahead of time what Israel would do after they arrived in the promised land, did not mean he caused or compelled them to do it—much less authorized it. A scientist-astronomer may now know that an eclipse will take place exactly at such-and-such a time in 1980. Does his foreknowledge cause the eclipse? No, but it may cause him to do many things in anticipation of it. It seems we have a fair parallel here. God anticipated the evil into which Israel would degenerate in clamoring for a king, and the present scriptures provide for that state of things.*¹²⁸

McGarvey: *What was to prevent Moses from anticipating this? He was starting his people on their national career without a king, when all the nations round about them had kings, and had been ruled by them in the past. He would have been grossly ignorant of human nature had he not anticipated and feared that in the course of time they would grow weary of such singularity, and want to live like other nations. Such has been the fearful anticipation of every body of patriots who ever organized a democratic or republican form of government.*¹²⁹

D. Davies: *A king is the creation of a nation's will. The nation does not exist for the king, but the king exists for the nation. His proper aim is not personal glory, but the widest public good.*¹³⁰

Peter Pett points out that *God had said that one day kings would be established who would be descended from Abraham (Gen. 17:6, 16 36:31 35:11.*¹³¹

Chapter Outline

Charts, Graphics and Short Doctrines

In this final section of Deut. 17, there are allusions to the 3 major institutions of kings, prophets and priests. That Israel would have a *king is prophesied* (as Moses was also a prophet) and there is interaction between the king

¹²⁶ Morgan G Campbell Exposition on BIBLE; Copyright © 2009 by Michael Andrews from e-sword; Deut. 17

¹²⁷ *Expositor's Bible Commentary*; Edited by the Rev. W. Robertson Nicoll; ©1887-1896; public domain; from e-sword, Deut. 17:14–20.

¹²⁸ *The College Press Bible Study Textbook Series*; (a compilation of many commentaries); from e-sword; Deut. 17:14–20 (commentary).

¹²⁹ *The College Press Bible Study Textbook Series*; (a compilation of many commentaries); from e-sword; Deut. 17:14–20 (commentary).

¹³⁰ *The Pulpit Commentary*; 1880-1919; by Joseph S. Exell, Henry Donald Maurice Spence-Jones, from e-sword, Deut. 17:14–20 (the Davies' section).

¹³¹ Dr. Peter Pett; *Commentary Series on the Bible*; from e-sword, Deut. 17:14–20.

and the *priests* (they were to provide a scroll of the Law for him to copy). These are the 3 fundamental institutions of Israel. The prophet spoke the words of God to the people; the priest represented the people to God; and the king acted on God's behalf to guide and lead the people. Jesus Christ would be all 3—a prophet, priest and king.

When you come unto the land which Y^ehowah your Elohim is giving to you and you have possessed her and you have lived in her and you have said, 'I will set over me a king like all the nations which [are] round about me.' Setting you will set over you a king whom choose Y^ehowah your Elohim in him from among your brothers; you will set over you a king; you will not be able to give over you a man a foreigner who [is] not your brother he.

Deuteronomy
17:14–15

When you enter into the land which Y^ehowah your Elohim has given you and you have taken possession of it and you have lived in it, you will say, 'I will place a king over me like all the other nations round about.' You will definitely place a king over you, [a king] that Y^ehowah your Elohim will choose from among your brothers—[him] you will set over you [as] king; [but] you are not allowed to place over you a foreigner who [is] not your brother.

When you enter into the land that Jehovah your God has given you, and you have taken possession of it and lived there for awhile, you might say, 'Let us place a king over us so that Israel will be like the other nations round about.' There is no doubt that you will place a king over yourselves—a man from your brothers that Jehovah your God will choose for you—that man you will place over you as king. However, you are not allowed to place a person of foreign descent over you.

Here is how others have translated this verse:

Ancient texts:

Masoretic Text (Hebrew)	When you come unto the land which Y ^e howah your Elohim is giving to you and you have possessed her and you have lived in her and you have said, 'I will set over me a king like all the nations which [are] round about me.' Setting you will set over you a king whom choose Y ^e howah your Elohim in him from among your brothers; you will set over you a king; you will not be able to give over you a man a foreigner who [is] not your brother he.
Targum of Onkelos	When you enter the land which the Lord your God giveth you, and possess, and dwell in it, and you say, Let us appoint a king over us, like all the nations about me, <u>you shall inquire for instruction</u> before the Lord and afterward appoint the king over you: but it will not be lawful to set over you a foreign man who is not of your brethren.
Revised Douay-Rheims	When you are come into the land, which the Lord your God will give you, and possess it, and shall say: I will set a king over me, as all nations have that are round about: You shall set him whom the Lord your God shall choose out of the number of your brethren. you may not make a man of another nation king, that is not your brother.
Peshitta (Syriac)	When you shall come to the land which the LORD your God gives you, and you shall possess it and dwell therein, and shall say, I will set a king over me, like as all the nations that are about me; You shall in any wise set a king over you whom the LORD your God shall choose; one from among your brethren you shall set king over you; it is unlawful for you to set a foreigner over you, who is not from among your brethren.
Septuagint (Greek)	And when you shall enter into the land which the Lord your God gives you, and shall inherit it and dwell in it, and shall say, I will set a ruler over me, as also the other nations round about me; [Choice of a King. Dt.17.14-20] you shall surely set over you the ruler whom the Lord God shall choose: of your brethren you shall set over you a ruler; you shall not have power to set over you a stranger, because he is not your brother.

Significant differences: The Latin leaves out the phrase *and you live in it [the land]*. The Hebrew has, *setting, you will set a king over you;* and the targum has *you will inquire for instruction;* which is not even close.

Limited Vocabulary Translations:

Bible in Basic English When you have come into the land which the Lord your God is giving you, and have taken it for a heritage and are living in it, if it is your desire to have a king over you, like the other nations round about you; Then see that you take as your king the man named by the Lord your God: let your king be one of your countrymen, not a man of another nation who is not one of yourselves.

Easy English

The king

You are going into the country that the LORD your God has given you. All the countries round you will have kings. Then you will decide that you need a king. Be careful! You must accept the king that the LORD your God chooses. The king must be a man from Israel. Do not choose anyone who is not an Israelite.

Easy-to-Read Version—2001

"You will enter the land that the Lord your God is giving you. You will take that land and live in it. Then you will say, 'We will put a king over us, like all the nations around us.' When that happens, then you must be sure to choose the king that the Lord chooses. The king over you must be one of your own people. You must not make a foreigner your king.

The Message

When you enter the land that God, your God, is giving you and take it over and settle down, and then say, "I'm going to get me a king, a king like all the nations around me," make sure you get yourself a king whom God, your God, chooses. Choose your king from among your kinsmen; don't take a foreigner—only a kinsman.

Names of God Bible

You will enter the land that **Yahweh** your **Elohim** is giving you. You will take possession of it and live there. You will say, "Let's have our own king like all the other nations around us." Be sure to appoint the king **Yahweh** your **Elohim** will choose. He must be one of your own people. Never let a foreigner be king, because he's not one of your own people.

NIRV

Appoint the King the Lord Chooses

You will enter the land the Lord your God is giving you. You will take it as your own. You will make your homes in it. When you do, you will say, "Let's appoint a king over us, just like all the nations around us." When that happens, make sure you appoint over yourselves a king the Lord your God chooses. He must be from among your own people. Don't appoint over yourselves someone from another country. Don't choose anyone who isn't from one of the tribes of Israel.

Thought-for-thought translations; paraphrases:

Common English Bible

Law of the king

Once you have entered the land the Lord your God is giving you and you have taken possession of it and settled down in it, you might say: "Let's appoint a king over us, as all our neighboring nations have done." You can indeed appoint over you a king that the Lord your God selects. You can appoint over you a king who is one of your fellow Israelites. You are not allowed to appoint over you a foreigner who is not one of your fellow Israelites.

Contemporary English V.

People of Israel, after you capture the land the LORD your God is giving you, and after you settle on it, you will say, "We want a king, just like the nations around us." Go ahead and appoint a king, but make sure that he is an Israelite and that he is the one the LORD has chosen.

The Living Bible	“When you arrive in the land the Lord your God will give you, and have conquered it, and begin to think, ‘We ought to have a king like the other nations around us’— be sure that you select as king the man the Lord your God shall choose. He must be an Israelite, not a foreigner.
New Century Version	Choosing a King When you enter the land the Lord your God is giving you, taking it as your own and living in it, you will say, “Let’s appoint a king over us like the nations all around us.” Be sure to appoint over you the king the Lord your God chooses. He must be one of your own people. Do not appoint as your king a foreigner who is not a fellow Israelite.
New Life Version	"When you go into the land the Lord your God gives you, and own it and live in it, and you say, 'I will have a king rule over me like all the nations around me,' 15 then you will set a king over you whom the Lord your God chooses. Set a king over you from among your brothers. Do not give a stranger power over you if he is not your brother.
New Living Translation	Guidelines for a King “You are about to enter the land the Lord your God is giving you. When you take it over and settle there, you may think, ‘We should select a king to rule over us like the other nations around us.’ If this happens, be sure to select as king the man the Lord your God chooses. You must appoint a fellow Israelite; he may not be a foreigner.

Partially literal and partially paraphrased translations:

American English Bible	'And when you enter the land that Jehovah your God is giving to you (after you've inherited it and lived there), and you decide that you want a king to rule over you like the other nations around you; he must be chosen by Jehovah, your God. Kings may only be selected from among your brothers; so, don't empower yourselves to select a king who isn't a brother.
Beck's American Translation	“When you come to the land the LORD your God gives you and you take it and live there and you say, ‘I’ll appoint a king over me like all the other nations around me.’ be sure to appoint as your king one the LORD your God chooses. Make one of your own people king over you; you’re not allowed to appoint a foreigner, who is not of your people, to rule over you.
International Standard V	<i>Duties of the Future King</i> “When you have come to the land that the LORD your God is about to give you, and you have taken possession of it, and have settled in it, then you will say, ‘I will appoint a king over me like all the nations around me.’ You will certainly set a king over you, whom the LORD your God will choose from among your relatives, but you must not place a foreign king over you who is not from your relatives.
New Advent (Knox) Bible	When you reach the land the Lord your God is giving you, and make it your own, and settle in it, you will resolve to have a king of your own, like the nations about you. The king you appoint must be the man the Lord your God chooses, one of your own race; you must not let an alien, who is not of your blood, bear rule over you.
Translation for Translators	Proper behavior for a king “ I know that after you have occupied the land that Yahweh our God is giving to you, and you are living there, you will say, ‘We should have a king to rule over us, like the kings that other nations around us have.’ Yahweh our God will permit you to have a king, but be sure that you appoint someone whom he has chosen. That man must be an Israeli; you must not appoint someone who is a foreigner to be your king.

Mostly literal renderings (with some occasional paraphrasing):

Ferrar-Fenton Bible	When you arrive in the country which your EVER-LIVING God has given to you, and possess it and reside in it, and say to yourselves ; —" Let us place a king over us, like all the nations who are around," you shall only place over you the king whom your EVER-LIVING God may choose for Himself. You shall place a king over you from your brothers ; you are not permitted to appoint a foreigner over yourselves, a man who is not your brother.
God's Truth (Tyndale)	When you are come unto the land which the Lord your God gives you and enjoy it and dwell therein: If you shall say, I will set a king over me: like unto all the nations that are about me: Then you shall make him king over you, whom the Lord your God shall choose. One of your brethren must you make king over you, and may not set a stranger over you which is not of your brethren.
HCSB	Appointing a King "When you enter the land the Lord your God is giving you, take possession of it, live in it, and say, 'I will set a king over me like all the nations around me,' you are to appoint over you the king the Lord your God chooses. Appoint a king from your brothers. You are not to set a foreigner over you, or one who is not of your people.
NIV – UK	The king When you enter the land the Lord your God is giving you and have taken possession of it and settled in it, and you say, 'Let us set a king over us like all the nations around us,' be sure to appoint over you a king the Lord your God chooses. He must be from among your fellow Israelites. Do not place a foreigner over you, one who is not an Israelite.

Catholic Bibles (those having the imprimatur):

Christian Community (1988)	The kings When you come to the land which Yahweh, your God, gives you, when you have conquered it and live in it, you shall perhaps say: "I would like to have a king like all the neighboring nations." Then you have to appoint a king chosen by Yahweh from among your brothers. You shall not appoint a foreign king who is not a brother Israelite.
The Heritage Bible	When you come into the land which Jehovah, your God, gives you, and shall possess it, and shall dwell there, and shall say, I will put a king over me like all those peoples about me, Putting, you shall put over you a king whom Jehovah, your God, shall choose; you shall put a king over you from among your brothers; you may not give over you a man who is a stranger, who is not your brother
New American Bible (2002)	"When you have come into the land which the LORD, your God, is giving you, and have occupied it and settled in it, should you then decide to have a king over you like all the surrounding nations, you shall set that man over you as your king whom the LORD, your God, chooses. He whom you set over you as king must be your kinsman; a foreigner, who is no kin of yours, you may not set over you.
New American Bible (2011)	<i>The King.</i> When you have come into the land which the LORD, your God, is giving you [1Sm 10–25.], and have taken possession of it and settled in it, should you then decide, "I will set a king over me, like all the surrounding nations," you [Dt 26:1; 1Sm 8:5, 19–20.] may indeed set over you a king whom the LORD, your God, will choose. Someone from among your own kindred you may set over you as king; you may not set over you a foreigner, who is no kin of yours. 1 Sm 9:16; 10:24; 16:1–13; 1 Kgs 19:15–16; 2 Kgs 9:1–13.
New Jerusalem Bible	'If, having reached the country given by Yahweh your God and having taken possession of it and, while living there, you think, "I should like to appoint a king to rule me -- like all the surrounding nations," the king whom you appoint to rule you must be chosen by Yahweh your God; the appointment of a king must be made

New RSV	from your own brothers; on no account must you appoint as king some foreigner who is not a brother of yours. When you have come into the land that the Lord your God is giving you, and have taken possession of it and settled in it, and you say, 'I will set a king over me, like all the nations that are around me', you may indeed set over you a king whom the Lord your God will choose. One of your own community you may set as king over you; you are not permitted to put a foreigner over you, who is not of your own community.
Revised English Bible	After you come into the land which the LORD your God is giving you, and have occupied it and settled there, if you then say, "Let us appoint a king over us, as all the surrounding nations do," you must appoint as king the man whom the LORD your God will choose. You must appoint over you a man of your own people; you must not appoint a foreigner, one who is not of your own people.

Jewish/Hebrew Names Bibles:

Complete Jewish Bible	(ii) ¹⁴ "When you have entered the land Adonai your God is giving you, have taken possession of it and are living there, you may say, 'I want to have a king over me, like all the other nations around me.' ¹⁵ In that event, you must appoint as king the one whom Adonai your God will choose. He must be one of your kinsmen, this king you appoint over you — you are forbidden to appoint a foreigner over you who is not your kinsman. I have no idea what the italicized <i>ii</i> means. I would guess that it is a marker for a new section.
exeGesés companion Bible	<u>THE TORAH ON SOVEREIGNS</u> When thou art come unto the land which the LORD Yah Veh thy God Elohim giveth thee, and shalt possess it, and shalt dwell settle therein, and shalt say, I will shall set a king sovereign over me, like as all the nations goyim that are about all around me; In setting, Thou shalt in any wise set him king sovereign over thee, whom the LORD Yah Veh thy God Elohim shall choose: one from among thy brethren shalt thou set king sovereign over thee: thou mayest canst not set give a man - a stranger over thee, which is not thy brother.
JPS (Tanakh—1985)	If, after you have entered the land that the Lord your God has assigned to you, and taken possession of it and settled in it, you decide, "I will set a king over me, as do all the nations about me," you shall be free to set a king over yourself, one chosen by the Lord your God. Be sure to set as king over yourself one of your own people; you must not set a foreigner over you, one who is not your kinsman.
Kaplan Translation	The Monarch When you come to the land that God your Lord is giving you, so that you have occupied it and settled it, you will eventually say, 'We would like to appoint a king, just like all the nations around us.' You must then appoint the king whom God your Lord shall choose [Prophetically (Sifri; Yad, Melakhim 1:3.)]. You must appoint a king from among your brethren; you may not appoint a foreigner who is not one of your brethren.
Orthodox Jewish Bible	When thou art come unto ha'arets which Hashem Eloheicha giveth thee, and shalt possess it, and shalt dwell therein, and shalt say, I will set a melech over me, like Kol HaGoyim that are about me; Thou shalt in any wise set him as melech over thee, whom Hashem Eloheicha shall choose; one from among thy achim shalt thou set as melech over thee; thou mayest not set an ish nokhri over thee, which is not achicha (thy brother, i.e., a fellow Hebrew).

The Scriptures 1998

“When you come to the land which יהוה your Elohim is giving you, and shall possess it and shall dwell in it, and you shall say, ‘Let me set a sovereign over me like all the gentiles that are around me,’ you shall certainly set a sovereign over you whom יהוה your Elohim shall choose. Set a sovereign over you from among your brothers, you are not allowed to set a foreigner over you, who is not your brother.

Expanded/Embellished Bibles:*The Amplified Bible*

“When you enter the land which the Lord your God is giving you, and you take possession of it and live there, and you say, ‘I will set a king over me like all the nations who are around me,’ you shall most certainly set a king over you whom the Lord your God chooses. You shall set a king over you from among your countrymen (brothers); you may not choose a foreigner [to rule] over you who is not your countryman.

The Expanded Bible

Choosing a King

When you enter the land the Lord your God is giving you, taking it as your own [possession] and living in it, you will say, “Let’s appoint [I will set] a king over us [me] like the nations all around us [1 Sam. 8:5, 20].” Be sure to appoint [set] over you the king the Lord your God chooses. He must be one of your own people [relatives; L brothers]. Do not appoint [set] as your king a foreigner who is not a fellow Israelite [relative; L brother].

Kretzmann’s Commentary

Verses 14-20

Of the office of an Eventual King

When thou art come unto the land which the Lord, thy God, giveth thee, and shalt possess it, and shalt dwell therein, and shalt say, I will set a king over me, like as all the nations that are about me, a thing which actually came to pass afterward, 1Sam. 8:5,

thou shalt in any wise, by all means, set him king over thee whom the Lord, thy God, shall choose, 1Sam. 9:15; one from among thy brethren shalt thou set king over thee; thou mayest not set a stranger over thee, which is not thy brother. The ideal which God had in mind for Israel was a theocracy, a direct government of the people by the Lord; but He was willing to modify that to the extent of letting a man chosen by Him, from among the children of Israel, be king as His representative.

NET Bible®

Provision for Kingship

When you come to the land the Lord your God is giving you and take it over and live in it and then say, “I will select a king like all the nations surrounding me,” you must select without fail [The Hebrew text uses the infinitive absolute for emphasis, indicated in the translation by the words “without fail.”] a king whom the Lord your God chooses. From among your fellow citizens [*Heb* “your brothers,” but not referring to siblings (cf. NIV “your brother Israelites”; NLT “a fellow Israelite”). The same phrase also occurs in v. 20.] you must appoint a king – you may not designate a foreigner who is not one of your fellow Israelites [*Heb* “your brothers.” See the preceding note on “fellow citizens.”].

Having a king is part of God’s plan for Israel. This king is supposed to be someone who depends faithfully on the Lord, not on wealth or power, and who would study God’s laws and follow them. A king like that will be a blessing to everyone in the country. But when the people ask for this king around 1000 B.C., their motives are wrong. They want to depend on this king instead of on God (1 Samuel 8:7). In the years that follow, many ungodly kings bring trouble to the nation and oppress the people. Their political maneuvering and policies of appeasement even lead them to set up altars to foreign gods. The people are ultimately punished for deserting the Lord by being taken into exile away from the promised land.

The Voice

Moses: ¹⁴ Once you've gotten into the land the Eternal your God is giving you, and you've conquered it and settled there, you may say to yourselves, "Let's appoint a king to rule our country, just as all the nations around us have!" ¹⁵ *If you do have a king, remember* you must enthrone the king He chooses. It must be a fellow Israelite whom you enthrone; you must not enthrone a foreigner who is not a fellow Israelite.

Literal, almost word-for-word, renderings:

- Concordant Literal Version When you come to the land that Yahweh your Elohim is giving to you, and you tenant it and dwell in it, and you say: Let me set a king over me like all the nations who are around me, then you shall set, yea set over you a king whom Yahweh your Elohim shall choose. From among your brothers shall you set a king over you. You cannot put over you a foreign man who is not of your brothers.
- Context Group Version When you have come to the land { or earth } which YHWH your God gives you, and shall possess it, and shall dwell in it, and shall say, I will set a king over me, like all the nations that are round about me; you shall surely set him king over you, whom YHWH your God shall choose: one from among your brothers you shall set king over you; you may not put a foreigner over you, who is not your brother.
- English Standard V. – UK **Laws Concerning Israel's Kings**
 "When you come to the land that the Lord your God is giving you, and you possess it and dwell in it and then say, 'I will set a king over me, like all the nations that are around me', 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. You may not put a foreigner over you, who is not your brother.
- Modern English Version **Appointing a King**
 When you have come into the land which the Lord your God gives you and possess it and dwell there and then say, "I will set a king over me just like all the nations that are around me," you must set a king over you whom the Lord your God will choose. You must select a king over you who is from among your brothers. You may not select a foreigner over you who is not your countryman.
- New European Version **Rules for a King**
 When you have come to the land which Yahweh your God gives you and shall possess it, and dwell therein and say, I will set a king over me like all the nations that are around me, you must surely set him king over yourselves whom Yahweh your God shall choose; one from among your brothers you shall set king over you. You may not put a foreigner over you, who is not your brother.
- New King James Version **Principles Governing Kings**
 "When you come to the land which the Lord your God is giving you, and possess it and dwell in it, and say, 'I will set a king over me like all the nations that are around me,' you shall surely set a king over you whom the Lord your God chooses; one from among your brethren you shall set as king over you; you may not set a foreigner over you, who is not your brother.
- A Voice in the Wilderness When you come to the land which Jehovah your God is giving you, and have possessed it and dwelt in it, and say, I will set a king over me like all the nations that are around me, you shall appoint to establish a king over you whom Jehovah your God chooses; one from among your brethren you shall set as king over you; you shall not designate a foreign man over you, who is not your brother.
- Young's Updated LT "When you come in unto the land which Jehovah your God is giving to you, and have possessed it, and dwelt in it, and you have said, 'Let me set over me a king like all the nations which are round about me,' — you will certainly set over you a king on whom Jehovah does fix; from the midst of your brothers you will set over you a king; you are not able to set over you a stranger, who is not your brother.

The gist of this passage: There will come a time when the Israelites move into the land and desire a king, so Moses tells them to choose someone from their own people and to choose whom the Lord would choose.

Deuteronomy 17:14a

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
kîy (כי) [pronounced <i>kee</i>]	<i>for, that, because; when, at that time, which, what time</i>	explanatory or temporal conjunction; preposition	Strong's #3588 BDB #471
bôw' (אָוַב) [pronounced <i>boh</i>]	<i>to come in, to come, to go in, to go, to enter, to advance; to attain</i>	2 nd person masculine singular, Qal perfect	Strong's #935 BDB #97
'el (אֶל) [pronounced <i>ehl</i>]	<i>unto; into, among, in; toward, to; against; concerning, regarding; besides, together with; as to</i>	directional preposition (respect or deference may be implied)	Strong's #413 BDB #39
'erets (אֶרֶץ) [pronounced <i>EH-rets</i>]	<i>earth (all or a portion thereof), land, territory, country, continent; ground, soil; under the ground [Sheol]</i>	feminine singular noun with the definite article	Strong's #776 BDB #75
'ăsher (אֲשֶׁר) [pronounced <i>ash-ER</i>]	<i>that, which, when, who, whom; where</i>	relative pronoun	Strong's #834 BDB #81
YHWH (יהוה) [pronunciation is possibly <i>yhoh-WAH</i>]	transliterated variously as <i>Jehovah, Yahweh, Y^ehowah</i>	proper noun	Strong's #3068 BDB #217
'Ēlôhîym (אֱלֹהִים) [pronounced <i>el-o-HEEM</i>]	<i>God; gods, foreign gods, god; rulers, judges; superhuman ones, angels; transliterated Elohim</i>	masculine plural noun with the 2 nd person masculine singular	Strong's #430 BDB #43
nâthan (נָתַן) [pronounced <i>naw-THAHN</i>]	<i>is giving, granting, is placing, putting, setting; is making</i>	Qal active participle	Strong's #5414 BDB #678
lâmed (ל) [pronounced <i>l^e</i>]	<i>to, for, towards, in regards to</i>	directional/relational preposition with the 2 nd person masculine singular suffix	No Strong's # BDB #510

Translation: [When you enter into the land which Y^ehowah your Elohim has given you...](#) Moses is speaking to the people east of the Jordan. He will not go over with them, but they will go into the land that God has promised them. So Moses, acting as a prophet here, tells them what they will do. However, he is speaking to the people standing right in front of him, but they themselves will not do what Moses is saying here.

We have returned to the 2nd person masculine singular suffixes.

There are a myriad of promises that God would give the land of promise to the sons of Israel. Deut. 7:1, Deut. 12:9, 10 18:9 26:1, 9 Lev. 14:34 Joshua 1:13.

Deuteronomy 17:14b

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
w ^e (or v ^e) (ו, or ו) [pronounced <i>weh</i>]	<i>and, even, then; namely; when; since, that; though; as well as</i>	simple wâw conjunction	No Strong's # BDB #251
yârash (יָרַשׁ) [pronounced <i>yaw-RASH</i>]	<i>to possess, to take possession of, to occupy a geographical area [by driving out the previous occupants], to take possession of anyone [or their goods]; to inherit, to possess; to expel, to drive out</i>	2 nd person masculine singular, Qal perfect with the 3 rd person feminine singular suffix	Strong's #3423 BDB #439
w ^e (or v ^e) (ו, or ו) [pronounced <i>weh</i>]	<i>and, even, then; namely; when; since, that; though; as well as</i>	simple wâw conjunction	No Strong's # BDB #251
yâshab (יָשַׁב) [pronounced <i>yaw-SHAH^hV</i>]	<i>to remain, to stay; to dwell, to live, to inhabit, to reside; to sit</i>	2 nd person masculine singular, Qal perfect	Strong's #3427 BDB #442
b ^e (ב) [pronounced <i>b^{eh}</i>]	<i>in, into, at, by, near, on, with, before, upon, against, by means of, among, within</i>	a preposition of proximity with the 3 rd person feminine singular suffix	No Strong's # BDB #88

Translation: ...and you have taken possession of it and you have lived in it,... They will first go into the Land of Promise and they will take it from the Canaanites who live in it—whose perversions and evil have become too much for God to allow to continue. The Jews will take the land from them and they will live in that land.

They will destroy the Canaanites as well, but that is not in view here.

Deuteronomy 17:14c

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
w ^e (or v ^e) (ו, or ו) [pronounced <i>weh</i>]	<i>and, even, then; namely; when; since, that; though; as well as</i>	simple wâw conjunction	No Strong's # BDB #251
'âmar (אָמַר) [pronounced <i>aw-MAHR</i>]	<i>to say, to speak, to utter; to say [to oneself], to think; to command; to promise; to explain; to intend; to decide; to answer</i>	2 nd person masculine singular, Qal perfect	Strong's #559 BDB #55
sîym (שָׂם) [pronounced <i>seem</i>]; also spelled sûwm (שָׂמוּ) [pronounced <i>soom</i>]	<i>to put, to place, to set; to make; to appoint</i>	1 st person singular, Qal imperfect; with the Voluntative hê	Strong's #7760 BDB #962

The voluntative hê; that is, it ends with *âh*, not to indicate a feminine ending (although the meaning is similar), but this indicates that with the verb in the 1st person, we should have the additional words *let me, allow me to*. The 1st person Niphal may require the additional word *may, might, ought, should*.

Deuteronomy 17:14c

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
‘al (עַל) [pronounced <i>gah</i>]	<i>upon, beyond, on, against, above, over, by, beside</i>	preposition of relative proximity with the 1 st person singular suffix	Strong's #5921 BDB #752
melek ^e (מֶלֶךְ) [pronounced <i>MEH-lek</i>]	<i>king, ruler, prince</i>	masculine singular noun	Strong's #4428 BDB #572
kaph or k ^e (כּ) [pronounced <i>k^e</i>]	<i>like, as, according to; about, approximately</i>	preposition	No Strong's # BDB #453
kôl (כֹּל) [pronounced <i>koh</i>]	<i>the whole, all of, the entirety of, all; can also be rendered any of</i>	masculine singular construct followed by a definite article	Strong's #3605 BDB #481
gôwyîm (גּוֹיִם) [pronounced <i>goh-YIHM</i>]	<i>Gentiles, [Gentile] nations, people, peoples, nations</i>	masculine plural noun with the definite article	Strong's #1471 BDB #156
’ăsher (אֲשֶׁר) [pronounced <i>ash-ER</i>]	<i>that, which, when, who, whom; where</i>	relative pronoun	Strong's #834 BDB #81
çâbîyb (סָבִיב) [pronounced <i>saw^b-VEE^bV</i>]	<i>around, surrounding, circuit, round about, encircle; all around; on every side</i>	adverb/preposition with the 1 st person singular suffix	Strong's #5439 BDB #686

Translation: ...you will say, ‘I will place a king over me like all the other nations round about.’ At some point, the people will begin to talk amongst themselves saying, “We could place a king over Israel, because the other nations around us have kings.”

What we find in these last few verses is quite interesting. Moses, as you will recall, is speaking from his own authority, which was granted him by God. Throughout the previous three books of the Bible, Moses very carefully recorded what information was spoken by God and what he said himself. Here, not only is Moses speaking *ex cathedra*, as it were, but he is doing so with the authorization of the Holy Spirit. That is, Moses is setting up Law himself. Throughout much of the book of Deuteronomy, Moses deals with the history of Israel and draws conclusions and exhorts them based upon their history. However, here, he looks down the corridors of time to when Israel would desire a king over her, and he sets up some laws concerning the future kings of Israel. This is not covered in the previous 3 books of Moses.

Verses like this cause critics to propose that Deuteronomy was written well after the time of Moses. This is because there was Moses, then Joshua, both military leaders, who were over Israel; however, they each served directly under God. Following their time, there were judges in the land who were the authority figures, during a lengthy period of apostasy. Finally, over 300 years after the time of Moses, Israel petitioned God for a king and received one. Moses, through the guidance of God the Holy Spirit knows that is what the people will desire in the future and that God will grant them this desire. Critics do not like passages like this because in their limited world there is no such thing as prophecy or divine inspiration and the Holy Spirit is just some vague force with no real power. However, Moses both wrote and spoke under the power of God the Holy Spirit. God the Holy Spirit perceives the future with the same clarity as He does the past. Sometimes future events will illustrate an important doctrine and sometimes future events fit into the context of the teaching, as they do here. The elders of Israel will make a formal request for a king in 1Sam. 8:5: **Then all the elders of Israel gathered together and came to Samuel at Ramah; and they said to him, “Look, you have grown old and your sons do not walk in your ways. Not appoint a king for us to judge us like all the nations.”** Samuel will give several reasons why this request was poorly thought out, but the elders insisted, and God allowed their request (1Sam. 8:10–22).

Deut. 17:14 *When you enter into the land that Jehovah your God has given you, and you have taken possession of it and lived there for awhile, you might say, 'Let us place a king over us so that Israel will be like the other nations round about.'* The idea is, this will happen. This is not maybe they will do this; the people of Israel will do this at some point in time. In the book of Samuel, when Samuel is the priest-prophet over them, they will ask for a king, and Saul will become their king. In fact, when the Israelites do this, they will use almost the exact same words. 1Sam. 8:19–20 *But the people refused to obey the voice of Samuel. And they said, "No! But there shall be a king over us, that we also may be like all the nations, and that our king may judge us and go out before us and fight our battles."* (ESV)

Whereas, Samuel will see this as a defect in the people and is displeased by this (*But the thing displeased Samuel when they said, "Give us a king to judge us." And Samuel prayed to the LORD.—1Kings 8:6; ESV*), Moses makes no such moral pronouncements here. He sees it as inevitable, and therefore, he sets up laws and regulations concerning a king who might rule over Israel.

There is no time frame given to this prophecy. It apparently was not in the immediate future, as provision had been made for Israel to set up judges to rule over them, which would happen soon after they conquered the Land of Promise.

In fact, many people have objected to this portion of Deuteronomy as having been originally written by Moses. Dr. Joe Temple writes: *There are not a great many [commentaries on Deuteronomy] that are fundamental [in theology] and not a great many that are really sound, but nearly every commentary on the book of Deuteronomy suggests that this paragraph was added by a later hand. What they mean by that is that somebody edited the writings of Moses and they got all mixed up in their notes and slipped this in here. This really shouldn't have been in the Bible until about the first book of Samuel. They got a little mixed up and put it in here, and we just have to put up with it unless we want to take it out of here and put it over there in 1Samuel. The reason they have that problem is that they do not believe in the inspiration of the Scriptures nor do they believe in the foreknowledge of God; but I believe in the inspiration of the Scripture and I believe in the foreknowledge of God. I believe that God knows what is going to happen before it happens and He makes provision for it.*¹³²

Because of the similarity of the prophecy and its fulfillment, some commentators (as well as others) have maintained that someone from the time of Solomon simply slipped these words into the book of Deuteronomy (or, somehow devised the book of Deuteronomy to include these words).

The Book of Deuteronomy was NOT written during the time of Samuel

1. It is clear that the prophecy of Moses here is very similar to the fulfillment of this prophecy in the book of Samuel.
 - 1) Deut. 17:14 *When you enter into the land that Jehovah your God has given you, and you have taken possession of it and lived there for awhile, you might say, 'Let us place a king over us so that Israel will be like the other nations round about.'*
 - 2) 1Sam. 8:19–20 *But the people refused to obey the voice of Samuel. And they said, "No! But there shall be a king over us, that we also may be like all the nations, and that our king may judge us and go out before us and fight our battles."* (ESV)
2. People who do not believe that the Bible is the Word of God disparage prophecy.
3. The first thing that ought to be noticed is, Moses in this passage does not disparage a future generation for wanting a king. He simply says that it is going to happen, and here are the boundaries. This is what we are studying in Deut. 17:14–20.
4. On the other hand, Samuel, when a king is sought by the people, is upset and he makes his feelings clearly known. Despite his own children veering away from the ways of God (1Sam. 8:3), Samuel is displeased (1Sam. 8:6).
5. There are some warnings from God for the people who demand a king, which warnings are to be given

¹³² From <http://www.livingbiblestudies.org/study/JT34/018.html> accessed May 13, 2016.

The Book of Deuteronomy was NOT written during the time of Samuel

- by Samuel (1Sam. 8:11–18). Although there is some overlap in the warnings and the requirements found in this chapter of Deuteronomy, there are more differences than similarities.
6. The point being, although there are some strong similarities between the basic prophecy, that is where the striking similarities end.
 7. If this prophecy was somehow inserted into Deuteronomy many centuries later, why was not the same displeasure conveyed? Why were not the warnings conveyed more similar?
 8. Furthermore, those who try to disparage Scriptures, seem to think that they were very fluid and that anyone at anytime could just stick a few verses in here or there to suit their own theological thinking. This is simplistic and silly.
 9. It would make little sense for the people to have a long-term reverence for the Scriptures of God; and yet, every few decades, someone adds this or that half chapter to them, but, somehow, no one ever notices it.
 10. We know that for many centuries, the Jews knew these Scriptures backward and forward. One example of this is when the Lord quoted some Scripture in a synagogue, and then sat down, and everyone is looking at Him. Why is everyone looking at Him? He did not complete the reading. He just stopped mid-verse, and they all knew it. Everyone in that synagogue was thinking, *what the...?*
 11. Although we do not know the complete history of the preservation of the Old Testament Scriptures, what we do know of it is *very* exacting and precise. They scribes knew the middle word and middle letter of every book; and there were many other safeguards to make certain that they correctly copied God's Word in their era.
 12. It would make little sense for them to have spent many centuries careless and arbitrary about the preservation of these books, and then, at some point in time, to be just the exact opposite.
 13. The people who make such charges actually have absolutely no basis for making these charges other than, the prophetic sections of the Old Testament are so accurate that the critics assume that they cannot be real.
 14. There are passages in Scripture which look back on various kings, such was what Nehemiah said about Solomon: **"Did not Solomon king of Israel sin on account of such women? Among the many nations there was no king like him, and he was beloved by his God, and God made him king over all Israel. Nevertheless, foreign women made even him to sin. Shall we then listen to you and do all this great evil and act treacherously against our God by marrying foreign women?"** (Neh 13:26–27; ESV) Nehemiah was looking backward at Solomon, based upon what he learned about Solomon (probably through the Scriptures). What he says matched up more exactly with Solomon because Nehemiah is making this statement *after* the fact.

What is most interesting is, most of the warnings delivered by Moses seem to have direct application to King Solomon, Israel's 3rd king (who is also viewed as a good king); and not so much to King Saul, Israel's first king (seen by most as one of Israel's bad kings).

As an aside, that is a little simplistic. King Saul begins as a wonderful king and does some great things in his early career. Then he seems to give in to mental illness later in life (interestingly enough, Saul is held to account for his mental illness). King Solomon begins as an outstanding king (at a very young age), is distracted (mostly by beautiful women); and he seems to get back on track near the end of his life.

These warnings of Moses and the warnings of Samuel do not appear to apply quite as easily to King David (Israel's second king), who was a great king, but made a couple of horrendous errors in judgment (I should say, horrendous sins). David will also go off-track and return to some semblance of greatness near the end of his life.

[Chapter Outline](#)

[Charts, Graphics and Short Doctrines](#)

At the same time, Moses does not encourage this of the people. He speaks of it as what will inevitably happen.

Deut. 17:14 When you enter into the land that Jehovah your God has given you, and you have taken possession of it and lived there for awhile, you might say, 'Let us place a king over us so that Israel will be like the other nations round about.'

Moses, by the power of God, perceived that the people would want a king

The Pulpit Commentary: *Moses foresaw that the people would wish to be as the nations around them—governed by a king—and he legislates accordingly, without approving of that wish.*¹³³

The College Press Bible Study: *Because God knew ahead of time what Israel would do after they arrived in the promised land, did not mean he caused or compelled them to do it—much less authorized it. A scientist-astronomer may now know that an eclipse will take place exactly at such-and-such a time in 1980. Does his foreknowledge cause the eclipse? No, but it may cause him to do many things in anticipation of it. It seems we have a fair parallel here. God anticipated the evil into which Israel would degenerate in clamoring for a king, and the present scriptures provide for that state of things.*¹³⁴

Dr. Thomas Constable: *As he revealed the mind of God here, a king was permissible, but he had to qualify in certain respects.*¹³⁵

By speaking of a future king, Moses is revealing that he has the gift of prophecy.

[Chapter Outline](#)

[Charts, Graphics and Short Doctrines](#)

Chuck Smith: *Now in the fourteenth verse it is interesting, as God now anticipates a future deterioration of the land. You see, God intended that the nation Israel be a Theocracy, that it be a nation that was governed by God. They were to have the most unusual form of government of any nation of the world. Where other nations may have had monarchies or dictatorships or democracies or other forms of government, theirs was to be unique because they were to be a Theocracy: A nation that was ruled over by God, not as Iran is today.*¹³⁶

Here is where we need to be careful. God knows that the Israelites will demand a king over them. This does not mean that the people are particularly degenerate, as the period of the Judges was one of the lowest points in Israel's history. The form of government that they will continue to have, even with a king, is a theocracy. Just because the people of Israel want a king, this does not make them any worse than their brothers in the time of the Judges.

There is actually a reason why having a king was put on the back burner for 350+ years; and that will be explained at the end of this chapter.

Applying the Torah to a Modern Nation: Although the Old Testament has a lot of great information about national entities, and the laws of divine establishment, this does not mean that a nation with a lot of believers should try to copy ancient Israel in every respect. The United States is not nation Israel; and modern Israel is not the Israel of the Old Testament. Therefore, whatever country you live in, be careful to be able to distinguish between what is to be applied and what is not to be applied.

First, a simple application: the United States is a **client nation** to God, but it is *not* a theocracy; therefore, we need to have some kind of rulers (preferable rulers which conform to our constitution, but that may be changing).

¹³³ *The Pulpit Commentary*; 1880-1919; by Joseph S. Exell, Henry Donald Maurice Spence-Jones, from e-sword, Deut. 17:4.

¹³⁴ *The College Press Bible Study Textbook Series*; (a compilation of many commentaries); from e-sword; Deut. 17:14–20.

¹³⁵ Dr. John Constable *The Expository Notes of Dr. Constable*; ©2012; from e-sword, Deut. 17:14–20.

¹³⁶ Chuck Smith, *Through the Bible Commentary C2000 Series*; from e-Sword, Deut. 17.

The broader point is, even though God wanted Israel to continue without a king; that does not mean that every nation afterwards ought to not have a king. That approach was preferable to God, as God was the *King of Israel*. God is not the King of the United States, even if there are over 50% believers in the United States. The United States is not a theocracy.

Quite obviously, many of the dietary laws from the Torah were needed to preserve Israel from food-borne diseases; but in an era of refrigeration and very sophisticated preservation methods, these dietary laws are not applicable to us.

We hear a lot of stupid things said, like, "You think homosexuality is bad? Well, do you wear a cotton-blend shirt? Well, that is bad too, according to the Bible." Such people who make these statements (1) really have no interest in what the Bible says and (2) are just repeating (or re-posting) a meme that they have come across. If you are reading this, then you obviously have some interesting in Scripture.

There are a variety of prohibitions in Scripture, and they are certainly not all equal. There is a classification of prohibitions by Moses specifically which guide a people who have never had to deal with these things before; and their parents are dead. So, when Moses tells the people not to mix wool and cotton, it is because the first time such a shirt becomes wet, the different shrinkage results in clothing that can no longer be worn. The reason that the children of Israel did not know this is, their clothing and sandals did not wear out in the desert (Deut. 8:4 29:5), and their parents (who would have understood these basic things) had all died the sin unto death (Num. 32:13 Psalm 95:10–11 Heb. 3:17). These suggestions are found *only* in the book of Deuteronomy, and, most interestingly, they are given spiritual meanings in the New Testament. Some of these things are discussed more fully in **Deuteronomy 22** ([HTML](#)) ([PDF](#)) ([WPD](#)).

There are prohibitions which were given by God which protected Israel as a people. Some foods were more prone to carrying disease in the ancient world; and God told Israel not to eat such foods, as they were unclean. This was merely a protection for the people of Israel; and I do not recall there being severe penalties for eating, for instance, pork.

Then there are prohibitions against a variety of behaviors, like murder, disobedience to parents, adultery, and homosexuality. These acts often were punishable by the death penalty. The point is, these acts were on a whole different level than someone eating some bacon.

Now, even though there are many principles that might be applied to your nation, it is not our job to change the government of a nation. Here is where we must have a very careful balance. Believers are called into all walks of life; and some can be political party chairmen and some can be political candidates (just as believers might become lawyer, accountants, taxi drivers, teachers, etc.). Wherever you are in life, you apply Bible doctrine. It is even okay to be enthusiastic about a political candidate or a political party or movement. But, that enthusiasm should never take you away from Bible doctrine; that political bend ought not make it impossible for you to witness to others. And, when your nation appears to be going down (as the United States appears to be doing in the year 2016), this does not mean that all is lost, that you need to buy a cabin out in the woods, etc. Your focus remain on Jesus Christ, through the teaching of the Word of God and the application of the Word of God.

You cannot change the volition of millions of people in your country who may appear to be lemmings rushing headlong into the sea. As believers, we do not go to socialist rallies in order to knock some sense into those people. Often, evangelism is person-by-person, and where God opens the door, you do the evangelizing. We are called to evangelize. We are not necessarily called to convince socialists of their silliness.

Right now, in case you did not know this, the United States is rushing headlong into socialism. Social Security, Medicare, Obamacare, the Student Loan Program, the Home Mortgage market, etc. are all socialist programs. There are movements to nationalize the police force and the education system in the United States. Now, most of those programs are not going to change; and often, when they do change, they get worse. You cannot let your

emotions get swept up as the United States (or wherever you live) continues to head down the wrong path. As R. B. Thieme, Jr. often said, "We are not here to whitewash the devil's world."

Here is where a careful balance is needed. If you live in a democracy (or a republic), then you ought to vote—that is part of the responsibility; but your vote needs to be informed by facts and by Bible doctrine. Voting for people on name recognition (which is how many people vote) is a bad idea. If you do not know the candidates or the issues, and there is no one you can trust on these things to talk to, then you ought not vote. If you feel confident of your knowledge of the issues (or you trust in an organization or a party which lines up with Bible doctrine), then vote. However, do not become upset when the other candidate or party wins. We are in this world, but we not of this world (John 17:14–16).

We ought to pray for our rulers/government officials, regardless of how we feel about them (just as you pray for the salvation of people you may not like). Even if your prayers do not appear to be working, you continue to pray for God's overruling will in the matter.

Let's say that you are called to become a missionary in a socialist nation (or a mostly socialist nation). Is it your job to start an anti-socialist movement in that country? Of course not! It is your job to evangelize the people; teach Bible doctrine whenever possible, and allow God to work His will. At no time should a Christian be seen as a threat to the government or to some of the leaders of that nation.

