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Deuteronomy 17:18

וְכָתַב לְפָנָיו כְּתוּבָה אֶת-כָּל-דִּבְרֵי הַתּוֹרָה הַזֹּאת
בְּיָמָיו וְהָיָה לְפָנָיו כְּתוּבָה אֶת-כָּל-דִּבְרֵי הַתּוֹרָה הַזֹּאת

16 May 2021 JALLERSON

Deuteronomy 17:14-20
A King Over Israel
May 16, 2021

¹⁴ “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,’ ¹⁵ 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. ¹⁶ But he shall not multiply horses for himself, nor cause the people to return to Egypt to multiply horses, for the LORD has said to you, ‘You shall not return that way again.’ ¹⁷ Neither shall he multiply wives for himself, lest his heart turn away; nor shall he greatly multiply silver and gold for himself.

¹⁸ “Also it shall be, when he sits on the throne of his kingdom, that he shall write for himself a copy of this law in a book, from the one before the priests, the Levites. ¹⁹ And 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 and be careful to observe all the words of this law and these statutes, ²⁰ that his heart may not be lifted above his brethren, that he may not turn aside from the commandment to the right hand or to the left, and that he may prolong his days in his kingdom, he and his children in the midst of Israel.

There is an irony in the verses today which is played out many hundreds of years later in Israel. Moses anticipated, even before the people entered Canaan, that they would want a king over them, just like all of the nations who were around them.

As we will see, that is exactly what occurred. Israel had a system that worked, it was developed by the Lord, and there was no need to change things. But we will look for change even when things are going along just fine, and even when we are aware of how the changes will negatively affect us. The idea is, “This time, it will be different.”

It is a hopeless condition in us that says, “We can do it better. Just get out of the way and we will handle it.” If that sounds familiar in today’s world, it’s because the exact same type of scenario is unfolding in the United States, right before our eyes. John Adams, our second president and one of the founding fathers, said –

“Our Constitution was made only for a moral and religious people. It is wholly inadequate to the government of any other.” John Adams

Contrast that to what we read from Jerry Nadler in last week’s sermon, “What any religious tradition describes as God’s will is no concern of this Congress.” While much of the world has pursued a secular agenda where God has no part in their governments, the US has resisted this.

Instead, we have held to a moral and religious foundation to direct our affairs. But the cry has been raised more and more with each succeeding year until today the United States, which has been unlike most other nations, wants to be just like all of the nations.

What worked for Israel wasn't enough. And what has worked for the US isn't enough. 'God, get out of our way. We want to be like everyone else.'

Text Verse: (*For the LORD is our Judge,
The LORD is our Lawgiver,
The LORD is our King;
He will save us*). Isaiah 33:22

Isaiah was a prophet during the time of the kings. And yet, while serving under various kings, he wrote these words acknowledging that while Israel has kings, Israel has a King. Today, thousands of years later, they still have not seen this. They have a government that is formed which is at odds with this notion.

They are a secular people and their idea of having a biblical morality is, like the United States today, only an idea displayed through lip service. The laws they enact are detestable, the conduct they allow is perverse, and the only time the name of the Lord is invoked is when they need to feel self-righteous or when there is a calamity looming. Other than that, He is far from their minds. Just like it is with the Jerry Nadler's of this nation.

Unfortunately, they are in power, and therefore, they determine the nations' direction. It will not go well for Israel, and it cannot go well for us. And it all could be avoided if people just accepted the will of the Lord. But that cannot happen unless the will of the Lord is known.

And that cannot come about unless the word of the Lord is available, read, meditated upon, and then applied to the conduct of the individual or group in question. This is a certain truth that is revealed today in this passage from His superior word. And so, let us turn to that precious word once again and... May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

I. The Wisest Man Who Ever Lived (verses 14-17)

¹⁴ **“When you come to the land which the LORD your God is giving you,**

Similar words have already been seen several times, and they will continue to be repeated. They clearly indicate either Mosaic authorship or total fabrication. One cannot claim partial authenticity when an entire passage is anchored on a verse such as this.

And as each passage is logically placed within the main content of the book, a meticulously designed structure evolves that reveals a single, unified whole that bears the stamp of one Source as it is then conveyed through the chosen instrument of writing the words out, meaning Moses.

Moses is speaking of an event – coming into the land – that is, literally, days away. And yet, the words are referring to a possibility that may be years away, or that – ostensibly – may never come to pass. However, the fact that they are being conveyed to Israel now indicates that the Lord knows they will occur.

He is their Ruler, and He is giving them the land. Thus, this situation speaks of a theocracy. In this situation, entering the land with the Lord as their ultimate Leader...

14 (con't) **and possess it and dwell in it, and say,**

The use of the prepositions one after another provides its own emphasis: *v'rishtah v'yasavtah bah v'amarta* – “and have possessed it, and have dwelt in it, and you have said.” It is to be a reflection before the proposed action is taken.

Who promised you the land? Who delivered you into the land? Who gave it to you to possess? Who made that possession possible? You now dwell there. How did that come about?

A similar thought process is conveyed between conservative and liberal ideologies at any given moment in our world today. Where did what you have come from? To whom do you want to be accountable? Be careful what you ask for...

Unfortunately, it seems people always inevitably incline toward the