Wherever we live, we are subject to the laws of that city, nation and state. God places rulers over us in order to maintain order. The fact that you can hop in your car and drive from point A to point B in reasonable safety is because there is established order where you live. There are two times where the Bible clearly allows us to ignore the dictates of government: we can evangelize and we can teach Bible doctrine. We are not called to be lawless; and we are not called to turn the world upside down by a political movement. The gospel of Jesus Christ and Bible doctrine will do that.

Even in a church, where nearly all of the people attending that church are believers, there is organization and authority and laws. Whereas, we might think, we are all believers and we all can be guided by God; every believer has a sin nature. Because of the indwelling sin nature, even in Christian organizations, there must be a system of authority and law.

Rich Cathers adds to this: *Ideally, we should be able to get along without any such thing as leaders or government. Ideally, each individual should be able to go to God and get instructions for his/her life straight from God. But the truth is, even with the best of groups, there are going to be times when human nature steps in and messes things up.*¹³⁷

For many believers who love this country, the idea of us rushing headlong into socialism is quite disconcerting and our natural response is to fight this with everything that we have. What we have is Bible doctrine; what we have is the gospel of Jesus Christ. These are our true weapons.

For further application, see the **Laws of Divine Establishment** ([HTML](#)) ([PDF](#)) ([WPD](#)).

Why did our country get so much freedom and now, suddenly, it appears to be disappearing? Here is the deal: we have had great spiritual revival in our country. The most recent was the 1950's, after the 2nd world war; the U.S. was the perfect field for harvesting; and many people became believers. However, a distressing sign which I noticed in the 1980's was, there were fewer and fewer young people in our churches. There was less evangelism taking place. There are fewer people turning to Jesus Christ. What does that mean? Less blessing for client nation U.S.A.

¹³⁷ From [Calvary Fullerton](#); accessed May 12, 2016.

When people are more apt to abuse freedom, they will lose their freedom.

Deuteronomy 17:15a			
Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
sîym (שׂים) [pronounced seem]; also spelled sūwm (שׂוּם) [pronounced soom]	<i>to put, to place, to set; to make; to appoint</i>	Qal infinitive absolute	Strong's #7760 BDB #962
sîym (שׂים) [pronounced seem]; also spelled sūwm (שׂוּם) [pronounced soom]	<i>to put, to place, to set; to make; to appoint</i>	2 nd person masculine singular, Qal imperfect	Strong's #7760 BDB #962
The infinitive absolute has four uses: ❶ when found alone, it sometimes acts as an English gerund, so that we may add <i>ing</i> to the end of the verb; ❷ When found directly before its verbal cognate, it serves to intensify or strengthen the action or the meaning of the verb which follows; ❸ When it follows its cognate verb, it emphasizes the duration or the continuation of the verbal idea; and, ❹ it is sometimes used as a substitute for a finite verb form. ¹³⁸			
‘al (עַל) [pronounced gah/]	<i>upon, beyond, on, against, above, over, by, beside</i>	preposition of relative proximity with the 2 nd person masculine singular suffix	Strong's #5921 BDB #752
melek ^e (מֶלֶךְ) [pronounced MEH-lek]	<i>king, ruler, prince</i>	masculine singular noun	Strong's #4428 BDB #572

Translation: You will definitely place a king over you,... When a verb is doubled, often the idea is, this is definite; this will certainly happen. The people of Israel will have a king over them. Therefore, Moses speaks of this in a matter-of-fact way, rather than in a judgmental way.

This would also seem typical for Moses to not think of this as problematic, as he is, for all intents and purposes, a king over them.

John Gill: *[Observing the nations around them] did lead them to such a thought and resolution; observing that the neighbouring nations had kings over them, they were desirous of being like them as to the form of their civil government, and have a king as they had.*¹³⁹

The Pulpit Commentary: *As things were, the Lord God was their King; and it would be a sinful discontent with the Divine arrangements if they wished any change in that respect in their national constitution. It would show an envious desire to be like unto the nations round about, and a craving after the pomp and display of the heathen world. Still, if such a wish should spring up, they are not to be violently coerced into the maintenance of the theocracy. They are to have their way. A dangerous permission this, but maybe it is a necessary one, to educate the people out of their perversity. The permission, however, is not left without its restrictions.*¹⁴⁰

¹³⁸ *Biblical Hebrew*; Page Kelley; William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., ©1992, pp. 184–185.

¹³⁹ Dr. John Gill, *John Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible*; from e-Sword, Deut. 17:14.

¹⁴⁰ *The Pulpit Commentary*; 1880-1919; by Joseph S. Exell, Henry Donald Maurice Spence-Jones, from e-sword, Deut. 17:14–20.

Although I do not believe that Moses wrote Genesis, it seems reasonable that he would be familiar with Genesis and the prophecies found in it, including: Gen. 49:10 *The scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor the ruler's staff from between his feet, until tribute comes to him; and to him shall be the obedience of the peoples.* Furthermore, Moses would have been familiar with the Oracle of Baalim: "I see Him, but not now; I behold Him, but not near: a star shall come out of Jacob, and a scepter shall rise out of Israel; it shall crush the forehead of Moab and break down all the sons of Sheth." (Num 24:17; ESV; capitalized)¹⁴¹

Between these words of Moses in Deuteronomy and the installation of a king, a little more than 350 years will pass. 1Sam. 9:15–17 10:24 16:12, 13 2Sam. 5:2 1Chron. 12:23 22:10 28:5 Psalm 2:2, 6. However, once there is a king, then this looks forward to the True King of Israel, Who is Jesus Christ.

Deuteronomy 17:15b			
Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
ʾăsher (אֲשֶׁר) [pronounced <i>ash-ER</i>]	<i>that, which, when, who, whom; where</i>	relative pronoun	Strong's #834 BDB #81
bâchar (בָּחַר) [pronounced <i>baw-KHAHR</i>]	<i>to choose; Gesenius also lists to prove, to try, to examine, to approve, to choose, to select; to love, to delight in [something], to desire</i>	3 rd person masculine singular, Qal imperfect	Strong's #977 BDB #103
YHWH (יהוה) [pronunciation is possibly <i>yhoh-WAH</i>]	transliterated variously as <i>Jehovah, Yahweh, Y^ehowah</i>	proper noun	Strong's #3068 BDB #217
ʾĒlōhîym (אֱלֹהִים) [pronounced <i>el-o-HEEM</i>]	<i>God; gods, foreign gods, god; rulers, judges; superhuman ones, angels; transliterated Elohim</i>	masculine plural noun with the 2 nd person masculine singular	Strong's #430 BDB #43
b ^e (ב) [pronounced <i>b^{eh}</i>]	<i>in, into, at, by, near, on, with, before, upon, against, by means of, among, within</i>	a preposition of proximity with the 3 rd person masculine singular suffix	No Strong's # BDB #88
min (מִן) [pronounced <i>min</i>]	<i>from, off, out from, of, out of, away from, on account of, since, than, more than</i>	preposition of separation	Strong's #4480 BDB #577
qereb (קֶרֶב) [pronounced <i>KEH-re^bv</i>]	<i>midst, among, from among [a group of people]; an [actual, physical] inward part; the inner person with respect to thinking and emotion; as a faculty of thinking or emotion; heart, mind, inner being; entrails [of sacrificial animals]</i>	masculine singular noun with the 2 nd person masculine singular suffix	Strong's #7130 BDB #899
This appears to mean, <i>from among you, from your midst.</i>			

¹⁴¹ Paraphrased from Dr. Peter Pett; *Commentary Series on the Bible*; from e-sword, Deut. 17:14–20.

Deuteronomy 17:15b

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
ʾachîym (אחִיִּם) [pronounced <i>awhk-EEM</i>]	<i>brothers, kinsmen, close relatives; tribesmen; fellow-countrymen</i>	masculine plural noun with the 2 nd person masculine singular suffix	Strong's #251 BDB #26

Translation: ...[a king] that Y^ehowah your Elohim will choose from among your brothers—... God will choose the king. Whenever there is a ruler over the people, God chooses that ruler as appropriate to the people.

Application: I write this in the year 2016, during a period of time when I have never seen a young generation so wrapped up in themselves, thinking only about themselves in the moment in which they live, not thinking even 10 years down the road, and never thinking about the nation as a whole. So, for 8 years, we have had a president who uses the words *I, me, mine* more than any other set of words. And who appears to be the candidate for the Republicans for this coming presidential election? A man who says *I, me, mine* more than any other set of words. Perfectly appropriate for a people who are only able to think about themselves individually right where they are today.

Application: And this is not just young people. We are spending money over and above our budget to where we are now \$19 trillion in debt—a number which is frankly unimaginable (people cannot even imagine a *billion*). Whereas another generation would have said, “No way; you put your signature on a bill to put us one more dollar in debt, and you are gone;” this generation, including people my age, are fine with our country being \$19 trillion in debt, which debt could destroy us as a nation or ruin our nation for many generations to come. But, we don't seem to care. Prov. 29:18 *Where there is no revelation, people cast off restraint; but blessed is the one who heeds wisdom's instruction.* (NIV)

Deuteronomy 17:15c

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
sîym (שִׂים) [pronounced <i>seem</i>]; also spelled sûwm (שׁוּם) [pronounced <i>soom</i>]	<i>to put, to place, to set; to make; to appoint</i>	2 nd person masculine singular, Qal imperfect	Strong's #7760 BDB #962
ʿal (עַל) [pronounced <i>gah!</i>]	<i>upon, beyond, on, against, above, over, by, beside</i>	preposition of relative proximity with the 2 nd person masculine singular suffix	Strong's #5921 BDB #752
melek ^e (מֶלֶךְ) [pronounced <i>MEH-lek</i>]	<i>king, ruler, prince</i>	masculine singular noun	Strong's #4428 BDB #572

Translation: ...[him] you will set over you [as] king;... This man that the Jews will place over them—this is a man chosen by God specifically for them, specifically suited for them. Each new generation defines its own spiritual sensibilities.

I like this translation regarding this part of this passage: Easy-to-Read Version–2001: "You will enter the land that the Lord your God is giving you. You will take that land and live in it. Then you will say, 'We will put a king over us, like all the nations around us.' When that happens, then you must be sure to choose the king that the Lord chooses. The king over you must be one of your own people. You must not make a foreigner your king. The idea is, choose the man that God chooses.



Application: When it comes to the next president (whenever you are reading this), you choose the man that God chooses, bearing in mind that, sometimes there are no good choices. That is, many times, in a democracy, there is no knight in shining armor; there is no Captain America. Even in a democracy, we get the king we deserve.

Deuteronomy 17:15 (a graphic); from [Free Daily Bible Study](#); accessed May 13, 2016.

Deuteronomy 17:15d

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
lô' (לא or לוּא) [pronounced low]	<i>not, no</i>	negates the word or action that follows; the absolute negation	Strong's #3808 BDB #518
yâkôl (לָכִי) [also yâkôwl (לִיכִי)] [pronounced yaw-COAL]	<i>to be able, can, to have the ability, to have the power to; to be able to bear; to be able to bring oneself [to do anything]; to be lawful, to be permitted; to be powerful, to prevail</i>	2 nd person masculine singular, Qal imperfect	Strong's #3201 BDB #407
With the negative, this means <i>cannot, to be unable to, to lack the ability to, to be powerless to, to lack permission to, to not be permitted to; to lack the power to.</i>			
lâmed (ל) [pronounced l ^e]	<i>to, for, towards, in regards to</i>	directional/relational preposition	No Strong's # BDB #510
nâthan (נָתַן) [pronounced naw-THAHN]	<i>to give, to grant, to place, to put, to set; to make</i>	Qal infinitive construct	Strong's #5414 BDB #678
'al (עַל) [pronounced gah!]	<i>upon, beyond, on, against, above, over, by, beside</i>	preposition of relative proximity with the 2 nd person masculine singular suffix	Strong's #5921 BDB #752
îysh (אִישׁ) [pronounced eesh]	<i>a man, a husband; anyone; a certain one; each, each one, everyone</i>	masculine singular noun (sometimes found where we would use a plural)	Strong's #376 BDB #35
nôk ^e rîy (נֹכְרִי) [pronounced nawck ^e -REE or nohk-REE]	<i>foreign, alien, stranger; strange; foreign woman, a harlot; of another family; metaphorically, unknown, unfamiliar; new, unheard of</i>	masculine singular adjective	Strong's #5237 BDB #648

Deuteronomy 17:15d

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
This has that odd vowel games-hartuf (ō as in <i>cost</i>) that looks exactly like a qâmats (â as in <i>car</i>).			
ʾăsher (אֲשֶׁר) [pronounced <i>ash-ER</i>]	<i>that, which, when, who, whom;</i> <i>where</i>	relative pronoun	Strong's #834 BDB #81
lôʾ (לֹא or לוֹא) [pronounced <i>low</i>]	<i>not, no</i>	negates the word or action that follows; the absolute negation	Strong's #3808 BDB #518
ʾăch (אָח) [pronounced <i>awhk</i>]	<i>brother, half-brother; kinsman or</i> <i>close relative; one who</i> <i>resembles</i>	masculine singular noun with the 2 nd person masculine singular suffix	Strong's #251 BDB #26
hûwʾ (אוּו) [pronounced <i>hoo</i>]	<i>he, it; him, himself as a</i> <i>demonstrative pronoun: that, this;</i> <i>(one); same</i>	3 rd person masculine singular, personal pronoun; sometimes the verb <i>to be</i> , is implied	Strong's #1931 BDB #214
This pronoun can be used in the emphatic sense. Sometimes, the verb <i>to be</i> is implied when this pronoun is used.			
This appears to allow, from time to time, a translation of <i>which [is]</i> .			

Translation: ...[but] you are not allowed to place over you a foreigner who [is] not your brother. There is one thing that the Jews are forbidden to do—they are not allowed to put a non-Jew over them as king.

That Moses here tells the people that they cannot choose a foreigner as a king implies that they had a choice in the matter. That is, Israel would become some form of democracy or republic. Whereas, they clearly did not hold a formal election, they did hold political rallies from time to time, supporting this or that man for king (1Kings 1:16ff). With enough support, these political rallies often became either a coronation or a rebellion against the present king (you can study these at the end of King David's reign or at the beginning of Solomon's).

You may have noticed that our own Constitution has a similar clause. The President of the United States must be a natural-born citizen; he cannot be born outside of the United States (except under very limited circumstances). This has become an issue with John McCain, Barack Obama and, most recently, with Ted Cruz.

After David's reign, kingship became a matter of heredity, but it was not always clear cut. Solomon became king as David's choice for king and they co-reigned for a period of time. However, at least one of David's older sons proclaimed himself king while David was ill. In the United States, we have an amazingly peaceful process of electing a new president. On the other hand, when the so-called Arab-Spring erupted, a half-dozen or more countries were plunged into years of civil wars, most of which continue today, a half a decade later.¹⁴²

The Jews could not, by their own choice, place a foreign king over themselves; but God would allow for a foreign power to rule over them—particularly in the final few centuries—as a result of promised discipline.

Although this order is a reasonable one, it seems odd to me—I have a difficult time picturing the Jewish people wanting a gentile ruler over them. However, many of the Jewish people did have a desire to return to Egypt, having romantic thoughts of their *homeland* (most of those had died the sin unto death). So, let me suggest two things: (1) from Moses' standpoint, this was a reasonable warning to make, because the Jews before him had

¹⁴² Which is one of the many reasons that the Bible does not support revolution.

talked about returning to Egypt; but, (2) this also looks down the corridors of time, when the people of Israel will make an agreement with the man of sin in the Tribulation.

So that the people listening do not miss what he has said, Moses mentions again that they will require of God a king to be placed over them. Moses was divinely appointed to lead Israel as a prophet of God. Joshua was also selected by God to lead Israel as a military and spiritual leader. The prophecy of placing of an Israelite over them does not appear to rank with the great prophecies at first—Moses makes it clear that the rulers which will be placed over Israel will at first be fellow Israelites. This statement is added to make it clear that Israel would demand of God a king and God, under His permissive and not directive will, would allow them to have a king. However, the far fulfillment is found in Jesus Christ. “*And their congregation will be established before Me and I will punish all their oppressors. And their leaders will be one of them. And their ruler will come forth from their midst; and I will bring Him near and He will approach Me. For Who is He who would give his heart in pledge to approach Me?*” declares Y^ehowah. “*And you will be My people and I will be your God.*” (Jer. 30:20b–22). One of the great purposes of the genealogical records found throughout the Bible, and particularly in Matthew and Luke, are to establish the royal line of our Lord Jesus Christ, as the King of Israel Who will rule forever.

God chose two kings as a contrast: He chose King Saul, who looked and acted the part, but went bad; and God chose David, who was not even viewed by his father as statesman material, to illustrate that the person does not have to look the part. We have that trouble with electing presidents. In every election since Kennedy v. Nixon, we have elected the better-looking candidate due to the overwhelming influence of television (I don't mean that we elect someone because we are so directed by the networks, but because we actually see these candidates day after day). Following David, we have David's son, Solomon, who had his good days and his bad (Solomon wrote a great deal of Scripture). And following Solomon, we have a series of generally horrible kings.

Moses predicts that Israel will desire a king. There are many theologians who do not like the fact that Moses wrote the book of Deuteronomy. This passage is one of the reasons that they do not like this. Here, perhaps 350 years separated from King Saul, Israel's first king, Moses discusses the appointment and character of a king. Moses discusses this topic herein because: (1) he is intelligent; (2) he has foresight; and (3) he is being led by God the Holy Spirit. Moses has set up the Law for Israel for the coming millennium; therefore, we should expect him to speak of every important aspect of Israel's political agenda. Moses knows that the people of Israel will demand a king someday (he has no idea when), and he sets up guidelines for the people and for the kings to come. Partially because of Moses' foresight, there are many theologians who believe that Moses could not have written the book of Deuteronomy but that it was written during the reign of King Josiah (640–609 B.C.)—a full 800 years after Moses actually gave this speech.

The idea that a brilliant man like Moses could not look down the corridors of time and see that the people might want a king in the future—this is normal foresight. I personally, over 5 years ago, predicted that if Donald Trump becomes president that he will re-make the White House (the building itself). He will either design and build a new White House (and keep the old one as a museum and as executive offices) or he would rehabilitate the current White House considerably and that many would call this, decades hence, as either the Trump White House or the Trump House. Also, I predicted that news outlets would throw a total hissy fit over this. I did not predict this from a spiritual gift of prophecy—no one has that gift since the completion of the New Testament canon of Scripture—I predicted that based upon current events and what I know about Donald Trump. There is nothing that would have prevented Moses from doing the same thing—and he has the added benefit of actually having the gift of prophecy.

My point in all of this is, there is no reason to doubt that Moses is able to look ahead and make such a prediction.

When the people actually do request a king, 350 or so years hence, Samuel, the prophet-priest is guided by God as to how to deal with their request.

1Samuel 8:7–22 Samuel, the people and their desire for a king

1Sam. 8:7–9 *And the LORD said to Samuel, "Obey the voice of the people in all that they say to you, for they*

1Samuel 8:7–22 Samuel, the people and their desire for a king

have not rejected you, but they have rejected Me from being king over them. According to all the deeds that they have done, from the day I brought them up out of Egypt even to this day, forsaking Me and serving other gods, so they are also doing to you. Now then, obey their voice; only you shall solemnly warn them and show them the ways of the king who shall reign over them."

God tells Samuel to respect the wishes of the people and to get a king for them.

1Sam. 8:10–18 So Samuel told all the words of the LORD to the people who were asking for a king from him. He said, "These will be the ways of the king who will reign over you: he will take your sons and appoint them to his chariots and to be his horsemen and to run before his chariots. And he will appoint for himself commanders of thousands and commanders of fifties, and some to plow his ground and to reap his harvest, and to make his implements of war and the equipment of his chariots. He will take your daughters to be perfumers and cooks and bakers. He will take the best of your fields and vineyards and olive orchards and give them to his servants. He will take the tenth of your grain and of your vineyards and give it to his officers and to his servants. He will take your male servants and female servants and the best of your young men and your donkeys, and put them to his work. He will take the tenth of your flocks, and you shall be his slaves. And in that day you will cry out because of your king, whom you have chosen for yourselves, but the LORD will not answer you in that day."

Samuel gives them a litany of things that a king would do to the people.

1Sam. 8:19–20 But the people refused to obey the voice of Samuel. And they said, "No! But there shall be a king over us, that we also may be like all the nations, and that our king may judge us and go out before us and fight our battles."

Israel had fought successfully against her enemies up until that time; but they wanted a king and a standing army as well.

1Sam. 8:21–22 And when Samuel had heard all the words of the people, he repeated them in the ears of the LORD. And the LORD said to Samuel, "Obey their voice and make them a king." Samuel then said to the men of Israel, "Go every man to his city."

As a result, Saul would become king over Israel. At the first, he seemed like a great king, but in time, he degenerated into a madman intent on pursuing and killing David, whom he saw as his rival.

The ESV; capitalized is used above.

Chapter Outline

Charts, Graphics and Short Doctrines

Keil and Delitzsch sum up these two verses: *If Israel, when dwelling in the land which was given it by the Lord for a possession, should wish to appoint a king, like all the nations round about, it was to appoint the man whom Jehovah its God should choose, and that from among its brethren, i.e., from its own people, not a foreigner or non-Israelite.*¹⁴³

Keil and Delitzsch add: *The appointment of a king is not commanded...because Israel could exist under the government of Jehovah, even without an earthly king; it is simply permitted, in case the need should arise for a regal government. There was no necessity to describe more minutely the course to be adopted, as the people possessed the natural provision for the administration of their national affairs in their well-organized tribes, by whom this point could be decided.*¹⁴⁴

¹⁴³ Keil and Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament*; from e-Sword; Deut. 17:14–17.

¹⁴⁴ Keil and Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament*; from e-Sword; Deut. 17:14–17.

But Moses recognized that, sometime in the future, the people would demand a king be placed over them; and that they would not be dissuaded even with the true warnings that would come from Moses (and later, from Samuel).

Quite frankly, I was doing the exegesis for 1Kings 4, and I knew that I needed to go back to this chapter and determine just exactly what this verse means.

Joseph Parker: *These are the temptations of the great ones of the earth—to have many horses, to gratify every appetite, and to have all that money can buy, and to boast themselves that they can purchase what they wish to possess. All these impulses must be kept down; the whole desire of the man must be chastened. The king must know himself to be the vicegerent of God, the messenger of Heaven, the errand-bearer of the eternal covenant. How is this to be brought about? Only by the inculcation of great principles, by the spread of spiritual knowledge, by a truer estimate of the scope and function of law.*¹⁴⁵

There are two questions which come out of this verse: (1) Is God telling Israel that they cannot have a cavalry? (2) Is Moses worried that, hundreds of years down the line, when Israel has a king, that the people will want to return to Egypt? It is easy, with the wrong translation or with a superficial read of this verse, that one might become confused by it or misinterpret it.

Only he will not multiply to himself horses and he will not cause to return the people Egypt-ward in order [to] multiply a horse. And Y^ehowah says to you [all], ‘You [all] will not add to return in the way the that again.’

Deuteronomy
17:16

Only he should not multiply horses to himself and he should not cause the people to return to Egypt in order to multiply the calvary [lit., horse], for Y^ehowah has said to [all of] you, ‘You [all] will not return along that way ever again.’

When in power, the king should not multiply horses to himself and he should not cause the people to return to Egypt in order to make his calvary great, for Jehovah has already told all of you, ‘You will never return to Egypt ever again.’

Here is how others have translated this verse:

Ancient texts:

Masoretic Text (Hebrew)	Only he will not multiply to himself horses and he will not cause to return the people Egypt-ward in order [to] multiply a horse. And Y ^e howah says to you [all], ‘You [all] will not add to return in the way the that again.’
Targum of Onkelos	Only let him not increase to him <u>more than two horses</u> , lest his princes ride upon them, and become proud, neglect the words of the law, and commit the sin of the captivity of Mizraim; for the Lord hath told you, By that way ye shall return no more.
Revised Douay-Rheims	And when he is made king, he shall not multiply horses to himself, nor lead back the people into Egypt, being lifted up with the number of his horsemen, especially since the Lord has commanded you to return no more the same way.
Peshitta (Syriac)	But he shall not multiply horses to himself, that he may not cause the people to return to Egypt, when his horses have multiplied; since the LORD has said to you, You shall never return that way again.
Septuagint (Greek)	For he shall not multiply to himself horses, and he shall by no means turn the people back to Egypt, lest he should multiply to himself horses; for the Lord said, Ye shall not any more turn back by that way.

¹⁴⁵ From <http://biblehub.com/commentaries/parker/deuteronomy/17.htm> accessed May 11, 2016.

Significant differences: The targum adds a lot of additional material, specifying that a king may own only 2 horses at most; and so that his princes will not ride proudly around on these excess horses. Some words are left out as well in the targum.

The other languages parallel the Hebrew text closely.

Limited Vocabulary Translations:

Bible in Basic English	And he is not to get together a great army of horses for himself, or make the people go back to Egypt to get horses for him: because the Lord has said, You will never again go back that way.
Easy English	The king must not get a lot of horses for himself. And he must not send his people back to Egypt to get more horses. The LORD has said to you, "Do not return there!"
Easy-to-Read Version–2001	The king must not get more and more horses for himself. And he must not send people to Egypt to get more horses. Why? Because the Lord has told you, 'You must never go back that way.'
Good News Bible (TEV)	The king is not to have a large number of horses for his army, and he is not to send people to Egypt to buy horses, because the LORD has said that his people are never to return there.
<i>The Message</i>	And make sure he doesn't build up a war machine, amassing military horses and chariots. He must not send people to Egypt to get more horses, because God told you, "You'll never go back there again!"
Names of God Bible	The king must never own a large number of horses or make the people return to Egypt to get more horses. Yahweh has told you, "You will never go back there again."
NIRV	The king must not get large numbers of horses for himself. He must not make the people return to Egypt to get more horses. The LORD has told you, "You must not go back there again."
New Simplified Bible	»He must not increase his herd of horses. He must not send the people to return to Egypt to get more horses. For Jehovah said to you: You should never again return that way.

Thought-for-thought translations; paraphrases:

Common English Bible	That granted, the king must not acquire too many horses, and he must not return the people to Egypt in order to acquire more horses, because the Lord told you: "You will never go back by that road again."
Contemporary English V.	The king should not have many horses, especially those from Egypt. The LORD has said never to go back there again.
The Living Bible	Be sure that he doesn't build up a large stable of horses for himself, nor send his men to Egypt to raise horses for him there, for the Lord has told you, 'Never return to Egypt again.'
New Berkeley Version	He shall not multiply horses for himself nor make people return to Egypt to import horses from there; for the LORD said, You shall never again return over that road.
New Century Version	The king must not have too many horses for himself, and he must not send people to Egypt to get more horses, because the Lord has told you, "Don't return that way again."
New Life Version	He must not take many horses for himself or make the people return to Egypt to get many horses. Because the Lord has told you, 'You must never again return that way.'
New Living Translation	"The king must not build up a large stable of horses for himself or send his people to Egypt to buy horses, for the LORD has told you, 'You must never return to Egypt.'

Partially literal and partially paraphrased translations:

American English Bible	[And no king should] accumulate horses for himself, nor may he send [My] people back to Egypt. He may [decide to] do this if he starts collecting horses for himself... but Jehovah has told you not to go back there again!
International Standard V	Only he must not amass horses for himself or cause the people to return to Egypt to obtain more horses. For the LORD said you must never return that way again.
New Advent (Knox) Bible	Once appointed, he must not raise troop after troop of horsemen, and turn his people's eyes back towards Egypt, flushed with the pride of horsemanship;[1] the Lord strictly enjoins you never to tread that way again. Literally, 'lead his people any more into Egypt, being elated with the number of his horsemen' (in the Hebrew text, 'so as to multiply his horsemen'). What is here discouraged is not, probably, an attempt to invade Egypt, but an attempt to secure an alliance with Egypt which would enable Israel to put cavalry into the field. Cf. III Kg. 4.26, 10.28; Is. 31.1).
Translation for Translators	<i>After he becomes the king</i> , he should not acquire a large number of horses for himself. He should not send people to Egypt to buy horses for him, because Yahweh said to you, 'Never return to Egypt <i>for anything!</i> '

Mostly literal renderings (with some occasional paraphrasing):

Ferrar-Fenton Bible	Further he shall not collect horses to himself, and he shall not take the People back to the Mitzeraim, because of its abundance of horses, for the EVER-LIVING has commanded you not to contemplate to return by that way for ever.
HCSB	But in any wise let him not hold too many horses, that he bring not the people again to Egypt through the multitude of horses, forasmuch as the Lord has said unto you: you shall from this time go no more again that way.
Lexham English Bible	Except, he may <i>not make numerous</i> for himself horses, and he may not allow the people to to go to Egypt <i>in order to increase horses</i> , for Yahweh has said to you that <i>you may never return</i> . I have no idea why Lexham italicizes.
NIV – UK	The king, moreover, must not acquire great numbers of horses for himself or make the people return to Egypt to get more of them, for the Lord has told you, 'You are not to go back that way again.'

Catholic Bibles (those having the imprimatur):

Christian Community (1988)	Ensure that your king does not acquire many horses, lest he again send his people to Egypt to get more horses. For Yahweh commanded you never to go back that way.
The Heritage Bible	Multiplying, he shall not multiply horses to himself, nor cause the people to return to Egypt in order to multiply horses, since Jehovah has said to you, You shall not again return that way any more.
New American Bible (2002)	But he shall not have a great number of horses; nor shall he make his people go back again to Egypt to acquire them, against the LORD'S warning that you must never go back that way again. Horses: chariotry for war. The LORD'S warning: the same warning is also referred to in ⇒ Deut 28:68, although it is not mentioned explicitly elsewhere in the Pentateuch. We know from other sources that Egypt used to export war horses to Palestine. The danger envisioned here is that some king might make Israel a vassal of Egypt for the sake of such military aid.
New American Bible (2011)	But he shall not have a great number of horses; nor shall he make his people go back again to Egypt to acquire many horses, for the LORD said to you, Do not go back that way again. [17:16–17] This restriction on royal acquisitions may have in mind the excesses of Solomon's reign mentioned in 1 Kgs 10:1–11:6. Horses: chariotry for war. Egypt engaged in horse trading, and the danger envisioned here is that some king might make Israel a vassal of Egypt for military aid. Dt 28:68; 1Sm 8:10–12; 1 Kgs 10:26–29; Is 2:7.

New Jerusalem Bible	'He must not, however, acquire more and more horses, or send the people back to Egypt with a view to increasing his cavalry, since Yahweh has told you, "You must never go back that way again."
New RSV	Even so, he must not acquire many horses for himself, or return the people to Egypt in order to acquire more horses, since the Lord has said to you, 'You must never return that way again.'
Revised English Bible	He must not acquire numerous horses, or send men to Egypt to obtain more horses, for the LORD said to you: "You are never to go back that way."

Jewish/Hebrew Names Bibles:

Complete Jewish Bible	However, he is not to acquire many horses for himself or have the people return to Egypt to obtain more horses, inasmuch as ADONAI told you never to go back that way again.
exeGesés companion Bible	But he shall not multiply abound horses to himself, nor cause the people to return to Egypt Misrayim , to the end that he should multiply abound horses: forasmuch as the LORD Yah Veh hath said unto you, Ye shall henceforth return no more not again that way.
JPS (Tanakh—1985)	Moreover, he shall not keep many horses or send people back to Egypt to add to his horses, since the Lord has warned you, "You must not go back that way again."
Kaplan Translation	[The king,] however, must not accumulate many horses [It is thus forbidden for an Israelite king to have more horses than he needs for transportation and war. He may not have any horses merely for pomp (Sanhedrin 21b; Yad, Melakhim 3:3).], so as not to bring the people back to Egypt to get more horses. God has told you that you must never again return on that path.
Orthodox Jewish Bible	But he shall not multiply susim to himself, nor cause the people to return to Mitzrayim, to the end that he should multiply the sus; forasmuch as Hashem hath said unto you, Ye shall henceforth return no more that way.
<i>The Scriptures</i> 1998	"Only, he is not to increase horses for himself, nor cause the people to return to Mitsrayim to increase horses, for הויה has said to you, 'Do not return that way again.'

Expanded/Embellished Bibles:

<i>The Amplified Bible</i>	Further, he shall not acquire many [war] horses for himself, nor make the people return to Egypt in order to acquire horses [to expand his military power], since the Lord said to you, 'You shall never return that way again.'
The Expanded Bible	The king must not have too many [multiply] horses for himself [Is. 2:7–9], and he must not send people to Egypt to get more horses, because the Lord has told you, "Don't return that way again."
Kretzmann's Commentary	But he shall not multiply horses to himself, make their raising his special avocation or even vocation, nor cause the people to return to Egypt, to the end that he should multiply horses, for the Egyptian lowlands were much better fitted for the rearing of horses than the mountainous Palestine; forasmuch as the Lord hath said unto you, Ye shall henceforth return no more that way, Deut. 28:68.
NET Bible®	Moreover, he must not accumulate horses for himself or allow the people to return to Egypt to do so [Heb "in order to multiply horses." The translation uses "do so" in place of "multiply horses" to avoid redundancy (cf. NAB, NIV).], for the Lord has said you must never again return that way.
Syndein/Thieme	But he shall not multiply horses to himself {means have a close tie with Egypt since they raised horses}, nor cause the people to return to Egypt {for their assistance - mostly militarily}, to the end that he should multiply horses. Forasmuch as

The Voice Jehovah/God has said unto you, You shall henceforth return no more that way {Jews were never to go back to their place of slavery in Egypt}." *Although an Israelite, he must not try to build a strong army by collecting large herds of horses for his cavalry troops and a chariot corps. The king must certainly not send people back to Egypt to get large herds of horses, because the Lord has commanded you, "Don't ever go back that way again!"*

Literal, almost word-for-word, renderings:

Concordant Literal Version	But he shall neither increase horses for himself nor cause his people to return to Egypt in order to get many more horses, for Yahweh, He has said to you: You should not again return in this way further.
Context Group Version	Only he shall not multiply horses to himself, nor cause the people to return to Egypt, to the end that he may multiply horses; since YHWH has said to you { pl }, You {pl} shall from now on return no more that way.
Darby Translation	Only he shall not multiply horses to himself, nor lead back the people to Egypt, to multiply horses; for Jehovah hath said unto you, Ye shall not return again any more that way.
English Standard Version	Only he must not acquire many horses for himself or cause the people to return to Egypt in order to acquire many horses, since the LORD has said to you, 'You shall never return that way again.'
Green's Literal Translation	Only, he shall not multiply horses to himself, nor cause the people to turn back to Egypt so as to multiply horses, since Jehovah has said to you, You shall not again return in this way any more.
Modern English Version	What is more, he shall not accumulate horses for himself or cause the people to return to Egypt in order that he accumulate horses, for as the Lord has said to you, "You must not go back that way ever again."
Word of Yahweh	But he shall not multiply horses to himself, nor cause the people to return to Egypt, to the end that he should multiply horses: forasmuch as Yahweh hath said unto you, Ye shall henceforth return no more that way.
World English Bible	Only he shall not multiply horses to himself, nor cause the people to return to Egypt, to the end that he may multiply horses; because Yahweh has said to you, "You shall not go back that way again."
Young's Updated LT	Only, he does not multiply to himself horses, nor cause the people to turn back to Egypt, so as to multiply horses, seeing Jehovah has said to you, 'You [all] do not add to turn back in this way any more.'

The gist of this passage: The king is not to multiply horses to himself nor is he to interact with Egypt in order to build up his own collection of horses.

Deuteronomy 17:16a

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
raq (רַק) [pronounced <i>rahk</i>]	<i>only, provided, altogether, surely; in any case; but; nevertheless</i>	adverb of limitation or of restrictive force	Strong's #7534 & #7535 BDB #956

It is also a prefix to a sentence to add a limitation to something previously expressed, in which case it is rendered *only*. It is used to emphasize single words, especially adjectives, in which case it can be *only* but also *nought but, nothing but*. After a negative, it can be rendered *save, except*.

Deuteronomy 17:16a

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
לֹא (אוּל or אֵל) [pronounced low]	<i>not, no</i>	negates the word or action that follows; the absolute negation	Strong's #3808 BDB #518
רַבָּהּ (הִרְבָּהּ) [pronounced raw ^b -VAWH]	<i>to make [do] much; to multiply, to increase; to give much; to lay much; to have much; to make great; many [as a Hiphil infinitive construct]</i>	3 rd person masculine singular, Hiphil imperfect	Strong's #7235 BDB #915
לָמַד (ל) [pronounced l ^e]	<i>to, for, towards, in regards to</i>	directional/relational preposition with the 3 rd person masculine singular suffix	No Strong's # BDB #510
סוּסִים (סוס) [pronounced soos]	<i>horse, chariot horse; swallow, swift</i>	masculine plural noun	Strong's #5483 BDB #692

Translation: *Only he should not multiply horses to himself...* Is Moses speaking here specifically of the first king of Israel, simply laying out what he will not do; or is Moses setting up a law which is applicable to all kings from that day forward? Most of the time, when we have a negative imperative, it is simply the 2nd person singular imperfect verb combined with the negative. It is possible to set up a prohibition when speaking in the 3rd person, although that is less often done.

Moses is addressing the people of Israel about a man who will king 350 years hence, so using the 3rd person would be appropriate.

You will note that we do not hear about King Saul multiplying horses to himself (although he apparently did have a cavalry); so this passage is not completely predictive of the first king over Israel.

However, is this really a prophecy, or is this a mandate for all kings? We have to note what this portion of v. 16 specifically says, *"Only he should not multiply horses to himself..."* We cannot ignore that final preposition with the suffix. God is not speaking about a king have a calvary; he is speaking of a king who simply gets a lot of horses just for himself.

Horses will be spoken about in two ways—in v. 16a, it is about the king owning horses himself. *Only he [the king] should not multiply horses to himself...* In relationship to the king alone, this is simply building up wealth, sometimes at the expense of his own people.

Deuteronomy 17:16b

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
וְ (or וֵ) (ו, or וּ) [pronounced weh]	<i>and, even, then; namely; when; since, that; though; as well as</i>	simple wâw conjunction	No Strong's # BDB #251
לֹא (אוּל or אֵל) [pronounced low]	<i>not, no</i>	negates the word or action that follows; the absolute negation	Strong's #3808 BDB #518

Deuteronomy 17:16b

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
shûwb (שׁוּב) [pronounced <i>shoo^bv</i>]	<i>to cause to return, to bring, to be caused to turn back mentally, reminisce, to return something, to restore, to bring back, to send back, to regain, to recover, to make restitution, reconsider, think again, to be caused to return</i>	3 rd person masculine singular, Hiphil imperfect	Strong's #7725 BDB #996
'êth (אֶת) [pronounced <i>ayth</i>]	untranslated generally; occasionally <i>to, toward</i>	indicates that the following substantive is a direct object	Strong's #853 BDB #84
'am (עַם) [pronounced <i>gahm</i>]	<i>people; race, tribe; family, relatives; citizens, common people; companions, servants; entire human race; herd [of animals]</i>	masculine singular collective noun with the definite article	Strong's #5971 BDB #766
Mits ^e rayim (מִצְרַיִם) [pronounced <i>mits-RAH-yim</i>]	<i>double straights; transliterated Mizraim; also Egypt, Egyptians</i>	masculine singular, proper noun; with the directional hê	Strong's #4714 BDB #595

The directional hê (properly, the directive hê) is the *âh* (ה) ending to a noun, usually found after a verb of motion. This is called the *directive hê* or the *hê locale*, which often indicates direction and puts somewhat of an adverbial spin on the noun. Essentially, it answers the question *where?* The pronunciation of the word does not change. The directional hê indicates the direction in which something moves. It is often used with the noun *heaven* and the most literal rendering in the English would be *heavenward*. We can also indicate the existence of the hê directional by supplying the prepositions *to* or *toward*.

Translation: ...and he should not cause the people to return to Egypt... This is a fascinating statement, and I do not know really how to take it. Once Israel is independent for a few decades from Egypt, Israel is not going back. Now, the people in the desert—many of them were ready to return to Egypt (and they would have been killed for doing that). But, a future king is not going to gather up all the people of Israel and say, “Hey, why don’t we return to Egypt? Who’s with me?”

So, what seems to be the way that we understand this is, the people to whom Moses is speaking might understand this to mean that they personally should not think about returning to Egypt. However, for the future, this really sounds like their future king (or kings) should not be dependent upon Egypt; should not make an alliance with Egypt, which alliance they depend upon.

It is this short phrase that helps to substantiate Mosaic authorship. Someone writing this passage several hundred years later in order to regulate the kings, would not have said anything about Egypt. Moses does, because that has been a big concern of the people before him and their fathers as well.

Now, what may explain this phrase even more clearly is the phrase which follows, which should be connected to v. 16a-b:

Deuteronomy 17:16c

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
l ^e ma'an (למען) [pronounced l ^e -MAH- gahn]	<i>for the sake of, on account of, to the intent of, to the intent that, to the purpose that, in order that, in view of, to the end that; so that</i>	compound preposition and substantive which acts like a preposition	Strong's #4616 BDB #775
This is the substantive ma'an (מֵאן) [pronounced MAH-gahn], which means <i>purpose, intent</i> , combined with the lamed preposition (which is the only way that it is found in Scripture).			
From the NET Bible footnote for Psalm 51:4: The Hebrew term l ^e ma'an (למען) [pronounced l ^e -MAH-gahn] normally indicates purpose ("in order that"), but here it introduces a logical consequence of the preceding statement. (Taking the clause as indicating purpose here would yield a theologically preposterous idea - the psalmist purposely sinned so that God's justice might be vindicated!) For other examples of l ^e ma'an (למען) [pronounced l ^e -MAH-gahn] indicating result, see 2 Kings 22:17 Jer 27:15 Amos 2:7.			
râbâh (רָבַח) [pronounced raw ^b -VAWH]	<i>to make [do] much; to multiply, to increase; to give much; to lay much; to have much; to make great; many [as a Hiphil infinitive construct]</i>	Hiphil infinitive construct	Strong's #7235 BDB #915
ḥûwḥ (חוּץ) [pronounced soos]	<i>horse, chariot horse; swallow, swift</i>	masculine singular noun	Strong's #5483 BDB #692

Translation: *...in order to multiply the calvary* [lit., *horse*],... First of all, this is not equivalent to the previous phrase, where a king is not to multiply horses to himself. That would be a personal thing. There would be no reason to repeat that prohibition; so this is something else. This would refer to the buildup of a cavalry (or, better yet, a large cavalry).

This suggests that the horses were bred and trained in Egypt; and one has to be careful not to depend upon Egypt for these horses (this clause appears to be tied directly to the previous clause). *...and he should not cause the people to return to Egypt in order to multiply the calvary* [lit., *horse*],...

You will note that The Voice gave a very strong anti-military message: *Although an Israelite, he must not try to build a strong army by collecting large herds of horses for his cavalry troops and a chariot corps. The king must certainly not send people back to Egypt to get large herds of horses, because the Lord has commanded you, "Don't ever go back that way again!"* If not anti-military, then anti-large military. The Voice is not the only translation to take that position. The Amplified Bible refers to these as *[war] horses*; where they admit *war* is not in the Hebrew, but that is how they chose to interpret this verse. *The Message* is clearly anti military: *And make sure he doesn't build up a war machine, amassing military horses and chariots. He must not send people to Egypt to get more horses, because God told you, "You'll never go back there again!"* It is easy to see how, a person who uses only one specific translation of the Bible could end up with the wrong idea.

The Geneva Bible puts an interesting spin on this (which may be more accurate than the Voice translation above): *[The king was not to lead his people back to Egypt in order] To revenge their injuries, and to take them of their best horses.*¹⁴⁶

¹⁴⁶ From the [Geneva Bible](#), Deut. 17:16; accessed April 23, 2016.

What is surprising is just how many commentators will claim that God is limiting Israel's cavalry here to essentially nothing. However, bear in mind that many commentators are not necessarily rough and rugged and like a good fight.

Commentators Who Think Moses is Restricting the Build-up of Israel's Army

Dr. Thomas Constable: *He must not build up a large military organization by multiplying horses (Deut. 17:16). This would lead to a false sense of security and power. Egypt was a major horse market in the ancient Near East, and horses were military machines.*¹⁴⁷

Gill: *But he shall not multiply horses to himself,.... That he might not put his trust and confidence in outward things, as some are apt to trust in horses and chariots; and that he might not tyrannise over and distress his subjects by keeping a number of horses and chariots as a standing army.*¹⁴⁸

The Preacher's Complete Homiletical Commentary: *The king... must trust in God, not in warlike preparations.*¹⁴⁹

J. Orr: *[The king] was not to be ambitious of military distinction. He was not to place his main reliance for the defense of the nation on extravagant military preparations.*¹⁵⁰

John Wesley: *[The king] was not to have many horses for his officers and guard, much less for war, lest he should trust in them.*¹⁵¹

Not every commentator took this point of view.

[Chapter Outline](#)

[Charts, Graphics and Short Doctrines](#)

Moses assumes the fact of the appointment of a king over Israel and now gives some directives which are not so much designed for this people but for the future kings of Israel. Horses, in the ancient world, are connected to power and a personal army and going to Egypt increases the size of their combined force. **Some boast in chariots, and some in horses; but we will boast in the name of Y^ehowah our God (Psalm 20:7).**

Horses were not used in the East either for farming or for traveling, but for war. Egypt and horses are often tied together, as Egypt was one of the principle providers of horses for much of Western Asia (Ex. 14:5–23 1Kings 10:28–29 2Kings 7:6). Therefore, when a king chose to multiply horses to himself, that would cause entanglements with Egypt, possibly leading to an alliance, which was not in God's plan for Israel. This does not mean that God denied peaceful co-existence between Israel and Egypt—it means that Israel was not to look to Egypt for deliverance. A second reason this prohibition is given is not because there is anything inherently wrong with using horses or using horses in warfare; the intention here was that Israel to be dependent upon God for deliverance and not man and certainly not Egypt.

Matthew Henry: *[He must not] multiply horses for war, lest he should trust too much to them, Psalm 20:7; Psalm 33:17; Hos. 14:3.*¹⁵²

The military has been difficult for many Christians to understand and to relate to over the years; and several *protestant* sects are anti-military (the Jehovah's Witnesses and the Quakers come to mind). The Bible, however, is not anti-military (although, quite obviously, there is great pain and suffering and instability in war).

¹⁴⁷ Dr. John Constable *The Expository Notes of Dr. Constable*; ©2012; from e-sword, Deut. 17:14–20.

¹⁴⁸ Dr. John Gill, *John Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible*; from e-Sword, Deut. 17:16.

¹⁴⁹ *The Preacher's Complete Homiletical Commentary*; edited by Joseph S. Exell, 1892; from e-sword, Deut. 17:16–20.

¹⁵⁰ *The Pulpit Commentary*; 1880-1919; by Joseph S. Exell, Henry Donald Maurice Spence-Jones, from e-sword, Deut. 17:15–20.

¹⁵¹ John Wesley; *Explanatory Notes on the Whole Bible*; courtesy of e-sword, Deut. 17:16.

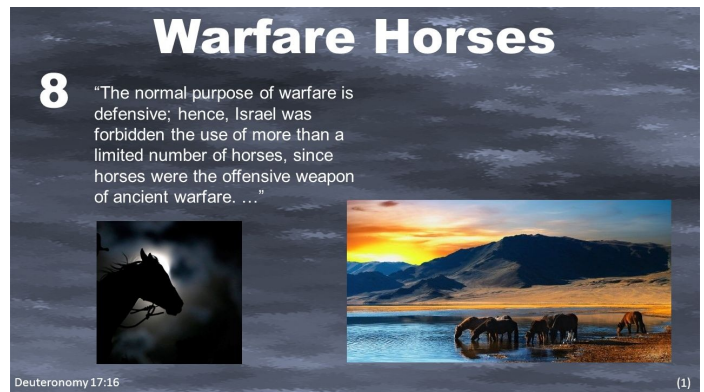
¹⁵² Matthew Henry, *Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible*; from e-Sword, Deut. 17:14–20.

I think that the unknown Kaplan Translation provides the best, as well as even-handed translation/interpretation here: [The king,] however, must not accumulate many horses [It is thus forbidden for an Israelite king to have more horses than he needs for transportation and war. He may not have any horses merely for pomp (Sanhedrin 21b; Yad, Melakhim 3:3).], so as not to bring the people back to Egypt to get more horses. God has told you that you must never again return on that path.

Similarly, the JPS translation ties these two phrases together properly, so that we do not try to separate them. JPS (Tanakh—1985): Moreover, he shall not keep many horses or send people back to Egypt to add to his horses, since the Lord has warned you, “You must not go back that way again.”

Warfare Horses (a graphic); from **Slide Player;** accessed May 13, 2016.

This is a message that Moses is delivering *after* the people of Israel have killed two kings and taken over their land (east of the Jordan) and God is about to deploy the children of Israel west of the Jordan River to destroy millions of people and their cities and settlements.



The Bible has a great deal to say about the military, and without a disparaging tone. God will use Israel’s military to destroy groups of degenerate people during the time of David (in particular; a man after God’s Own heart, by the way). Even in the New Testament, the person paid the highest compliment by Jesus is a Roman centurion (a soldier of high rank).

I think that we ought to understand this with the parameters set by the text itself. The king is not to multiply horses *to himself*. Only he should not multiply horses **to himself** and **he** should not cause the people to return to Egypt in order to multiply the calvary [lit., horse], for Y^ehowah has said to [all of] you, ‘You [all] will not return along that way ever again.’ There is no reason to understand this to refer to having a small military.

God placed the people of Israel into the nation Egypt temporarily, for a few hundred years, because they were too easily corrupted by the wild people of Canaan. There are several narratives of Genesis which make the early patriarchs look pretty bad (Gen. 34–38, for instance). There was the influence of God on their fathers—Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob—but there was the influence of the Canaanites all around them, day in and day out.

By moving the people of Israel to Egypt, the people of Canaan were allowed to increase their own degeneracy; and the people of Israel were, after a time, segregated even from Egyptian society, as they were made into slaves.

Deuteronomy 17:16d

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong’s Numbers
w ^e (or v ^e) (ו, or וי) [pronounced <i>weh</i>]	<i>and, even, then; namely; when; since, that; though; as well as</i>	simple wâw conjunction	No Strong’s # BDB #251

With a voluntative, cohortative or jussive, the wâw conjunction means *that, so that*. It expresses *intention*. The wâw conjunction can express informal inference or consequence (*so, then, therefore*); especially at the beginning of a speech. The wâw conjunction can connect alternative cases or contrasting ideas and be properly rendered *or, but, yet*. The wâw conjunction can also be rendered *for*.

Deuteronomy 17:16d

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
YHWH (יהוה) [pronunciation is possibly <i>yhoh-WAH</i>]	transliterated variously as <i>Jehovah, Yahweh, Y^ehowah</i>	proper noun	Strong's #3068 BDB #217
'amar (אמר) [pronounced <i>aw-MAHR</i>]	<i>to say, to speak, to utter; to say [to oneself], to think; to command; to promise; to explain; to intend; to decide; to answer</i>	3 rd person masculine singular, Qal perfect	Strong's #559 BDB #55
lamed (ל) [pronounced <i>l^e</i>]	<i>to, for, towards, in regards to</i>	directional/relational preposition with the 2 nd person masculine plural suffix	No Strong's # BDB #510
lô' (לא or אול) [pronounced <i>low</i>]	<i>not, no</i>	negates the word or action that follows; the absolute negation	Strong's #3808 BDB #518
yâçaph (יָצַף) [pronounced yaw- <i>SAHPH</i>]	<i>to add, to augment, to increase, to multiply; to add to do = to do again; to continue to</i>	2 nd person masculine plural, Hiphil imperfect	Strong's #3254 BDB #414
lamed (ל) [pronounced <i>l^e</i>]	<i>to, for, towards, in regards to</i>	directional/relational preposition	No Strong's # BDB #510
shûwb (שׁוּב) [pronounced <i>shoo^bv</i>]	<i>to return, to turn, to turn back, to reminisce, to restore something, to bring back something, to revive, to recover something, to make restitution</i>	Qal infinitive construct	Strong's #7725 BDB #996
b ^e (ב) [pronounced <i>b^{eh}</i>]	<i>in, into, at, by, near, on, with, before, upon, against, by means of, among, within</i>	a preposition of proximity	No Strong's # BDB #88
derek ^e (דֶּרֶךְ) [pronounced <i>DEH-rek^e</i>]	<i>way, distance, road, path; journey, course; direction, towards; manner, habit, way [of life]; of moral character</i>	masculine singular construct	Strong's #1870 BDB #202
With the bêyth preposition, this means <i>in the way, along the way [road], near the road, by the way, on [your] journey.</i>			
zeh (זֶה) [pronounced <i>zeh</i>]	<i>here, this, this one; thus; possibly another</i>	masculine singular demonstrative adjective with a definite article	Strong's #2088, 2090 (& 2063) BDB #260
'ôwd (אוֹד) [pronounced <i>gohd</i>]	<i>a going around; a continuing, a continuance; a repeating</i>	adverb/substantive	Strong's #5750 BDB #728

Translation: ...for Y^ehowah has said to [all of] you, 'You [all] will not return along that way ever again.' God has told the people, "You all will never return along that way again." Again, an interesting phrase, as who in Israel will want to return to Egypt once they are an independent people? The people before Moses will think about such a thing; but not a generation down the road.

When Moses speaks this, he is certainly thinking of the people who have harangued him and have said, "We need to elect a leader to take us back to Egypt, and back to the leeks and garlic of Egypt." However, Moses is inspired by God the Holy Spirit, Who looks further down the road than Moses does, and knows that there needs to be a separation from Egypt—physical, political and spiritual. This does not mean that there can be no treaties between the nations or even an alliance, but Israel was not to depend upon Egypt, because they would become a sharpened reed that a man might make the mistake of leaning upon for support, and finding the reed pierce through his hand (2Kings 18:21 Isa. 36:6).

Deut. 17:16 Only he should not multiply horses to himself and he should not cause the people to return to Egypt in order to multiply the calvary [lit., horse], for Y^ehowah has said to [all of] you, 'You [all] will not return along that way ever again.'

Interpreting Multiplying Horses and Returning to Egypt (Deuteronomy 17:16)

The Christian Community Bible (1988): *The kings of Israel were negotiating with Egypt. In exchange for the horses they wished to purchase, they sent young Israelites to serve in the Pharaoh's armies.*¹⁵³

Gill: *[Egypt] was a country that abounded with them, and therefore he was not to encourage, and much less oblige his subjects to travel thither or trade with that people for the sake of increasing his stock of horses, Isa. 31:1.*

Gill continues: *for the Lord said unto you, you will no more return that way; not that going into Egypt on any account whatsoever was forbidden, as for trade and merchandise in other things, or for shelter and safety, for which some good men fled thither; but for outward help and assistance against enemies, and for horses on that account, and particularly in order to dwell there, from which the Jews in the times of Jeremiah were dissuaded by him, and threatened by the Lord with destruction, in case they should, Jer. 42:15.*¹⁵⁴

Matthew Henry: *The reason here given against his multiplying horses is because it would produce a greater correspondence with Egypt (which furnished Canaan with horses, 1Kings 10:28–29) than it was fit the Israel of God should have, who were brought thence with such a high hand: You shall return no more that way, for fear of being infected with the idolatries of Egypt (Lev. 18:3), to which they were very prone. Note, We should take heed of that commerce or conversation by which we are in danger of being drawn into sin.*¹⁵⁵

Keil and Delitzsch: *[The king] was not to keep many horses, or lead back the people to Egypt, to multiply horses, because Jehovah had forbidden the people to return thither by that way. The notion of modern critics, that there is an allusion in this prohibition to the constitution of the kingdom under Solomon, is so far from having any foundation, that the reason assigned - namely, the fear lest the king should lead back the people to Egypt from his love of horses, "to the end that he should multiply horses" - really precludes the time of Solomon, inasmuch as the time had then long gone by when any thought could have been entertained of leading back the people to Egypt. But such a reason would be quite in its place in Moses' time.*¹⁵⁶ Because of the eternal nature of Scripture, it would seem odd for such a warning to apply to one or two generations only, neither of which will be alive when the people choose a king for themselves.

¹⁵³ From <http://www.pbible.org/english/dt/dt17.html> accessed April 23, 2016.

¹⁵⁴ Dr. John Gill, *John Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible*; from e-Sword, Deut. 17:16.

¹⁵⁵ Matthew Henry, *Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible*; from e-Sword, Deut. 17:14–20.

¹⁵⁶ Keil and Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament*; from e-Sword; Deut. 17:14–17.

Interpreting Multiplying Horses and Returning to Egypt (Deuteronomy 17:16)

Dr. Peter Pett: *In those days the horse was the symbol of military power, and the army was built around them, so the multiplying of horses indicated the building up of military power. They must not gaze with envy at Egypt's power, and its many horses with its chariotry, nor appoint a king who would submit to Pharaoh and return them under Egypt's rule in return for some of those horses to be at his disposal..To them they were a symbol of Egypt's greatness, and Egypt's oppression. But Israel must depend on Yahweh for security, not on Pharaoh and Egypt and horses...Some connect this with trading with Egypt, possibly trading slaves or mercenaries for horses. But the emphasis is surely more on the danger of becoming embroiled with Egypt once again, and trusting in them with all its downside rather than in Yahweh.*¹⁵⁷

The Pulpit Commentary: *The multiplying of horses is prohibited, because this would bring Israel into intercourse and friendly relations with Egypt, and might tend to their going back to that country from which they had been so marvelously delivered; a prohibition which could only have been given at an early stage in the history of the people, for at a later period, after they had been well established in Canaan, such a prohibition for such a reason would have been simply ridiculous.*¹⁵⁸

Gary North: *An Israelite army without horses was at the mercy of God, not the mercy of Egypt. To preserve the inheritance of Israel, the king had to conform to God's Bible-revealed laws, for he was the nation's supreme civil representative. A stable full of horses would serve as a symbol of the king's trust in military might rather than God's preserving hand. An arms race in offensive weaponry in Israel would testify to a national loss of faith. Men of valor, seated on slow-moving donkeys or on foot would be sufficient to defend the borders of Israel and preserve the inheritance.*¹⁵⁹

Thomas Coke makes some good points, but they are very difficult to wade through.¹⁶⁰ Although Coke seems to be saying that Israel is forbidden all commerce and communication with Egypt, that seems unlikely. God does not want Israel to depend upon Egypt or to adopt the evil religions practiced in Egypt, but Egypt is never treated anything like the Canaanites, who are completely wiped out (God could have easily wiped Egypt out).

God gave Israel some specific land upon which to live. Much of this land was fairly easy to defend, as Israel lived throughout the hill country, and would have the advantage there, becoming the indigenous people there (see 1Kings 20:23). However, the primary purpose of a large cavalry would be the conquer other lands, and God gave Canaan to the people of Israel; He did not give them the lands off to the east.

The mountainous and rocky hill country would be good for mules; but not for horses. If Israel is invaded, they are able to choose the battleground, which does not have to be hospitable to horses.

Maintaining a large cavalry is not necessary, if Israel remains within their boundaries (and God did not require them to leave their boundaries at any time). In the future, Israel will occupy more ground; but ancient Israel always had enough land for her people.¹⁶¹

[Chapter Outline](#)

[Charts, Graphics and Short Doctrines](#)

Application: We have to be careful how we apply this to our own lives. The United States has a massive military, and we are spending massive amounts of money on it. However, this is not the driver of our debt-ridden society. **94 million people who are not working** (I write this in 2016) are the primary reasons our country is going deeper and deeper into debt (and why one party always wants more taxes and more *benefits*).

¹⁵⁷ Dr. Peter Pett; *Commentary Series on the Bible*; from e-sword, deut. 17:16.

¹⁵⁸ *The Pulpit Commentary*; 1880-1919; by Joseph S. Exell, Henry Donald Maurice Spence-Jones, from e-sword, Deut. 17:16–17.

¹⁵⁹ From <http://www.garynorth.com/Deuteronomy2.pdf> (p. 659); accessed May 15, 2016.

¹⁶⁰ From <http://www.studydrive.org/commentaries/tcc/deuteronomy-17.html> accessed May 8, 2016.

¹⁶¹ I have used some of Coke's points and modified and listed others.

Application: What we have done with our military is helped to maintain peace throughout the world. It does not matter if you love the slogan, *we are not the world's policeman*; fact is, God has blessed our country greatly, and He uses our army to destroy Muslim groups that get out of control, and to maintain peace in regions that would be at war right now without us being there (between North and South Korean, for instance). We have not used our power to establish a world government under the United States. Unfortunately, at the same time, we have not allowed or encouraged the spread of the gospel of Jesus Christ, and we will pay for the grave mistake (this was the biggest mistake that President Bush made in Iraq and Afghanistan).

Application: So, even though God appears to be limiting Israel's army here to be primarily a defensive force; that does not mean that we ought not have a large military in the United States.

Above, it appears that Moses' warning somewhat overlaps two disparate times—the time of the people before him, some of whom would return to Egypt, if given half a chance (Num. 14:3–4); and the time of the kings, when Israel's independence was well established, and no one would have given any thought to returning to Egypt.

Keil and Delitzsch on a More Timeless Understanding of Deuteronomy 17:16

When Riehm objects to this, that if such a prohibition had been unnecessary in a future age, in which the people had reached the full consciousness of its national independence, and every thought of the possibility of a reunion with the Egyptians had disappeared, Moses would never have issued it, since he must have foreseen the national independence of the people; the force of this objection rests simply upon his confounding foreseeing with assuming, and upon a thoroughly mistaken view of the prophet's vision of the future. Even if Moses, as "a great prophet," did foresee the future national independence of Israel, he had also had such experience of the fickle character of the people, that he could not regard the thought of returning to Egypt as absolutely an impossible one, even after the conquest of Canaan, or reject it as inconceivable. Moreover, the prophetic foresight of Moses was not, as Riehm imagines it, a foreknowledge of all the separate points in the historical development of the nation, much less a foreknowledge of the thoughts and desires of the heart, which might arise in the course of time amidst the changes that would take place in the nation. A foresight of the development of Israel into national independence, so far as we may attribute it to Moses as a prophet, was founded not upon the character of the people, but upon the divine choice and destination of Israel, which by no means precluded the possibility of their desiring to return to Egypt, even at some future time, since God Himself had threatened the people with dispersion among the heathen as the punishment for continued transgression of His covenant, and yet, notwithstanding this dispersion, had predicted the ultimate realization of His covenant of grace. And when Riehm still further observes, that the taste for horses, which lay at the foundation of this fear, evidently points to a later time, when the old repugnance to cavalry which existed in the nation in the days of the judges, and even under David, had disappeared; this supposed repugnance to cavalry is a fiction of the critic himself, without any historical foundation. For nothing more is related in the history, than that before the time of Solomon the Israelites had not cultivated the rearing of horses, and that David only kept 100 of the war-horses taken from the Syrians for himself, and had the others put to death (2Sam. 8:4). And so long as horses were neither reared nor possessed by the Israelites, there can be no ground for speaking of the old repugnance to cavalry. On the other hand, the impossibility of tracing this prohibition to the historical circumstances of the time of Solomon, or even a later age, is manifest in the desperate subterfuge to which Riehm has recourse, when he connects this passage with the threat in Deut. 28:68, that if all the punishments suspended over them should be ineffectual, God would carry them back in ships to Egypt, and that they should there be sold to their enemies as men-servants and maid-servants, and then discovers a proof in this, that the Egyptian king Psammetichus, who sought out foreign soldiers and employed them, had left king Manasseh some horses, solely on the condition that he sent him some Israelitish infantry, and placed them at his disposal. But this is not expounding Scripture; it is putting hypotheses into it. As Oehler has already observed, this hypothesis has no foundation whatever in the Old Testament, nor (we may add) in the accounts of Herodotus and Diodorus Siculus concerning Psammetichus. According to Diod. (i. 66), Psammetichus hired soldiers from Arabia, Caria, and Ionia; and according to Herodotus (i. 152), he hired Ionians and Carians armed with brass, that he might conquer his rival kings with their assistance. But neither of these historians says anything at all about Israelitish infantry. And even if it were conceivable that any king of Israel or Judah could carry on such traffic in men, as to sell his own subjects to the Egyptians for horses, it is very certain that the prophets, who

Keil and Delitzsch on a More Timeless Understanding of Deuteronomy 17:16

condemned every alliance with foreign kings, and were not silent with regard to Manasseh's idolatry, would not have passed over such an abomination as this without remark or without reproof.

I realize that Keil and Delitzsch are sometimes rather difficult to plow through and understand. So, I will provide a full explanation below.

[Chapter Outline](#)

[Charts, Graphics and Short Doctrines](#)

Deut. 17:16 **Only he should not multiply horses to himself and he should not cause the people to return to Egypt in order to multiply the calvary [lit., horse], for Y^ehowah has said to [all of] you, 'You [all] will not return along that way ever again.'**

Adam Clarke Explains Deuteronomy 17:16

As horses appear to have been generally furnished by Egypt, God prohibits these,

1. Lest there should be such commerce with Egypt as might lead to idolatry.
2. Lest the people might depend on a well-appointed cavalry as a means of security, and so cease from trusting in the strength and protection of God. And,
3. That they might not be tempted to extend their dominion by means of cavalry, and so get scattered among the surrounding idolatrous nations, and thus cease, in process of time, to be that distinct and separate people which God intended they should be, and without which the prophecies relative to the Messiah could not be known to have their due and full accomplishment.

Adam Clarke, *Adam Clarke's Commentary on the Bible*; from e-Sword, Deut. 17:16.

[Chapter Outline](#)

[Charts, Graphics and Short Doctrines](#)

Lange's explanation: *The king is the natural manifestation of the perfectly free and independent man. Is there a true king in Israel, then Israel must be perfectly free and independent; for it lies in the very nature of the king that his perfection is not for himself; he must permit his whole fulness to flow out over his people.*¹⁶²

King Solomon was somewhat of an anomaly. He came from great stock and wrote marvelous portions of God's Word. However, he did not always follow God's Word himself. **And Solomon has 40,000 [possibly 4000 or 1400] stalls of horse for his chariots and 12,000 horsemen** (1Kings 4:26; see also 1Kings 9:19 10:26–29 2Chron. 2:14).

The latter portion of this verse was a prophetic warning against an alliance with Egypt. **Woe to those who go down to Egypt for help—to 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 Y^ehowah...now the Egyptians are men and not God, and their horses are flesh and not spirit; so Y^ehowah will stretch out His hand and he who helps will stumble and he who is helped will fall and all of them will come to an end together** (Isaiah 31:1, 3; see also Jer. 42:13–43:7 Ezek. 17:15). For we know: **The king is not delivered by a mighty army and a warrior is not delivered by great strength. A horse is a false hope for victory; nor does it deliver anyone by its great strength** (Psalm 33:16–17; see Psalm 147:10 as well). Psalm 20:7 gives the alternative: **For the king trusts in Y^ehowah and through the grace of the Most High, he will not be shaken.** So the problem is with trust and focus.

Deut. 17:16 **Only he should not multiply horses to himself and he should not cause the people to return to Egypt in order to multiply the calvary [lit., horse], for Y^ehowah has said to [all of] you, 'You [all] will not return along that way ever again.'** Within the doctrine, the ESV; capitalized is used.

¹⁶² The Rev. Dr. John P. Lange, *Lange's Commentary*; 1857–1864; in the Public Domain; from E-sword; Deut. 16_18–18:22.

Some translators confuse the issue here:

Bible in Basic English

And he is not to get together a great army of horses for himself, or make the people go back to Egypt to get horses for him: because the Lord has said, You will never again go back that way.

The Message

And make sure he doesn't build up a war machine, amassing military horses and chariots. He must not send people to Egypt to get more horses, because God told you, "You'll never go back there again!"

There are two things which must be explained: (1) Moses warns about a return to Egypt in order to get horses. Even though there are those who would like to return to Egypt standing before him, Moses himself must realize that, a few hundred years in the future, that will not be a serious temptation. (2) Is God specifically limiting the army of Israel.

Deuteronomy 17:16 Israel, Its King, and Its Military (and Its Horses)

1. Because Israel is a true theocracy, God wanted Israel to depend upon Him rather than upon a great army. Psalm 20:7 (*Some trust in chariots and some in horses, but we trust in the name of the LORD our God.*) Psalm 33:16–17 Psalm 147:10 Job. 39:19 Hosea 1:7 (*But I will have mercy on the house of Judah, and I will save them by the LORD their God. I will not save them by bow or by sword or by war or by horses or by horsemen.*)
2. This does not mean that God wanted Israel to disband their army. It would be a mistake to think that God is anti-military or anti-standing army.
3. God worked through the people of Israel when they invaded the Land of Promise. Many heathen were killed by the people of Israel.
4. At no time, after taking the land, did God require Israel to disband its army after taking the land of Canaan. In fact, God specifically left enemies within their borders to use against Israel when they got out of line. This also meant that Israel needed to be ready militarily to deal with these enemies. In fact, God often used the horrors and reality of war to bring His people back to himself (something that we ought to be aware of in 21st century America). Judges 2:11–23
5. Both Saul and David maintained strong armies. Although Saul eventually used his military improperly, David primarily used his army to provide protection for Israel (it was at war nearly all of the time). At no time did God speak to Saul (through Samuel) or to David (through Nathan) to say, "Your military is just too doggoned large and you use it too much. Make it a lot smaller and keep them at home." God could have communicated this to Saul or David if it were a problem, but He did not because it was not a problem.
 - 1) Bear in mind that Saul misused his army to go after David. 1Sam. 22 (for instance)
 - 2) Bear in mind that David, when his army was off at war, and the men were gone, he used this opportunity to have sex with a soldier's wife. 2Sam. 11
 - 3) So, even though these kings abused their army, God never said, "You need to disband your army."
6. Therefore, we have what seem to be competing mandates from God: (1) Israel is to maintain an army, primarily for defense; (2) Israel is to depend upon God for deliverance in war.
7. Maintaining these two concepts in one's head at the same time may be difficult. However, look at it this way. We are, as believers, to be good stewards of God's money, with regards to giving, our family, and preparing for the future. At the same time, we are not to place all of our hope and trust in the money that we have earned or set aside. However, this does not mean that we do not try to earn money or that we have no savings or that we spend money like there is no tomorrow because God will take care of us. The key is, *where do we place our trust?* If things happen and all of our savings is gone, are we suddenly without hope?
8. Deut. 17:16 *Only he should not multiply horses to himself and he should not cause the people to return to Egypt in order to multiply the calvary [lit., horse], for Y^ehowah has said to [all of] you, 'You [all] will not return along that way ever again.'* Horses are mentioned twice in this verse, so we need to understand what is meant.
9. The first mention is about the king having a lot of horses for himself. Today, this would be akin to a leader collecting cars or jets (or whatever). A leader of a country is not to use his position in order to build up

Deuteronomy 17:16 Israel, Its King, and Its Military (and Its Horses)

- great wealth for himself. Now, obviously, this is going to happen with unbelieving leaders of mostly unbelieving countries. In our recent history, Carter, both Bush's and Reagan did not use the office to amass a great deal of wealth. The Clinton's have used the office and their charity to go from being "dead broke" (**Mrs. Clinton's words**) to having a **net worth of over \$140 million**. Al Gore has parlayed the global warming movement into a whopping **\$200 million net worth**. A king of Israel who believes in the God of Israel is not to behave like other kings (which is what the Deut. 17:14–20 is all about).
10. The second mention appears to be related to the military, but in the sense of depending upon Egypt and depending upon their horses.
 11. Egypt was undoubtedly known for its horses. Ex. 14:23 1Kings 10:26, 28 2Chron. 1:16 9:28 Isa. 31:1,3 Ezek. 17:15
 12. At various times in her History, Israel was warned not to depend upon Egypt as an ally. Isa. 31:1–2 36:6 (**Behold, you are trusting in Egypt, that broken reed of a staff, which will pierce the hand of any man who leans on it. Such is Pharaoh king of Egypt to all who trust in him.**) Ezek. 29:16
 13. Matthew Poole suggests that Israel was to remain separate from Egypt's gods and their idolatry. *Their confederacies with the Egyptians, their trusting to them for aid, which they were very prone to, and their infection by the idolatry and other manifold wickednesses for which Egypt was infamous.*
 14. Whedon gives a second reasonable reason here: *Egypt was the principal source of supply for horses to the nations of western Asia. The gathering of large supplies of horses would necessitate great commercial intercourse with Egypt. Moses saw in the corruptions of Egyptian life the danger there was to the people in a close connexion with that country.* It is likely that Egypt continued to have faith in false gods throughout the ages.
 15. Whedon also suggests that a king must be careful not to become an aggressive warrior, conquering lands simply to gain more territory. *Horses were chiefly used in the East in ancient times for military purposes. In many passages the horse is mentioned in connexion with warlike operations. The reasons for the prohibition are apparent. Their king should not make those preparations for war and conquest which were so generally made by Eastern despots.*
 16. It is in this sense that Israel had a unique place in human history. All of the other nations were to know that Israel was protected by her God. Therefore, Israel could not be running about depending upon other nations for her safety. Isa. 31:3 (**The Egyptians are man, and not God, and their horses are flesh, and not spirit. When the LORD stretches out His hand, the helper will stumble, and he who is helped will fall, and they will all perish together.**) Hosea 1:7 14:3 Amos 5:4
 17. What sense would it make for the nation of the Living God to spend all of its time allied with degenerate countries in order to be protected?
 - 1) As an aside, this does not mean that the United States or modern Israel should not maintain state-of-the-art armies today.
 - 2) Even though the United States is a client nation to God and even though God will preserve the Jewish people, we do not follow the same exact Old Testament rules as God set up for ancient Israel. Ancient Israel was known to all of the nations around her as a nation of the Living God. Israel was a testimony to that fact. Therefore, Israel was to behave differently and her king needed to behave differently.
 18. Interestingly enough, there appear to have been times in Israel's history when some of the population actually did want to return to Egypt. Isa. 30:1–3 Jer. 42:13–16 (**But if you say, 'We will not remain in this land,' disobeying the voice of the LORD your God and saying, 'No, we will go to the land of Egypt, where we shall not see war or hear the sound of the trumpet or be hungry for bread, and we will dwell there,' then hear the word of the LORD, O remnant of Judah. Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel: If you set your faces to enter Egypt and go to live there, then the sword that you fear shall overtake you there in the land of Egypt, and the famine of which you are afraid shall follow close after you to Egypt, and there you shall die.**)
 19. In any case, it appears that Egypt became a major exporter of horses and chariots (which would be weapons of war). 1Kings 10:28–29
 20. When Israel depends upon Egypt for its military, this could backfire in several ways. Israel could need military equipment and be denied at an important time; and when buying such equipment, Israel was

Deuteronomy 17:16 Israel, Its King, and Its Military (and Its Horses)

- supporting Egypt and helping them to prosper.
21. Let me draw an analogous situation—let's say that we in the United States depend upon China to build some of the important parts of our **weapon systems** or for our **military planes**. This would be a very bad idea.
 22. God wanted the king of Israel to stand out from all the other kings; to appear to be different from all the other kings.

Commentators were not too bad in this regard. Jamieson, Fausset and Brown: *The use of these animals was not absolutely prohibited, nor is there any reason to conclude that they might not be employed as part of the state equipage. But the multiplication of horses would inevitably lead to many evils, to increased intercourse with foreign nations, especially with Egypt, to the importation of an animal to which the character of the country was not suited, to the establishment of an Oriental military despotism, to proud and pompous parade in peace, to a dependence upon Egypt in time of war, and a consequent withdrawal of trust and confidence in God. (2Sam. 8:4; 1Kings 10:26; 2Chron. 1:16; 2Chron. 9:28; Isa. 31:3).*¹⁶³ A couple translations messed this verse up, however.

Treasury of Scriptural Knowledge: *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. 1Sam. 8:11, 2Sam. 8:4, 1Kings 1:5, 1Kings 4:26, 1Kings 10:26–28, 2Chron. 9:25, Psalm 20:7, Isa. 36:8, Isa. 36:9, Hos. 14:3.*¹⁶⁴

In any case, this is probably the best overall explanation for the second half of this verse.

Poole's quote from Matthew Poole, *English Annotations on the Holy Bible*; ©1685; from e-Sword, Deut. 17:16.

Whedon's quote is from *Whedon's Commentary on the Old and New Testaments*; Editor: Daniel D. Whedon, D.D. L.L.D.; ©1874–1909; from E-sword; Deut. 17:16.

[Chapter Outline](#)

[Charts, Graphics and Short Doctrines](#)

Egypt was a temporary place in Israel's history. The people of Israel were placed there by God in order to protect them from the awful degenerate culture of Canaan, but once God gave the land to Israel, they were not to return to Egypt nor to depend upon Egypt. Isa. 31:1 **Woe to those who go down to Egypt for help, who rely on horses, who trust in the multitude of their chariots and in the great strength of their horsemen, but do not look to the Holy One of Israel, or seek help from the LORD.** (NIV) Isa. 36:6 **Look, I know you are depending on Egypt, that splintered reed of a staff, which pierces the hand of anyone who leans on it! Such is Pharaoh king of Egypt to all who depend on him.** (NIV)

We continue with a theme: if Israel is to have a king, then he ought to be set apart from all other kings and not do as they.

¹⁶³ Robert Jamieson, A. R. Fausset and David Brown; *Commentary Critical and Explanatory on the Whole Bible*; 1871; from e-sword, Deut. 17:16.

¹⁶⁴ *Treasury of Scriptural Knowledge*; by Canne, Browne, Blayney, Scott, and others about 1880; from E-sword, Deut. 17:16.

<p>And he will not multiply to himself women and he will not turn away his heart and silver and sold he will not multiply to himself greatly.</p>	<p>Deuteronomy 17:17</p>	<p>He should not multiply to himself wives; so that he will not turn his heart away [from God]; nor should he greatly multiply silver and gold to himself.</p>
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He should not have a collection of wives; nor should he allow his heart to be turned away from God; nor should he multiply great quantities of gold and silver to himself.

Here is how others have translated this verse:

Ancient texts:

Masoretic Text (Hebrew)	And he will not multiply to himself women and he will not turn away his heart and silver and sold he will not multiply to himself greatly.
Targum of Onkelos	Neither shall he multiply to him wives <u>above eighteen</u> , lest they pervert his heart; nor shall he increase to him silver or gold, <u>lest his heart be greatly lifted up, and he rebel against the God of heaven.</u>
Revised Douay-Rheims	He shall not have many wives, that may allure his mind, nor immense sums of silver and gold.
Peshitta (Syriac)	Neither shall he multiply wives to himself, that they may not cause his heart to turn away; neither shall he greatly multiply to himself silver and gold.
Septuagint (Greek)	And he shall not multiply to himself wives, lest his heart turn away; and he shall not greatly multiply to himself silver and gold.

Significant differences: The targum has a lot of additional text.

Limited Vocabulary Translations:

Bible in Basic English	And he is not to have a great number of wives, for fear that his heart may be turned away; or great wealth of silver and gold.
Easy English	The king must not marry many wives. They will stop him from thinking about the LORD. He must not store a lot of silver and gold for himself.
Easy-to-Read Version–2001	Also, the king must not have too many wives. Why? Because that will make him turn away from the Lord. And the king must not make himself rich with silver and gold.
<i>God's Word™</i>	The king must never have a large number of wives, or he will turn away from God. And he must never own a lot of gold and silver.
<i>The Message</i>	And make sure he doesn't build up a harem, collecting wives who will divert him from the straight and narrow. And make sure he doesn't pile up a lot of silver and gold.
NIRV	The king must not have many wives. If he does, they will lead him astray. He must not store up large amounts of silver and gold.

Thought-for-thought translations; paraphrases:

Contemporary English V.	And the king must not have a lot of wives--they might tempt him to be unfaithful to the LORD. Finally, the king must not try to get huge amounts of silver and gold.
The Living Bible	He must not have too many wives, lest his heart be turned away from the Lord, neither shall he be excessively rich.
New Century Version	The king must not have many wives, or his heart will be led away from God. He must not have too much silver and gold.
New Living Translation	The king must not take many wives for himself, because they will turn his heart away from the Lord. And he must not accumulate large amounts of wealth in silver and gold for himself.

Partially literal and partially paraphrased translations:

American English Bible	Nor may he start accumulating many women for himself, for they will change his heart... and he shouldn't collect a lot of silver and gold for himself.
Beck's American Translation	Nor should he have many wives to turn his heart away, or get a lot of gold and silver for himself.
International Standard V	Also, he must not accumulate wives for himself (otherwise, his affection will become diverted), nor accumulate for himself excessive quantities of [The Heb. lacks quantities of] silver and gold.
New Advent (Knox) Bible	He is not to wed a multitude of wives, that will seduce his heart from its loyalty; he is not to amass great treasures of silver and gold. Cf. III Kg. 11.1-8.
Translation for Translators	And he must not have a lot of wives, because if he did that, they would turn him [SYN] away from <i>worshipping only</i> Yahweh. And he must not acquire a lot of silver and gold.

Mostly literal renderings (with some occasional paraphrasing):

Ferrar-Fenton Bible	He shall not collect wives about himself, nor turn his heart to silver and gold, to accumulate them excessively.
God's Truth (Tyndale)	Also he shall not have too many wives, lest his heart turn away, neither shall he gather him silver and gold too much.
Lexham English Bible	And he must not <i>acquire many</i> wives for himself, so that his heart would turn aside; and <i>he must not accumulate silver and gold for himself excessively</i> .

Catholic Bibles (those having the imprimatur):

Christian Community (1988)	Neither shall he have many women lest they pervert his heart. And neither let him pile up gold and silver.
New American Bible (2002)	Neither shall he have a great number of wives, lest his heart be estranged, nor shall he accumulate a vast amount of silver and gold.
New American Bible (2011)	Neither shall he have a great number of wives, lest his heart turn away, nor shall he accumulate a vast amount of silver and gold. 1 Kgs 10:10–25; 11:1–8; Neh 13:26; Is 2:7.
New Jerusalem Bible	Nor must he keep on acquiring more and more wives, for that could lead his heart astray. Nor must he acquire vast quantities of silver and gold.
New RSV	And he must not acquire many wives for himself, or else his heart will turn away; also silver and gold he must not acquire in great quantity for himself.
Revised English Bible	Your king must not acquire numerous wives and so be led astray, or amass for himself silver and gold in great quantities.

Jewish/Hebrew Names Bibles:

Complete Jewish Bible	Likewise, he is not to acquire many wives for himself, so that his heart will not turn away; and he is not to acquire excessive quantities of silver and gold.
exeGesés companion Bible	Neither shall he multiply wives about women to himself, that his heart turn not away: neither shall he greatly multiply mightily about to himself silver and gold.
JPS (Tanakh—1985)	And he shall not have many wives, lest his heart go astray; nor shall he amass silver and gold to excess.
Kaplan Translation	He [also] must not have many wives [Although polygamy was permitted, and was common for kings, an Israelite king was forbidden to have more than eighteen wives (Sanhedrin 21b; Yad, Melakhim 3:2).], so that they not make his heart go astray. He

shall likewise not accumulate very much [That is, the king is forbidden to build up a personal fortune (Yad, Melakhim 3:4).] silver and gold.

Orthodox Jewish Bible Neither shall he multiply nashim to himself, that his lev turn not away; neither shall he greatly multiply to himself kesef and zahav.

Expanded/Embellished Bibles:

<i>The Amplified Bible</i>	He shall not acquire multiple wives for himself, or else his heart will turn away [from God]; nor [for the same reason] shall he acquire great amounts of silver and gold.
The Expanded Bible	The king must not have many [multiply for himself] wives, or his heart will be led away [turn aside] from God [1 Kin. 11:1–13]. He must not have too much silver and gold.
Kretzmann's Commentary	Neither shall he (the king) multiply wives to himself, after the manner of the luxury-loving, voluptuous Oriental monarchs, that his heart turn not away, as that of Solomon in after-years, when his wives seduced him to idolatry, 1Kings 11:3-4; neither shall he greatly multiply to himself silver and gold, another dangerous practice of the Oriental kings.
NET Bible®	Furthermore, he must not marry many [<i>Heb</i> "must not multiply" (cf. KJV, NASB); NLT "must not take many."] wives lest his affections turn aside, and he must not accumulate much silver and gold.
Syndein/Thieme	{1st Requirement of the King - Not to be Polygamist} Neither shall he {from verse 15: king in view - the future king appointed by God} multiply wives to himself {no polygamy for the future king}, that his 'right lobe'/heart/'right lobe' turn not away [from God]. [Note: A king is required by God's Word to only have one wife. Solomon is a good example of what happens when a king has more than one wife. He had a thousand women in his harem and he was always searching for how to find happiness. Later in life, he returned to God and His Word and re-discovered happiness. A side note is that after the cross, there is no difference between male and female believers in Christ. We are all royalty. The Higher Walk (optimum relationship in phase II) as revealed in the New Testament appears to be one man with his one right woman.] {Note: In I Samuel 25:43, David becomes a polygamist. He knows he is to be the next king of Israel so he should know he has violated God's law for him by taking a second and third wife etc. Click here to see more on sex and marriage.}
The Voice	This king must not have many wives. <i>If he takes foreign wives in marriage alliances, they could turn his heart away from the Lord and lead him to worship foreign gods.</i> And the king must not accumulate great quantities of silver and gold for himself.

Literal, almost word-for-word, renderings:

Concordant Literal Version	He shall neither increase wives for himself, that his heart may not withdraw, nor increase silver and gold for himself to excess.
Context Group Version	Neither shall he multiply women { or wives } to himself, that his heart shall not turn away: neither shall he greatly multiply to himself silver and gold.
English Standard Version	And he shall not acquire many wives for himself, lest his heart turn away, nor shall he acquire for himself excessive silver and gold.
Green's Literal Translation	And he shall not multiply wives to himself, and his heart shall not turn aside. And he shall not greatly multiply to himself silver and gold.
Webster's Bible Translation	Neither shall he multiply wives to himself, that his heart may turn not away: neither shall he greatly accumulate to himself silver and gold.
Young's Updated LT	And he does not multiply to himself wives, and his heart does not turn aside, and silver and gold he does not multiply to himself—exceedingly.

The gist of this passage: A king should not marry a lot of women nor should he build up an excess of wealth.

Deuteronomy 17:17a

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
w ^e (or v ^e) (ו, or ו) [pronounced <i>weh</i>]	<i>and, even, then; namely; when; since, that; though; as well as</i>	simple wâw conjunction	No Strong's # BDB #251
lô ³ (אול or אל) [pronounced <i>low</i>]	<i>not, no</i>	negates the word or action that follows; the absolute negation	Strong's #3808 BDB #518
râbâh (הַבָּר) [pronounced <i>raw^b-VAWH</i>]	<i>to make [do] much; to multiply, to increase; to give much; to lay much; to have much; to make great; many [as a Hiphil infinitive construct]</i>	3 rd person masculine singular, Hiphil imperfect	Strong's #7235 BDB #915
lâmed (ל) [pronounced <i>l'</i>]	<i>to, for, towards, in regards to</i>	directional/relational preposition with the 3 rd person masculine singular suffix	No Strong's # BDB #510
nâshîym (מִיִּשְׁנ) [pronounced <i>naw-SHEEM</i>]	<i>women, wives</i>	feminine plural noun; irregular plural of Strong's #802	Strong's #802 BDB #61

Translation: *He should not multiply to himself wives;...* At this point, it ought to be clear that these are mandates for a future king; and it would be legitimate to translate this, *he should not multiply wives to himself*. A king is in the unique position to do pretty much anything that he wants to do and what normal man is not attracted to women? How much more so when you have the ability and wherewithal to bring them to yourself (as King Solomon would do; and King David to a lesser extent).

One of the perks of being a king is the ability to have as many wives as one chooses. There are several problems which go hand-in-hand with several wives. There is the problem of space and having too many of these wives close at hand and underfoot, involved in jealousy and arguments. A king had a large enough palace where he could avoid the personal involvement here, if he so chose to. He had the room to entertain one or two wives without having the others so close at hand. Another problem was one of finances—it is expensive to support several wives and one's children. A king can afford this sort of luxury. So, throughout the ancient world, polygamy was the norm for a king. However, God, here in the Law of Moses, held the kings of Israel to a higher standard. They were not to have many wives.

The theological problems with have more than one wife can be enumerated as follows: Marriage illustrates the union between Jesus Christ and the nation Israel. God did not choose several nations from the earth and flit from nation to nation—He chose Israel and has always been faithful to Israel. Right man right woman can only be found in a marriage of one man and one woman. Other partners confuse the issue and destroy the rapport. This is why having several sexual partners or having been married more than once confuses the soul and makes both identifying and relating to one's right person difficult if not impossible. Multiplying the number of sin natures makes life more difficult, not easier. What about family? When kids come along, there is a clear line of authority. Husband over the wife over the firstborn over the rest of the children.

Furthermore, wives of other cultures would serve other gods and cause the believer to either back pedal on the exclusivity of Jesus Christ, or to abandon Him entirely (Ex. 34:16 1Kings 11:4–9 Prov. 31:3).

We find that David succumbed to temptation and took several wives to himself (2Sam. 5:13), as did Solomon (1Kings 11:3). These wives turned Solomon's heart away from God: **For it came about when Solomon was old, his wives turned his heart away after other gods; and his heart was not wholly devoted to Y^ehowah his God, as had been the heart of David his father** (1Kings 11:4). Solomon further deepened his inroads to reversionism with the abuse of wealth, which he stole from the people in taxes (1Kings 10:14 Eccles. 2:8–10).

Kings, in particular, were mandated not to have many wives because their successor was then a difficult choice. David had several children by a variety of wives. Therefore, both during and after his life, there was civil unrest because there were so many young men who believed that they had claim to his throne. The events of Judges 9 in themselves are a good argument against a king/judge/leader having many wives. If a king has one wife, then the kingly succession simply goes by birth order.

On the other hand, we need to be aware that a king with one wife is not necessarily a great or even good king (we have the examples of Saul and Ahab—1Kings 14:50).

Gary North: The prohibition on polygamy applied in the Old Covenant only to kings. The most likely reason why the king was singled out in this regard was his access to foreign wives. These marital alliances were not merely biological; they were covenantal. They were therefore political. These wives would likely be part of military alliances with foreign kings. David's wife Maacah was the daughter of a king (2Sam. 3:3). The multiplication of foreign wives was a lure into polytheism, for with foreign wives might come foreign gods. A king's polygamy could easily lead to polytheism. Polytheism was the obvious way for a king to reconcile in his competitive household the imported gods of his wives and their sons. Foreign wives could accept this solution, for the gods of the ancient Near East were polytheistic. This is what happened to Solomon.¹⁶⁵

We do learn something from the life of both David and Solomon. Neither man was perfect and they both turned against God's Word in this respect. This tells us that it is possible to enjoy right man right woman (David and Bathsheba) under these circumstances, just as it is possible to be a great king. However, the more likely scenario is never finding one's right man or right woman (the Song of Solomon illustrates this) and falling prey to false gods and the doctrine of demons, as Solomon did for much of his life. I have to be careful here. We note that despite his failures, David was a man of greatness, the one great king of Israel. More typical would be the illustration of Rehoboam, who was generally a failure (2Chron. 10:8) and caused the division of the Land of Promise into Judah and Israel (2Chron. 10:14–19); who was a man of many wives (2Chron. 11:21).¹⁶⁶ These examples would, by application, indicate that it would be *possible* for a pastor, for instance, to be divorced and remarried and still do a competent job. However, this is not very likely, which is why we have a New Testament prohibition of a pastor being a husband to more than one wife. However, the general result of sexual promiscuity or being married and divorced once or twice is a destruction of the Christian life and a ruination of the possibility of right man right woman.

There are patterns of behavior which are true of kings all over the known world. Moses is telling his people that their king should not be like other kings.

Also see the Doctrine of **Polygamy** ([HTML](#)) ([PDF](#)) ([WPD](#)).

Deuteronomy 17:17b

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
w ^e (or v ^e) (ו, or וּ) [pronounced weh]	and, even, then; namely; when; since, that; though; as well as	simple wâw conjunction	No Strong's # BDB #251

¹⁶⁵ From <http://www.garynorth.com/Deuteronomy2.pdf> (p. 660); accessed May 15, 2016.

¹⁶⁶ Incidentally, you will notice in this verse that God graced Rehoboam out and gave him his right woman, Maacah.

Deuteronomy 17:17b

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
לֹא (אוּל or אֵל) [pronounced <i>low</i>]	<i>not, no</i>	negates the word or action that follows; the absolute negation	Strong's #3808 BDB #518
שׁוּר (סוּר) [pronounced <i>soor</i>]	<i>to turn aside, to depart, to go away</i>	3 rd person masculine singular, Qal imperfect	Strong's #5493 (and #5494) BDB #693
לֵבָב (בִּבְל) [pronounced <i>lay-BAHB^v</i>]	<i>mind, inner man, inner being, heart</i>	masculine singular noun with a 3 rd person masculine singular suffix	Strong's #3824 BDB #523

Translation: ...so that he will not turn his heart away [from God];... One of the reasons that we know that these are not simply predictions about King Saul in the future is, he did turn his heart against God. In fact, this would seem to be the foremost mandate; and it is surprising that we do not have the words *from God* or *from the Law*.

Thomas Coke: *He shall not indulge himself in a vast number of wives and concubines, especially women of different nations and religions, after the manner of the eastern monarchs. The reason is added, that his heart turn not away; i.e. lest his thoughts be diverted from minding the good of his people; and lest he be seduced from the true religion by marrying the worshippers of strange gods, as was the case with Solomon.*¹⁶⁷

Guzik: *Each of these issues 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.*¹⁶⁸

Deuteronomy 17:17c

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
וְ (or וֵ) (וּ or וּ) [pronounced <i>weh</i>]	<i>and, even, then; namely; when; since, that; though; as well as</i>	simple wâw conjunction	No Strong's # BDB #251
כֶּסֶף (כֶּסֶף) [pronounced <i>KEH-sef</i>]	<i>silver, money; silver [as a metal, ornament, color]; shekels, talents</i>	masculine singular noun	Strong's #3701 BDB #494
וְ (or וֵ) (וּ or וּ) [pronounced <i>weh</i>]	<i>and, even, then; namely; when; since, that; though; as well as</i>	simple wâw conjunction	No Strong's # BDB #251
זָהָב (זָהָב) [pronounced <i>zaw-HAW^v</i>]	<i>gold; a measure of weight [related to gold]; [figuratively used for] brilliance, splendor</i>	masculine singular noun	Strong's #2091 BDB #262

¹⁶⁷ From <http://www.studydrive.org/commentaries/tcc/deuteronomy-17.html> accessed May 9, 2016.

¹⁶⁸ David Guzik's *Commentary on the Old Testament*; courtesy of e-sword; ©2006; Deut. 17:16–17.

Deuteronomy 17:17c

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
lō' (לוּל or לוֹ) [pronounced low]	<i>not, no</i>	negates the word or action that follows; the absolute negation	Strong's #3808 BDB #518
rābâh (רָבַח) [pronounced raw ^b -VAWH]	<i>to make [do] much; to multiply, to increase; to give much; to lay much; to have much; to make great; many [as a Hiphil infinitive construct]</i>	3 rd person masculine singular, Hiphil imperfect	Strong's #7235 BDB #915
lâmed (ל) [pronounced l ^e]	<i>to, for, towards, in regards to</i>	directional/relational preposition with the 3 rd person masculine singular suffix	No Strong's # BDB #510
m ^e ôd (מְאֹד) [pronounced m ^e -ODE]	<i>exceedingly, extremely, greatly, very</i>	adverb	Strong's #3966 BDB #547

Translation: ...nor should he greatly multiply silver and gold to himself. We do not know about Saul or David, but Solomon clearly spent time multiplying silver and gold to himself.

The second prohibition of v. 17 is against using the office of king to become wealthy. It is easy to tax the people without regard to their ability to pay. It is easy to frivolously spend money which you taxed and did not earn yourself. This is what our government has done for years. As we fall further and further into nation debt we get into, the politician simply borrows more money or taxes more heavily. There is no personal accounting for the squandering of money. If a politician's salary or retirement was tied to fiscal responsibility, he would be more parsimonious, but it is not. One of the reasons Israel was warned by Samuel not to choose a king is that the king would just tax and tax them. This is above and beyond the spiritually-related tithes and offerings.

J. Vernon McGee: *God warned against trying to corner the silver and gold market of that day. Yet that is exactly what Solomon did. David had begun it — but David was collecting silver and gold to build the temple, but Solomon continued collecting silver and gold for himself. This was the undoing of Solomon, and the grievous taxation was the direct cause of the division of Israel as a nation into the northern and southern kingdoms after Solomon's death.*¹⁶⁹

This passage sounds as though we are speaking of King Solomon, who was David's son and had the potential of being one of the greatest kings of Israel, had he continued to pursue God's truth (2Chron. 1:8–13). Instead, he broke the mandates herein laid down by Moses (1Kings 10:27–11:5) and this led him from the truth. For it came to pass when Solomon was old, his wives turned his heart away after other gods; and his heart was not wholly devoted to Y^ehowah his God, as the heart of David, his father. For Solomon went after Ashtoreth, the goddess of the Sidonians, and after Milcom, the detestable idol of the Ammonites. And Solomon did what was evil in the sight of Y^ehowah and...built a high place for Chemosh, the detestable idol of Moab, on the mountain which is east of Jerusalem, and for Molech, the detestable idol of the sons of Ammon. Thus also he did for all his foreign wives, who burned incense and sacrificed to their gods (1Kings 11:4–6a, 7–8).

This passage in general points toward a Mosaic authorship, rather than an author from the time of Solomon, as has been alleged. Think about it: would it make sense to record in what would be called *Holy Scripture* several quotes which are in direct opposition to the king in power? This clearly tells Solomon to not do what you are doing.

¹⁶⁹ From http://archive.org/stream/05_Deuteronomy/05-DEUTERONOMY_djvu.txt (Chapter 17); accessed May 10, 2016.

Whereas, prophets were never shy about telling it like it is directly to the face of a king, this would have been different. This would have been a man or a group of men who write something which was supposedly written four hundred years previous and then to somehow, slip this in as *Scripture* past a king who read and wrote *Scripture*. It would be one thing for a prophet to show up at Solomon's front door and speak to him about his mistakes; another to try to fake that this was God's Word written four hundred years ago. The author herein is concerned about an alliance with Egypt; during the time of Solomon, when this was supposed to have been written, this was not a serious concern. However, during the time of Moses and much later, during the time of Isaiah, this was a real fear.

For the present day application: although the number of people today who are involved in polygamy is relatively small, we have a huge number of people involved in adulterous relationships. You cannot serve God and allow yourself to fall into a relationship of this sort outside of marriage. Such a relationship requires you to spend a great deal of your waking hours outside of fellowship due to lying, deception and adultery. Furthermore, such activity is extremely hurtful to the other person and has caused the ruin of many a child's life, causing them to be disoriented and therefore off-balance for most of their lives.

The second application is you do not allow yourself to marry someone who is not a believer in Jesus Christ or someone who really has no interest in God's Word. It does not matter at this point how much you think you love this person, your relationship is doomed if you are both pulling in two different directions. This does not mean a Catholic cannot marry a Jew, as a for instance, as both might be unbelievers. The application given here applies to believers.

*Thomas Coke: He shall not set himself to heap up treasure in his own coffers for his private interest, which could not be done without great oppression of his subjects. Add to this, that luxury, and dissolution of manners, are the common effects of exorbitant wealth; vices most destructive to the people in general, who are too apt to imitate the example of their prince. Of this we have many instances in history, particularly in the kings of Persia, who, by their overgrown wealth, entailed ruin both on themselves and their whole people. Another fatal effect of immoderate wealth is, that it begets pride and tyranny; it being the epidemic folly of mankind to trust in their riches, and upon account thereof to form an over-weening opinion of themselves, and to behave with insolence and cruelty towards others.*¹⁷⁰

This certainly appears to be something ignored by Solomon. 1Kings 10:21 *All King Solomon's drinking vessels were of gold, and all the vessels of the House of the Forest of Lebanon were of pure gold. None were of silver; silver was not considered as anything in the days of Solomon.* (ESV) Before being too quick to condemn Solomon here, bear in mind that at least some of these riches were a result of his relationships with other countries. 1Kings 10:22–25 *For the king had a fleet of ships of Tarshish at sea with the fleet of Hiram. Once every three years the fleet of ships of Tarshish used to come bringing gold, silver, ivory, apes, and peacocks. Thus King Solomon excelled all the kings of the earth in riches and in wisdom. And the whole earth sought the presence of Solomon to hear his wisdom, which God had put into his mind. Every one of them brought his present, articles of silver and gold, garments, myrrh, spices, horses, and mules, so much year by year.*

Before condemning Solomon too harshly (and, he was certainly not perfect), we ought to recognize what Solomon did do that was amazing. He may have single-handedly changed human history. Usually when a nation grew large and powerful, one of the things that it did to increase its wealth was to plunder other nations. Solomon did not do this. He had a great army; he had the power, but he did not try to destroy other nations in order to seize their wealth. This was revolutionary for that era of human history; and no doubt, many kings and their representatives visited Solomon in appreciation for the peace which he maintained over a very large landscape.

Having a very powerful army, yet not using it except to deter other nations, is exactly the approach God would approve of. The first thing a powerful nation with a large army is going to do is to attack many of its neighbors. Israel under Solomon did not do that, which was revolutionary.

¹⁷⁰ From <http://www.studylight.org/commentaries/tcc/deuteronomy-17.html> accessed May 9, 2016.

Wealth and the King: Here, we need to be careful. Can a king multiply gold and silver to his kingdom, which might be prudent; and not multiply it to himself? In the United States, we are familiar with presidents, and they leave office after 4 or 8 years. At that point, it is clear whether they have lined their pockets with gold and silver or not. With our last two presidents (I write this in 2016), they both left office increasing the national debt dramatically, yet neither one of them is under any personal financial worry.

On the other hand, kings usually remained in office until they died (naturally or in a revolution). So they might increase the national treasure, but there is not as clear a separation between the funds belonging to a king and the build up of wealth that belongs to the kingdom. There were few things to prevent the king from using the national treasury as his own personal slush fund (which is the direction that Solomon eventually took).

We have added to this phrase the word *greatly*. Therefore, it would seem to me that some accumulation of gold and silver is not necessarily a bad thing provided that: (1) this is not a chief focus of the king; and (2) he does not allow the gold and silver to turn his heart away from God; (3) he is not motivated by greed; and (4) he does not depend upon the gold and silver for deliverance. In fact, these 4 points would be reasonably applicable to whatever a king might want to multiply to himself, be it horses, women or precious metals.

Again, there is a tricky middle ground for the king. To build up the national treasury is a patriotic thing for the king to do. To use some of this money for various national projects is also a patriotic thing to do. Solomon did these things. The problem is, is he went overboard. He did these things to excess. Where he should have exercised some restraint, he went big.

The problem is, during peacetime, where does a king get wealth from? He takes it from the people by means of taxation. He might build up wealth for himself and the government of the country, but, at the same time, drain the country of its private resources. Since making the central government rich occurs at the expense of the public during peacetime, the king is warned not to multiply silver and gold to himself.

Application: So that there is no confusion, none of what we are studying prevents you, the individual, from making wise investments (there are several verses in Proverbs which encourage that); as long as (1) you are not motivated by greed; (2) that this accumulation of wealth does not turn your heart away from God; (3) that these things are not the primary focus of your life; and (4) that you do not primarily depend upon these things. I should add a fifth point: (5) the believer has a financial responsibility to the Lord (but, to make it clear, that responsibility is between himself and God; it is none of your business).

Deut. 17:16–17 Only he [the king] will not multiply horses to himself and he should not cause the people to return to Egypt in order to multiply the calvary [lit., horse], for Y^ehowah has said to [all of] you, ‘You [all] will not return along that way ever again.’ He should not multiply to himself wives; so that he will not turn his heart away [from God]; nor should he greatly multiply silver and gold to himself.

Rich Cathers—The Warnings of Moses and the Acts of Solomon

The king who ruled during the height of the kingdom of Israel was also the one who started the downhill slide. He didn’t pay attention to the four rules that God had for kings.

- 1) Wealth
(1Kings 10:23-25 KJV) So king Solomon exceeded all the kings of the earth for riches and for wisdom. And all the earth sought to Solomon, to hear his wisdom, which God had put in his heart. And they brought every man his present, vessels of silver, and vessels of gold, and garments, and armour, and spices, horses, and mules, a rate year by year.
- 2) Horses
(1Kings 10:26 KJV) And Solomon gathered together chariots and horsemen: and he had a thousand and

Rich Cathers—The Warnings of Moses and the Acts of Solomon

four hundred chariots, and twelve thousand horsemen, whom he bestowed in the cities for chariots, and with the king at Jerusalem.

King David understood this: (Psalm 20:7 KJV) Some trust in chariots, and some in horses: but we will remember the name of the LORD our God.

- 3) Egypt
(1Kings 10:28-29 KJV) And Solomon had horses brought out of Egypt, and linen yarn: the king's merchants received the linen yarn at a price. And a chariot came up and went out of Egypt for six hundred shekels of silver, and an horse for an hundred and fifty: and so for all the kings of the Hittites, and for the kings of Syria, did they bring them out by their means.
This is in addition to the fact that he married the daughter of the Pharaoh of Egypt!
- 4) Wives
(1Kings 11:1-4 KJV) But king Solomon loved many strange women, together with the daughter of Pharaoh, women of the Moabites, Ammonites, Edomites, Zidonians, and Hittites; Of the nations concerning which the LORD said unto the children of Israel, Ye shall not go in to them, neither shall they come in unto you: for surely they will turn away your heart after their gods: Solomon clave unto these in love. And he had seven hundred wives, princesses, and three hundred concubines: and his wives turned away his heart. For it came to pass, when Solomon was old, that his wives turned away his heart after other gods: and his heart was not perfect with the LORD his God, as was the heart of David his father.

We ought to learn from Solomon that you can't think that you are above God's principles. Take God's Word seriously.

Listen carefully to what Solomon wrote at the end of life:

(Eccles. 12:8 KJV) Vanity of vanities, saith the preacher; all is vanity.

(Eccles. 12:13 KJV) Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man.

He finally came to the conclusion that you can't get around God's ways. God's ways are best.

In another study, Rich Cathers writes: *Billy Graham used to say that the three things that will bring a man down are: Sex, money, and power.*¹⁷¹ Basically, this conforms to the lust patterns of the soul. Every person suffers from different lusts in different proportions.

From <http://www.calvaryfullerton.org/Bstudy/05%20Deu/1998/05Deu17.htm> accessed May 11, 2016.

Also from [Calvary Fullerton](#); accessed May 12, 2016.

[Chapter Outline](#)

[Charts, Graphics and Short Doctrines](#)

Even though this is Moses who is saying this, because Scripture is inspired, this has the same force as if God had spoken from Mount Sinai.

Deut. 17:16–17 Only he should not multiply horses to himself and he should not cause the people to return to Egypt in order to multiply the calvary [lit., horse], for Y^ehowah has said to [all of] you, 'You [all] will not return along that way ever again.' He should not multiply to himself wives; so that he will not turn his heart away [from God]; nor should he greatly multiply silver and gold to himself.

¹⁷¹ From [Calvary Fullerton](#); accessed May 11, 2016.

God's Restrictions Upon a King of Israel

1. The general principle is this: Israel is a nation set apart to God; therefore, if they have a king, he should be set apart to God. He should be different from all other earthly kings.
2. Kings will typically build up their wealth in a variety of ways. A typical heathen king will look to increase his holdings in silver and gold. He will want his own private stable of horses and he will want a large military (that military might be offensive or defensive). And, because the king is a man, he may want to be surrounded by a bevy of lovely women, whom he takes as wives and mistresses.
3. Moses is saying that, when Israel demands a king, he cannot be just like all the other kings of the world.
4. Wealth comes to a king in 3 different ways:
 - 1) He can gain this wealth through military actions. Some kings did nothing more than build up a large and vicious army in order to plunder other countries and to exact tribute from them. We studied this in **Genesis 14** ([HTML](#)) ([PDF](#)) ([WPD](#)). However, David's military was primarily a defensive army. Many countries attempted to take land from Israel, and David's military (mostly under Joab) would thwart the plans of evil foreign kings. In this latter mode, the wealth build-up would have been natural and essentially initiated by the kings of other countries.
 - 2) The king can gain wealth by taxation. There was a specific amount of taxation for Israel's government (23⅓%) but that included support for the tribe of Levi. In today's world, that would translate to 13⅓% *total tax* (which includes federal, state and local) with no property taxes charged to churches and synagogues (the reason that church property is not taxed is, that prevents the government from shutting down churches due to high taxation). Some kings, unsatisfied with the amount of taxation in Israel, required more (1Kings 12:4).
 - 3) A king can set up a national business for profit. This is more of a hypothetical than anything else. The United States has attempted several business takeovers (of the home mortgage market and of the student loan market) and has bungled both.
 - 4) **Application:** A country is better off if it is not a predatory nation; if it does not tax too much; and if it does not attempt to compete with the free market. Many times, this means that the grand plans of some politicians must be dialed back considerably.
5. God does not want a king of Israel to increase his wealth by raiding nearby nations for their wealth. However, taking wealth from a nation which attacks Israel was legitimate.
6. God does not want a nation to build up government wealth through excessive taxation.
7. These things are curbed by requiring that a king not build up a military for the purpose of plundering and that a king not multiply wives or gold or silver to himself.
8. Wealth buildup, for a nation and for the people of a nation, is a long, normal process.
9. A king which gets a limited amount of taxes from his people during peacetime allows the wealth of his people to grow, which, in turn, increases his wealth as well.
10. It does not appear that Solomon used his army to plunder; and that a great deal of his wealth was probably the result of what David and Joab had done in defending Israel from an onslaught of aggressive and angry countries.
11. Solomon also apparently taxed his people a great deal. 1Kings 12:4
12. Given the nature of Israel's perennial enemies, we ought not understand this as a call for Israel to disband its army during peacetime.
13. We should not understand this as a call for the government of Israel under a king to abandon all of its wealth.
14. In other words, there needs to be a balance established.
 - 1) Although the Bible clearly speaks of the superiority of a marriage between one man and one woman, there does not appear to be an unequivocal ban of polygamy. In the instance of a levirate marriage or a king marrying in order to establish an alliance, the man may end up having more than one wife. The Bible does not encourage this; the Old Testament simply recognizes it. However, two of the great polygamists—David and Solomon—write only to praise the marriage of one man and one woman; neither man exalts polygamy.
 - 2) It would make no sense for a king to allow his nation's treasury to be reduced to 0. However, on the other hand, this should not be the focus of the king to build up this wealth as much as possible.
 - 3) It would be irrational for a king to disband the military of Israel; but, at the same time, God ordered

God's Restrictions Upon a King of Israel

a limited war against specific groups of people (the Canaanites). Once they were defeated and the land was Israel's, there is no call for Israel to conquer other nearby lands. So Israel ought to have a strong military, but not one that (1) over-burdened the country or (2) placed the country at risk because it is too weak. So many times, the Christian life is all about balance.

15. King David appears to have achieved this balance, except for the multiplication of wives; Solomon appears to have begun with a balance, but he spun out of control regarding wives and a buildup of wealth for himself. Solomon had the wisdom to keep it under control, but his marriages to so many women caused him to spiral out of control. Israel remained strong as a nation; but Solomon's focus and balance were lacking—at least for a portion of his reign. Also, based upon what we read in Kings, Solomon could have lived much longer and been king much longer, had he continued to take in doctrine and obey the Word of God.
16. One of the amazing things that occurred under Solomon is, peace was established over a very large area, in part because David beat back all of Israel's enemies and in part because Solomon did not raise up a predatory army. This virtually transformed this area, to where many nations peacefully interacted; and many kings and their representatives came to Solomon's kingdom to check out his wisdom. This, in many ways, parallels the United States today and its relationship with many nations throughout the world.
17. At first, Solomon seemed to have a balance, but this spun out of control as he continued to add wives and mistresses to his harem.

There is no doubt that Solomon eventually violated this balance.

[Chapter Outline](#)

[Charts, Graphics and Short Doctrines](#)

Deut. 17:14–17 When you enter into the land that Jehovah your God has given you, and you have taken possession of it and lived there for awhile, you might say, 'Let us place a king over us so that Israel will be like the other nations round about.' There is no doubt that you will place a king over yourselves—a man from your brothers that Jehovah your God will choose for you—that man you will place over you as king. However, you are not allowed to place a person of foreign descent over you. When in power, the king should not multiply horses to himself and he should not cause the people to return to Egypt in order to make his calvary great, for Jehovah has already told all of you, 'You will never return to Egypt ever again.' He should not have a collection of wives; nor should he allow his heart to be turned away from God; nor should he multiply great quantities of gold and silver to himself.

The College Press Bible Study on a Summary of Transgressions

King Solomon probably represents the most flagrant transgressor of these prohibitions. He at first obeyed the Lord, and riches (which he had not asked for) were added to his request for wisdom (1Ki_3:9-14). But he was soon sidetracked from wholehearted service to Jehovah. Exactly as these verses specify he was not to do, he multiplied

- (1) Horses—1Kings 4:26 (Cf. 2Chron. 9:25) 1Kings 10:26; 1Kings 10:28–29. Note also that his horses "were brought out of Egypt"—again breaking the command of God as we have it here (Deut. 17:16). A king would not "multiply" horses normally, unless preparing for war or building up military might. See Psalm 20:7; Psalm 33:16–19; Psalm 147:10–11; Prov. 21:31; Isa. 2:5–8. "Woe to them that 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 look not unto the Holy One of Israel, neither seek Jehovah!" (Isa. 31:1).
- (2) Riches—1Kings 10:27, 2Chron. 1:15. At first given by God, money apparently became an obsession with him. This meant heavy, excessive taxes, plus a system of forced labor, 1Kings 5:13–17. Compare Israel's complaint to Rehoboam, 1Kings 12:4.
- (3) Wives—1Kings 11:1–10. These turned Solomon's heart away from God.

The College Press Bible Study Textbook Series; (a compilation of many commentaries); from e-sword; Deut. 17:14–20 (commentary).

[Chapter Outline](#)

[Charts, Graphics and Short Doctrines](#)

Guzik summed up the previous verses quite well:

David Guzik: “It is a Matter of Balance”

1. **The king will not multiply horses for himself:** The future king of Israel must not put undue trust in military
2. **Neither shall he multiply wives for himself:** The future king of Israel must not put undue emphasis on physical indulgence and personal status.
3. **Nor shall he greatly multiply silver and gold for himself:** The future king of Israel must not put undue emphasis on personal wealth.
4. **Lest His heart turn away:** Each of these issues 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.

Then Guzik adds:

Solomon was a notorious breaker of these commands. He had forty thousand stalls of horses for his chariots (1Kings 4:26), and Solomon had horses imported from Egypt (1Kings 10:28). He had seven hundred wives, princesses, and three hundred concubines; and his wives turned away his heart (1Kings 11:3). He surpassed all the kings of the earth in riches (1Kings 10:23).

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.

From *David Guzik’s Commentary on the Old Testament*; courtesy of e-sword; ©2006; Deut. 17:16–17.

[Chapter Outline](#)

[Charts, Graphics and Short Doctrines](#)

D. Davies: To him [the king] does not belong the privilege to gratify every taste and temper. The very contrary. He is under greater obligations than any other man to restrain himself. Temptation will surround him on every side; but he must meet temptation with vigilance, patience, firmness. To be a true king, he must first conquer himself. He must restrain carnal ambition. He must restrain love of display. He must restrain the passion for conquest. He must restrain sensual pleasure. He must restrain his avarice. His real distinction is not to have many horses, many wives, or great riches. His distinction is to be wise administrator of righteousness, the protector of public liberty and peace. To fulfill faithfully the functions of a king, he must walk circumspectly in the narrow way—be a loyal subject to the King of heaven.¹⁷²

Do you see just how different God’s requirements for a king were? A king was not to focus on the accumulation of wealth, or upon developing an aggressive army to use to plunder nearby countries, or upon collecting dozens of wives—just the very things that people with power do. The king of Israel was to be different, and this accomplished two things in the plan of God: (1) people of other nations could observe the wisdom and restraint of Israel’s king and associate that with the God of Israel; and (2) the God of Israel was an illustration of the King of Kings, Lord of Lords, Jesus Christ, Who will rule in Israel over the world.

¹⁷² *The Pulpit Commentary*; 1880-1919; by Joseph S. Exell, Henry Donald Maurice Spence-Jones, from e-sword, Deut. 17:14–20 (Davies).

Deut. 17:16–17 Only he [the king] must not acquire many horses for himself or cause the people to return to Egypt in order to acquire many horses, since the LORD has said to you, 'You shall never return that way again.' And he shall not acquire many wives for himself, lest his heart turn away, nor shall he acquire for himself excessive silver and gold. (ESV; capitalized; and throughout)

God Made One VERY Conditional Promise to Solomon

God made promises to Solomon which were very specific. 1Kings 3:11–14 And God said to him, "Because you have asked this, and have not asked for yourself long life or riches or the life of your enemies, but have asked for yourself understanding to discern what is right, behold, I now do according to your word. Behold, I give you a wise and discerning mind, so that none like you has been before you and none like you shall arise after you. I give you also what you have not asked, both riches and honor, so that no other king shall compare with you, all your days. And if you will walk in my ways, keeping my statutes and my commandments, as your father David walked, then I will lengthen your days."

Even our passage makes a similar promise to any king of Israel. Deut. 17:18–20 "And when he sits on the throne of his kingdom, he shall write for himself in a book a copy of this law, approved by the Levitical priests. And it shall be with him, and he shall read in it all the days of his life, that he may learn to fear the LORD his God by keeping all the words of this law and these statutes, and doing them, that his heart may not be lifted up above his brothers, and that he may not turn aside from the commandment, either to the right hand or to the left, so that he may continue long in his kingdom, he and his children, in Israel.

However, Solomon allowed his lusts to get in the way. 1Kings 11:1–11 Now King Solomon loved many foreign women, along with the daughter of Pharaoh: Moabite, Ammonite, Edomite, Sidonian, and Hittite women, from the nations concerning which the LORD had said to the people of Israel, "You shall not enter into marriage with them, neither shall they with you, for surely they will turn away your heart after their gods." Solomon clung to these in love. He had 700 wives, who were princesses, and 300 concubines. And his wives turned away his heart. For when Solomon was old his wives turned away his heart after other gods, and his heart was not wholly true to the LORD his God, as was the heart of David his father. For Solomon went after Ashtoreth the goddess of the Sidonians, and after Milcom the abomination of the Ammonites. So Solomon did what was evil in the sight of the LORD and did not wholly follow the LORD, as David his father had done. Then Solomon built a high place for Chemosh the abomination of Moab, and for Molech the abomination of the Ammonites, on the mountain east of Jerusalem. And so he did for all his foreign wives, who made offerings and sacrificed to their gods. And the LORD was angry with Solomon, because his heart had turned away from the LORD, the God of Israel, who had appeared to him twice and had commanded him concerning this thing, that he should not go after other gods. But he did not keep what the LORD commanded. Therefore the LORD said to Solomon, "Since this has been your practice and you have not kept my covenant and my statutes that I have commanded you, I will surely tear the kingdom from you and will give it to your servant.

Solomon's loss of his kingdom was premature. My guess is that he became king at a very young age (between 10 and 15), and died at a very young age as well (50–55 years of age). 1Kings 11:29–39 And at that time, when Jeroboam went out of Jerusalem, the prophet Ahijah the Shilonite found him on the road. Now Ahijah had dressed himself in a new garment, and the two of them were alone in the open country. Then Ahijah laid hold of the new garment that was on him, and tore it into twelve pieces. And he said to Jeroboam, "Take for yourself ten pieces, for thus says the LORD, the God of Israel, 'Behold, I am about to tear the kingdom from the hand of Solomon and will give you ten tribes (but he shall have one tribe, for the sake of my servant David and for the sake of Jerusalem, the city that I have chosen out of all the tribes of Israel), because they have forsaken me and worshiped Ashtoreth the goddess of the Sidonians, Chemosh the god of Moab, and Milcom the god of the Ammonites, and they have not walked in my ways, doing what is right in my sight and keeping my statutes and my rules, as David his father did. Nevertheless, I will not take the whole kingdom out of his hand, but I will make him ruler all the days of his life, for the sake of David my servant whom I chose, who kept my commandments and my statutes. But I will take the kingdom out of his son's hand and will give it to you, ten tribes. Yet to his son I will give one tribe, that David my servant may always have a lamp before me in Jerusalem, the city where I have chosen to put my name. And I will take you, and you shall reign over all that

God Made One VERY Conditional Promise to Solomon

your soul desires, and you shall be king over Israel. And if you will listen to all that I command you, and will walk in my ways, and do what is right in my eyes by keeping my statutes and my commandments, as David my servant did, I will be with you and will build you a sure house, as I built for David, and I will give Israel to you. And I will afflict the offspring of David because of this, but not forever."

1Kings 11:40–43 Solomon sought therefore to kill Jeroboam. But Jeroboam arose and fled into Egypt, to Shishak king of Egypt, and was in Egypt until the death of Solomon. Now the rest of the acts of Solomon, and all that he did, and his wisdom, are they not written in the Book of the Acts of Solomon? And the time that Solomon reigned in Jerusalem over all Israel was forty years. And Solomon slept with his fathers and was buried in the city of David his father. And Rehoboam his son reigned in his place.

Nehemiah writes the postscript: I told them, "It was foreign women that made King Solomon sin. Here was a man who was greater than any of the kings of other nations. God loved him and made him king over all of Israel, and yet he fell into this sin. Are we then to follow your example and disobey our God by marrying foreign women?" (Neh 13:26–27) The key is not foreign women, per se, but those who did not believe in the God of Israel.

Solomon grew old before his time. Eccles. 12:1–7 So remember your Creator while you are still young, before those dismal days and years come when you will say, "I don't enjoy life." That is when the light of the sun, the moon, and the stars will grow dim for you, and the rain clouds will never pass away. Then your arms, that have protected you, will tremble, and your legs, now strong, will grow weak. Your teeth will be too few to chew your food, and your eyes too dim to see clearly. Your ears will be deaf to the noise of the street. You will barely be able to hear the mill as it grinds or music as it plays, but even the song of a bird will wake you from sleep. You will be afraid of high places, and walking will be dangerous. Your hair will turn white; you will hardly be able to drag yourself along, and all desire will be gone. We are going to our final resting place, and then there will be mourning in the streets. The silver chain will snap, and the golden lamp will fall and break; the rope at the well will break, and the water jar will be shattered. Our bodies will return to the dust of the earth, and the breath of life will go back to God, who gave it to us. (GNB)

Chapter Outline

Charts, Graphics and Short Doctrines

Arno Gaebelein: *A comparison of verse 16 and 17 with 1 Kings 9-11 [which is about the great failures of Solomon] is most interesting. What failure man is in himself. And Solomon was the wisest and most influential of all the kings. This fact that Solomon did the very opposite from what the king should do has led the critics to say that this passage was written after Solomon. As if God did not know all this beforehand.*¹⁷³

The Modern Language Bible: *Solomon should have been the pattern for the king described here, but in time he multiplied wives, introduced cavalry, and even accompanied his wives to their pagan temples.*¹⁷⁴

Solomon was given great wisdom by God. Why does he appear to be the most flagrantly disobedient to these guidelines laid out by Moses?

Solomon's Wisdom Versus Solomon's Failings

1. Solomon, as a very young man, asked God for wisdom. He was given wisdom supernaturally.

¹⁷³ Arno Clement Gaebelein, *The Annotated Bible*; 1919; from e-Sword, Deut. 16:18–17:20.

¹⁷⁴ The Modern Language Bible (*The New Berkeley Version*); Gerrit Verkuyl, Ph.D., Editor-in-chief; revised edition; Hendrickson Publishers, © 1969, p. 200 (footnote).

Solomon's Wisdom Versus Solomon's Failings

2. Solomon continued to have a sin nature and a lust pattern despite the great wisdom.
3. Knowing what is right and doing just the opposite is not uncommon among Christians. Solomon had the wisdom to know what was right; that does not mean that he always did what was right.
4. Furthermore, to maintain one's wisdom, one needs to continue to breathe in divine viewpoint (that is, to learn from the Scriptures). We don't start out the day with 4 or 5 really good breathes of air, and then coast on that for the rest of the day. We have to continue breathing in and out to preserve our physical well-being. The same thing is true when it comes to breathing the Word of God in and out.
5. A believer who is mature and who is therefore wise can fall from grace. All he has to do is to know what is wrong, and then to do that.
6. A believer can fall from grace if he stops taking in Bible doctrine. So even though such a believer has moved to the high ground; he then loses it, ceding control to his sin nature.
7. Throughout the believer's life, he does good, he does bad and he does evil.
8. The believer who develops spiritual maturity and then holds that through regular intake of the Word of God, will finish the race honoring God.
9. However, it is clear that both David and Solomon stumbled late in their lives (it also appears that they recovered as well).

Throughout Scripture, most believers have terrific failings.

[Chapter Outline](#)

[Charts, Graphics and Short Doctrines](#)

Application: The United States has been a unique nation in the history of mankind. Most nations, when they defeat another nation, take over its land and assets. The United States has not done that, but has made allies out of its two greatest enemies from WWII, Germany and Japan. Most kings (prime ministers, presidents) would have exploited this victory and required reparations, taking as much from the defeated countries as possible. Instead, the United States helped to built up these nations and then, having established ties with them, granted them their complete and total independence. In the Korean War, we did the same thing with South Korea.

Application: Just being a do-gooder is not enough. We also brought the gospel of Jesus Christ into these nations. When Great Britain conquered much of the world, they brought law and order and the gospel of Jesus Christ to the various countries that they conquered. This was what great about the British Empire.

Application: The great mistake of Iraq was not that George Bush went into Iraq, but that he did not also encourage the Word of God to follow after the military. He believed that the key was a western-style democracy, when the key was actually the gospel of Jesus Christ. What we did (or attempted to do) in Iraq was admirable; and clearly botched by the next president. However, regardless of the good intended by President George Bush, this was a mission destined to fail because he did not bring the people the gospel of Jesus Christ. What George Bush did was a whole lot of human good.

Throughout most of man's history, the king's word is law. However, even before Israel chose her first king, it was made clear to all that a king over Israel would be subject to God and to the constitution of Israel (which was the Torah). Deut. 17:18–20 *"And when the king sits on the throne of his kingdom, he shall write for himself in a book a copy of this law, approved by the Levitical priests. And it shall be with him, and he shall read in it all the days of his life, that he may learn to fear the LORD his God by keeping all the words of this law and these statutes, and doing them, that his heart may not be lifted up above his brothers, and that he may not turn aside from the commandment, either to the right hand or to the left, so that he may continue long in his kingdom, he and his children, in Israel."* Limiting the actions of the ruler of a country by a document was unique to Israel in her time; and the limitations on the power of the president by our constitution when our country was founded is based upon these same Biblical principles.

Speed's History: *[T]hat peerless princess, Queen Elizabeth, as she passed in triumphal state through the streets of London after her coronation, when the Bible was presented to her at the little conduit in Cheapside, received the same with both her hands, and kissing it, laid it to her breasts, saying, that the same had ever been her chiefest delight, and should be the rule whereby she meant to frame her government.*¹⁷⁵

Lessons for Today (Deut. 17:18–20 —a graphic); from **Slide Player**; accessed May 13, 2016.

Deuteronomy 17

Lessons for Today (Deut. 17:18-20)

Writing God's word leads to...

Reading God's word leads to...

Learning God's word leads to...

Keeping / doing God's word leads to...

Humility with God's word leads to...

Straight course with God's word leads to...

Prolonged days with God's word

41

These final 3 verses provide us with the positive requirements of a king of Israel.

And he was as his sitting on a throne of his kingdom and he has written for himself a copy of the Torah the this upon a scroll from to faces of the priests, the Levites. And she was with him and he has read in him all days of his life in order that he will learn to fear Y^ehowah his Elohim to keep all words of the Torah the this and the statutes to do them, so to not lift up his heart more than his brothers and to not turn aside from the commandment, to the right and to the left, in order that he will prolong days over the kingdom, he and his sons in a midst of Israel.”

Deuteronomy
17:18–20

And it will be, while he sits on the throne of his kingdom, that he will write for himself a copy of this Torah upon a scroll provided by the Levitical priests. And it will be with him and he will read in it all the days of his life so that he will learn to fear Y^ehowah his Elohim, [and] to keep all the words of the Torah, and to obey [lit., *do*] the statutes so as to not lift up his heart over his brothers and so as not to turn aside from the commandments, [not] to the right or to the left, so that he will prolong his days over the kingdom [for] himself and his sons, in the midst of Israel.”

When the king sits on the throne, he should write out his own copy of the Law onto a scroll provided by the Levitical priests. He will keep this scroll with him and read it throughout his life so that he will learn to fear Jehovah his God and to keep all the words of the Law, and to obey the statutes contained therein, so as not to become arrogant because of his position, and so that he does not turn to the left or the right from the commandments. As a result, he will prolong his days as king over Israel, and prolong the days of his sons as well.”

Here is how others have translated this verse:

Ancient texts:

Masoretic Text (Hebrew)

And he was as his sitting on a throne of his kingdom and he has written for himself a copy of the Torah the this upon a scroll from to faces of the priests, the Levites. And she was with him and he has read in him all days of his life in order that he will

¹⁷⁵ John Trapp *A Commentary on the Old and New Testaments*; Edited by W. Webster and Hugh Martin; e-sword, Deut. 17:18.

learn to fear Y^ehowah his Elohim to keep all words of the Torah the this and the statutes to do them, so to not lift up his heart more than his brothers and to not turn aside from the commandment, to the right and to the left, in order that he will prolong days over the kingdom, he and his sons in a midst of Israel.

Targum of Onkelos

And it shall be that if he be steadfast in the commandments of the law he shall sit upon the throne of his kingdom in security. And let the elders write for him the section (pharasha) of this law in a book before the priests of the tribe of Levi ; and let it be at his side, and he shall read it all the days of his life, that he may learn to fear the Lord his God, to keep all the words of this law, and all these statutes to perform them: that his heart may not be arrogant toward his brethren, nor decline from the precepts to the right or the left, and that his days may be prolonged over his kingdom, his and his sons' among Israel.

Revised Douay-Rheims

But after he is raised to the throne of his kingdom, he shall copy out to himself the Deuteronomy of this law in a volume, taking the copy of the priests of the Levitical tribe, And he shall have it with him, and shall read it all the days of his life, that he may learn to fear the Lord his God, and keep his words and ceremonies, that are commanded in the law; And that his heart be not lifted up with pride over his brethren, nor decline to the right or to the left, that he and his sons may reign a long time over Israel.

Peshitta (Syriac)

And when he sits upon the throne of his kingdom, he shall write for himself a copy of this law in a book out of that which is before the priests and the Levites; And it shall be with him, and he shall read therein all the days of his life; that he may learn to fear the LORD his God, to keep all the words of this law, and these commandments, to do them; That his heart may not be lifted up above his brethren, and that he may not turn aside from the commandments, neither to the right hand nor to the left; so that he may prolong his days in his kingdom, he and his children, in the midst of Israel.

Septuagint (Greek)

And when he shall be established in his government, then shall he write for himself this repetition of the law into a book by the hands of the priests the Levites; and it shall be with him, and he shall read in it all the days of his life, that he may learn to fear the Lord your God, and to keep all these commandments, and to observe these ordinances: that his heart be not lifted up above his brethren, that he depart not from the commandments on the right hand or on the left; that he and his sons may reign long in his dominion among the children of Israel.

Significant differences:

The targum adds additional text. The Greek appears to interpret *sitting on the throne* to mean *to be established in his government*. The Latin does the same thing.

The targum sounds as if the king does not write out a copy of the Law, but that someone does it for him. It appears that the Levites prepare the scroll for this to be written upon, which is not what we find in the Syriac or targum.

The Latin leaves out the second mention of *the commandments*.

Limited Vocabulary Translations:

Bible in Basic English

And when he has taken his place on the seat of his kingdom, he is to make in a book a copy of this law, from that which the priests, the Levites, have in their care: And it is to be with him for his reading all the days of his life, so that he may be trained in the fear of the Lord his God to keep and do all the words of this teaching and these laws: So that his heart may not be lifted up over his countrymen, and he may not be turned away from the orders, to one side or the other: but that his life and the lives of his children may be long in his kingdom in Israel.

Easy English

The Law of God

When he becomes king, he must copy the Law of God on a scroll. This scroll will be a copy of the one that belongs to the priests. They belong to the tribe of Levi. He must keep this scroll near him always and he must read it every day. If you do that, he will learn to love the LORD his God. And he will learn to obey him. He must be careful to read all the words of this Law. He must obey the words and these decrees also. He must not think that he is better than other Israelites. He must not stop thinking about the Law. If he does that, he, his sons and his grandsons will be kings in Israel for many years.

Easy-to-Read Version—2001

"And when the king begins to rule, he must write a copy of the law for himself in a book. He must make that copy from the books that the priests and Levites[1737] keep. The king must keep that book with him. He must read from that book all his life. Why? Because the king must learn to respect the Lord his God. And the king must learn to completely obey everything the law commands. Then the king will not think that he is better than any of his own people. And he will not turn away from the law, but he will follow it exactly. Then that king and his descendants[1738] will rule the kingdom of Israel a long time.

Good News Bible (TEV)

When he becomes king, he is to have a copy of the book of God's laws and teachings made from the original copy kept by the levitical priests. He is to keep this book near him and read from it all his life, so that he will learn to honor the LORD and to obey faithfully everything that is commanded in it. This will keep him from thinking that he is better than other Israelites and from disobeying the LORD's commands in any way. Then he will reign for many years, and his descendants will rule Israel for many generations.

The Message

This is what must be done: When he sits down on the throne of his kingdom, the first thing he must do is make himself a copy of this Revelation on a scroll, copied under the supervision of the Levitical priests. That scroll is to remain at his side at all times; he is to study it every day so that he may learn what it means to fear his God, living in reverent obedience before these rules and regulations by following them. He must not become proud and arrogant, changing the commands at whim to suit himself or making up his own versions. If he reads and learns, he will have a long reign as king in Israel, he and his sons.

Names of God Bible

When he becomes king, he should have the Levitical priests make him a copy of these teachings on a scroll. He must keep it with him and read it his entire life. He will learn to fear **Yahweh** his **Elohim** and faithfully obey everything found in these teachings and laws. Then he won't think he's better than the rest of his people, and he won't disobey these commands in any way. So he and his sons will rule for a long time in Israel.

NIRV

When he sits on the throne of his kingdom, he must make for himself a copy of the law. He must write on a scroll the law that I am teaching you. He must copy it from the scroll of a priest, who is a Levite. The king must keep the scroll close to him at all times. He must read it all the days of his life. Then he can learn to have respect for the LORD his God. He can carefully obey all the words of this law and these rules. He won't think of himself as being better than his people are. He won't turn away from the law. He won't turn to the right or the left. Then he and his sons after him will rule over his kingdom in Israel for a long time.

Thought-for-thought translations; paraphrases:

Common English Bible

Instead, when he sits on his royal throne, he himself must write a copy of this Instruction on a scroll in the presence of the levitical priests. That Instruction must remain with him, and he must read in it every day of his life so that he learns to revere the Lord his God by keeping all the words of this Instruction and these regulations, by doing them, by not being overbearing toward his fellow Israelites,

Contemporary English V.	<p>and by not deviating even a bit from the commandment. If the king does all that, he will ensure lasting rule in Israel for himself and for his successors.</p> <p>The official copy of God's laws will be kept by the priests of the Levi tribe. So, as soon as anyone becomes king, he must go to the priests and write out a copy of these laws while they watch. Each day the king must read and obey these laws, so that he will learn to worship the LORD with fear and trembling and not think that he's better than everyone else. If the king completely obeys the LORD's commands, he and his descendants will rule Israel for many years.</p>
The Living Bible	<p>“And when he has been crowned and sits upon his throne as king, then he must copy these laws from the book kept by the Levite-priests. That copy of the laws shall be his constant companion. He must read from it every day of his life so that he will learn to respect the Lord his God by obeying all of his commands. This regular reading of God’s laws will prevent him from feeling that he is better than his fellow citizens. It will also prevent him from turning away from God’s laws in the slightest respect and will ensure his having a long, good reign. His sons will then follow him upon the throne.</p>
New Berkeley Version	<p>When he is established upon his throne in his kingdom, he shall write for himself in a book a copy of this law, from (the scroll kept by) the priestly Levites; he shall keep it near him and read in it all the days of his life, that he may learn to revere the LORD his God by observing all the words of this law and these statutes and practicing them. Thus his heart will not be exalted above his brothers, nor will he turn aside from any commandments of the Book to right or left; so that he and his sons will long remain upon the throne in Israel.</p>
New Century Version	<p>When he becomes king, he should write a copy of the teachings on a scroll for himself, a copy taken from the priests and Levites. He should keep it with him all the time and read from it every day of his life. Then he will learn to respect the Lord his God, and he will obey all the teachings and commands. He should not think he is better than his fellow Israelites, and he must not stop obeying the law in any way so that he and his descendants may rule the kingdom for a long time.</p>
New Living Translation	<p>“When he sits on the throne as king, he must copy for himself this body of instruction on a scroll in the presence of the Levitical priests. He must always keep that copy with him and read it daily as long as he lives. That way he will learn to fear the Lord his God by obeying all the terms of these instructions and decrees. This regular reading will prevent him from becoming proud and acting as if he is above his fellow citizens. It will also prevent him from turning away from these commands in the smallest way. And it will ensure that he and his descendants will reign for many generations in Israel.</p>

Partially literal and partially paraphrased translations:

American English Bible	<p>'And when [these kingships] are established and start to rule, the [kings] must each write their own copy of these Laws in a scroll, with the help of the Levite priests. Then they must keep it and read from it all the days of their lives, so they will learn to fear Jehovah their God and keep and observe all these Commandments and rules. Then they won't consider themselves more important than their brothers in their hearts, nor will they swerve to the right or to the left of the Commandments, so they and their sons will reign a long time in their land among the children of IsraEl.'</p>
Beck's American Translation	<p>“When he sits on the throne of his kingdom, he should make himself a copy of this teaching on a scroll, from the one kept by the priests descended from Levi. He must keep it with him and read it all his life to learn to fear the LORD his God and carefully do everything this teaching and these laws tell him; then he will not think he’s above the rest of his people or turn away from the commandments to the right or the left; then he and his sons will continue long on the throne in Israel.”</p>

International Standard V	When he occupies his royal throne, he must make a copy of this Law for himself from a scroll used by the Levitical priests. It is to remain with him the rest of his life so he may learn to fear the LORD his God and observe all the words of this Law and these statutes, in order to fulfill them. He is not to exalt himself over his relatives, nor turn aside from the commandment—neither to the right nor to the left—so that he and his sons may reign long in Israel.”
New Advent (Knox) Bible	And now he sits enthroned in his kingdom; let his first act be to borrow this schedule of the law from the priests of Levi’s race, and have a second copy made of it [Cf. II Par. 34.18-31.]. And that scroll he will keep by him, studying it all his life long, so that he may learn to serve the Lord his God, and follow all the rules and observances which the law enjoins. Never let his heart, puffed up with pride, disdain his brethren; never let him swerve from these commandments to right or left, if he and his sons are to enjoy long dominion over the race of Israel.
Translation for Translators	When he becomes your king, he must <i>appoint someone to copy</i> these laws. He must copy them from the scroll that is kept by the priests who are descended from Levi. He must keep this new scroll near him and read from it every day of his life, in order that he may learn to revere Yahweh, and to faithfully obey [DOU] all the rules and regulations that are written in these laws. If he does that, he [SYN] will not think that he is better/more important than [IDI] his fellow Israelis, and he will completely obey [LIT] Yahweh's commands. As a result, he and his descendants will rule as kings in Israel for many years.”

Mostly literal renderings (with some occasional paraphrasing):

Ferrari-Fenton Bible	When he is set upon the throne for his kingship, there shall be written out for him a Duplicate of the Law, from the book in the custody of the Levitical priests, and he shall keep it with him, and read in it every day of his life, so that he may learn to fear the Ever-living his God, — to guard the whole of the commandments of the Law, and to administer these Institutions ; so that his heart may not rise above his brothers, and that he may not turn from its commands to the right or to the left ; so that he may extend his days in his kingship, he and his sons in the circuit of Israel.
God’s Truth (Tyndale)	And when he is sitten upon the seat of his kingdom, he shall write him out this second law in a book taking a copy of the priests the Levites. And it shall be with him and he shall read there in all days of his life that he may learn to fear the Lord his God for to keep all the words of this law and these ordinances for to do them: that his heart arise not above his brethren and that he turn not from the commandment: either to the right hand or to the left: that both he and his children may prolong their days in his kingdom in Israel.
Jubilee Bible 2000	And it shall be when he sits upon the throne of his kingdom that he shall cause a copy of this second law to be written in a book in the presence of the priests the Levites; and it shall be near unto him, and he shall read in it all the days of his life that he may learn to fear the LORD his God, to keep all the words of this law and these statutes, to do them, that his heart be not lifted up above his brethren and that he turn not aside from the commandment, to the right hand or to the left, to the end that he may prolong his days in his kingdom, he and his sons, in the midst of Israel.
Lexham English Bible	“ <i>And then when he is sitting</i> on the throne of his kingdom, then he shall write for himself a copy of this law on a scroll before the Levitical priests. And it shall be with him, and he shall read it all the days of his life, so that he may learn to revere Yahweh your God by <i>diligently observing</i> all the word of this law and these rules, so as not to exalt his heart above his countrymen and not to turn aside from the commandment to the right or to the left, so that <i>he may reign long over his kingdom</i> , he and his children in the midst of Israel.”
NIV – UK	When he takes the throne of his kingdom, he is to write for himself on a scroll a copy of this law, taken from that of the Levitical priests. It is to be with him, and he

Tree of Life Version is to read it all the days of his life so that he may learn to revere the Lord his God and follow carefully all the words of this law and these decrees and not consider himself better than his fellow Israelites and turn from the law to the right or to the left. Then he and his descendants will reign a long time over his kingdom in Israel. “Now when he sits on the throne of his kingdom, he is to write for himself a copy of this Torah on a scroll, from what is before the Levitical kohanim. It will remain with him, and he will read in it all the days of his life, in order to learn to fear Adonai his God and keep all the words of this Torah and these statutes. Then his heart will not be exalted above his brothers, and he will not turn from the commandment to the right or to the left—so that he may prolong his days in his kingship, he and his sons, in the midst of Israel.

Catholic Bibles (those having the imprimatur):

Christian Community (1988) When he ascends the throne, let him copy for his use this Law from the book of the Levite priests. He shall bring it with him and read it every day of his life, that he may learn to fear Yahweh, keeping all the sayings of the Law and putting his precepts into practice. So let him not become conceited nor look down on his brothers, nor turn aside from this commandment either to the right or to the left, so that he and his children may lengthen the days of their reign in the midst of Israel.

The Heritage Bible And it shall be, when he sits down on the throne of his kingdom, he shall write him a copy of this law in a book from before the face of the Levitical priests, And it shall be with him, and he shall call out from 19 there all the days of his life that he may learn to fear Jehovah, his God, to hedge about all the words of this law and these enactments to do them; So that his heart is not exalted above his brothers, and he does not turn aside from the commandment, to the right hand, or to the left, so that he may prolong his days in his kingdom, he and his children, in the midst of Israel. Deut. 17:18-20 call out from, qara, is the same word used when Adam called the animals by name. It means to call out what is written in the character of the thing seen. When you see words, you call them out, that is, you recognize the character and meaning of the words, and call them out. In other words, you read words by perceiving their true character, and you call them into yourself. This is what God commands us in this passage. We are to have our copy of the words of God, the Bible, and we are to call those words out of God’s book into ourselves. We are to perceive their true character and meaning by the revelation of the Holy Spirit, and call those words out with our mouth into our hearts. It is by confessing with your mouth and believing God in your heart that delivers us, Rom 10:9.

New American Bible (2002) When he is enthroned in his kingdom, he shall have a copy of this law made from the scroll that is in the custody of the levitical priests. He shall keep it with him and read it all the days of his life that he may learn to fear the LORD, his God, and to heed and fulfill all the words of this law and these statutes. Let him not become estranged from his countrymen through pride, nor turn aside to the right or to the left from these commandments. Then he and his descendants will enjoy a long reign in Israel.

New American Bible (2011) When he is sitting upon his royal throne, he shall write a copy of this law [A copy of this law: the source of the name Deuteronomy, which in Hebrew is literally “double” or “copy”; in the Septuagint translated as deuteronomion, literally “a second law.” In Jerome’s Latin Vulgate as deuteronium.] upon a scroll from the one that is in the custody of the levitical priests [Dt 31:9, 24–26; Jos 8:32.]. It shall remain with him and he shall read it as long as he lives, so that he may learn to fear the LORD, his God, and to observe carefully all the words of this law and these statutes [The only positive requirement imposed upon the king is strict adherence to the Mosaic or Deuteronomic law. In that respect, the king’s primary task was to be a model Israelite.], so that he does not exalt himself over his kindred or turn aside from this

commandment to the right or to the left, and so that he and his descendants may reign long in Israel. [17:19–20] Dt 5:32–6:3; 2 Sm 7:12–16; 1 Kgs 2:4; Ps 132:11–18.

New Jerusalem Bible

Once seated on his royal throne, and for his own use, he must write a copy of this Law on a scroll, at the dictation of the levitical priests. It must never leave him, and he must read it every day of his life and learn to fear Yahweh his God by keeping all the words of this Law and observing these rules, so that he will not think himself superior to his brothers, and not deviate from these commandments either to right or to left. So doing, long will he occupy his throne, he and his sons, in Israel.'

New RSV

When he has taken the throne of his kingdom, he shall have a copy of this law written for him in the presence of the levitical priests. It shall remain with him and he shall read in it all the days of his life, so that he may learn to fear the Lord his God, diligently observing all the words of this law and these statutes, neither exalting himself above other members of the community nor turning aside from the commandment, either to the right or to the left, so that he and his descendants may reign long over his kingdom in Israel.

Revised English Bible

When he has ascended the throne of the kingdom, he is to make a copy of this law in a book at the dictation of the levitical priests. He is to have it by him and read from it all his life, so that he may learn to fear the LORD his God and keep all the words of this law and observe these statutes. Thus he will avoid alienation from his fellow-countrymen through pride, and not deviate from these commandments to right or to left; then he and his sons will reign long in Israel.

Jewish/Hebrew Names Bibles:

Complete Jewish Bible

“When he has come to occupy the throne of his kingdom, he is to write a copy of this Torah for himself in a scroll, from the one the cohanim and L’vi’im use. It is to remain with him, and he is to read in it every day, as long as he lives; so that he will learn to fear Adonai his God and keep all the words of this Torah and these laws and obey them; so that he will not think he is better than his kinsmen; and so that he will not turn aside either to the right or to the left from the mitzvah. In this way he will prolong his own reign and that of his children in Isra’el.

exeGesés companion Bible

And it shall be,
 when he sitteth upon the throne
 of his kingdom sovereigndom ,
 that he shall write inscribe him
 a copy duplicate of this law torah in a book scroll
 out of that
 which is before at the face of the priests the Levites Leviym :
 And it shall be with him,
 and he shall read recall therein all the days of his life:
 that he may learn
 to fear the LORD awe Yah Veh his God Elohim ,
 to keep guard all the words
 of this law torah and these statutes,
 to do work them:
 That his heart be not lifted up above his brethren,
 and that he turn not aside from the commandment misvah ,
 to the right hand , or to the left:
 to the end that he may prolong his days
 in his kingdom sovereigndom ,
 he, and his children sons , in the midst of Israel Yisra El.

JPS (Tanakh—1985)

When he is seated on his royal throne, he shall have a copy of this Teaching written for him on a scroll by the levitical priests. Let it remain with him and let him read in

it all his life, so that he may learn to revere the Lord his God, to observe faithfully every word of this Teaching as well as these laws. Thus he will not act haughtily toward his fellows or deviate from the Instruction to the right or to the left, to the end that he and his descendants may reign long in the midst of Israel.

Kaplan Translation

When [the king] is established on his royal throne, he must write a copy of this Torah as a scroll [Literally, 'book,' but all books were then written as scrolls.] edited by the Levitical priests [That is, by the Sanhedrin (Tosefta, Sanhedrin 4:4; Yad, Melakhim 3:1)]. [This scroll] must always be with him, and he shall read from it all the days of his life. He will then learn to be in awe of God his Lord, and carefully keep every word of this Torah and these rules. He will then [also] not begin to feel superior to his brethren, and he will not stray from the mandate to the right or the left. He and his descendants will thus have a long reign in the midst of Israe.

Orthodox Jewish Bible

And it shall be, when he sitteth upon the kisei mamlakhto (throne of his kingdom), that he shall write him a mishneh hatorah hazot (copy of this torah) in a sefer out of that which is before the kohanim, the Levi'im; And it shall be with him, and he shall read therein all the days of his life; that he may learn to fear Hashem Elohav, to be shomer over kol divrei hatorah hazot and these chukkim, to do them; That his lev be not lifted up in pride above his brethren, and that he turn not aside from the mitzvah, to the right hand, or to the left; to the end that he may prolong his days in his mamlachah, he, and his banim, in the midst of Yisroel.

The Scriptures 1998

“And it shall be, when he sits on the throne of his reign, that he shall write for himself a copy of this Torah in a book, from the one before the priests, the Lēvites. “And it shall be with him, and he shall read it all the days of his life, so that he learns to fear יהוה his Elohim and guard all the Words of this Torah and these laws, to do them, so that his heart is not lifted up above his brothers, and so as not to turn aside from the command, right or left, so that he prolongs his days in his reign, he and his children, in the midst of Yisra’el.

Expanded/Embellished Bibles:

The Amplified Bible

“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. And it shall be with him and he shall read it all the days of his life, so that he may learn to fear [and worship] the Lord his God [with awe-filled reverence and profound respect], by carefully obeying (keeping foremost in his thoughts and actively doing) all the words of this law and these statutes, so that his heart will not be lifted up above his countrymen [by a false sense of self-importance and self-reliance] and that he will not turn away (deviate) from the commandment, to the right or to the left, so that he and his sons may continue [to reign] for a long time in his kingdom in Israel.

The Expanded Bible

When he ·becomes king [‘sits on the throne of his kingdom], he should write a copy of ·the teachings [these laws/instructions] on a scroll for himself, a copy taken from the priests and Levites. He should keep it with him all the time and read from it every day of his life. Then he will learn to ·respect [fear] the Lord his God, and he will obey all ·the teachings [these laws/instructions] and ·commands [statutes; ordinances; requirements]. He should not ·think he is better than his fellow Israelites [‘exalt his heart above his relatives/brothers], and he must not ·stop obeying [turn aside from] the law ·in any way [‘to the right or the left] so that he and his ·descendants [sons] may rule the kingdom for a long time [2 Sam. 7:16].

Kretzmann’s Commentary

And it shall be, when he sitteth upon the throne of his kingdom, having reached the summit of human greatness, where everything would be moving according to his will, that he shall write him a copy of this Law in a book out of that which is before the priests, the Levites, made for him by the priests of the tribe of Levi;

and it shall be with him, and he shall read therein all the days of his life, thus keeping the will of the Most High before him, as his aim and standard, that he may learn to fear the Lord, his God, to keep all the words of this Law and these statutes, to do them, bound by the laws and institutions of the Lord and of the nation which was God's covenant people;

that his heart be not lifted up above his brethren, in unwarranted pride and haughtiness, and that he turn not aside from the commandment to the right hand or to the left, making it his aim at all times to adhere to the Law of God, a copy of which was in his possession, with the utmost strictness; to the end that he may prolong his days in his kingdom, he and his children, in the midst of Israel; for the Lord rewards obedience to His Law with earthly blessings. We Christians pray for our government and for all those that are in authority, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty, 1Tim. 2:2.

NET Bible®

When he sits on his royal throne he must make a copy of this law²⁵ on a scroll²⁶ given to him by the Levitical priests. It must be with him constantly and he must read it as long as he lives, so that he may learn to revere the Lord his God and observe all the words of this law and these statutes and carry them out. Then he will not exalt himself above his fellow citizens or turn from the commandments to the right or left, and he and his descendants will enjoy many years ruling over his kingdom [*Heb* “upon his kingship.” Smr supplies כִּסֵּא (kise’, “throne”) so as to read “upon the throne of his kingship.” This overliteralizes what is a clearly understood figure of speech.] in Israel.

The Voice

As soon as this king takes the royal throne, he must write out a copy of this law for himself on a scroll with the Levitical priests looking on. He must keep this copy with him and read it every day, so that he will learn to fear the Eternal his God and to obey everything in the law and *remember all* these regulations very carefully *in order to do them*. That way he won't think he's privileged and oppress and exploit his fellow Israelites. He won't deviate at all from what the Eternal has commanded, and he and his descendants will rule over Israel in a long dynasty.

Literal, almost word-for-word, renderings:

Context Group Version

And it shall be, when he sits on the throne of his kingdom, that he shall write himself a copy of this law in a book, out of [that which is] before the priests the Levites: and it shall be with him, and he shall read in it all the days of his life; that he may learn to fear YHWH his God, to keep all the words of this law and these statutes, to do them; that his heart is not lifted up above his brothers, and that he does not turn aside from the commandment, to the right hand, or to the left: to the end that he may prolong his days in his kingdom, he and his sons, in the midst of Israel.

Modern English Version

It must be, when he sits on the throne of his kingdom, that he shall write a copy of this law for himself on a scroll before the priests, the Levites. It must be with him, and he must read it all the days of his life so that he may learn to fear the Lord his God, and carefully observe all the words of this law and these statutes, and do them, that his heart will not be lifted up above his brothers and so that he may not turn aside from the commandment, to the right or to the left, to the end, so that he may prolong his days in his kingdom, he and his children, in the midst of Israel.

NASB

“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. 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, 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.

Third Millennium Bible

"And it shall be, when he sitteth upon the throne of his kingdom, that he shall write him a copy of this law in a book from that which is before the priests the Levites. And it shall be with him, and he shall read therein all the days of his life, that he may learn to fear the LORD his God, to keep all the words of this law and these statutes, to do them, that his heart be not lifted up above his brethren, and that he turn not aside from the commandment to the right hand or to the left, to the end that he may prolong his days in his kingdom, he and his children, in the midst of Israel.

Young's Updated LT

And it has been, when he sits on the throne of his kingdom, that he has written for himself the copy of this law, on a book, from that before the priests the Levites, and it has been with him, and he has read in it all days of his life, so that he does learn to fear Jehovah his God, to keep all the words of this law, and these statutes, to do them; so that his heart is not high above his brothers, and so as not to turn aside from the command, right or left, so that he prolongs days over his kingdom, he and his sons, in the midst of Israel.

The gist of this passage:

The king should make a copy of the Law—the words of God to Moses—and keep it and study it so that he does not think of himself in terms of arrogance and so that his life as king will be prolonged.

Deuteronomy 17:18a

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
w ^e (or v ^e) (וּ, or ו) [pronounced <i>weh</i>]	<i>and, even, then; namely; when; since, that; though; as well as</i>	simple wâw conjunction	No Strong's # BDB #251
hâyâh (הָיָה) [pronounced <i>haw-YAW</i>]	<i>to be, is, was, are; to become, to come into being; to come to pass</i>	3 rd person masculine singular, Qal perfect	Strong's #1961 BDB #224
kaph or k ^e (כּ) [pronounced <i>k^e</i>]	<i>like, as, according to; about, approximately</i>	preposition	No Strong's # BDB #453
yâshab (בָּשַׁב) [pronounced <i>yaw-SHAH^{AV}</i>]	<i>to remain, to stay; to dwell, to live, to inhabit, to reside; to sit</i>	Qal infinitive construct with the 3 rd person masculine singular suffix	Strong's #3427 BDB #442
‘al (עַל) [pronounced <i>‘ah]</i>	<i>upon, beyond, on, against, above, over, by, beside</i>	preposition of relative proximity	Strong's #5921 BDB #752
kiççê’ (כִּסֵּי) [pronounced <i>kis-SAY</i>]	<i>throne, seat of honor; seat of judgment; royal dignity, authority, kingdom, power</i>	masculine singular construct	Strong's #3678 BDB #490
mam ^e lâkâh (מַמְלַכָּה) [pronounced <i>mahm^e-law-kaw</i>]	<i>kingdom, national government; sovereignty, dominion, reign, dynasty; used to refer to both the royal dignity and to the country of a king</i>	feminine singular noun with the definite article	Strong's #4467 BDB #575

Translation: *And it will be, while he sits on the throne of his kingdom,...* Moses now says what the king ought to do when he has power over Israel. He will be sitting on the throne of his kingdom, a position that all kings assume.

Also, I think that the language here is more than just a reference to the king having power. I think that this refers to the king physically sitting upon the throne (which obviously means that he has power). He is recognized as king by all Israel.

Deuteronomy 17:18b

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
w ^e (or v ^e) (וּ, or ו) [pronounced <i>weh</i>]	<i>and, even, then; namely; when; since, that; though; as well as</i>	simple wâw conjunction	No Strong's # BDB #251
kâthab (כָּתַב) [pronounced <i>kaw-THAHB^v</i>]	<i>to write, to write down, to record [chronicle, document], to direct or decree in writing, to proscribe; to describe, to inscribe</i>	3 rd person masculine singular, Qal perfect	Strong's #3789 BDB #507
lâmed (ל) [pronounced <i>l^e</i>]	<i>to, for, towards, in regards to</i>	directional/relational preposition with the 3 rd person masculine singular suffix	No Strong's # BDB #510
'êth (אֵת) [pronounced <i>ayth</i>]	untranslated generally; occasionally <i>to, toward</i>	indicates that the following substantive is a direct object	Strong's #853 BDB #84
mish ^e neh (מִשְׁנֵה) [pronounced <i>mish^e-NEH</i>]	<i>double, copy, second</i>	masculine singular construct	Strong's #4932 BDB #1041
tôwrah (תּוֹרָה אוֹ הַתּוֹרָה) [pronounced <i>TOH-rah</i>]	<i>instruction, doctrine; [human and divine] law, direction, regulations, protocol; custom; transliterated Torah</i>	feminine singular noun with the definite article	Strong's #8451 and #8452 BDB #435

The NET Bible: Or "instruction." The LXX reads here τὸ δευτερονόμιον τὸ 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 תּוֹרַת הַמִּשְׁנֵה הַזֶּה (mishneh hattorah hazzo't) 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.¹⁷⁶

In the Greek, this is...

tô (τὸ) [pronounced <i>toh</i>]	<i>in the; by the; by means of the; for the benefit [advantage] of; for the disadvantage of</i>	masculine singular definite article; locative, dative, or instrumental case	Strong's #3588
deuteronomion (δευτερονόμιον)	<i>a copy of the law; a second law; Brenton: a repetition of the law</i>	neuter singular noun; accusative case	No Strong's #

This appears to be made up of the following two words:

¹⁷⁶ From <https://bible.org/netbible/index.htm?deu17.htm> (footnote); accessed April 23, 2016.

Deuteronomy 17:18b

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
deuteros (δεύτερος) [pronounced DYOO-ter-oss]	<i>the second, the other of two; (ordinal) second (in time, place or rank; also adverbially): - afterward, again, second (-arily, time)</i>	adjective	Strong's #1208
nomos (νόμος) [pronounced NOHM-oss]	<i>1) anything established, anything received by usage, a custom, a law, a command; 1a) of any law whatsoever; 1a1) a law or rule producing a state approved of God; 1a1a) by the observance of which is approved of God; 1a2) a precept or injunction; 1a3) the rule of action prescribed by reason; 1b) of the Mosaic law, and referring, acc. to the context. either to the volume of the law or to its contents; 1c) the Christian religion: the law demanding faith, the moral instruction given by Christ, especially the precept concerning love; 1d) the name of the more important part (the Pentateuch), is put for the entire collection of the sacred books of the OT</i>	masculine singular noun	Strong's #3551
The intention here is probably to mean, a <i>copy of the law</i> ; but this could mean, a <i>second law</i> , which is an excellent name for the book of <i>Deuteronomy</i> .			
touto (τοῦτο) [pronounced TOO-toh]	<i>this, this one, this thing</i>	intermediate demonstrative pronoun; accusative singular neuter form	Strong's #3778 (also known as Strong's #5124)
This should be rendered: <i>this second law; this copy [double, duplicate] of the law</i> . There is probably a nuance here that I am missing.			
zô`th (זֹה) [pronounced zoth]	<i>here, this, this one; thus; possibly another</i>	feminine of singular zeh; demonstrative pronoun, adverb; with the definite article	Strong's #2063 (& 2088, 2090) BDB #260

Deuteronomy 17:18b

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
'al (עַל) [pronounced <i>gahl</i>]	<i>upon, beyond, on, against, above, over; on the ground of, because of, according to, on account of, on behalf of, with, by, besides, in addition to, to, toward, together with, in the matter of, concerning, as regards to</i>	preposition of relative proximity	Strong's #5921 BDB #752
çêpher (סֵפֶר) [pronounced <i>SAY-fur</i>]	<i>letter, missive, book, document, writing, scroll, tablet, register</i>	masculine singular noun	Strong's #5612 BDB #706

The NET Bible: *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.*¹⁷⁷

Translation: ...that he will write for himself a copy of this Torah upon a scroll... He will spend some time writing a copy of the Torah on a scroll. In Moses' mind, he was probably thinking of the words that specifically were spoken by God. However, God the Holy Spirit probably is thinking Genesis through Deuteronomy. For all intents and purposes, this is the constitution for Israel.

Although some commentators¹⁷⁸ suggest that this means the king will have someone write a copy of the Torah for him, the language here seems to be very specific. The king is the one who is supposed to make a copy of the Law. In this way, the king has become familiar with the law at least on one reading.

V. 18 so far: **And it will be, while he sits on the throne of his kingdom, that he will write for himself a copy of this Torah upon a scroll...** There are two opinions here: that the king is to write this himself and that he is to have the book of the Law written for him.¹⁷⁹ The verb is *kâthab* (כָּתַב) [pronounced *kaw-THAHB^v*] and means *to write, to write down, to chronicle, to record, to document*. Surprisingly enough, this is never found in the Old Testament in the Hiphil (causative) stem (which here, it would suggest that the king would cause someone to write this down). The Qal stem is simple action; there are no accompanying verbs nor are there any qualifying words to indicate that the king has assigned this project to someone else. If that was what God required, then this would simply be stated that the king would *obtain* for himself a copy of the Law. Strong's #3789 BDB #507. Therefore, I believe that the king, with his own hand, is to record the Law of Moses.

That the king should write out this copy of the law himself is quite important. I found out very early on, when listening to R. B. Thieme, Jr., that I concentrated better when I took notes; and I had something to refer back to later if I had a question or wanted to explore this or that topic. For many people, who walk into Berachah for the first time, they are struck by how many people are taking notes, and if they are critical of Berachah, this is one of the first things they will talk about (always with some disparagement). I started out as a *taper*, so I began taking notes without thinking too much about it. I was college age and I took a great many notes in school; so that seemed to be the way to go when listening to Bob. I can understand in many churches, if there is not much teaching that occurs, why someone would not take notes; but the Bible is a massive book and requires a great deal of thought and concentration. My point in all of this is, a king would understand and remember more from

¹⁷⁷ From <https://bible.org/netbible/index.htm?deu17.htm> (footnote); accessed April 23, 2016.

¹⁷⁸ Utley among others. Dr. Bob Utley, Copyright © 2014 Bible Lessons International; www.freebiblecommentary.org; from e-sword; Deut. 17:18.

¹⁷⁹ This is the position taken in Keil & Delitzsch's *Commentary on the Old Testament*; ©1966 Hendrickson Publishers, Inc.; Vol. 1, p. 929.

the Law if he wrote it out in his own hand. Someone could simply hand him a copy of the Law, but there is no expectation that he would even read all of it. When the king copies out the Law himself, then, he has gone through the entire Law at least once.

Of utmost importance, the king is to have a personal copy of the Law which he will write himself before the face of the priests. This is a solemn occasion; one that will require a great deal of time each morning or afternoon when this is done; and it seems to indicate that the king is to do his own writing. This will cause the king to actually read what it is that he is writing. This is to be done in the presence of the priests—the Levites. “This book of the law will not depart from your mouth, but you will study it day and night. So that you may be responsible 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 1:8). So in Joshua’s last message to his people, he said, “Be stabilized and keep and do all that is written in the book of the Law of Moses, so that you may not turn aside from it to the right hand or to the left.” (Joshua 11:6).

We do not know how many kings followed this requirement. It would seem likely that both David and Solomon did, but this is not recorded in Scripture for us.

Although there is quite a bit of discussion of this in the exegesis, let me provide some more information on that:

The Title of Deuteronomy (Several Commentators)

In the Greek, *copy of the law* is actually the single word *deuteronomion* (δευτερονόμιον); from whence we get the word *Deuteronomy*. This word either has a double meaning (*copy of the law*; *a second law*), or it is used correctly in this verse in the LXX, but modified for the title of this book. In the Greek, it reads ΔΕΥΤΕΡΟΝΟΜΙΟΝ (these are simply capital letters; there is no change from the word we find in this verse).

According to *Treasury of Scriptural Knowledge*, the Jews called Deuteronomy the *Mishna*.¹⁸⁰ However, at becoming Jewish.org, Deuteronomy has the name *Deuteronomy*; and two Jewish Bibles (the ORT and the OJB) title this book *Devarim*, which simply means *words*. *Ha devarim* are the second and third words of the book of Deuteronomy (actually, the second word with the definite article¹⁸¹).

Clarke reasonably supposes: *[T]he copy which the king was to write out was to be taken from the autograph kept in the tabernacle before the Lord, from which, as a standard, every copy was taken and with which doubtless every copy was compared; and it is probable that the priests and Levites had the revising of every copy that was taken off, in order to prevent errors from creeping into the sacred text.*¹⁸²

Kline perhaps provides the best understanding of what is going on here: *A duplicate copy of the suzerainty treaty was provided for each vassal king.*¹⁸³ God is the Suzerain and whatever king is in Israel is God’s vassal king (“You may indeed set a king over you whom the LORD your God will choose.”—Deut. 17:15a—ESV); and the book of Deuteronomy (in addition to whatever additional books would be copied) represent the conditions and provisions designated by the Suzerain (the superior king, the superior state to whom the vassal state is subject to). God lays out the conditions and provisions to which the vassal king is subject.

Peake makes an important point: *The LXX translates wrongly by “this repetition of the law,” thus originating and confirming the common mistake that Deuteronomy is essentially a later edition of the laws in the previous books of the Pentateuch. This is contrary to the sense of the Hebrew. and to the contents of Deuteronomy, which omits most of the laws in Exodus, Leviticus, and Numbers and contains laws absent from these books (Deuteronomy 17:14-20, etc.).*¹⁸⁴

¹⁸⁰ *Treasury of Scriptural Knowledge*; by Canne, Browne, Blayney, Scott, and others about 1880; from E-sword, Deut. 17:18.

¹⁸¹ The Hebrew does not treat the definite article as a word; it is simply a prefix to a word.

¹⁸² Adam Clarke, *Adam Clarke’s Commentary on the Bible*; from e-Sword, Deut. 17:18.

¹⁸³ From <http://www.studylight.org/commentaries/bcc/deuteronomy-17.html> accessed May 8, 2016.

¹⁸⁴ From <http://www.studylight.org/commentaries/pfc/deuteronomy-17.html> accessed May 11, 2016 (slightly edited).

The Title of Deuteronomy (Several Commentators)

Ian Mackervoy (Easy English Commentary): *The name 'Deuteronomy' for this book means 'second law'. But this book is not a second or distinct law. The book was not always called Deuteronomy. The name comes from the time when people translated the *Old-Testament into the Greek language. That was in about 200 *BC.*¹⁸⁵

It strikes me that the use of this word for the title is a play on words.

Chapter Outline

Charts, Graphics and Short Doctrines

There is a great deal of disagreement as to what portion of the Law (Torah) was to be copied by the king. Were these only the words of God (found in Exodus and elsewhere); was this the entire book of Deuteronomy (which appears to be the bare minimum to me); was this just the few passages which are applicable to the king? Although this was surely clear to the original hearers, this is not clear to me (and no commentator made a strong enough argument to me to sway me one way or the other). However, because we have the word *this* and because there was a complete version of Deuteronomy delivered to the priests (Deut. 31:9); it is reasonable to assume that the book of Deuteronomy is the bare minimum that the king had to copy. Or, perhaps Moses essentially left this up to the king, having in his own mind what this ought to be, but not knowing what would be in the hands of the priests a few hundred years hence. Perhaps he simply assumed that the priests would make the determination. In any case, I saw no reason to hash over the different options any further, or to discuss who suggested what, and which argument was best. It did not seem to require discussion. If you have some interest, **James Burton Coffman** probably devotes the most discussion to this topic.

In any case, I do not recall a passage where this is actually done by a king. It is possible that this is inferred by 2Kings 11:12 **Then he brought out the king's son and put the crown on him and gave him the testimony. And they proclaimed him king and anointed him, and they clapped their hands and said, "Long live the king!"** (ESV) Maybe the *testimony* is the hand-written law of God as possessed by the previous king. Even though the king was supposed to write this out himself, it would not be surprising that one king's copy is judged to be good, and the next king just appropriated it for himself (and some of them, no doubt, had relatively little interest in the Word of God).

This requirement parallels those things required of a vassal king under the suzerainty treaties during that time period. There would be an agreement and/or contract which has been drawn up; the vassal king who is subject to this treaty was to copy it down and study it and live by it. A king over the Israelites is similar to a vassal king, having been given rulership over the people of the land. He is given temporary custodianship over these people. Their true ruler is Jesus Christ.

Deuteronomy 17:18c

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
min (מִן) [pronounced <i>mihn</i>]	<i>from, away from, out from, out of from, off, on account of, since, above, than, so that not, beyond, more than</i>	preposition of separation	Strong's #4480 BDB #577
lâmed (ל) [pronounced <i>l'</i>]	<i>to, for, towards, in regards to, with reference to, as to, with regards to, belonging to</i>	directional/relational preposition	No Strong's # BDB #510

¹⁸⁵ From <http://www.easyenglish.info/bible-commentary/deuteronomy-im-lbw.htm> (Chapter 17) accessed May 11, 2016.

Deuteronomy 17:18c

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
pānîym (פָּנִים) [pronounced paw-NEEM]	<i>face, faces, countenance; presence</i>	masculine plural construct (plural acts like English singular)	Strong's #6440 BDB #815
Together, the two prepositions and pānîym mean <i>from before, from the presence of, from a position before a person or object, from before a place</i> . However, this also expresses source or cause, and is also rendered <i>because of, on account of</i> .			
kôhên (כֹּהֵן) [pronounced koh-HANE]	<i>priest; principal officer or chief ruler</i>	masculine plural noun with the definite article	Strong's #3548 BDB #463
L ^e vîyyim (לְוִיִּם) [pronounced ^l -vee-YIM]	<i>joined to, attached; garland, crown; and is transliterated Levites</i>	plural gentilic adjective with the definite article	Strong's #3881 BDB #532

Translation: ...provided by the Levitical priests. The Levites were in charge of all things spiritual; and they would prepare scrolls for the words of the Law, which they would preserve. They would provide the king a scroll and the necessary writing utensils.

The scribes were probably mostly Levites and this would have been one of their spiritual services.

Deut. 17:18 reads: *and it will be, while he sits on the throne of his kingdom, that he will write for himself a copy of this Torah upon a scroll provided by the Levitical priests*. It appears that the king receives the proper scroll from the Levitical priests. It is suggested by some that they receive the Law that they will copy from the Levites as well. The text here is not quite that clear, as far as I can tell.

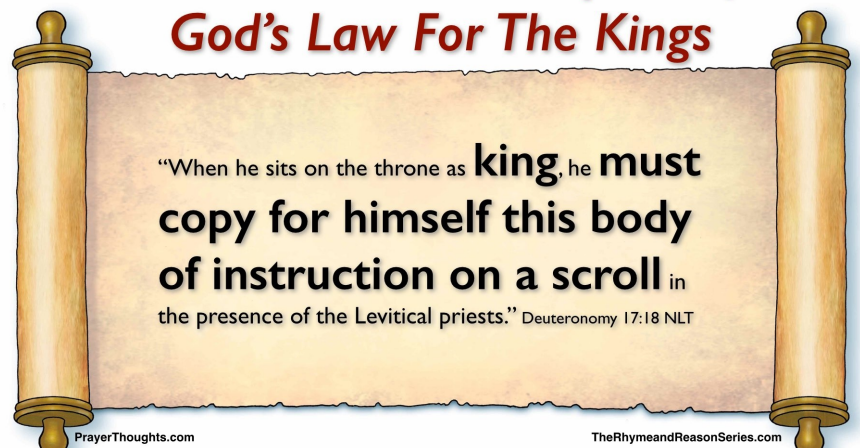
Scrolls Copied by the King —Deuteronomy 17:18 (a graphic); from [Hope, Help, Healing](#); accessed May 13, 2016.

Chapter Outline

Charts, Graphics and Short Doctrines

Deut. 17:18 *And it shall be, when he [the king] sits on the throne of his kingdom, he shall write for himself a copy of this Law in a book, from before the priests, the Levites. (ESV)* Although the Levites were essentially in charge of the copies of Scripture, the king himself needed to make a copy of the Torah for himself, which copy he was to keep near and study.

Scrolls Recorded Copies Of God's Law For The Kings



We know that later in Israel's history, there were many copies of the books of the Bible spread throughout the land of Israel and elsewhere. The Dead Sea Scrolls is a library collection of books (scrolls), with several copies of some books. Whereas, I did come across one commentator (Gary North¹⁸⁶) who claimed that there was a primary copy of the Law held by the Levites and a secondary copy held by the king (so that he would not alter it), we really do not know how many copies of the Law (and of the various books which became the Bible) existed at any given time. The Old Testament Bible as a complete book is not clearly known until circa 200 B.C. when the Greek translation of the Bible was made (the Septuagint or the LXX). So there are gaps—great gaps where we do not know exactly how many copies of each book there were and where they were kept.

Here are things that we do know

What we know about the Old Testament canon

1. By the time of the translation of the Old Testament into Greek, there appears to be some reasonable agreement on what the Old Testament consisted of.
2. Unlike the New Testament, where we know individuals, groups, translations and canons that were developed over the first few hundred years, we do not have all of that information from the Old Testament.
3. By the time of the Dead Sea Scrolls (circa 100 B.C.) we know that there were many copies of some books in at least this one library. There would suggest that there were many, many copies of the individual books scattered elsewhere in many different libraries.
4. We know that, in the time of Jesus, synagogues throughout Judæa had copies of the Old Testament (how complete is unknown). Due to the size of the individual books, the Jews never had a single scroll which was their Bible in ancient times. It just would not fit on a scroll.
5. We also know that, in the time of Jesus, there was a regular occupation known as *scribe*, a person who copied books word-for-word for a living. There seemed to be great importance attached to the copying of the Old Testament canon at that time, where the middle letter and word of each book was known in order to cross-check the accuracy of a copy.

What we know for certain is, there was a point at which the canon of Scripture for the Old Testament was identified and recognized throughout the people of Israel; and that there were many copies of the individual books in personal and public libraries and in the synagogues.

[Chapter Outline](#)

[Charts, Graphics and Short Doctrines](#)

Based upon what we know, we can make some reasonable guesses about the Old Testament canon.

What we can guess about the Old Testament canon

1. We know that the development of the New Testament canon was a fairly organic process; there is no reason to think that the development of the Old Testament canon was any different.
2. By the time of the book of Deuteronomy, Moses had clearly assumed great authority, which he had not done before. He began to make pronouncements, near the end of his life, of the Law and the application of the Law, that he had not done before (which was the book of Deuteronomy). He taught these things with great authority.
3. It appears that Joshua picked up on this, that he seemed to confirm that Deuteronomy is God's Word, even though these are words spoken by Moses to the people, and that he himself completed that book.
4. The requirement that the future king make a copy of the Torah for himself suggests, at the very least, that the books Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy were considered from/of God.
5. Each book, having been written, seemed to be eventually accepted into the canon of Scripture. How long this took and exactly what it meant to them is unknown to us.
6. We have developed a very precise definition in inspiration, which includes both the Old and New Testaments. What the ancient Jews thought is less clear; but by the time of the pharisees, the Old Testament canon appeared to have great authority. These would have been known as the Holy Books

¹⁸⁶ From <http://www.garynorth.com/Deuteronomy2.pdf> (p. 663); accessed May 15, 2016.

What we can guess about the Old Testament canon

- of the Jews. What exactly that meant to each person from these different eras (from Joshua to Samuel to David to Josiah) is unknown to us.
7. What appears to be the case is, there was a canon of Scripture before we understood fully what the canon of Scripture was. That this canon was inspired of God was known by various people at various levels, but was not really laid out until the definition of inspiration was developed.
 8. I would guess that, copies of various books of Scripture were passed around—particularly to the Levites, who lived throughout the land of Israel, among all the tribes. Since Levites were related particularly to God’s spiritual directions for the nation, it would make sense for them to have, at the very least, a copy of the Torah at each Levite city.
 9. At some point, libraries and synagogues were established, and these books found their way into these places. What would be the point of a synagogue without the Scriptures to read?
 10. Based upon Jesus reading the passage of Isaiah, where he stops and everyone is looking at Him—there were periods of time when many people knew the books of the Bible, some of them knew some books word-for-word (much the way we know the words to certain songs).
 11. When Jesus later would quote from this book and that book, the idea was, that would shut down discussion, as He had just explained or applied divine information for His hearers; that there was some understanding and knowledge of the passages which He quoted. His quoting from the existing Old Testament and explanation of this or that passage was very much seen as dealing with God’s Word. Nowhere do we find groups of pharisees who say, “Come on, that is just a bunch of words written by shepherds and the like from a long time ago.”

My point here is, there were probably multiple copies of each book from a very early time; and that the recognition of each book as part of God’s Word would have been an organic process, which did not include a full understanding of what that even meant.

[Chapter Outline](#)

[Charts, Graphics and Short Doctrines](#)

Deuteronomy 17:19a

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong’s Numbers
w ^e (or v ^e) (וּ, or ו) [pronounced <i>weh</i>]	<i>and, even, then; namely; when; since, that; though; as well as</i>	simple wâw conjunction	No Strong’s # BDB #251
hâyâh (הָיָה) [pronounced <i>haw-YAW</i>]	<i>to be, is, was, are; to become, to come into being; to come to pass</i>	3 rd person feminine singular, Qal perfect	Strong’s #1961 BDB #224
‘îm (עִם) [pronounced <i>geem</i>]	<i>with, at, by, near; like; from</i>	preposition of nearness and vicinity; with the 3 rd person masculine singular suffix	Strong’s #5973 BDB #767

Translation: *And it will be with him...* We have the feminine singular verb here, referring to the *Torah* which would be copied by the king. There should never be an excuse; the Law of God should be within his reach at all times.

The Pulpit Commentary: *It was to be carefully kept by him, but not as a mere sacred deposit or palladium; it was to be constantly with him wherever he was, was to be the object of his continual study, and was to be the directory and guide of his daily life (cf. Joshua 1:8 Psalm 1:2 119:15–16, 24, 97–99, etc.).*¹⁸⁷

¹⁸⁷ *The Pulpit Commentary*; 1880-1919; by Joseph S. Exell, Henry Donald Maurice Spence-Jones, from e-sword, Deut. 17:19.

Application: Would that our current president respect the Constitution of the United States and have a copy nearby as well to read and study. It appears that the only purpose of his knowledge of the Constitution is figuring out ways to subvert it.

Deuteronomy 17:19b

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
w ^e (or v ^e) (וּ, or ו) [pronounced <i>weh</i>]	<i>and, even, then; namely; when; since, that; though; as well as</i>	simple wâw conjunction	No Strong's # BDB #251
qârâ' (אָרָא) [pronounced <i>kaw-RAW</i>]	<i>to call, to proclaim, to read, to call to, to call out to, to assemble, to summon; to call, to name [when followed by a lâmed]</i>	3 rd person masculine singular, Qal imperfect	Strong's #7121 BDB #894
b ^e (ב) [pronounced <i>b^{eh}</i>]	<i>in, into, at, by, near, on, with, before, upon, against, by means of, among, within</i>	a preposition of proximity with the 3 rd person masculine singular suffix	No Strong's # BDB #88
kôl (כֹּל) [pronounced <i>kohl</i>]	with a plural noun, it is rendered <i>all of; any of</i>	masculine singular construct with a masculine plural noun	Strong's #3605 BDB #481
yâmîym (יָמִים) [pronounced <i>yaw-MEEM</i>]	<i>days, time of life, lifetime; a specific time period, a year</i>	masculine plural construct	Strong's #3117 BDB #398
chayyîym (חַיִּים) [pronounced <i>khay-YEEM</i>]	<i>life, lives, living, being alive, having life, immortality, a long life, sustenance, sustaining life; refreshment; being vigorous; prosperity, welfare, happiness, living prosperously</i>	masculine plural substantive; masculine plural adjective with the 3 rd person masculine singular suffix	Strong's #2416 BDB #313

Literally, this is *all days of his life*; and this could be translated *for the rest of his life, all his days, all the days of his life*.

Translation: ...and he will read in it all the days of his life... Here, we have the masculine singular suffix, which refers back to the scroll. The Law would be written onto this scroll, and the king was to read and study this scroll for the rest of his life.

The king needs to refer to it and to read it regularly.

The College Press Bible Study: *The book was to be constantly studied and meditated upon by the king (Deut. 17:19–20)—and be his directory and guide in daily life. Joshua was not a king, but was God's leader of Israel, note Joshua 1:7–8. David, of course, is the king who truly held God's law in its proper esteem (Psalms 119, etc.).*¹⁸⁸

¹⁸⁸ The College Press Bible Study Textbook Series; (a compilation of many commentaries); from e-sword; Deut. 17:14–20 (commentary).

Interestingly enough, there was a time when the Law had been so neglected, that the people appeared to forget that they had the Law. The ESV; capitalized is used below.

God had warned the northern kingdom (Israel), and the northern kingdom had been taken into captivity. Now God was warning the southern kingdom (Judah). Josiah comes to power in 639 B.C. and Judah would be taken into captivity in 586 B.C.; so the time was near. Zephaniah the prophet's ministry took place somewhere between 635–625 B.C.¹⁸⁹

Recovering the Law of Moses—2Chronicles 34

Scripture	Text/Commentary
<p>2Chron. 34:1–2 Josiah was eight years old when he began to reign, and he reigned thirty-one years in Jerusalem. And he did what was right in the eyes of the LORD, and walked in the ways of David his father; and he did not turn aside to the right hand or to the left.</p>	<p>Josiah became king because his father had been assassinated.</p> <p>This description of Josiah is not him at 8 years of age, but of his entire reign as king.</p> <p>Josiah would be king from 640–608 B.C. and Judah would undergo the 5th Stage of National Discipline in 586 B.C.</p>
<p>2Chron. 34:3–5 For in the eighth year of his reign, while he was yet a boy, he began to seek the God of David his father, and in the twelfth year he began to purge Judah and Jerusalem of the high places, the Asherim, and the carved and the metal images. And they chopped down the altars of the Baals in his presence, and he cut down the incense altars that stood above them. And he broke in pieces the Asherim and the carved and the metal images, and he made dust of them and scattered it over the graves of those who had sacrificed to them. He also burned the bones of the priests on their altars and cleansed Judah and Jerusalem.</p>	<p>Josiah, at age 16, began to seek for the Lord; and, as we know, God reveals Himself objectively. Since Josiah sought the God of David, we might reasonably assume that he was reading the history of David, probably as found in the book of Samuel.</p> <p>Idolatry was extensive and could even be found in the Temple of God (2Kings 23:4–5). Josiah destroyed the idols and the priests who promoted them as well.</p>
<p>Josiah may have had good reason to seek the Lord. Around this time, there would have been an <i>invasion from the north of barbaric, nomadic horsemen known as the Scythians (628-626 B.C.)</i>.</p>	
<p>Josiah was able to distinguish between the God of David and the false religions that he removed from the land. There were prophets throughout much of the reigns of these kings; particularly as time drew near for the destruction of the southern kingdom.</p>	
<p>We know that the prophet Zephaniah rises up during Josiah's reign as per Zeph. 1:1. The reason that this is important is, the Torah (the first 5 books of the Bible) appears to have fallen out of use for a time. I mention this because Josiah needs some sort of norm or standard by which to act—which were probably the other sacred writings along with the guidance of God's prophets.</p>	

¹⁸⁹ I am taking these dates from *The Narrated Bible In Chronological Order*; narrated by F. LaGard Smith; ©1984 by Harvest House Publishers; Eugene, Oregon; (NIV ©1984 by the International Bible Society); pp. 934–935 (and following).

Recovering the Law of Moses—2Chronicles 34

Scripture	Text/Commentary
<p>2Chron. 34:6–7 And in the cities of Manasseh, Ephraim, and Simeon, and as far as Naphtali, in their ruins all around, he broke down the altars and beat the Asherim and the images into powder and cut down all the incense altars throughout all the land of Israel. Then he returned to Jerusalem.</p>	<p>Josiah even went north into Israel, to their ruins, and destroyed whatever idolatry existed up there as well. He was going to cleanse the entire land of idolatry.</p>
<p>Hezekiah had done the same thing during his reign, perhaps 80 years earlier (2Chron. 29). This suggests that the people of Israel would return to the Lord, but that there was no commitment by them.</p>	
<p>2Chron. 34:8 Now in the eighteenth year of his reign, when he had cleansed the land and the house, he sent Shaphan the son of Azaliah, and Maaseiah the governor of the city, and Joah the son of Joahaz, the recorder, to repair the house of the LORD his God.</p>	<p>Josiah would be 26 years of age at this time, and he is organizing the repairs to be done to house of Y^ehowah—this would be the Temple built by Solomon, which had fallen into disrepair. This would suggest that it was not being used.</p>
<p>We do not know exactly how Josiah came to make all of these decisions. Perhaps he knew enough national history to recognize that, when Israel had a close relationship to their God, they were a great nation.</p>	
<p>2Chron. 34:9–11 They came to Hilkiah the high priest and gave him the money that had been brought into the house of God, which the Levites, the keepers of the threshold, had collected from Manasseh and Ephraim and from all the remnant of Israel and from all Judah and Benjamin and from the inhabitants of Jerusalem. And they gave it to the workmen who were working in the house of the LORD. And the workmen who were working in the house of the LORD gave it for repairing and restoring the house. They gave it to the carpenters and the builders to buy quarried stone, and timber for binders and beams for the buildings that the kings of Judah had let go to ruin.</p>	<p>Collections were taken up from Judah and from the remnant that still lived in the northern kingdom (principally from Manasseh, Ephraim, Judah and Benjamin). This suggests (1) that remnants from the original tribes still lived up north and (2) they themselves recognized a need for the restoration of the Temple.</p> <p>This sounds like an extensive project, as new timber and large stones are being brought in.</p>
<p>2Chron. 34:12–13 And the men did the work faithfully. Over them were set Jahath and Obadiah the Levites, of the sons of Merari, and Zechariah and Meshullam, of the sons of the Kohathites, to have oversight. The Levites, all who were skillful with instruments of music, were over the burden-bearers and directed all who did work in every kind of service, and some of the Levites were scribes and officials and gatekeepers.</p>	<p>The Levites in particular appeared to be the most involved. From the Levites, there were contractors, project managers, musicians, team leaders (who were over the slaves); scribes, officials and gatekeepers.</p> <p>The Levites did not have land which belonged to them exclusively; they lived in cities within land that belonged to other tribes.</p>
<p>2Chron. 34:14–15 While they were bringing out the money that had been brought into the house of the LORD, Hilkiah the priest found the Book of the Law of the LORD given through Moses. Then Hilkiah answered and said to Shaphan the secretary, "I have found the Book of the Law in the house of the LORD." And Hilkiah gave the book to Shaphan.</p>	<p>While the money was being collected, others were going into the Temple to determine what sort of restoration needed to be done. It sounds very much like the temple was not being used.</p> <p>When in the Temple, the book of the Law (the Torah) was found. Further, the authorship is ascribed to Moses. This suggests that these are the books Exodus through Deuteronomy. There is a possibility that this might be Deuteronomy alone.</p>

Recovering the Law of Moses—2Chronicles 34

Scripture

Text/Commentary

Guzik: *According to Deut. 31:24–27, there was to be a copy of this Book of the Law beside the ark of the covenant, beginning in the days of Moses. The word of God was with Israel, but it was greatly neglected in those days.*

Payne: *'The Book,' however, seems to have become misplaced during the apostate administrations of the previous kings, Manasseh and Amon, under whom the ark had been moved about (2Chron. 35:3).*

2Chron. 34:16–17 **Shaphan brought the book to the king, and further reported to the king, "All that was committed to your servants they are doing. They have emptied out the money that was found in the house of the LORD and have given it into the hand of the overseers and the workmen."**

Shaphan, Hilkiah's secretary, brings the book to Josiah. He also tells him that any of the cash remaining in the Temple was used to pay the overseers and the workmen.

Guzik: *Here the word of God spreads. It had been forgotten and regarded as nothing more than an old, dusty book. Now it was found, read, and spread. We should expect some measure of spiritual revival and renewal to follow. Throughout the history of the God's people, when the word of God is recovered and spread, then spiritual revival follows. It can begin as simply as it did in the days of Josiah, with one man find and reading and believing and spreading the Book.*

Guzik gives the example of **Peter Waldo** (c. 1140 – c. 1205) as one who had discovered the Word of God and lived by it. Guzik: *Another example of this in history is the story of Peter Waldo and his followers, sometimes known as Waldenses. Waldo was a rich merchant who gave up his business to radically follow Jesus. He hired two priests to translate the New Testament into the common language and using this, he began to teach others. He taught in the streets or wherever he could find someone to listen. Many common people came to hear him and started to radically follow Jesus Christ. He taught them the text of the New Testament in the common language and was rebuked by church officials for doing so. He ignored the rebuke and continued to teach, eventually sending his followers out two by two into villages and market places, to teach and explain the scriptures. The scriptures were memorized by the Waldenses, and it was not unusual for their ministers to memorize the entire New Testament and large sections of the Old Testament. The word of God - when found, read, believed, and spread - has this kind of transforming power.*

2Chron. 34:18–19 **Then Shaphan the secretary told the king, "Hilkiah the priest has given me a book." And Shaphan read from it before the king. And when the king heard the words of the Law, he tore his clothes.**

Shaphan reads this book before Josiah and Josiah is so moved by the words of the Lord that he tears his clothes. This is likely from the realization that Israel, the nation, is founded upon God; and they had left God to pursue false gods.

It is likely that the world appeared to be falling apart all around Israel; and that Israel was clearly in danger. Josiah would have recognized *why* Israel was in such danger.

Application: A person who knows doctrine can look at the landscape of the United States, a nation blessed beyond belief; and see that we are in a very precarious place, and that our nation could, at any point, spiral into self-destruction. The very fact that a significant portion of Americans would vote for a socialist to be president (I write this in 2016) is quite amazing as well as disturbing.

Recovering the Law of Moses—2Chronicles 34

Scripture

Text/Commentary

2Chron. 34:20–21 And the king commanded Hilkiyah, Ahikam the son of Shaphan, Abdon the son of Micah, Shaphan the secretary, and Asaiah the king's servant, saying, "Go, inquire of the LORD for me and for those who are left in Israel and in Judah, concerning the words of the book that has been found. For great is the wrath of the LORD that is poured out on us, because our fathers have not kept the word of the LORD, to do according to all that is written in this book."

Josiah recognizes God's wrath that had been poured out upon all Israel and Judah because the words of the Law were not being kept.

This does not mean that Josiah lacked all forms of revealed truth. Because he is seeking for the God of his father David, it is reasonable to assume that he had access to the book of Samuel (and perhaps other books).

Josiah understood the spiritual hierarchy in place, that he did not go to God directly but that he went to God through his priests or prophets.

The concept of inspired writings was in its infancy in that era. In the book of Samuel, there are times when God is quoted specifically; but most of that book is narrative. However, God's exact words are found throughout the writings of Moses. In my estimation, they did not view the writings of Samuel (and David and Nathan) as inspired as those words coming directly from God. In our era, we see the entire Bible as the inspired Word of God.

What this narrative indicates is, some very important portions of the Bible had fallen into disuse. They were not being read, and therefore, they were not being followed.

The specificity of the description of the book that is found does not mean that the other books of the Bible were lost as well. The official Torah of the Temple had fallen into disuse and recovered in the Temple. Could other copies have existed at this time? We do not know. Were the other books of Scripture available at this time? Probably, but we do not know where they would be—we don't know what sort of libraries existed in that time.

2Chron. 34:22–25 So Hilkiyah and those whom the king had sent went to Huldah the prophetess, the wife of Shallum the son of Tokhath, son of Hasrah, keeper of the wardrobe (now she lived in Jerusalem in the Second Quarter) and spoke to her to that effect. And she said to them, "Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel: 'Tell the man who sent you to Me, Thus says the LORD, Behold, I will bring disaster upon this place and upon its inhabitants, all the curses that are written in the book that was read before the king of Judah. Because they have forsaken Me and have made offerings to other gods, that they might provoke Me to anger with all the works of their hands, therefore My wrath will be poured out on this place and will not be quenched.'

There is a prophetess at this time living in Jerusalem. What God says through her is quite disheartening, because God makes it clear that they are past the point of recovery.

Because of various people in Scripture, like Nathan or Gad or Huldah, God spoke through prophets to Israel throughout Israel's history (which seemed to increase around the time of Samuel). Those prophets have not written books that we have today (insofar as we know); yet they played a very important part in the history of Israel.

Recovering the Law of Moses—2Chronicles 34

Scripture	Text/Commentary
<p>2Chron. 34:26–28 But to the king of Judah, who sent you to inquire of the LORD, thus shall you say to him, Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel: Regarding the words that you have heard, because your heart was tender and you humbled yourself before God when you heard His words against this place and its inhabitants, and you have humbled yourself before Me and have torn your clothes and wept before Me, I also have heard you, declares the LORD. Behold, I will gather you to your fathers, and you shall be gathered to your grave in peace, and your eyes shall not see all the disaster that I will bring upon this place and its inhabitants." And they brought back word to the king.</p>	<p>All we know about Huldah is found in this and its parallel passage (2Kings 22:13–20).</p> <p>Clarke: <i>We find from this, and we have many facts in all ages to corroborate it, that a pontiff, a pope, a bishop, or a priest, may, in some cases, not possess the true knowledge of God; and that a simple woman, possessing the life of God in her soul, may have more knowledge of the divine testimonies than many of those whose office it is to explain and enforce them.</i></p> <p>Because of Josiah's reverence for God, God tells him that he will die before he sees the destruction of Judah and Jerusalem.</p>
<p>Morgan: <i>Josiah went on with the work of reformation, even when he knew that nationally it was foredoomed to failure. . . . She distinctly told him that there would be no true repentance on the part of the people, and therefore that judgment was inevitable. It was then that the heroic strength of Josiah manifested itself, in that he went on with his work. . . . No pathway of service is more difficult than that of bearing witness to God, in word and in work, in the midst of conditions which are unresponsive.</i></p>	
<p>What is most sobering is, there is a point at which there is no return with God. For all men, this is, of course, the point of death; but for nations and individuals in life, they sometimes tread too close to the edge, and God's removes them from history. Despite Josiah's reforms, God would subject Israel to the 5th Stage of National Disciple. This nation was too far gone to come back. Something every believer in America should ponder. Israel would never return to the glory of Solomon's day.</p>	
<p>2Chron. 34:29–30 Then the king sent and gathered together all the elders of Judah and Jerusalem. And the king went up to the house of the LORD, with all the men of Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem and the priests and the Levites, all the people both great and small. And he read in their hearing all the words of the Book of the Covenant that had been found in the house of the LORD.</p>	<p>The words of Moses were read aloud to the people in the Temple. It is unclear as to how much of the remaining population was there. The people who were there appear to be quite interested in the words of God as read.</p> <p>Guzik: <i>The king did this himself. He was so concerned that the nation would hear the word of God that he read it to them himself.</i></p>
<p>2Chron. 34:31 And the king stood in his place and made a covenant before the LORD, to walk after the LORD and to keep His commandments and His testimonies and His statutes, with all his heart and all his soul, to perform the words of the covenant that were written in this book.</p>	<p>Josiah makes a solemn promise aloud that he will keep all of the commandments of the Lord as found in this book that has just been read aloud.</p>
<p>2Chron. 34:32 Then he made all who were present in Jerusalem and in Benjamin join in it. And the inhabitants of Jerusalem did according to the covenant of God, the God of their fathers.</p>	<p>All of the people there were told to enter into this covenant that Josiah made.</p>

Recovering the Law of Moses—2Chronicles 34

Scripture

Text/Commentary

2Chron. 34:33 And Josiah took away all the abominations from all the territory that belonged to the people of Israel and made all who were present in Israel serve the LORD their God. All his days they did not turn away from following the LORD, the God of their fathers.

There was a period of time, before the destruction of Judah, that the people faithfully listened to and followed and feared the LORD.

Having not exegeted this passage before, I referred several times to *David Guzik's Commentary on the Old Testament*; courtesy of e-sword; ©2006; 2Chron. 34. Unless otherwise noted, any quotation within this doctrine has come from Guzik (including Morgan's, Clarke's and Payne's).

Chapter Outline

Charts, Graphics and Short Doctrines

Deuteronomy 17:19c

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
<p>l^oma'an (למען) [pronounced l^o-MAH- gahn]</p>	<p><i>for the sake of, on account of, to the intent of, to the intent that, to the purpose that, in order that, in view of, to the end that; so that</i></p>	<p>compound preposition and substantive which acts like a preposition</p>	<p>Strong's #4616 BDB #775</p>
<p>This is the substantive ma'an (מאן) [pronounced MAH-gahn], which means <i>purpose, intent</i>, combined with the lâmed preposition (which is the only way that it is found in Scripture).</p>			
<p>From the NET Bible footnote for Psalm 51:4: The Hebrew term l^oma'an (למען) [pronounced l^o-MAH-gahn] normally indicates purpose ("in order that"), but here it introduces a logical consequence of the preceding statement. (Taking the clause as indicating purpose here would yield a theologically preposterous idea - the psalmist purposely sinned so that God's justice might be vindicated!) For other examples of l^oma'an (למען) [pronounced l^o-MAH-gahn] indicating result, see 2 Kings 22:17 Jer 27:15 Amos 2:7.</p>			
<p>lâmad (למד) [pronounced law-MAHD]</p>	<p><i>to learn [by discipline], to train [by discipline and repetition]; to accustom oneself</i></p>	<p>3rd person masculine singular, Qal imperfect</p>	<p>Strong's #3925 BDB #540</p>
<p>lâmed (ל) [pronounced l^o]</p>	<p><i>to, for, towards, in regards to</i></p>	<p>directional/relational preposition</p>	<p>No Strong's # BDB #510</p>
<p>yârê' (אָרַי) [pronounced yaw-RAY]</p>	<p><i>to fear, to be afraid; to fear-respect, to reverence, to have a reverential respect</i></p>	<p>Qal infinitive construct</p>	<p>Strong's #3372 BDB #431</p>
<p>'êth (אֶת) [pronounced ayth]</p>	<p>untranslated generally; occasionally <i>to, toward</i></p>	<p>indicates that the following substantive is a direct object</p>	<p>Strong's #853 BDB #84</p>
<p>YHWH (יהוה) [pronunciation is possibly yhoh-WAH]</p>	<p>transliterated variously as <i>Jehovah, Yahweh, Y^ehowah</i></p>	<p>proper noun</p>	<p>Strong's #3068 BDB #217</p>

Deuteronomy 17:19c

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
ʿĒlōhîym (אֱלֹהִים) [pronounced <i>el-o-HEEM</i>]	<i>God; gods, foreign gods, god; rulers, judges; superhuman ones, angels; transliterated Elohim</i>	masculine plural noun with the 3 rd person masculine singular	Strong's #430 BDB #43

Translation: ...so that he will learn to fear Y^ehowah his Elohim,... Here we find out that **fear/respect of God** is learned, and it is learned through the study of God's Word.

There is great importance attached to the attitude and thinking of the king. In our era, because of movies and television, we have a whole different set of celebrities; however, in this age of kings, the king and his family would be the celebrities of the nation. His relationship to God was quite important to the nation and would influence the nation.

Deuteronomy 17:19d

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
lâmed (ל) [pronounced <i>l</i> ʰ]	<i>to, for, towards, in regards to</i>	directional/relational preposition	No Strong's # BDB #510
shâmar (שָׁמַר) [pronounced <i>shaw-MAR</i>]	<i>to keep, to guard, to protect, to watch, to preserve</i>	Qal infinitive construct	Strong's #8104 BDB #1036
ʿêth (אֵת) [pronounced <i>ayth</i>]	untranslated generally; occasionally <i>to, toward</i>	indicates that the following substantive is a direct object	Strong's #853 BDB #84
kôl (כֹּל) [pronounced <i>kohl</i>]	with a plural noun, it is rendered <i>all of; any of</i>	masculine singular construct with a masculine plural noun	Strong's #3605 BDB #481
d ^e bârîym (דְּבָרִים) [pronounced <i>daw^b-vawr-EEM</i>]	<i>words, sayings, doctrines, commands; things, matters, affairs; reports</i>	masculine plural construct	Strong's #1697 BDB #182
tôwrah (תּוֹרָה) [pronounced <i>TOH-rah</i>]	<i>instruction, doctrine; [human and divine] law, direction, regulations, protocol; custom; transliterated Torah</i>	feminine singular noun with the definite article	Strong's #8451 and #8452 BDB #435
zô'th (זֹאת) [pronounced <i>zoth</i>]	<i>here, this, this one; thus; possibly another</i>	feminine of singular zeh; demonstrative pronoun, adverb; with the definite article	Strong's #2063 (& 2088, 2090) BDB #260

Translation: ...[and] to keep all the words of the Torah,... The king is enjoined to keep (preserve, protect) the words of the Torah. The more copies of the Law, the better protected the Law is.

There are many critics of the Word of God. They seem to think that the Old Testament was flimsily cobbled together, changes were made, text was taken from here and there and all over; with multiple authors writing the same book. This is all poppycock and fanciful thinking. You cannot suddenly bring out a book and say, "Hey, Moses wrote this and it is the Word of God. So now, we all need to study and obey it." So many of the critics act as if the books of Moses were written hundreds of years later. There is no reason to think that these words would have engendered so much reverence if they suddenly popped up hundreds of years after they had been written.

Moses teaching these things to the people of Israel, having these things recorded, and then these words become a sacred part of Israel—that makes sense. The idea that a group of priest hundreds of years later develop a book from all kinds of writings (which, apparently no one else knows about), and then suddenly says, "Hey, we have this book that is from God!" It just does not make any sense.

Furthermore, Scripture tells us that Moses himself wrote Deuteronomy and gave it to the priests, those sons of Levi who carried the Ark of God. Deut. 31:9, 24–26 *Then Moses wrote this law and gave it to the priests, the sons of Levi, who carried the ark of the covenant of the LORD, and to all the elders of Israel. When Moses had finished writing the words of this law in a book to the very end, Moses commanded the Levites who carried the ark of the covenant of the LORD, "Take this Book of the Law and put it by the side of the ark of the covenant of the LORD your God, that it may be there for a witness against you."* (ESV)

Peter Pett: [The] king must rather be one who submits himself to Yahweh's instruction. When he sits on his throne his consideration should not be on how to build up his power base and his wealth, and how to please his wives, but on how to please Yahweh, the One Who had given them everything that they had, and how to build up the wealth of the nation. Thus he should ensure that he had his own copy of the record of Yahweh's doings and of His Law as contained in the books which were in the levitical priests' care.¹⁹⁰

L. M. Grant: Whether Solomon obeyed verse 18 and 19 may be a question, but it would seem that if he had written a copy of the law and had read it every day of his life, this might have preserved him from the sad failure and disobedience that caused him such grief in his later years.

Then Grant concludes with: In beautiful contrast to Solomon, the Lord Jesus, in all His life on earth, has shown perfect subjection to God. Though He is God's appointed King, yet in all His wondrous life of sorrow and love, He took no place of prominence, but displayed rather a perfect spirit of subjection as a Servant, not taking authority, but obeying the authority of God. This lowly subjection has qualified Him to eventually take the throne as King of kings and Lord of lords. What confidence too believers can have in Him, having seen Him tested in His lowly life of sorrow and obedience. He is the only One worthy to be given the place of supreme honor and dignity, for He has proven Himself in humiliation.¹⁹¹

"So you will take responsibility to do just as Y^ehowah your God has commanded you; you will not turn aside to the right or to the left." (Deut. 5:32). The authority of God's Word was instituted from the top down. If the king was spiritually growing and functioning under God's directives, then it was very likely that Israel as a whole would be experiencing spiritual growth. God spoke to Solomon, saying, "Then it will come to pass that if you listen to all that I command you an walk in My ways, and do what is right in My sight by observing My statutes and My commandments, as My servant David did, then I will be with you and build you an enduring house as I built for David, and I will give Israel to you." (1Kings 11:38).

As we have examined many times, there is nothing more important than God's Word in our lives, perceived by means of the Holy Spirit: *"My foot has held fast to His path; I have kept His way and I have not turned aside. I have not departed from the command of His lips; I have treasured the words of His mouth more than my necessary food." (Job 23:11–12). O, how I love Your Law! It is my study all the day. Your commandments make me wiser than my enemies, for they are forever with me. I have more insight than all my teachers, for Your*

¹⁹⁰ Dr. Peter Pett; *Commentary Series on the Bible*; from e-sword, Deut. 17:18–19.

¹⁹¹ From <http://www.studylight.org/commentaries/lmg/deuteronomy-17.html> accessed May 9, 2016.

testimonies are my study. I understand more than the aged, because I have observed You precepts. I have restrained my feet from every evil way, that I may keep Your word (Psalm 119:97–100). And David’s charge to Solomon: “And keep the charge of Y^ehowah your God, to walk in His ways, to keep His statutes, His commandments, His ordinances, and His testimonies, according to what is written in the Law of Moses, that you may succeed in all that you do and wherever you turn, so that Y^ehowah may carry out His promise which He spoke concerning me, saying, ‘If your sons are careful of their way, to walk before Me in truth with all their heart and with all their soul, you will not lack a man on the throne of Israel.’ “ (1Kings 2:3–4). And note how often the king was to study God’s Word: **All the days of his life**. There is no precedent in the Bible for examining God’s Word but once a week; there is no precedent in the Bible for going to God’s Word only when you are in a jam. You don’t deal with trouble in your life by opening up the Bible and dropping your finger on some random verse and reading it and practicing it. God’s Word is designed to be studied every day of your life—it is more necessary to your life than the food you eat.

In fact, taking in Bible doctrine is often compared to eating or to breathing. How often do you do that?

Deuteronomy 17:19e			
Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong’s Numbers
w ^e (or v ^e) (וּ, or ו) [pronounced <i>weh</i>]	<i>and, even, then; namely; when; since, that; though; as well as</i>	simple wāw conjunction	No Strong’s # BDB #251
’êth (אֶת) [pronounced <i>ayth</i>]	untranslated generally; occasionally <i>to, toward</i>	indicates that the following substantive is a direct object	Strong’s #853 BDB #84
kôl (כֹּל) [pronounced <i>kohl</i>]	with a plural noun, it is rendered <i>all of; any of</i>	masculine singular construct with a masculine plural noun	Strong’s #3605 BDB #481
chuqqîym (חֻקִּים) [pronounced <i>khook-KEEM</i>]	<i>decrees, those things which are decreed; statutes; boundaries, defined limitations; appointed portions of labor, tasks</i>	masculine plural noun with the definite article	Strong’s #2706 BDB #349
The key concept here is the setting of a boundary or a limit.			
’êlleh (אֵלֶּה) [pronounced <i>ALE-leh</i>]	<i>these, these things; they</i>	demonstrative plural adjective with the definite article (often the verb <i>to be</i> is implied)	Strong’s #428 BDB #41
lâmed (ל) [pronounced <i>le</i>]	<i>to, for, towards, in regards to</i>	directional/relational preposition	No Strong’s # BDB #510
‘âsâh (עָשָׂה) [pronounced <i>gaw-SAWH</i>]	<i>to do, to make, to construct, to fashion, to form, to prepare, to manufacture; accomplish</i>	Qal infinitive construct; with the 3 rd person masculine plural suffix	Strong’s #6213 BDB #793

Translation: ...and to obey [lit., do] all the statutes... The king is to obey all the statutes, which are the limitations placed on human behavior.

In nearly every kingdom, the king was the absolute law; his decrees were final. Not so with Israel. The king was subject to the Law of God.

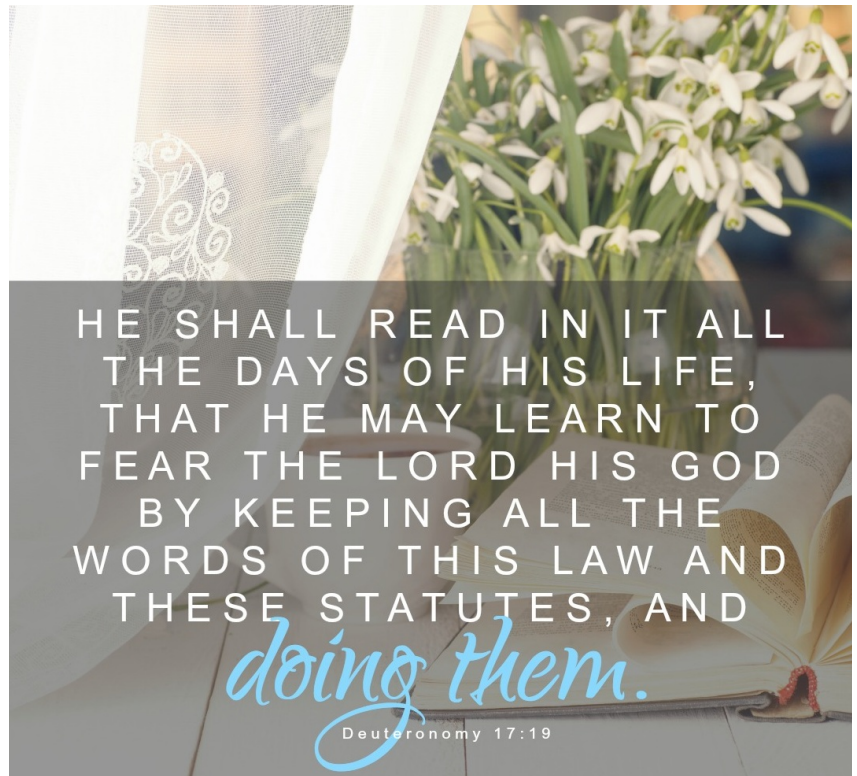
Application: In the same way, our president ought to be subject to the constitution, as should our courts. The founding fathers *never* envisioned the courts as writing or appending law; they never saw the president as one who could make a decree about the bathrooms of all public schools. There were no public schools then; but it would be like the president giving the capitols of each state direction as to how to use their bathrooms there. Such an act would have seemed absurd to our founders.

Application: According to our Constitution, the Supreme Court members are to act like referees, calling balls and strikes. They are not rule-makers, changing rules in the middle of a game. It is to this constitution that they are supposed to subject themselves, and yet, in power lust and arrogance, they do not.

Deuteronomy 17:19 (a graphic) from GoodMorningGirls.org; accessed May 13, 2016.

God spoke truth to Moses and Moses, with a soul filled with doctrine, spoke truth to the people. All of these things guided Israel, a nascent nation, to become a great and powerful nation in their time. It is because they followed the laws and statutes found in their Scriptures.

Deut. 17:18–19 *And it will be, while he sits on the throne of his kingdom, that he will write for himself a copy of this Torah upon a scroll provided by the Levitical priests. And it will be with him and he will read in it all the days of his life so that he will learn to fear Y^ehowah his Elohim, [and] to keep all the words of the Torah, and to obey [lit., do] the statutes...*



Clarke: *[This] was the surest way to bring the king to an acquaintance with the Divine law to oblige him to write out a fair copy of it with his own hand, in which he was to read daily. This was essentially necessary, as these laws of God were all permanent, and no Israelitish king could make any new law, the kings of this people being ever considered as only the vice-gerents of Jehovah.*¹⁹²

D. Davies: *[The king's] first duty is to obtain completest acquaintance with the will of God. To this end he must possess a copy of God's written Law, and in this Law he must meditate day and night. The spirit of this Law must animate his being and breathe in all his speech. God's Word must be his vade mecum, his daily compass and chart. He must move among his courtiers and governors as a visible embodiment of truth and purity, a living transcript of the Divine will. This is a true pattern of a king—a man who excels in wisdom, having learnt of God; a man who is eminent for pious obedience, and writes in largest characters the model of a noble life. Such a man shall live.*¹⁹³

As God told Joshua: “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 good success.” (Joshua 1:8; ESV)

¹⁹² Adam Clarke, *Adam Clarke's Commentary on the Bible*; from e-Sword, Deut. 17:19.

¹⁹³ *The Pulpit Commentary*; 1880-1919; by Joseph S. Exell, Henry Donald Maurice Spence-Jones, from e-sword, Deut. 17:14–20 (the Davies section).

Peter Pett says that whatever the king copied, it could not be Deuteronomy, as it had not been written yet.¹⁹⁴ This whole *king thing* was off in the future; and Moses referring to *this copy of the Law* very much suggests that it is the book of Deuteronomy that he is speaking of (at bare minimum). As has been discussed, we do not know what Moses did to prepare to teach Deuteronomy. Was it all written down? Did he have notes? How extensive were they? In any case, either he or Joshua wrote down the contents of the book. By this time in his presentation, Moses would have been aware that this was all being written down. His speaking with authority suggests that Moses understands that he is speaking divine truth.

McGarvey suggests that this was not the entire Law, but the parts that refer to the king and his judgments. As he put it: *it included only such portions as related to the king's personal and official duties. It was not, therefore, a very long document.*¹⁹⁵ However, note what our text says: *And it will be, while he [the king] sits on the throne of his kingdom, that he will write for himself a copy of this Torah upon a scroll provided by the Levitical priests. And it will be with him and he will read in it all the days of his life so that he will learn to fear Y^ehowah his Elohim, [and] to keep all the words of the Torah, and to obey [lit., do] the statutes... (Deut. 17:18–19).* If the king is to fear God and *[and] to keep all the words of the Torah,*, he must have the entire Torah in order to do this (or, a considerable portion of it). Therefore, the plain text suggests that the king has before him the entire Law of God. Now, whether this includes Genesis or Numbers, it is hard to say; but I would lean more towards their being a part of the Law than not.

What sense would it make to exclude the very text which deals directly with a future king?

It would make little sense for the king to be limited on the Torah. After all, there is just this short section about the future king; the rest of the Law was written or spoken without necessarily considering a king. However, all of the laws, even the ceremonial ones, apply to Israel. It would seem logical that a king ought to know these laws as well.

In some commentaries, there is a lot of discussion about which copies were kept where; but all this passage tells us is, the king was to keep his own personal copy of the Law. Exactly what portion of the Law is intended here is more difficult to ascertain. From my point of view, this would be all or most of Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy.

Moses advances the concept of canonization: We do not know how many copies of the Divine Word were spread around and who had them, as we have very little by way of history of the earliest era of the scribal process. I have suggested that, based upon the canonization of the New Testament, that the canonization of the Old Testament was also a very organic process. Someone did not simply write a book on one day, and the next day, everyone proclaimed that it was the Word of God. In fact, it is only recently (in the past couple hundred years) that we have become quite categorical in what the inspiration of Scripture does and does not mean. We have books of the Bible clearly being recognized as having Divine Authority long before we know what all of the implications of what that means.

This passage gives us somewhat of a clue. Moses here is requiring the king to make a copy of Deuteronomy (at the very least), and there is no distinction being made by Moses between these words of Deuteronomy and the rest of the Law (which may or may not be required of the king to copy).

Moses, when recording the latter 4 books of the Torah (particularly in Exodus) was very careful to distinguish between what God said and the rest of the text of the book (which is mostly narrative). In his mind, early on, Moses saw a clear distinction between the words of God and the narrative that he recorded (but not one that we recognize today). However, at this point in time, Moses is saying, “The king needs to make himself a copy of Deuteronomy (at the very least), *so that he will learn to fear Jehovah his God and to keep all the words of the Law, and to obey the statutes contained therein, so as not to become arrogant because of his position, and so that he*

¹⁹⁴ Dr. Peter Pett; *Commentary Series on the Bible*; from e-sword, Deut. 17:18–19.

¹⁹⁵ *The College Press Bible Study Textbook Series*; (a compilation of many commentaries); from e-sword; Deut. 17:14–20 (commentary).

does not turn to the left or the right from the commandments.” With this, Moses has placed his own words, his own teachings of Deuteronomy, on the same level as the words of God.

Whereas, we might have a disagreement about exactly what Moses said the king had to make a copy of; Moses *does not* give any restrictions like, “Make sure you only copy the sections where it is God speaking.” So, without coming right out and saying it, Moses has placed his words equally with those spoken by God, which clearly advances the concept of divine inspiration which takes place just in the life of Moses.

Does Moses have a full understanding the **verbal plenary inspiration**? It is highly unlikely that he did. But he did come to a point in his life where he recognized and treated his own words as if they are the words of God—and this point in his life may have been as recent as within a month of him speaking these things to the sons of Israel.

As an aside, verbal plenary inspiration means: *God the Holy Spirit so supernaturally directed the human writers of Scripture, that, without waving their human intelligence, individuality, literary style, personal feelings or any other human factor, His own complete and coherent message to man was recorded in perfect accuracy in the original languages of Scripture, the very words bearing the authority of divine authorship.*¹⁹⁶

New Testament Canonization: We have a much better understanding of New Testament canonization, which is intentionally distorted by some. The Catholic church did not decide, on some whim, that the following books are inspired by God, *end of discussion*. Nor did the Catholic church gather a bunch of books together, choose their favorites, and then edit the books to their satisfaction before releasing them to the public. The Catholic Church did some evil things during its history—and they did try to distort and restrict the Word of God; but, early on, they were only trying to identify the canon.

When Paul wrote an epistle, for instance, to the church at Corinth, and this epistle was copied and taken over to the church at Ephesus, both churches recognized the spiritual authority of Paul; and so, this epistle had inherent authority (since Paul wrote it). Because Paul was an Apostle (the highest rank in the Church Age; and *no one* is an *Apostle* today), what he wrote and distributed was the Word of God. Therefore, whatever churches had a copy of 1 Corinthians, for instance, recognized it as authoritative. This does not mean that they fully understand what that means. It would take time before a book like 1 Corinthians passes from the authoritative stage to the recognition that, this is the Word of God.

The early church expected Jesus to return soon; and it is very likely that, despite these writings being done and passed around, that many did not even think about a New Testament canon. Paul’s authority was recognized, as a for instance, his writing was recognized as authoritative, and as these new churches are established here and there, they read and study the writings of Paul to understand the new age that they are in.

In the very early first century church, who recognized the Old Testament canon; it is very unlikely that anyone, while being taught an epistle written by Paul said, “We are studying the Word of God.” It is highly unlikely that anyone in the 1st century said, “We need to develop a New Testament canon. We need a New Testament.”

Time passes. There are all of these writings which are in various churches and libraries. There is an understanding of the fixed canon of the Old Testament. So, very early on—probably as early as the 1st or 2nd century—people began to determine, *what writings are authoritative?* Later, this question became, *what writings belong in the Word of God?* Individuals weighed in; church councils weighed in; translators, which began work almost immediately, weighed in; and larger organizations, like the nascent Catholic Church, weighed in. Today, we know of perhaps 20 or 30 groups, individuals and translators who were a part of this *discussion*.

¹⁹⁶ Quoted and paraphrased from R. B. Thieme, Jr., *Canonicity*; ©1973 by R. B. Thieme, Jr.; p. 5, who in turn took this from Lewis Sperry Chafer, *Systematic Theology*; Abridged Edition; Victor Books, ©1984, Vol. Two, p. 71.

For instance, Clement of Rome lived at the end of the 1st century A.D., and is said to have known Peter. He wrote and taught; and based upon the way that he treated certain books of that era in his writings, we know which books he considered authoritative. This does not mean that he made a list of books that he thought should be in the canon of Scripture; it simply means that he wrote various things (like a letter to the Corinthians), and he would quote from this or that book as authoritative. There are 17 early church fathers named below, all of whom lived during the first 4 centuries of the Church Era; and by their writings, we have been able to deduce which books they believed to be authoritative.

There were also individuals and groups who thought, *we need to determine which books are inspired writings*. The early church understood that there was an Old Testament canon; they used it all of the time. It came to many of them as a single book (in the form of the Greek Septuagint), and they realized that such a collection should be determined for the Church Age.

	X= Cited or allusion to O= Named as authoritative ?= Named as disputed																							
	Pseudo-Barnabas (c. 70-130) Clement of Rome (c. 95-97) Ignatius (c. 110) Polycarp (c. 110-150) Hermas (c. 110-150) Dionysius (c. 115-140) Papias (c. 120-150) Irenaeus (c. 130-202) Dionysius (c. 150) Justin Martyr (c. 150-165) Clement of Alexandria (c. 150-215) Tertullian (c. 150-220) Origen (c. 185-254) Cyrus of Jerusalem (c. 315-386) Eusebius (c. 315-340) Augustine (c. 340-430) Marcellinus (c. 400) Muratorian (c. 140) Apostolic (c. 170) Cheltenham (c. 300) Augustine (357)																							
	Individuals														Canons									
Matthew	X	X		X	X	X		O		X	X	X	X	O	O	O	O		O	O	O	O		
Mark	X			X	X			O		X	X	X	X	O	O	O	O		O	O	O	O		
Luke	X			X	X	X		O		X	X	X	X	O	O	O	O		O	O	O	O		
John		X		X			X	O		O	X	X	X	O	O	O	O		O	O	O	O		
Acts				X	X			O		X	X	X	X	O	O	O	O		O	O	O	O		
Romans		X		X		X		O		X	O	X	X	O	O	O	O		O	O	O	O		
1Corinthians		O		X	X	X		O		X	O	X	X	O	O	O	O		O	O	O	O		
2Corinthians				X	X			O	X	X	O	X	X	O	O	O	O		O	O	O	O		
Galatians				X				O	X	X	O	X	X	O	O	O	O		O	O	O	O		
Ephesians	X	X		X	X			O		X	X	X	X	O	O	O	O		O	O	O	O		
Philippians				X	X	X		O			O	X	X	O	O	O	O		O	O	O	O		
Colossians				X	X			O	X	X	O	X	X	O	O	O	O		O	O	O	O		
1Thess.				X	X	X	X	O		X	X	X	X	O	O	O	O		O	O	O	O		
2Thess.				X	X			O		X	X	X	X	O	O	O	O		O	O	O	O		
1Timothy		X		X	X	X		X			O	X	X	O	O	O	O		O	O	O	O		
2Timothy	X					X		X			X	X	O	O	O	O	O		O	O	O	O		
Titus	X	X						X	X		O	X	X	O	O	O	O		O	O	O	O		
Philemon				X										O	O	O	O		O	O	O	O		
Hebrews	X	X			X			X			O	X	?	O	O	O	O			O		O		
James		X			X									O	?	O	O			O		O		
1Peter	X			X	X			O		X	O	X	O	O	O	O	O			O	O	O		
2Peter	X	X												?	O	?	O	O			O	?	O	
1John				X	X			O			O	X		O	O	O	O			O	O	O	O	
2John				X				X						?	O	?	O	O			O	O	?	O
3John														?	O	?	O	O			O	O	?	O
Jude								X			O	X		O	?	?	O	O			O	O		O
Revelation					X	X	O	O		X	O	X	O		O	O	O			O		O	O	O

Then books begin to be copied and distributed and evangelists went out to other countries; and times and nations changed; and it became clear that a New Testament was needed in Aramaic or in Latin. But a translator must have some idea as to what to translate. As you can see below, the Old Latin and the Old Syriac were not complete; but they did contain most of the books of the New Testament.

To us, the Bible is just one big book; and we have accepted it as such. If we begin to study the background of the Bible, we might become intrigued by the concept of canonization, and why books are in or out of the canon. However, back then, this was very organic. What I mean is, first the people of the early church might determine,

yes, this is an epistle written by Paul or by one of the other Apostles. Later, they would understand these writings to be authoritative, and profitable for doctrine. After that, they might understand that, *there is an Old Testament canon; shouldn't there be a New Testament canon?* And, after awhile, after the input of many, this canon is determined, and determined again, and determined again after that. And then, *many centuries later*, we actually categorically determine, *what does a canon of Scripture means? How are we to understand the inspiration of the Scriptures?*

Do you see what I mean by an organic process? The canonization was not some high up church official or group declaring, "This is the canon. I have spoken. No discussion. Time for lunch." In our day, we have the canon of Scripture and the doctrine of Inspiration as one big package—it is right here already done. But it took 3 centuries to come to a point where the canon was fully recognized.

Various people would teach from the literature they had on hand. Some of the writings available to them were clearly written by an Apostle or someone closely associated with an Apostle; and other writings were not (regardless of the name on this or that book).

Eventually, as churches became established, it seemed reasonable to many of them that a canon ought to be established—especially as the 1st century faded further and further into the rearview mirror. In the 4th century, at least 4 church councils met and determined what the canon of Scripture is for the New Testament. 3 of them agreed completely.

From Norma Geisler and William Nix, *A General Introduction to the Bible*, Chicago: Moody Press, ©1986, p. 295.

Although many portions of this book have been duplicated and are found on the Internet, I highly recommend this book. I have a copy of reference books.

	X=	O=	?	O=	?	O=	?	
Early Determinations of Canonicity	Translations		Councils		Councils		Councils	
Jesus Christ did not come and present the gospel one day, Paul sent out epistles on the next, and on the day after that, some important council gathered to determine which books belonged in the Bible and which did not. This was all a very natural, organic process, as we would assume. The church at Corinth would get a letter from Paul, and they would make copies of it, and someone from the church in Galatia would request a copy of that epistle and it would be sent to them. In this way, the letters of Paul and the other Apostles were circulated throughout the various churches. Pastors would rise up, study these letters, study the Old Testament, study the gospels (the biographies of the life of Jesus), and they would both teach and write. As they wrote, they would cite passages from this or that letter, from this or that gospel, from this or that Old Testament book.								
At some point, various individuals and groups saw a need to determine which books of the New Testament were authoritative. As a result, individuals and groups began to specify certain books as clearly canonical, which meant that they were authoritative (that is, they could be cited as accurate). Also, as the gospel spread, translations were made for new peoples, and a determination must be made what to translate.								
These are lists of individuals, councils and translations and which books they either cited or recognized as authoritative.								
This first table has early translations of the New Testament and the decisions made by various church councils. The next page has individuals and lists of some of the canons developed at that time. There are undoubtedly other individuals, canon determinations and councils from this early era that have been lost to historians.								
Matthew	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Mark	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Luke	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
John	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Acts		O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Romans		O	O	O	O	O	O	O
1 Corinthians		O	O	O	O	O	O	O
2 Corinthians		O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Galatians		O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Ephesians		O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Philippians		O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Colossians		O	O	O	O	O	O	O
1 Thess.		O	O	O	O	O	O	O
2 Thess.		O	O	O	O	O	O	O
1 Timothy		O	O	O	O	O	O	O
2 Timothy		O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Titus		O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Philemon		O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Hebrews			O	O	O	O	O	O
James			O	?	O	O	O	O
1 Peter			O	O	O	O	O	O
2 Peter				?	O	O	O	O
1 John		O	O	O	O	O	O	O
2 John		O		?	O	O	O	O
3 John		O		?	O	O	O	O
Jude		O		?	O	O	O	O
Revelation		O		O	O	O	O	O

What we find in these charts is not an exhaustive listing of all individuals, groups, translations and councils; these are simply the ones that we know about. This was 2000 years ago! The list of all those who weighed in on this matter probably is several hundred long.

New Testament Canon Charts are from Norman Geisler and William Nix; *A General Introduction to the Bible*; Chicago; Moody Press, ©1968, p. 193 (reproduced with WordPerfect).

Interestingly enough, the works which were clearly excluded throughout the first few centuries of the Church Age were *never*, by any serious reputable group, ever thought to be in the Word of God. That is, no one, in those early centuries, said, "Hey, I think the *Gospel of Saint Thomas* ought to be included." And many friends agreed, but the Catholic church overruled them. That never happened. In fact, the vast majority of written material was never seriously considered for the canon simply because it was written in the wrong century. Everything written in the 2nd century and forward was simply outright rejected. No Apostle could have written it.

Pretty much, about the only books ever in question were the general epistles (for various reasons) and the book of Revelation (it was too doggone weird). There was serious debate on these books. No one seriously fought for the inclusion of the *Acts of Peter*. You do not have to worry that somewhere, out there, are books that should have been in the Bible, but someone high up in some church did not like them and therefore excluded them.

Again, all of this came about as the result of natural, organic processes. What it actually meant for these writings to be inspired by God came along much later in the Church Age.

Everyone from the king on down to the people of Israel were responsible to read and study the Word of God. Deut. 17:18–19 *When the king sits on the throne, he should write out his own copy of the Law onto a scroll provided by the Levitical priests. He will keep this scroll with him and read it throughout his life so that he will learn to fear Jehovah his God and to keep all the words of the Law, and to obey the statutes contained therein, so as not to become arrogant because of his position, and so that he does not turn to the left or the right from the commandments. (Kukis paraphrase) Deut. 6:6–9 "And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise. You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates." (ESV)*

Deut. 17:14–17 *When you enter into the land that Jehovah your God has given you, and you have taken possession of it and lived there for awhile, you might say, 'Let us place a king over us so that Israel will be like the other nations round about.' There is no doubt that you will place a king over yourselves—a man from your brothers that Jehovah your God will choose for you—that man you will place over you as king. However, you are not allowed to place a person of foreign descent over you. When in power, the king should not multiply horses to himself and he should not cause the people to return to Egypt in order to make his calvary great, for Jehovah has already told all of you, 'You will never return to Egypt ever again.' He should not have a collection of wives; nor should he allow his heart to be turned away from God; nor should he multiply great quantities of gold and silver to himself. When the king sits on the throne, he should write out his own copy of the Law onto a scroll provided by the Levitical priests. He will keep this scroll with him and read it throughout his life so that he will learn to fear Jehovah his God and to keep all the words of the Law, and to obey the statutes contained therein, so as not to become arrogant because of his position, and so that he does not turn to the left or the right from the commandments.*

Dr. Thomas Constable on the Limitations Placed on a King

"With the regency of Yahweh and the proper protocol by which He had to be approached having been established, the covenant text then addresses the human leaders who serve Him and exercise authority over

Dr. Thomas Constable on the Limitations Placed on a King

the nation at large." [Note: Merrill, "A Theology . . .," p. 80.]

"Just as in its religious worship the Israelitish nation was to show itself to be the holy nation of Jehovah, so was it in its political relations also. This thought forms the link between the laws already given and those which follow." [Note: Keil and Delitzsch, 3:378.]

Moses recognized that when Israel settled in Canaan and took on the characteristics of other nations (e.g., a homeland, political organization, etc.) her people would desire a king. As he revealed the mind of God here, a king was permissible, but he had to qualify in certain respects. [Note: See John E. Johnson, "The Old Testament Offices as Paradigm for Pastoral Identity," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 152:606 (April-June 1995):182-200.]

1. He had to be an Israelite (Deut. 17:15). This was essential since Israel's king would be the vice-regent of Yahweh. The king therefore had to be a member of the covenant community.
2. He must not build up a large military organization by multiplying horses (Deut. 17:16). This would lead to a false sense of security and power. Egypt was a major horse market in the ancient Near East, and horses were military machines. [Note: For a helpful discussion of horses in the ancient Near East, see D. R. Ap-Thomas, "All the King's Horses," in *Proclamation and Presence*, pp. 135-51.]
3. He was not to multiply wives (Deut. 17:17) since these women would tend to turn his heart away from devotion to, and concentration on, Yahweh. Furthermore God's standard for marriage has always been monogamy (cf. 1Kings 11:1-13).
4. He was not to amass a large personal fortune (Deut. 17:17). This too would lead to a false sense of security and a divided allegiance (cf. Luke 16:13).

"A richly furnished harem, and the accumulation of silver and gold, were inseparably connected with the luxury of Oriental monarchs generally; so that the fear was a very natural one, that the future king of Israel might follow the general customs of the heathen in these respects." [Note: Keil and Delitzsch, 3:386.]

5. He was to transcribe a copy of the law of God (the covenant text of Deuteronomy [cf. Deut. 1:5; Deut. 4:44; Deut. 27:3; Deut. 27:8; Deut. 27:26; Deut. 29:21; Deut. 29:29; Deut. 30:10] [Note: Thompson, p. 206; Merrill, *Deuteronomy*, p. 266.]) personally (Deut. 17:18). This would encourage his thoughtful mental interaction with God's revealed will for Israel.
6. He was to read this law throughout his lifetime. Note that this and the preceding command assume that the king could read and write. This would normally produce two conditions. First, he would get to know God personally and thus fear Him. Second, he would be able to obey God's will (Deut. 17:19-20).

"Three conclusions may be drawn from these admonitions. There is, first, a clear limitation on power, to avoid tyranny and the danger of the king's assuming the Lord's rule of the people. . . .

"Second, these restrictions and injunctions serve the main purpose of Deuteronomy, to enjoin a full and undivided allegiance to the Lord. . . .

"Finally, the law of the king places upon that figure the obligations incumbent upon every Israelite. In that sense, Deuteronomy's primary concern was that the king be the model Israelite." [Note: Miller, pp. 148-49.]

"It is a remarkable fact that nowhere in the Old Testament is the king represented as having anything to do with the making of laws." [Note: Whybray, p. 108.]

Yahweh, Israel's true King, made Israel's laws and was to make the choice of Israel's kings. The people were not to select a monarch without God's approval. He would be Yahweh's vice-regent. In some of Israel's neighbor nations, the king was regarded as a god, but in Israel, God was the true King.

Dr. Thomas Constable on the Limitations Placed on a King

"It is noteworthy that in the secular suzerainty treaties, a similar oversight of the vassal's choice of king is exercised." [Note: Kline, "Deuteronomy," p. 179.]

When Israel entered the land and requested a king, Samuel the prophet became greatly distressed (1Sam. 8:6). His reaction was evidently not due to the request itself but to the motive behind the request. The people were turning away from their real King to a human king (1Sam. 8:7–8). God granted the people's request even though it sprang from the wrong motive, but He disciplined them in the years following through the king they requested, Saul. Similarly, God conceded to the Israelites' request for meat in the wilderness, but He disciplined them for their choice by allowing them to get sick from it (Numbers 11; Psalm 106:15).

This pericope makes very clear that in civil life God wants justice for all (Deut. 16:18–20) and His people's wholehearted devotion to Himself (Deut. 16:21 to Deut. 17:7; cf. Php. 3:20). Submission to civil authority (Deut. 17:8–13; cf. Rom. 13:1–7; 1Peter 2:13–15) and leaders who follow Him (Deut. 17:4–20; cf. 1Tim. 2:1–7) are also important to God. [Note: For an exposition of this pericope with excellent applications for leadership, see Daniel I. Block, "The Burden of Leadership: The Mosaic Paradigm of Kingship (Deuteronomy 17:14–20)," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 162:647 (July–September 2005):259–78.]

Dr. John Constable *The Expository Notes of Dr. Constable*; ©2012; from e-sword, Deut. 17:14–20.

[Chapter Outline](#)

[Charts, Graphics and Short Doctrines](#)

Deuteronomy 17:20a

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
wa (or va) (ו) [pronounced <i>wah</i>]	<i>and so, and then, then, and; so, that, yet, therefore, consequently; because</i>	wāw consecutive	No Strong's # BDB #253
lâmed (ל) [pronounced <i>leh</i>]	<i>to, for, towards, in regards to</i>	directional/relational preposition	No Strong's # BDB #510
bil'îy (יֹלֵי) pronounced <i>bill^e-TEE</i>	<i>not</i>	adverb/particle of negation	Strong's #1115 BDB #116
This combination means <i>in that not, so that this [will not happen], so as not.</i>			
rûwm (רוּם) [pronounced <i>room</i>]	<i>to lift up, to rise, to arise, to raise up, to grow; to be exalted, to become high, to become powerful; to be high and lofty; to be remote, to be in the far distance</i>	Qal infinitive construct	Strong's #7311 BDB #926
lêbab (בֶּבֶל) [pronounced <i>lay-BAHB^v</i>]	<i>mind, inner man, inner being, heart</i>	masculine singular noun with a 3 rd person masculine singular suffix	Strong's #3824 BDB #523
min (מִן) [pronounced <i>mihn</i>]	<i>from, away from, out from, out of from, off, on account of, since, above, than, so that not, beyond, more than</i>	preposition of separation	Strong's #4480 BDB #577

Deuteronomy 17:20a

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
ʾachīym (אחִיִּים) [pronounced <i>awhk-EEM</i>]	<i>brothers, kinsmen, close relatives; tribesmen; fellow-countrymen</i>	masculine plural noun with the 3 rd person masculine singular suffix	Strong's #251 BDB #26

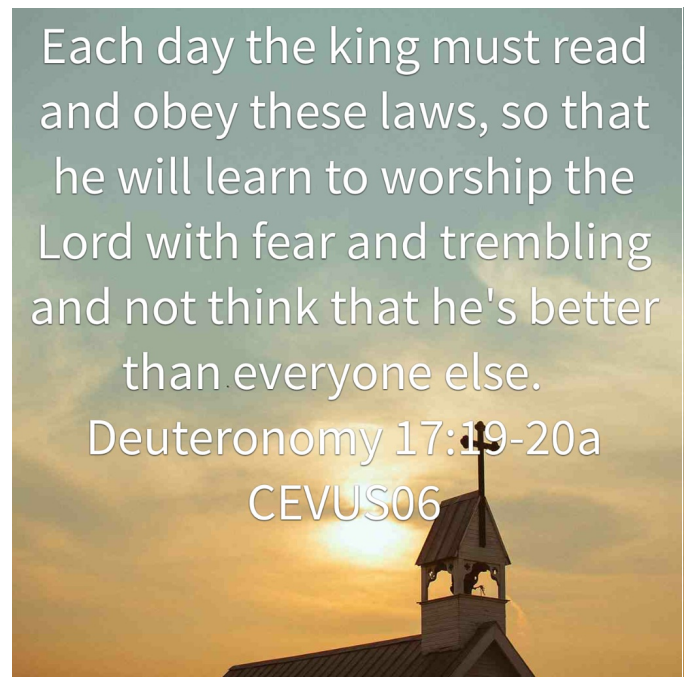
Translation: ...so as to not lift up his heart over his brothers... It is the Bible which keeps our heads on straight. It is easy to think of oneself as superior and better than this or that person, particularly if you are king. But understanding the Scripture tells us that we all stand equal before God.

Application: In life, this is the same today. You might be the CEO of a massive company; and you might be the janitor sweeping out the place after hours. Before God, there is no distinction. God does not look at the CEO and deem him as better because of his position. Nor does God think any less of the janitor cleaning that building. Now, we might do that, but God does not. As men, we have all kinds of hierarchies that we ascribe to, but God does not ascribe to any of them. Faith in Christ is fundamental, and then spiritual growth comes after that.

Application: The kings has a great position of authority, but he is no greater than the least in his kingdom. One of the great arrogant gestures of several bureaucracies in Washington and the United States Congress is that they would routinely exempt themselves from legislation which they pass. Having great authority does not place you above or outside of the laws of the land in any way. The writing down of the Law of God and the studying of the same is a clear indication that the kings over Israel were subject to the Laws of God as much if not more so than the general populace.

Furthermore, the king is not to look upon his position of authority as one of superiority. This is too often the case today: a person in authority is perceived as being superior to a person who is under him. People in authority and people under authority just have different well-defined roles. Having authority does not mean that a person is smarter than any of those below him. It is just where God has placed him. If you are placed in a position of authority, it is not a time for you to flaunt your authority or to abuse your authority, but you are to have respect for those under your authority and to take responsibility for those under your authority. A good leader guides his people and sets an example for his people; and he will do what is right by his people. General George Patton and General Douglas MacArthur were great men of great authority, whose every decision impacted the life and death of hundreds and thousands of men. This was delicately balanced against the freedom of the United States which they fought for. They were men to emulate when it comes to the concept of leadership.

Deuteronomy 17:19–20a (from the CEV; a graphic); from ; accessed May 13, 2016.



[Chapter Outline](#)

[Charts, Graphics and Short Doctrines](#)

Over and over again, the Bible teaches concern and provision for the widows and the orphans. Why? Because they are people who stand before God with the same status as the king. They are saved or unsaved; they are

spiritual or carnal; they are growing or not growing as believers. Those of substance must be aware of and sensitive to those who lack substance. God did not make you wealthy just so that you could go crazy buying cool things. When God blesses you, then recognize that you have responsibilities when it comes to the management of your wealth. The same is true of a nation. The United States is very blessed by God; this means, that we have responsibility in the world toward others who lack our great wealth.

Deuteronomy 17:20b

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
w ^e (or v ^e) (וּ, or ו) [pronounced <i>weh</i>]	<i>and, even, then; namely; when; since, that; though; as well as</i>	simple wâw conjunction	No Strong's # BDB #251
lâmed (ל) [pronounced <i>leh</i>]	<i>to, for, towards, in regards to</i>	directional/relational preposition	No Strong's # BDB #510
bil ^{et} iy (לֹא) pronounced <i>bill^e-TEE</i>	<i>not</i>	adverb/particle of negation	Strong's #1115 BDB #116
This combination means <i>in that not, so that this [will not happen], so as not.</i>			
çûwr (סוּר) [pronounced <i>soor</i>]	<i>to turn aside, to depart, to go away</i>	Qal infinitive construct	Strong's #5493 (and #5494) BDB #693
min (מִן) [pronounced <i>mihn</i>]	<i>from, away from, out from, out of from, off, on account of, since, above, than, so that not, beyond, more than</i>	preposition of separation	Strong's #4480 BDB #577
mits ^e vâh (מִצְוָה) [pronounced <i>mits^e-VAH</i>]	<i>prohibition, precept, that which is forbidden, constraint, proscription, countermand; commandment</i>	feminine singular noun with the definite article	Strong's #4687 BDB #846
yâmîyn (יְמִינִי) [pronounced <i>yaw-MEEN</i>]	<i>[to] the right hand, the right side, on the right, at the right; the south</i>	feminine singular noun	Strong's #3225 BDB #411
w ^e (or v ^e) (וּ, or ו) [pronounced <i>weh</i>]	<i>and, even, then; namely; when; since, that; though; as well as</i>	simple wâw conjunction	No Strong's # BDB #251
s ^e mô'î (שְׂמֹאל) [pronounced <i>s^eMOHL</i>]	<i>[to] the left, the left hand, the left side; north [when facing east]</i>	masculine singular noun	Strong's #8040 BDB #969

Translation: ...and so as not to turn aside from the commandments, [not] to the right or to the left,... The king is not to turn aside from the commandments or to modify them in any way.

Commandment is actually in the singular. I am not sure I fully understand the significance of that; but I have seen this before.

We have similar verbiage in Deut. 28:14 2Kings 22:2 Joshua 1:7 Joshua 23:6. The ESV; capitalized is used below.

Do Not Turn Aside to the Left or to the Right (Scriptures)

Scripture	Text/Commentary
Deut. 5:32–33 You shall be careful therefore to do as the LORD your God has commanded you. You shall not turn aside to the right hand or to the left. You shall walk in all the way that the LORD your God has commanded you, that you may live, and that it may go well with you, and that you may live long in the land that you shall possess.	God's commandments were very specific. This mandate was given to Israel after Moses reiterated the Ten Commandments from God.
Deut. 28:13–14 And the LORD will make you the head and not the tail, and you shall only go up and not down, if you obey the commandments of the LORD your God, which I command you today, being careful to do them, and if you do not turn aside from any of the words that I command you today, to the right hand or to the left, to go after other gods to serve them.	Moses continues speaking to the children of Israel.
2Kings 22:1–2 Josiah was eight years old when he began to reign, and he reigned thirty-one years in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Jedidah the daughter of Adaiah of Bozkath. And he did what was right in the eyes of the LORD and walked in all the way of David his father, and he did not turn aside to the right or to the left.	This is an overall observation made about Josiah and his reign as king.
Joshua 1:1–4 After the death of Moses the servant of the LORD, the LORD said to Joshua the son of Nun, Moses' assistant, "Moses my servant is dead. Now therefore arise, go over this Jordan, you and all this people, into the land that I am giving to them, to the people of Israel. Every place that the sole of your foot will tread upon I have given to you, just as I promised to Moses. From the wilderness and this Lebanon as far as the great river, the river Euphrates, all the land of the Hittites to the Great Sea toward the going down of the sun shall be your territory.	God is speaking to Joshua, getting him started on the right foot.
Joshua 1:5–7 No man shall be able to stand before you all the days of your life. Just as I was with Moses, so I will be with you. I will not leave you or forsake you. Be strong and courageous, for you shall cause this people to inherit the land that I swore to their fathers to give them. Only be strong and very courageous, being careful to do according to all the law that Moses my servant commanded you. Do not turn from it to the right hand or to the left, that you may have good success wherever you go."	God would always be with Joshua (a promise that we can apply to ourselves); and Joshua was to follow the Law of Moses exactly, without turning to the left or the right.
Joshua 23:4–10 Behold, I have allotted to you as an inheritance for your tribes those nations that remain, along with all the nations that I have already cut off, from the Jordan to the Great Sea in the west. The LORD your God will push them back before you and drive them out of your sight. And you shall possess their land, just as the LORD your God promised you. Therefore, be very strong to keep and to do all that is written in the Book of the Law of Moses, turning aside from it neither to the right hand nor to the left, that you may not mix with these nations remaining among you or make mention of the names of their gods or swear by them or serve them or bow down to them, but you shall cling to the LORD your God just as you have done to this day. For the LORD has driven out before you great and strong nations. And as for you, no man has been able to stand before you to this day. One man of you puts to flight a thousand, since it is the LORD your God who fights for you, just as he promised you.	Joshua is speaking to the people when he is near death. He is telling them not to turn from the Mosaic Law, not to the left or to the right. God can be trusted to keep His promises.

Do Not Turn Aside to the Left or to the Right (Scriptures)

Scripture	Text/Commentary
<p>Joshua 23:11–13 Be very careful, therefore, to love the LORD your God. For if you turn back and cling to the remnant of these nations remaining among you and make marriages with them, so that you associate with them and they with you, know for certain that the LORD your God will no longer drive out these nations before you, but they shall be a snare and a trap for you, a whip on your sides and thorns in your eyes, until you perish from off this good ground that the LORD your God has given you.”</p>	<p>God would allow some Canaanites to remain in the land to test the Israelites.</p>

[Chapter Outline](#)

[Charts, Graphics and Short Doctrines](#)

Neither to the Left or the Right (graphic); from [Slide Player](#); accessed May 13, 2016.

[Chapter Outline](#)

[Charts, Graphics and Short Doctrines](#)

The Law of Moses was precise and represents the mind of Christ. The people of God were not to go freestyle with God’s laws; they were not to later decide that this or that law is out of date; or would be better revised to read something else.

Neither To The Right Nor The Left Warnings

God warned men in the Old Testament

- Moses to Israel, Deut. 5:23-33
- Kings, Deut. 17:18-20
- Blessing, cursing, Deut. 28:1-14
- Joshua to Israel, Josh. 23:6-8
- Not to add or remove, Deut. 4:2; Prov. 30:5, 6

As believers in Jesus Christ living in client nation U.S.A., we need to carefully apply the information found in the Old Testament. We do not take everything that was for Israel (a theocracy) and apply it to the United States. For instance, we do not outlaw some cults and execute those who belong to these cults. We might limit Islam in the United States, but purely for precautionary reasons. Obviously, we do not round up Muslims and execute them for being Muslims.

Deuteronomy 17:20c

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong’s Numbers
<p>l^ema’an (למַעַן) [pronounced l^e-MAH- gahn]</p>	<p><i>for the sake of, on account of, to the intent of, to the intent that, to the purpose that, in order that, in view of, to the end that; so that</i></p>	<p>compound preposition and substantive which acts like a preposition</p>	<p>Strong’s #4616 BDB #775</p>

This is the substantive ma’an (מַעַן) [pronounced MAH-gahn], which means *purpose, intent*, combined with the lamed preposition (which is the only way that it is found in Scripture).

From the NET Bible footnote for Psalm 51:4: The Hebrew term l^ema’an (למַעַן) [pronounced l^e-MAH-gahn] normally indicates purpose ("in order that"), but here it introduces a logical consequence of the preceding statement. (Taking the clause as indicating purpose here would yield a theologically preposterous idea - the psalmist purposely sinned so that God’s justice might be vindicated!) For other examples of l^ema’an (למַעַן) [pronounced l^e-MAH-gahn] indicating result, see 2 Kings 22:17 Jer 27:15 Amos 2:7.

Deuteronomy 17:20c

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
'ārak ^e (אָרַךְ) [pronounced aw-RAHK]	<i>to prolong [days]; to make [tent cords] long; to grow long, to continue long, to live long</i>	3 rd person masculine singular, Hiphil imperfect	Strong's #748 BDB #73
yāmîym (יָמִים) [pronounced yaw-MEEM]	<i>days, time of life, lifetime; a specific time period, a year</i>	masculine plural noun	Strong's #3117 BDB #398
'al (עַל) [pronounced gah/]	<i>upon, beyond, on, against, above, over; on the ground of, because of, according to, on account of, on behalf of, with, by, besides, in addition to, to, toward, together with, in the matter of, concerning, as regards to</i>	preposition of relative proximity	Strong's #5921 BDB #752
mam ^e lākāh (מַמְלָכָה) [pronounced mahm ^e -law-kaw]	<i>kingdom, national government; sovereignty, dominion, reign, dynasty; used to refer to both the royal dignity and to the country of a king</i>	feminine singular noun with the 3 rd person masculine singular suffix	Strong's #4467 BDB #575
hûw' (אוּהוּ) [pronounced hoo]	<i>he, it; him, himself as a demonstrative pronoun: that, this (one); same</i>	3 rd person masculine singular, personal pronoun; sometimes the verb <i>to be</i> , is implied	Strong's #1931 BDB #214
This pronoun can be used in the emphatic sense. Sometimes, the verb <i>to be</i> is implied when this pronoun is used.			
w ^e (or v ^e) (וּ, וְ) [pronounced weh]	<i>and, even, then; namely; when; since, that; though; as well as</i>	simple wāw conjunction	No Strong's # BDB #251
bânîym (בָּנִים) [pronounced baw-NEEM]	<i>sons, descendants; children; people; sometimes rendered men; young men, youths</i>	masculine plural noun with the 3 rd person masculine singular suffix	Strong's #1121 BDB #119
b ^e (בְּ) [pronounced b ^{eh}]	<i>in, into, at, by, near, on, with, before, upon, against, by means of, among, within</i>	a preposition of proximity	Strong's #none BDB #88
qereb (בְּרֵב) [pronounced KEH-re ^{bv}]	<i>midst, among, from among [a group of people]; an [actual, physical] inward part; the inner person with respect to thinking and emotion; as a faculty of thinking or emotion; heart, mind, inner being; entrails [of sacrificial animals]</i>	masculine singular noun with the 2 nd person masculine singular suffix	Strong's #7130 BDB #899

With the bēyth preposition, it means *in the midst of, among, into the midst of* (after a verb of motion).

Deuteronomy 17:20c

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
Yis ^{er} â'êl (יִסְרָאֵל) [pronounced <i>yis-raw-ALE</i>]	<i>God prevails; contender; soldier of God; transliterated Israel</i>	masculine proper noun; God-given name to Jacob; and national name for the Jewish people	Strong's #3478 & #3479 BDB #975

Translation: ...so that he will prolong his days over the kingdom [for] himself and his sons, in the midst of Israel.” By reading and studying the Word of God, and by obeying the mandates of God’s Word, a king will continue his time over Israel; and not just for himself, but for his children as well.

Although there is the implication earlier that the Israelites will choose a king (in accordance with God’s will), with the king comes rule by progeny (common to nearly all nations).

Clarke writes: *From this verse it has been inferred that the crown of Israel was designed to be hereditary, and this is very probable; for long experience has proved to almost all the nations of the world that hereditary succession in the regal government is, on the whole, the safest, and best calculated to secure the public tranquillity.*¹⁹⁷

Life is prolonged by obedience to the Word of God. Prov. 10:27–30 *The fear of the LORD prolongs life, but the years of the wicked will be short. The hope of the righteous brings joy, but the expectation of the wicked will perish. The way of the LORD is a stronghold to the blameless, but destruction to evildoers. The righteous will never be removed, but the wicked will not dwell in the land.* (ESV; capitalized)

The Word of God is beneficial to all mankind. Psalm 119:9–12 *How can a young man keep his way pure? By guarding it according to your word. With my whole heart I seek you; let me not wander from your commandments! I have stored up your word in my heart, that I might not sin against you. Blessed are you, O LORD; teach me your statutes!*

A more relaxed translation of vv. 18–20: *When the king sits on the throne, he should write out his own copy of the Law onto a scroll provided by the Levitical priests. He will keep this scroll with him and read it throughout his life so that he will learn to fear Jehovah his God and to keep all the words of the Law, and to obey the statutes contained therein, so as not to become arrogant because of his position, and so that he does not turn to the left or the right from the commandments. As a result, he will prolong his days as king over Israel, and prolong the days of his sons as well.”*

I should probably edit this down.

An Overview of an Israelite King from the Perspective of Moses (Peter Pett)

At the time Moses was Israel’s ‘Judge’ (Deut. 1:17 b) with full powers of ‘kingship’ under Yahweh, and he knew that he would shortly be appointing Joshua to have similar supreme authority. He had lived in the light of the revelations of Yahweh and the records of the fathers of old, and he expected Joshua to do the same. And he knew that always over Israel was Yahweh as Great King and Overlord Who had proved His supremacy even over the Pharaoh.

But once established in the land he must have recognised that it was very likely that, once Joshua had died and time had passed, the people would want to appoint a king. At present Yahweh was their King with Moses as

¹⁹⁷ Adam Clarke, *Adam Clarke’s Commentary on the Bible*; from e-Sword, Deut. 17:20.

An Overview of an Israelite King from the Perspective of Moses (Peter Pett)

His deputy. The same would apply with Joshua. But what about those who followed? Moses knew men's weaknesses. They would want to fall into line, and they would want to be looked after. And as Scripture confirmed that kingship was to happen, that made it obvious. But that made it necessary that getting the wrong kind of king was guarded against. When they did seek a king he was concerned that that king should recognise his true position under Yahweh, and be the kind of king that Yahweh approved of. And he knew that the only difference between Joshua and a king would be that Joshua had more authority because Yahweh was supreme king and he was His voice, but had less pretensions. The king, if a bad one, might act on his own authority and in his own name.

So Moses' concern about kingship was fully understandable. He had especially seen what it was like in Egypt. He had seen the frantic efforts to build up the numbers of horses for military purposes, especially for the drawing of the chariots which were so vital a weapon in warfare, so that pre-eminence might be gained. He had himself been involved in the harems of Pharaoh, and experienced the intrigues that were constantly going on. He had noted the great efforts that kings and nobles put into gaining great wealth. And as he considered his people he was afraid lest they find themselves under someone like that. And he was concerned lest such a king might make treaties with Egypt, becoming their vassal in order to obtain horses.

He had also no doubt experienced petty 'kings' while son-in-law to the priest of Midian, and had noted that although their ambitions were on a smaller scale, they were still there. He had recently had dealings with the kings of Edom, Moab and Ammon who would all have treated him as a king, to say nothing of the kings of the Amorites. He would have noted the harem and wealth of Sihon, king of the Amorites, laid bare in Heshbon. He knew especially of Og, foreign king in Bashan, descended from a 'super-race' whose very bedstead (or sarcophagus) was the talk of all the nations around. Furthermore Israel were about to invade a country of nations who all had kings. Kingship was very much a current issue. And once they were settled in the land they would constantly be surrounded by kings. But he wanted to save his people from kings like that. It would be better for them to stick with Judges who had no such expectations. But if they would not do that, and he suspected that they would not, for they would soon begin to see them as the equivalent of kings, then let them consider what a king under Yahweh must be like if they were not to regret the move.

So we may take it for granted that an astute leader like Moses would recognise the very good likelihood, indeed certainty, that one day the people would seek to make their Judge a king following a similar pattern to the nations round about. How else could the prophecies be fulfilled? And it was after all only one step on from the overall 'Judge'. The only difference that there would be between Joshua and a king would be that Joshua would not seek to behave with the bad habits of a king. He thus now gave strict instructions of what any king they considered appointing must be like.

Moses' stress, then, was on the fact that he must not be like the kings round about. Rather he was to be an 'ideal', one of themselves, chosen by Yahweh, a native of Israel, and a student of Yahweh's Instruction. He was to be a disclaimer of foreign military power and foreign marriage treaties, and spurn the accumulation of treasure for himself. He was to that end to write for himself a book based on the records which were under the oversight of the levitical priests and kept in the Tabernacle, the book which Moses himself had brought together from ancient covenant and other records (Genesis) and from the details of the Instruction (Torah) as directly revealed to him by God (the main basis of Exodus, Leviticus and Numbers). And he was to live by them.

Indeed this picture of an 'ideal' king was so unlike any king that Israel ever knew or would know that it could only have been a theoretical one posited before the reality ruined the whole picture. Once kingship was established no one would ever have dreamed of suggesting a king like this. For it was actually the very opposite of what kings were. Instead they would have turned back to arguing for judges or chieftains or councils of elders. Moses' words would also act as a warning to future judges. But until the coming of Jesus no such king ever lived.

We can consider in this respect how at least one such Judge, Gideon, was pressed to become Israel's king and his refusal may well have been a polite acceptance (Judges 8:22–23). He certainly behaved like a king of the

An Overview of an Israelite King from the Perspective of Moses (Peter Pett)

wrong kind (Judges 8:30), and one of his sons was expected to follow after him (Judges 9:2). Indeed he lost the position for his family precisely because he ignored Moses' words here. He incidentally proved the wisdom of Moses' instructions in his ignoring of them, for his family suffered the consequences.

One remarkable thing about this idea of kingship here was that there was no thought within it of the king making the laws. This king was rather to be like his fellow countrymen, he was to be subject to Yahweh's Instruction. He was to be totally unlike other kings. He was to act as a judge under Yahweh. Indeed as he will shortly reveal, there would be priests chosen by Yahweh and prophets raised up by Yahweh to keep him in the right way.

We may note in passing that he expected that the king would write himself a copy of the Law. It is hardly therefore likely that he himself would have failed to ensure that such a book was available for Joshua.

Dr. Peter Pett; *Commentary Series on the Bible*; from e-sword, Deut. 17:14–20.

[Chapter Outline](#)

[Charts, Graphics and Short Doctrines](#)

Moses know that the people would eventually demand a king. He has set up some high standards for a king which would not be met.

Dr. Peter Pett: No King Matched the Mosaic Ideal

We must repeat that no king appointed in Israel (and then Judah) was ever like the ideal that Moses describes here. It was purely theoretical and ideal, demonstrating that it was certainly written before kingship arose, for once that happened it shattered into smithereens the ideal once and for all. This comes out especially in the fact that even from the beginning of the concept of kingship the people rejected this type of king altogether and never even considered it. It was not at all what they wanted. They wanted one who was like other kings, and they shrugged off the consequences (1Sam. 8:10–21). They did not want a man who was involved in God's Law and would thus disapprove of how they continually disobeyed it, they wanted a shoulder to cry on.

It is probable indeed that Moses' sketch of a suitable king made them shudder. It described the last kind of king that they would want. By the time that the possibility of kingship arose they had long since laid much of that Law aside in their behaviour with the Canaanites, and they would not want one therefore who would pull them up short over the way that they lived. What they wanted was a king like other peoples had who would fight their battles, and they were ready to meet the consequences.

How they had described what they wanted to Samuel comes out in the way that Samuel gave his warning to them (1Sam. 8:11–21). Had they opted for a king like Moses described Yahweh would not have been displeased, and Samuel would not have said what he did. But they had made plain what they wanted, and it was inevitably not in accordance with the Mosaic ideal. For by the time of Saul they had long since gone past any such dedication the Law. It would have been cynical in the extreme, no we must say utterly foolish, for a later writer to even have suggested such a kingship as a possibility once kingship was established in the way it was. By then the ways and ideas of kingship was firmly established.

So the thought that anyone would later write like this when there was not even the slightest chance that such a kingship could possibly arise is ludicrous. Such a concept would not even have been considered, even by a religious fanatic. Any later writer would rather have allowed the king more in the way of prestige so as hopefully to win his argument and make his idea attractive. And an extremist would have wanted rid of kingship altogether. The description here is the ideal of the wilderness when no Israelite king had yet been known. Then only could it have been put forward. And then only it might have had a chance. This picture did not even have a remote chance once kingship had been established and enjoyed. Thus it must have been written by someone who was looking forward to a theoretical situation.

Dr. Peter Pett; *Commentary Series on the Bible*; from e-sword, Deut. 17:14–20.

[Chapter Outline](#)

[Charts, Graphics and Short Doctrines](#)

What Orr had to say about the limitations on the king were, for the most part, quite perceptive. In most nations, the king is the law. One of our former presidents said, "When the President does it, that means that it's not illegal." (Richard M. Nixon)¹⁹⁸ Some believe for the highest authority in the land to be above the law. That was never to be the case for a king of Israel.

J. Orr on the Limited Monarchy in Israel

The position of king in Israel was essentially different from that of the monarch of any other nation. While discharging the same general functions as other kings (ruling, judging, leading in battle), his authority was checked and limited in ways that theirs was not. He was no irresponsible despot, whose will was law and who governed as he listed. He filled the throne, not as absolute and independent sovereign, but only as the deputy of Jehovah, and ruled simply in the name and in subordination to the will of God—in this respect affording another marked type of God's true king, whom he has set on his holy hill of Zion (Psalm it.). This fact gave rise to a second peculiarity, that he had no authority to make laws, but only to administer the Law already given. The manner of his election corresponded to these peculiarities of his position.

1. He was chosen under Divine guidance (cf. i Samuel Deut. 10:20, Deut. 10:21).
2. The Divine choice was ratified by the free election of the people (1Sam. 10:24). From which we learn
 - (1) that the throne is strong only when it rests on the free choice, and on the loyal affection of the body of the people
 - (2) That kingly like all other authority, is derived from God. This is a truth of general application, though it was in a peculiar sense true of Israel. The Scripture gives no sanction to the "right Divine of kings to govern wrong." But popular sentiment has always recognized that a certain "divinity doth hedge a king." Ancient nations (Egypt, etc.) held him to be the representative of God on earth. The state and style with which a monarch is surrounded, and the homage paid to him, are expressions of the same idea. He embodies the functions of government, and has honor, majesty, and high-sounding titles bestowed on him on that ground. But this is simply to say that in certain respects he represents Deity. To constitute perfect "Divine right," it would be necessary:
 - (a) That a monarch should occupy the throne with perfect Divine sanction. Most rulers, on ascending the throne, try to make out, however weakly, some shadow of right to it.
 - (b) That he should govern in perfect accordance with the Divine will. The only perfect case of ruling by Divine right is the reign of Christ.

Orr had a great deal more to say on this topic, but much of it was incorrect or slightly misunderstood.

The Pulpit Commentary; 1880-1919; by Joseph S. Exell, Henry Donald Maurice Spence-Jones, from e-sword, Deut. 17:15.

[Chapter Outline](#)

[Charts, Graphics and Short Doctrines](#)

Bob Utley gives a simple overview.

Utley on the King of Israel

These restrictions upon the king is unique in ancient Near Eastern law. The king of Israel has limited powers and is subject to God. This passage...

1. ...sets the place and procedures of justice
2. ...sets the pattern of worship

¹⁹⁸ From http://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/authors/r/richard_m_nixon_2.html accessed May 1, 2016.

Utley on the King of Israel

3. ...sets limits on kingly power, succession, and wealth.
Therefore,...
4. ...the king is one among many covenant partners (cf. Deut. 17:20)
5. ...the king must study regularly and implement (personally and officially) God's laws (cf. Deut. 17:18–19)

Dr. Bob Utley, Copyright © 2014 Bible Lessons International; www.freebiblecommentary.org; from e-sword; Deut. 17:15 (edited).

[Chapter Outline](#)

[Charts, Graphics and Short Doctrines](#)

The Preacher's Complete Homiletical Commentary Limitations of a King

- I. The choice of a king. Moses foresaw the nation's wish to have a king, and is taught to legislate for his choice and conduct (cf. 1Sam. 8:10–12).
 1. According to Divine arrangement. "Set him king over thee, whom the Lord thy God shall choose." The people might select, but subject somehow to Divine approval. Kings are God's vice-regents, and He nominates when nations elect them. God's will should direct and determine our choice. The people are reprov'd for acting in forgetfulness. "They have set up kings, but not by me" (Hos. 8:4).
 2. Not from a strange nation. "Not a stranger over thee which is not thy brother." Kings must own their kinship to the people and act as brothers, not as Eastern despots nor royal castes. A gentile head for a Jewish nation would be strange, might defeat the end in view in separating that nation from others, and introduce strange customs and foreign alliances.
- II. The duties of the king. These are specified.
 1. Negatively. (a) He is not to depend upon horses. "Not multiply horses" (Deut. 17:16). His trust must not be in "horses and chariots" and warlike preparations, but in the living God. Egypt furnished Canaan with horses (1Kings 10:28–29), and they might be endangered by alliance, and tainted by idolatry. "Woe to them that go down to Egypt for help, and stay on horses" etc. (Isa. 31:1). (b) Not to be seduced by many wives. "Neither shall he multiply wives to himself." No harem must be kept to gratify the love of pleasure. His heart must not be turned away from business and works of piety. "When Solomon was old his wives turned away his heart after other gods" (1Kings 11:1–4). (c) Not to accumulate riches. "Neither shall he greatly multiply to himself silver and gold." Desire for wealth might lead to oppression and injustice. Riches produce pride, and we are not "to trust in uncertain riches."
 2. Positively. (a) He must copy the law, or some qualified scribe must copy it for him. This would inure himself to labour and study, enlighten and impress his mind. The Word of God must not only be written on parchment, but imprinted on the mind and heart. (b) He must read it when copied. "He shall read therein." It is not enough to have the Bible in the cabinet, or in the drawer; we must read it. Read it daily, read it all through life as our guide and companion. Alexander valued Homer most highly and Scipio Africanus would scarcely allow Xenophon's Cyclopaedia to be put out of sight. The king of Israel was to study God's word, and meditate therein day and night.

EARTHLY KINGS UNDER THE POWER OF THE HEAVENLY KING

- I. In the method of their election. None chosen without God's permission, or if chosen, elected without His providence. "The Most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever He will" (Dan. 4:32; Dan. 5:21).
- II. In the laws by which they govern. Good laws are made by good men, and good men are the gift of God. Bad laws are often overruled for the good of men. "Of law," says Hooker, "these can be no less acknowledged than that her seat is the bosom of God—her voice the harmony of the world."
- III. In the duration of their reign—God can lengthen or shorten their days. He puts down one and sets up

The Preacher's Complete Homiletical Commentary Limitations of a King

another. "He changes the times and the seasons: He removes kings and sets up kings" (Dan. 2:21).

The Preacher's Complete Homiletical Commentary; edited by Joseph S. Exell, 1892; from e-sword, Deut. 17:14–20 (slightly edited).

[Chapter Outline](#)

[Charts, Graphics and Short Doctrines](#)

I need to seriously edit this down.

Observations on the King of Israel by the Expositor's Bible Commentary

It is a striking instance of the accuracy of the national memory that there is a clear and conscious testimony to the fact that for long there was no king in Israel. Had the later historians been at the mercy of a tradition so deeply influenced by later times as it pleases some critics to suppose, it would seem inexplicable that Moses should not have been represented as a king, and especially that the conquest should not have been represented as a king's work.

Evidently there was a perfectly clear national consciousness of the earlier circumstances of the nation, and it presents us with an outline of the original constitution which is very simple and credible. According to this the tribes whom Moses led were ruled in the main by their own sheikhs or elders. Under these again were the clans or fathers' houses similarly governed; and lastly, there were the families in the wider sense, made up of the individual households and governed by their heads. So far as can be gathered, Moses did not interfere with this fundamental organization at all.

He added to it only his own supremacy, as the mediator and means of communication between Yahweh and His people. As such, his decision was final in all matters too difficult for the sheikhs and judges. But the fundamental point never lost sight of was that Yahweh alone was their ruler, their legislator, their leader in war, and the doer of justice among His people. From the very first moment of Israel's national existence therefore, from the moment that it passed the Red Sea, Yahweh was acknowledged as King, and Moses was simply His representative. That is the cardinal fact in this nation's life, and amid all the difficulties and changes of its later history that was always held to. Even when kings were appointed, they were regarded only as the viceroys of Yahweh. In this way the whole of the national affairs received a religious color; and those who look at them from a religious standpoint have a justification which would have been less manifest under other circumstances.

It is, therefore, no delusion of later times which finds in Israelite institutions a deep religious meaning. Nor is the persistence with which the Scriptural historians regard only the religious aspects of national life to be laid as a fault to their charge. It is nothing to the purpose to say that the bulk of the people had no thoughts of that kind, that the whole fabric of the national institutions appeared to them in a different light. We have no right to lower the meaning of things to the gross materialism of the populace. One would almost think, to hear some Old Testament critics speak, that in this most ideal realm of religion we can be safe from illusion only when ideal points of view are abandoned, that only in the commonest light of common day have we any security that we are not deceiving ourselves. But most of these same men would resent it bitterly if that standard were applied to the history of the lands they themselves love. What Englishman would think that Great Britain's career and destiny were rightly estimated if imperial sentiment and humanitarian aims were thrust aside in favor of purely material considerations? Why then should it be supposed that the views and opinions of the multitude are the only safe criterion to be applied to the institutions of God's ancient people?

In truth, there is no reason why we should think so. The Divine kingship made it impossible that the higher minds should be content with the low aims of the opportunists of their day, whether these were of the multitude or not. Even the entrance into Canaan, which to the mass of the people was, in the first place, a mere acquisition of territory and wealth, was idealized for the leaders of the people by the thought that it was the land promised by Yahweh to their fathers, the land in which they should live in communion with Him. Generally, it may be said that the desire for communion with God was the impelling and formative power in Israel. The

Observations on the King of Israel by the Expositor's Bible Commentary

thoughts of even the dullest and most earthly were touched by that ideal at times; and no leader, whether royal, or priestly, or prophetic, ever really succeeded among this people who did not keep that persistently in view as the true goal of his efforts. Moreover this gave its depth of meaning to the whole movement of history in Israel. Every triumph and defeat, every lapse and every reform had, owing to this direction of the people's efforts, as significance far beyond itself. These were not merely incidents in the history of an obscure people; they were the pulsations and movements of the world's advance to the full revelation of God. All that would have been wholly national or tribal in the institutions and arrangements of an ordinary people was in Israel lifted up into the religious sphere; and the orders of men who spoke for the invisible King—the earthly king, the priest, and the prophet—became naturally the organs of the national life.

The king's position was entirely dependent upon Yahweh. He was to be chosen by Yahweh, he was to act for Yahweh, and no king could rightly fill his place in Israel who was not loyal to that conception. It is in this sense that David was the man after God's own heart. He, in contrast to Saul and to many of the later kings, accepted with entire loyalty, notwithstanding his great natural powers, the position of viceroy for Yahweh. It is, therefore, an essential truth which underlies the Scriptural judgment that the kings who made themselves, or attempted to make themselves, independent of Yahweh, were false to Israel and to their true calling. And this is why Samuel, when the people demanded a king, regarded the movement with stern disapproval, and why he received an oracle denouncing the movement as a falling away from Yahweh. For, in the first place, the motive for the people's request, their desire to be like other nations, was in itself a rejection of their God. It repudiated, in part at least, the position of Israel as His peculiar people, and implied that an earthly king would do more for them than Yahweh had done; whereas if they had been faithful and united enough in spirit they would have found victory easy. In the second, the request in itself was a confession of unfitness for their high national calling; it was a confession of failure under the conditions which had been Divinely appointed for them. Not only in the eyes of the Biblical historian therefore, but as a plain matter of fact, the demand was an expression of dissatisfaction on the people's part with their invisible King. They needed something less spiritual than Yahweh's invisible presence and the prophetic word to guide them. But since they had declared themselves thus unfaithful, Yahweh had to deal with them at that level, and granted their request as a concession to their unbelief and hardness of heart.

That is the representation of the Books of Samuel; and the absence of any similar law from the codes before Deuteronomy confirms the view that the earthly kingship was not an essential part of the polity of Israel, but a mere episode. Nowhere in legislation save here in Deuteronomy is the king ever mentioned, and nowhere, not even here, is any provision made for his maintenance. No civil taxes are appointed by any law, while the most ample provision is made for the presentation direct to Yahweh, as Lord paramount, of tithes and first fruits. The history and the law alike agree therefore in regarding the kingship as somewhat of an excrescence upon the national polity; and this law, where alone the king's existence is recognized, confines itself strictly to securing the theocratic character of the constitution. He must be chosen by Yahweh; he must be a born worshipper of Yahweh, not a foreigner; and he must rule in accordance with the law given by Yahweh. Further, the ideal Israelite king must be on his guard against the grossly voluptuous luxury which Oriental sovereigns have never been able to resist, either in ancient or modern times; and also against the lust for war and conquest which was the ruling passion of Assyrian and Egyptian kings. Evidently too the ideal king of Israel was, like Bedouin sheikhs now, expected to be rich, able to maintain his state out of his own revenues. The tribute paid by subject peoples, together with the booty taken in war and the profits of trade, were his only legitimate sources of income beyond his own wealth.

Every other exaction was more or less of an oppression. He had no right to make any claims upon the land, for that was held direct of Yahweh. Nor were there any regular taxes, so far as the Old Testament informs us. The only approach to that would appear to be that the presents with which his subjects voluntarily approached the king were sometimes and by some rulers made permanent demands; at least that would seem to be the meaning of the somewhat obscure statement in 1Sam. 17:25 that King Saul would reward the slayer of Goliath by making "his father's house free in Israel." Some kind of regular exaction from which the victorious champion's family should be free must here be referred to; but it would not be safe, in the absence of all other evidence, to suppose that regular taxes in the modern sense are referred to. More probably something of the nature of

Observations on the King of Israel by the Expositor's Bible Commentary

the "benevolences" which Edward IV introduced into England as a source of revenue is; meant. If a popular and powerful king of Israel was in want of money, he could always secure it by ordering those able to afford handsome presents to appear yearly before him with such gifts as a loyal subject should offer. For the convenience of all parties an indication of how much would be expected might be made, and then he would have what to all intents and purposes would be a tax. Along with this he might also enforce the corvee; but such things were always regarded as excesses of despotic power. That Samuel in his *mishpat hammelekh* (1Sam. 8:15) warns the people that the king would demand of them a tithe of their cereal crops and of the fruit of their vineyards and of their sheep, does not contradict this reading of the passage in 1Sam. 17:1-58. For though chapter 8 belongs to the later portion of 1 Samuel and may therefore represent what the kings had actually claimed, yet it in no way endorses such demands. On the contrary, it indicates that such exactions would bring the people into slavery to the king by the phrase "And ye shall be to him for slaves." All that is mentioned there, consequently, is part of the evil the kingship would bring with it, and cannot in any way be regarded as a legal provision for the maintenance of royalty.

It is not probable, therefore, that in these prescriptions the author of Deuteronomy is repeating a more ancient law. No such law has come down to us. Dillmann supposes the provision that the king should always be an Israelite to be ancient; and indeed at first sight it is difficult to see why such a provision should be introduced for the first time in the last days of the Southern Kingdom, where the kingship had so long been confined, not only to Israelites, but to the Davidic line. But Jer. 30:21—"Their potentate shall be of themselves, and their governor shall proceed from the midst of them"—shows that, whatever the cause might be, there was in the first years of the sixth century a longing for a native king similar to that here expressed. In any case, as the obvious intention here is to make entire submission to Yahweh the condition of any legitimate kingship, it was only consistent to require expressly that the king should be one of Yahweh's people. That motive would be quite sufficient to account for raising what had been the invariable practice into a formulated law; and no other of the prescriptions need have been ancient. On the other hand, the curious phrase "Only he shall not multiply horses to himself, nor cause the people to return to Egypt to the end that he should multiply horses; forasmuch as Yahweh hath said unto you, Ye shall henceforth return no more that way," can hardly belong to the Mosaic time. There was no doubt then much danger that the people should wish to return to Egypt; but that a king should cause them to return for horses, is too much of a subordinate detail to have been portion of a Mosaic prophecy. If, as is most probable, the phrase condemns the sending of Israelites into Egypt to buy horses and chariots, it can have been written only after Solomon's days. Before that time Israel, as an almost exclusively mountain people, regarded horses and chariots with dislike, and usually destroyed them when they fell into their hands. With the extension of their power over the plains and the growth of a lust for conquest, they sought after chariots eagerly. To procure them they entered into alliances with Egypt which the prophets denounced, and which brought to the nation nothing but evil. It was natural, therefore, that the Deuteronomist should specially mention this detail, and should support it by reference to a Divine promise, which does not appear in our Bible, but which probably was found in either the Yahwistic or the Elohist narrative.

But whether the whole is Deuteronomic or not, there can be no question that the command that the king shall have "a copy of this law" prepared for him and shall read constantly therein is so; and perhaps of all the prescriptions this is the most important. In purely Eastern states there is no legislature at all, and the greater part of the criminal jurisdiction especially is carried on without any reference to fixed law save in cases affecting religion. This was the case in the Mahratta states in India so long as they were independent. The ruler and the officers he appointed administered justice, solely according to custom and their own notions of rectitude, "without advertence to any law except the popular notions of customary law." Now in Israel the state of things was entirely similar, save in so far as the fundamental principles of Yahwistic religion had been formulated. In all other respects customary law ruled everything. But it was the religious influence that gave its highest and best developments to the life of Israel. It was this, too, which brought to such early maturity in Israel the principles of justice, mercy, and freedom. Elsewhere these were of exceedingly slow growth. In Israel, the influence of the lofty religious ideas implanted in the nation by Moses did for them what the influence of the higher political and social ideas of the governing Englishmen are said to do, under favorable circumstances, for the Indian peoples. Without disturbing the general harmony which must subsist between all parts of the

Observations on the King of Israel by the Expositor's Bible Commentary

organism of the State if the nation's life is to be healthy, and without putting it out of relation with its surroundings, that influence has been, and is still, moving the more backward Indian societies along the natural paths of human progress at a greatly accelerated speed. In a similar way the Israelite people was moved by the Mosaic influence, in its aspirations at least, with an elsewhere unexampled speed and certainty, towards an ideal of national life which no nation since has even endeavored to realize. But whenever the kings threw off the yoke of Yahweh and plunged into idolatry, then the evils of despotic Oriental rule made their appearance unchecked. These evils have been enumerated in the following words by one well acquainted with Oriental states: "Cruelty, superstition, callous indifference to the security of the weaker and poorer classes, avarice, corruption, disorder in all public affairs, and open brigandage." With the exception perhaps of the last, these are precisely the sins which the prophets are continually denouncing. Long before Hezekiah they were rampant, especially in the Northern Kingdom, and in the evil days between Hezekiah and Josiah, when we suppose Deuteronomy to have been written, they were indulged in without shame or compunction.

The result was that an inarticulate cry, like that we hear today from Persia in the articulate form of newspaper articles, must have filled the hearts of all righteous men and the multitude of the oppressed. What it would be we may learn from the following extract from a letter written from Persia to the Kamin, i.e., "Law," a Persian newspaper published in London, and translated by Arminius Vambery in the *Deutsche Rundschau* for October, 1893: "Oh, brothers, behold how deeply we have sunk into the sea of ignominy and shame. Tyranny, famine, disease, poverty, calamity, decay of character, and all the misery in the world has overflowed our country. The cause of all this misfortune lies in this, that we have no laws; only in this, that our conscienceless and foolish great ones have willfully and purposely rejected, trodden under foot, and destroyed the laws of the sacred code... We are men, and would have laws! It is not new laws we ask for, but we desire that our secular and spiritual heads should assemble and press for the enforcement of the holy laws of the sacred code. Therefore we ask of you this one thing, that you should proclaim: 'We are men, and would have laws.'" The East is so perennially the same, that the two thousand five hundred years which separate that pathetic cry from the prayers of the true Israel in Manasseh's and Amon's days make no radical difference. The situation was the same, and the need was the same. Hence came this prophetic and priestly redaction of the Law of the Covenant. "They were men, and would have laws." They sought to be freed from the greed, the cruelty, and the lawlessness of their rulers; and having produced their revised code, they wished to secure that it should not disappear from memory, as the more ancient law had been suffered to do. It must be kept continually before the king's mind. "It shall be with him, and he shall read therein all the days of his life; that he may learn to fear Yahweh his God, to keep all the words of this law and these statutes to do them." In this way it was thought that future "great ones" would be prevented from "rejecting, treading under foot, and destroying the laws of the sacred code."

But the king of Israel was not only to be a law-abiding and a law-enforcing king. He was to learn from this new law even a deeper lesson. He was to read daily in the law, "that his heart might not be lifted up above his brethren." Oriental despots either openly claim that they are of higher and purer blood than their subjects, or they deal with these latter as if they had nothing in common with them. In the laws of Manu it is said, "Even an infant king must not be despised (from an idea) that he is a (mere) mortal; for he is a great deity in human form." It was not to be so in Israel. His subjects were the Israelite king's "brethren." They all stood in the same relation to their God. All equally had shared Yahweh's favor in being delivered from the bondage of Egypt. Each had the same rights, the same privileges, the same claims to justice and consideration as the king himself had. That, this law was to teach the king; and when he had learned the lesson, it is taken for granted that the root from which the other evils spring would be destroyed.

Such, then, the ruler of Israel was to be. He was to feel, first of all his responsibility to God. Then he was to deny himself to the lust of conquest, to the voluptuous pleasures of the flesh, to the most devouring lust of all, the love of money. Last of all, and above all, he was to acknowledge his equality with the poorest of the people in the sight of God. Could there be even yet a nobler ideal set before the kings of the world than this? The reign of only one king of Israel, Josiah, promised its realization. That seemed, indeed, to be "the fair beginning of a time." But it was not so; it proved to be only an afterglow, a mere prelude to the night. None of his successors made even an attempt to imitate him, and the destruction of the Jewish State put an end to all hope of the

Observations on the King of Israel by the Expositor's Bible Commentary

appearance of the Yahwistic king in Israel. Elsewhere, before the coming of Christ, he did not appear. Since Christ's coming, here and there, at rare intervals, such rulers have been found. But in the East perhaps the only rulers who can be said to have made any attempt in this direction are the best of the great uncrowned kings of India, the British viceroys.

Such, for example, was Lord Lawrence's aim, and his reward. From the beginning to the end of his Indian career he lived a pure and simple life, labored with untiring energy for the good of the people, and kept in his mind, as his aspirations for his Punjaub peasantry show, the Old Testament ideal of both ruler and ruled. He was, too, entirely free from the lust of conquest, as some Indian viceroys have not perhaps been; and he did all his work under a solemn sense of responsibility to God. To a large extent, the Biblical ideal made him what he was as a ruler, and the life and power of that ideal now, in such men, sufficiently show the truth of the prophetic and priestly insight which is embodied here. Many who have disregarded these rules have done great things for the world; but we are only the more sure, after two thousand five hundred years, that on these lines alone can the ruler attain his highest and purest eminence. All the aspirations of men today are towards a state of things in which rulers, whether they be any longer kings or no, shall stand on a level of brotherhood with their subjects, and shall set the good of the ruled before them as their sole aim. All men are dreaming now of a future in which personal ambition shall have little scope, in which none will be for himself or for a party, but "all will be for the State." If ever that good dream be realized, rulers of the Deuteronomic type will be universal; and the depth of wisdom embodied in the laws of this small and obscure Oriental people, so many ages ago, will be manifested in a general political and social happiness such as has never yet been seen, on any large scale at least, in the history of men.

Expositor's Bible Commentary; Edited by the Rev. W. Robertson Nicoll; ©1887-1896; public domain; from e-sword, Deut. 17:14–20.

[Chapter Outline](#)

[Charts, Graphics and Short Doctrines](#)

The great problem with an Israelite king is that he would have a sin nature. Many of us have certain aspects of our sin nature under control because (1) we are in the midst of a family and a society where strong disapproval would result from giving full reign to our individual lusts; and (2) we do not have the means to satisfy our lusts.

The king, unless under constant attack from an outside power, has a great deal of freedom. He is the law (in Israel, he is not supposed to be, but...); he sets the standards; he can satisfy his every desire (as was true with Solomon). A king can pursue any weird thing and, as king, he is the boss. Here we have King Saul, who pursued after David, who was clearly innocent of all that Saul accused him of; and yet, his soldiers and underlings took their orders from Saul and pursued David with the intention of harming him. And when Saul was frustrated, he ordered the deaths of every priest in Nob.

Even King David, a man after God's Own heart, when he saw a married woman that he desired, he simply took her.

Having complete and total freedom can be problematic for any believer; having the power and fortune to do whatever is in one's heart can also be problematic.

Application: We have recently seen this with the United States Congress (I write this in 2016). Because of the failed policies of President Barack Obama, Republicans were elected in historic numbers to the House and Senate. So, as his political rivals, we would assume that they would flex their muscles and slow his roll, so to speak. But they did not. Most of the Republicans did not run on a clearly defined conservative platform. Many of them voted a few dozen times to repeal Obamacare, conveniently forgetting the fact that Congress controls the purse strings, and that they could defund any program that they did not like (in a tug-of-war battle over the budget, the government would have shut down and there would have been concessions made on both sides). But they did not do this. They acted as if the greatest sin in human history was to shut down the government. They had power; they were not going to be thrown out of office, as the people rejected President Obama. So they used this

new-found power to simply coast along without principles. And their most basic function—to write a full and complete budget and to organize the revenue for that through appropriations bills—Congress did none of that. They passed resolution after resolution which kept the government spending money, without passing a true budget (a true budget would result in a real battle). My point is, they gained power, they were probably not going to lose their power, and so they acted in such a way as to preserve their power. So, at this point in time, the United States has a \$19 trillion debt with no end in sight when it comes to federal spending.

Why did God wait to allow Israel to have a king? All this being said, God did allow Israel to have a king over them in the person of King Saul. Why did God wait so long? Why didn't Moses make himself king? Why didn't Moses say, "Let Joshua become your king"? Human nature being what it is, why didn't Moses give in to this natural desire for leadership from the beginning? For one very important reason: the Word of God was to be seen as paramount; the Word of God would become their constitution. They would first follow the Torah of Moses, and when a king deviated from God's Word, the people who knew Scripture, knew of the deviation.

This is what was so amazing in our own government. George Washington, who did not run for president, but stood for president, after 8 years as president, stepped down. He could have been elected and reelected; he could have suspended the constitution, had he chosen to, and there would have been little opposition, because he was so well-respected and beloved. But President Washington did the unthinkable—he willingly relinquished his power and position, and stood to the side as an election for the next president took place.

The people who wrote the Constitution of the United States saw this as the result of divine guidance; they saw the Constitution as a document inspired or guided by the hand of God. Therefore, they set this document above human power, which was one of the greatest things to ever occur in human history.

This, in a very small way, helps us to understand the importance of the Word of God, which was established first before any king took power, so that its preeminence might be known throughout all Israel. We all know that Moses was a great genius, but Scripture is more than the writings of a great genius; it is inspired by God the Holy Spirit. It is alive and powerful. It was to guide Israel for 1400 years (bear in mind, our Constitution is not yet 250 years old and is threatened in every way). This firmly sets in the minds and culture of Israel is that they are ruled by God; He has made His will known through His Word; and this is over and above all earthly power.

God is the highest authority in Israel and in the church. He has delineated His mandates in His Word.

R. M. Edgar: The church officers required implicit obedience from the people to their interpretation of God's will. In a rude age this was needful, implicit obedience such as we require from children. But when we reach the corresponding part of the New Testament economy, the exhortation is, "Prove all things, hold fast that which is good" (1Thess. 5:21). The right of private judgment is admitted, and regulates the obedience. Just as when children grow to manhood, the implicit obedience demanded gives place to persuasion and the appeal to conscience.¹⁹⁹

I quote Edgar here, not because he is entirely right, but because he makes an excellent point. God has always had those who are experts in His Word to teach the public, be it priests or pastor-teachers. We know that the scribes and priests, during the time of the incarnation of our Lord, went very far afield from the truth. Today, it ought to be obvious that there are many who teach the Word of God who do it poorly (and whether they have a small or large number of people listening to them is not the measure of the accuracy of their teaching). We, as believers, have the ability to choose our church and our pastor-teacher. When you are trying on a new church, it is okay to quietly hold the pastor up to the teaching of the Word of God, and then decide what you are going to do next. If you are going to leave that church, then leave it quietly, without expressing your mind.

¹⁹⁹ *The Pulpit Commentary*; 1880-1919; by Joseph S. Exell, Henry Donald Maurice Spence-Jones, from e-sword, Deut. 17:8–13.

My own personal experience is hearing R. B. Thieme, Jr. teach from a tape recorder. I did not really like the guy. I was a former hippie, recently saved, living in California—very nearly a pacifist—and Bob is talking about stacking the bodies of your enemies to the heavens. How is a former hippie supposed to process that kind of information? But, what Bob did is, he carefully exegeted the Word of God. When he taught a passage, when all was said and done, you generally understood what he had taught; and you could compare his teaching to the text, and it compared favorably. Eventually choosing Bob to be my pastor-teacher did not come easily, but the more I leaned toward the authority of the Word of God, the more I was drawn to his ministry (and I listened to a lot of pastors, live and on the radio). In fact, at first, I figured I would simply find the Bob Thieme-type church in Sacramento, because we had a lot of churches there. Figured that would be easy to do. So I saw one nearly charismatic type playing on his guitar throughout his sermon, and talking about the old standards (with a break given for people to speak in tongues); I went to a Baptist church where I made a run for the door at the end of the service, just so I would not have to shake the hands of 10 guys there again. I went to another Baptist church that was not bad, but, it just was not the same level of teaching. I ended up at a Bible institute for a short time, simply because they made an attempt to teach the Word of God word-by-word (they weren't too bad). Luckily, a taper's group (we listened to Bob Thieme on a tape recorder) was established in Sacramento for several years, and that became my home church until I left Sacramento. Without realizing it, I was doing exactly as Paul exhorted me to do: **Prove all things; hold fast to that which is good.**

Despite the prophetic nature of this passage, there is no reason to assume that someone other than Moses wrote this.

Dr. Bob Utley concerning the final verses of Deut. 17: *These 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 monarchial period, and that it was written by the priests then to centralize worship at Jerusalem (cf. 2Kings 22:8; 2Chron. 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 Deut. 17:14–20 are not unique in the Pentateuch are Gen. 17:6; Gen. 35:11; Gen. 36:31; Num. 24:7; Judges 8:22–23; Judges 9:6.*²⁰⁰

Dr. Bob Utley: Moses' Authorship of the Pentateuch

1. The Bible itself does not name the author (as is true of many OT books). Genesis has no "I" sections like Ezra, Nehemiah, or "we" sections like Acts.
2. Jewish tradition
 - 1) Ancient Jewish writers say Moses wrote it
 - (1) Ben Sirah's Ecclesiasticus, 24:23, written about 185 b.c.
 - (2) The Baba Bathra 14b, a part of the Talmud which gives traditional authorship of OT books
 - (3) Philo of Alexandria, Egypt, a Jewish philosopher, living about 20 b.c. to a.d. 42
 - (4) Flavius Josephus, a Jewish historian, living about a.d. 37-70
 - 2) YHWH reveals truth to Moses
 - (1) Moses is said to have written for the people
 - i Exodus 17:14
 - ii Exodus 24:4, 7
 - iii Exodus 34:27, 28
 - iv Numbers 33:2
 - v Deuteronomy 31:9, 22, 24-26
 - (2) God is said to have spoken through Moses to the people
 - i Deuteronomy 5:4-5, 22
 - ii Deuteronomy 6:1
 - iii Deuteronomy 10:1

²⁰⁰ Dr. Bob Utley, Copyright © 2014 Bible Lessons International; www.freebiblecommentary.org; from e-sword; Deut. 17:14–20.

Dr. Bob Utley: *Moses' Authorship of the Pentateuch*

- (3) Moses is said to have spoken the words of the Torah to the people
 - i Deuteronomy 1:1, 3
 - ii Deuteronomy 5:1
 - iii Deuteronomy 27:1
 - iv Deuteronomy 29:2
 - v Deuteronomy 31:1, 30
 - vi Deuteronomy 32:44
 - vii Deuteronomy 33:1
- 3) OT authors attribute it to Moses
 - (1) Joshua 8:31
 - (2) 2 Kings 14:6
 - (3) Ezra 6:18
 - (4) Nehemiah 8:1; 13:1-2
 - (5) 2 Chronicles 25:4; 34:12; 35:12
 - (6) Daniel 9:11
 - (7) Malachi 4:4
- 3. Christian tradition
 - 1) Jesus attributes quotes from the Torah to Moses
 - (1) Matthew 8:4; 19:8
 - (2) Mark 1:44; 7:10; 10:5; 12:26
 - (3) Luke 5:14; 16:31; 20:37; 24:27, 44
 - (4) John 5:46-47; 7:19, 23
 - 2) Other N.T. authors attribute quotes from the Torah to Moses
 - (1) Luke 2:22
 - (2) Acts 3:22; 13:39; 15:1, 15-21; 26:22; 28:23
 - (3) Romans 10:5, 19
 - (4) 1 Corinthians 9:9
 - (5) 2 Corinthians 3:15
 - (6) Hebrews 10:28
 - (7) Revelation 15:3
 - 3) Most early Church Fathers accepted Mosaic authorship. However, Ireneus, Clement of Alexandria, Origen, and Tertullian all had questions about Moses' relationship to the current canonical form of Genesis (cf. D. 2. on page 3). You can add Kukis to that list. :)
- 4. Modern Scholarship
 - 1) There have obviously been some editorial additions to the Torah (seemingly to make the ancient work more understandable to contemporary readers, which was a characteristic of Egyptian scribes.
 - (1) Genesis 12:6; 13:7; 14:14; 21:34; 32:32; 36:31; 47:11
 - (2) Exodus 11:3; 16:36
 - (3) Numbers 12:3; 13:22; 15:22-23; 21:14-15; 32:33ff
 - (4) Deuteronomy 3:14; 34:6
 - 2) Ancient scribes were highly trained and educated. Their techniques, however, differed from country to country:
 - (1) In Mesopotamia, they were careful not to change anything, and even checked their works for accuracy. Here is an ancient Sumerian scribal footnote from about 1400 b.c.: "the work is complete from beginning to end, has been copied, revised, compared, and verified sign by
 - (2) In Egypt they freely revised ancient texts to update them for contemporary readers. The scribes at Qumran (i.e., Dead Sea Scrolls) followed this approach.
 - 3) Scholars of the 19th century theorized that the Torah is a composite document from many sources over an extended period of time (Graff-Wellhausen). This theory was based on:
 - (1) the different names for God
 - (2) apparent doublets in the text
 - (3) the literary form of the accounts

Dr. Bob Utley: *Moses' Authorship of the Pentateuch*

- (4) the theology of the accounts
- 4) Supposed sources and dates
 - (1) J source (use of YHWH from southern Israel) – 950 B.C.
 - (2) E source (use of Elohim from northern Israel) – 850 B.C.
 - (3) JE combined – 750 B.C.
 - (4) D source – 621 B.C. (The Book of the Law, 2 Kgs. 22:8, discovered during Josiah's reform while remodeling the Temple was supposedly the book of Deuteronomy, written by an unknown priest of Josiah's time to support his reform.)
 - (5) P source (priestly rewrite of OT, especially ritual and procedure) – 400 B.C.
 - (6) So there is no misunderstanding, I view these various *sources* as horse spit.
- 5) There have obviously been editorial additions to the Torah. The Jews assert that it was
 - (1) The High Priest (or another of his family) at the time of the writing
 - (2) Jeremiah the Prophet
 - (3) Ezra the Scribe – IV Esdras says he rewrote it because the originals were destroyed in the fall of Jerusalem in 586 B.C.
- 6) However, the J. E. D. P. theory says more about our modern literary theories and categories than evidence from the Torah (R. K. Harrison, Introduction to the Old Testament, pp. 495-541 and Tyndale's Commentaries, "Leviticus," pp. 15-25).
- 7) Characteristics of Hebrew Literature
 - (1) Doublets, like Genesis 1 & 2, are common in Hebrew. Usually a general description is given, followed by a specific account. This may have been a way to accent truths or help oral
 - (2) The ancient rabbis said the two most common names for God have theological significance:
 - i YHWH – the Covenant name for deity as He relates to Israel as Savior and Redeemer (cf. Ps. 19:7-14; 103).
 - ii Elohim – deity as Creator, Provider, and Sustainer of all life on earth (cf. Ps. 19:1-6;
 - (3) It is common in non-biblical near eastern literature for a variety of styles and vocabulary to occur in unified literary works (cf. R. K. Harrison, pp. 522-526).
- 8) There is an emerging theory that there were scribes (in different parts of Israel) working on different parts of the Pentateuch at the same time under the direction of Samuel (cf. 1 Sam. 10:25). This theory was first proposed by E. Robertson's *The Old Testament Problem*.
5. The evidence from Ancient Near Eastern literature implies that Moses used written cuneiform documents or Mesopotamian style (patriarchal) oral traditions to write Genesis. This in no way means to imply a lessening of inspiration, but is an attempt to explain the literary phenomenon of the book of Genesis (cf. P. J. Wiseman's *New Discoveries in Babylonia about Genesis*). Beginning in Genesis 37, a marked Egyptian influence of style, form, and vocabulary seems to indicate Moses used either literary productions or oral traditions from the Israelites' days in both Egypt and Mesopotamia. Moses' formal education was entirely Egyptian! The exact literary formation of the Pentateuch is uncertain. I believe that Moses is the compiler and author of the vast majority of the Pentateuch, though he may have used scribes and/or written and oral (patriarchal) traditions. His writings have been updated by later scribes. The historicity and trustworthiness of these first few books of the OT have been illustrated by modern archaeology.

The Jews had a tradition of reading these passages aloud in their synagogues; there was also a history of teaching the Word of God among the Jews. There were hundreds (if not thousands) of copies of various books scattered throughout the Jewish world and beyond that (we know this because of what books were found among the Dead Sea Scrolls). Some higher ups in the religious community could not simply add a few verses here or there without this being noticed by others. Furthermore, even if there were some dishonest scribes or priests, there is no indication that every scribe and priest would be willing to just sign on to an obvious addition.

Furthermore, bear in mind that adding a king to the conversation and embedding it in the Mosaic writings takes away from the power of the scribes and priests. These men numbered in the thousands.

Let's say that you wanted to add 7 verses to the Bible—do you think that you could, and that, 100 years from now, everyone will think that those 7 verses were always there? Of course not! Why? Because there are millions of copies of the Bible out there right now. Changing the reading of a passage by adding material will gain nothing but a boatload of criticism for doing so. The Bible would be just as difficult to change in the Old Testament period of time as well. There was not just one copy of the Bible floating around, where people just added to or took from at will. In fact, until around 200 B.C., the Bible was not even viewed as a single book; nor was the concept of inspiration as clearly understood then as it is now. But, what the priests and scribes knew for a fact: they were not to add or subtract from the Word of God (Deut. 4:2 12:32).

How could a critic, on the one hand, think that adding a few verses here and there would be an easy thing to do, and then criticize ancient man for being so superstitious about the divine nature of the Bible on the other hand? People either developed a tradition that this was the Word of God; or that it was just some flexible set of writings that, if you wanted to add something to it, then go ahead, and append to your heart's content.

Some scholars make such insane assertions (1) to take away from the authority of Scripture; and (2) to make it seem as if there is no such thing as prophecy. The Old Testament is filled with prophecy—long term and short term. I have heard one estimate placed at one-fifth of the Bible is prophetic. How silly it is to assert that a fifth of the Bible was added later, and nobody noticed or complained.

Again, prophecies abound in the Word of God. Yet critics think that, throughout a period of a thousand years, people willy nilly added passages to the Word of God; subtracted passages from the Word of God; and yet no one noticed.

Let me see if I can offer you some proof of how difficult it would be to add or subtract from the Bible. Jesus Christ stood in a synagogue, spoke a few verses from Isaiah (Isa. 61:1–2a) and then sat down. Everyone was looking at him—why? He did not read the entire passage. He stopped halfway through the passage and sat down. Then, with every eye upon Him in the synagogue, he said, **“And today, this Scripture is fulfilled in your ears.”** (see Luke 4:18–21) That was an amazing moment in *the History of God and Man*. Jesus did not read an entire passage (on purpose), and then sat down, but everyone was looking at Him because they KNEW He had not read the entire passage. Every man in that synagogue looked at Him, thinking, *what the hell?* That is because they knew the Word of God, even in the generation which, for the most part rejected their Savior. How much more did the Jews know the Word of God during times of positive volition?

From http://www.freebiblecommentary.org/special_topics/moses_authorship_pentateuch.html accessed May 1, 2016 (some editing and many additions were made to this doctrine).

Chapter Outline

Charts, Graphics and Short Doctrines

Whitecross: *The Bible is the foundation of all good government, as it instructs rulers and subjects in their respective duties. A French lady once said to Lord Chesterfield that she thought the Parliament of England consisted of five or six hundred of the best informed and most sensible men in the kingdom. ‘True, madam, they are generally supposed to be so. ‘What then, my lord, can be the reason that they tolerate so great an absurdity as the Christian religion?’ ‘I suppose, madam,’ replied his lordship, ‘it is because they have not been able to substitute anything better in its stead; when they can, I do not doubt but in their wisdom they will readily adopt it.’*²⁰¹

Chapter Outline

Charts, Graphics and Short Doctrines

Beginning of Document

Doctrines Alluded to

Chapters of the Bible Alluded to

Definition of Terms

Introduction

Addendum

²⁰¹ *The Preacher's Complete Homiletical Commentary*; edited by Joseph S. Exell, 1892; from e-sword, Deut. 17:18–20. This was a nice little story; and they placed it here, so I place it at the end of Deut. 17 as well.

Addendum

When I study a chapter of the Bible, one of the questions which I nearly always have is, *why is this chapter in the Word of God?*

Why Deuteronomy 17 is in the Word of God

1. This chapter taken with the previous chapter (or with the next chapter) deals with the king, the priest and the prophet, the 3 most important offices to nation Israel and the 3 offices occupied by the Lord Jesus Christ.
2. There is a direct tie in with 1Kings 4 that we are able to explore more fully.
3. This chapter gave us the opportunity to discuss public execution as well as rules of evidence for a capital case.
4. This chapter gave us two other examples of crimes which require the death penalty to be applied.
5. There is a verse here misapplied to give the pope infallibility; and he does not have that (which is discussed in the proper context).
6. We got a better idea as to the duties of judges (they had some executive duties).
7. We see the importance of the structure of authority in Israel and how disobeying this could result in the execution of a judge.
8. We study the very important qualifications of a king for Israel.
9. We were led to examine wealth and the king.
10. The title of Deuteronomy comes from this chapter.
11. There is a parallel between God requiring the king of Israel to make a copy of the Law; and a vassal ruler keeping a copy of the agreement made with the more powerful king, whom the vassal king serves.

[Chapter Outline](#)

[Charts, Graphics and Short Doctrines](#)

There are a great many things to be studied in the book of Deuteronomy; here are a few of the studies that we embarked on and learned from.

What We Learn from Deuteronomy 17

1. We got to see the thinking process of Moses, as we go from one subject to the next.
2. We have the opportunity to study the current *green* movement and the global warming crowd as modern religion and modern idolatry.
3. We had the opportunity to look at the death penalty more closely because of this chapter.
4. We examined the priesthood and the concept of the priesthood in the Church Age.
5. This chapter gave us the opportunity to discuss the separation of power clauses in the U.S. constitution and how they are presently violated.
6. We study the doctrine of authority.
7. There is some excellent commentary by Gary North on law abiding and the predictability of law enforcement.
8. We cover a very important doctrine: how do we apply to Torah to a client nation today.
9. We studied how the United States is rushing headlong into socialism; and why Americans are slowly losing their freedoms in the United States.
10. We see how Moses speaking with authority leads us towards the concept of inspiration and the canon

What We Learn from Deuteronomy 17

- of Scripture.
11. We study the assembly of both the Old and New Testament canons of Scripture.
 12. Although God sets up standards for a king of Israel different from all other kings, there are reasons for that, and we study those reasons.
 13. We study the silly notion of someone writing Scripture several hundred years later and planting it into a passage.
 14. We get several points of view on the king of Israel.

Chapter Outline

Charts, Graphics and Short Doctrines

It may be helpful to see this chapter as a contiguous whole:

A Complete Translation of Deuteronomy 17

A Reasonably Literal Translation

A Reasonably Literal Paraphrase

Proper sacrifices to Y^ehowah

“You will not sacrifice to Y^ehowah your Elohim an ox or a lamb on which [there] is a blemish—[or] any injury [imperfection or defect]—for that [is] an abomination [to] Y^ehowah your Elohim.

“You will not offer up to Jehovah your God any ox or lamb on which there is a blemish or defect of any kind, for that would be an abomination to Jehovah your God.

The penalty for worshiping false gods in Israel

When [one] is found in your midst, in one of your cities [lit., *gates*] that Y^ehowah your Elohim will give to you, a man or a woman who is doing evil in the sight of Y^ehowah your Elohim, to violate His covenant; and he has gone and served other gods [lit., *elohim*] and he bows down to them (or to the sun or to the moon or to the host of the heavens), which I have instructed [you] not [to do]; and [this idolatry] has been made known to you and you have heard [a credible report about it] and you have diligently investigated [this matter]; and if [lit., *behold*] the thing is established [as] true, [that] this abomination has been done in Israel; then you will bring [out] this man or this woman, who has done this evil thing, to your gates—the man or the woman—and you will stone them with stones until [lit., *and*] they die.

If it is discovered that a man or a woman in your midst is doing evil in the sight of Jehovah your God in one of the cities that your God will give to you—which act violates His covenant—and this person is serving other gods so that he bows down to them (or worships the sun, the moon or all the stars)—which I have instructed should not be done—and this has been made known to you—you have heard about it and then you diligently investigated the matter—and if this thing turns out to be true, that this abomination has been done in Israel; then you will bring this man or this woman to the gates of your city and you will stone them to death.

The criminal [lit., *the dying one*] will be put to death on the basis of two or three witnesses; he will not be executed on the basis of one witness.

Criminals are to be executed on the basis of two or three witnesses; you will not execute someone based upon the testimony of one person.

The hand of the witnesses will be against him; [they will be] the first to put him to death; and the hand of all the people [will be against the criminal] afterward.

The ones who cast the first stones will be the witnesses against the idolater. Then the rest of the people will join in on the execution afterward.

[By this,] you have purged [this] evil from your midst.

By doing this, you will be purging evil from your midst.

Regulations on higher courts

A Complete Translation of Deuteronomy 17

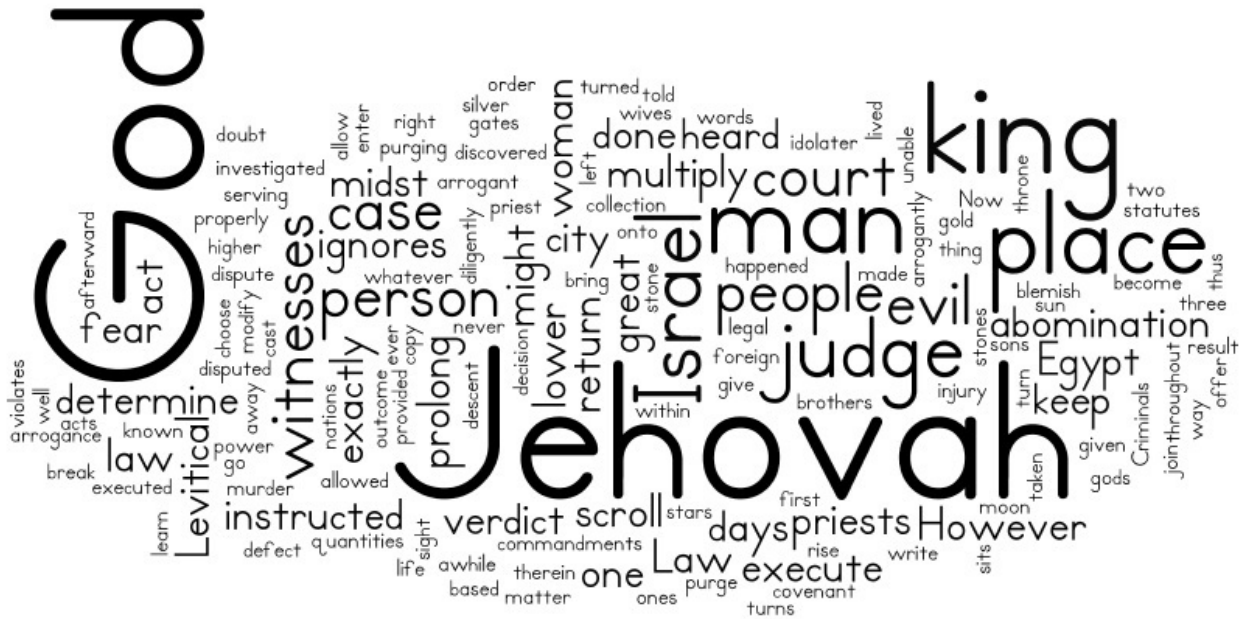
A Reasonably Literal Translation	A Reasonably Literal Paraphrase
When a case [requiring] a verdict is more extraordinary than you—whether two sides of a murder, whether two sides of a legal dispute, or two sides of an injury case—disputed words within your city—then you will rise up and you will go to a place chosen by Y ^e howah your Elohim in it.	Now and again, there will be a verdict which you are unable to determine, whether this is a murder or a legal dispute or an injury case—whatever might be disputed within your city—then you will rise up with the witnesses and go to the place chosen by Jehovah your God.
And you will go to the Levitical priests, or to a judge who is [in office] in those days, and you will inquire [as to their opinion on this case]. Then they will make known the judicial verdict, then you will do according to the word that they have made known to you from that place which was chosen by Y ^e howah.	You will present this case before the Levitical priests or before the presiding judge, and they will determine the outcome of the case.
Then you will be careful to do all that they instructed you [to do]. According to the word of the law which they instruct [or, <i>direct</i>] you and based upon the verdict that they tell you, [that] you will do, [and] you will not deviate either to the left or to the right of the word that they declare to you.	When you have heard the verdict, you will do exactly as they have instructed you, exactly according to the law which they have spoken to you, and you will not veer from the decision to modify it in any way.
But, the man who acts arrogantly, to not listen to the priest (the one who stands up to serve before [lit., <i>with</i>] Y ^e howah your Elohim), [or who does not listen] to the judge—that man will die.	However, if the judge from the lower court acts arrogantly and ignores the ruling of the priest (the man who stands before Jehovah your God) or ignores the judge from the higher court, then you will execute the lower court judge and thus purge this evil from Israel.
Thus, you will purge [this] evil from Israel. Consequently, all the people will hear [about this] and they will fear [the consequences of the law] and they will not act presumptuously again.	Consequently, the people will hear about what has happened, and they will properly fear to break the law, and they will not act with such arrogance again.
Regulations for a king	
When you enter into the land which Y ^e howah your Elohim has given you and you have taken possession of it and you have lived in it, you will say, 'I will place a king over me like all the other nations round about.'	When you enter into the land that Jehovah your God has given you, and you have taken possession of it and lived there for awhile, you might say, 'Let us place a king over us so that Israel will be like the other nations round about.'
You will definitely place a king over you, [a king] that Y ^e howah your Elohim will choose from among your brothers—[him] you will set over you [as] king; [but] you are not allowed to place over you a foreigner who [is] not your brother.	There is no doubt that you will place a king over yourselves—a man from your brothers that Jehovah your God will choose for you—that man you will place over you as king. However, you are not allowed to place a person of foreign descent over you.
Only he should not multiply horses to himself and he should not cause the people to return to Egypt in order to multiply the calvary [lit., <i>horse</i>], for Y ^e howah has said to [all of] you, 'You [all] will not return along that way ever again.'	When in power, the king should not multiply horses to himself and he should not cause the people to return to Egypt in order to make his calvary great, for Jehovah has already told all of you, 'You will never return to Egypt ever again.'

A Complete Translation of Deuteronomy 17	
A Reasonably Literal Translation	A Reasonably Literal Paraphrase
<p>He should not multiply to himself wives; so that he will not turn his heart away [from God]; nor should he greatly multiply silver and gold to himself.</p>	<p>He should not have a collection of wives; nor should he allow his heart to be turned away from God; nor should he multiply great quantities of gold and silver to himself.</p>
<p>And it will be, while he sits on the throne of his kingdom, that he will write for himself a copy of this Torah upon a scroll provided by the Levitical priests.</p>	<p>When the king sits on the throne, he should write out his own copy of the Law onto a scroll provided by the Levitical priests.</p>
<p>And it will be with him and he will read in it all the days of his life so that he will learn to fear Y^ehowah his Elohim, [and] to keep all the words of the Torah, and to obey [lit., <i>do</i>] the statutes so as to not lift up his heart over his brothers and so as not to turn aside from the commandments, [not] to the right or to the left, so that he will prolong his days over the kingdom [for] himself and his sons, in the midst of Israel.”</p>	<p>He will keep this scroll with him and read it throughout his life so that he will learn to fear Jehovah his God and to keep all the words of the Law, and to obey the statutes contained therein, so as not to become arrogant because of his position, and so that he does not turn to the left or the right from the commandments. As a result, he will prolong his days as king over Israel, and prolong the days of his sons as well.”</p>
Chapter Outline	Charts, Graphics and Short Doctrines

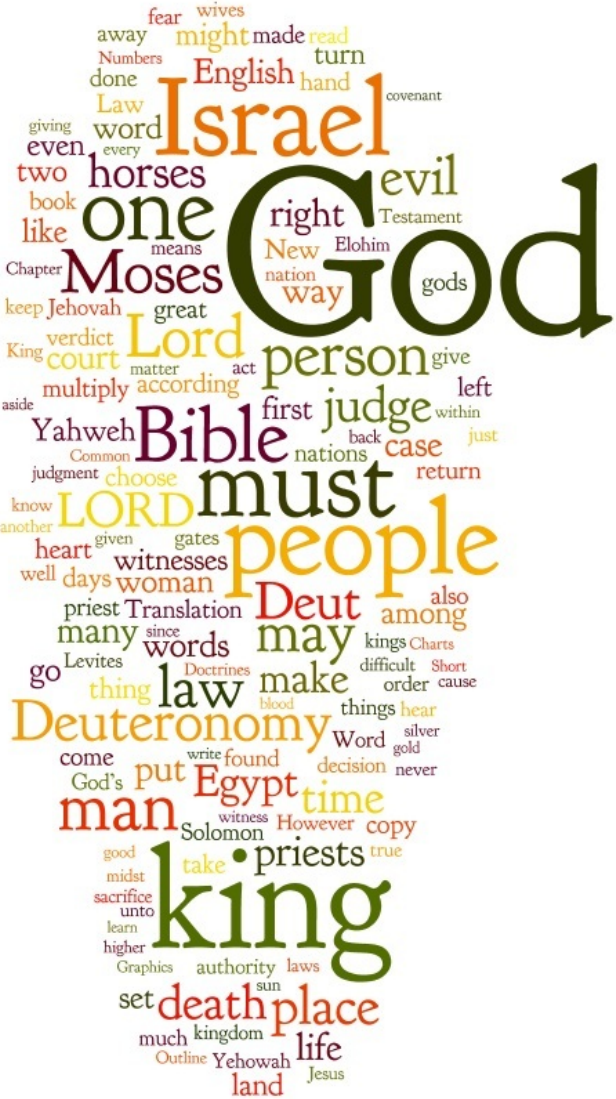
The following Psalms would be appropriately studied at this time:

I found nowhere that R. B. Thieme, Jr. covered Deut. 17 in his available lessons. There is some translation material on the Syndein page that suggests that Bob covered some of these verses, but I could not find that in the [master list](#) of Bob's studies.

Word Cloud from a Reasonably Literal Paraphrase of Deuteronomy 17



Word Cloud from Exegesis of Deuteronomy 17



These two graphics should be very similar; this means that the exegesis of Deuteronomy 17 has stayed on topic and has covered the information found in this chapter of the Word of God.

C

**Charts, Graphics and Short
Doctrines**

Chapter Outline

Beginning of Document

Doctrines Alluded to

Chapters of the Bible Alluded to

Definition of Terms

Introduction

Addendum

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Deuteronomy**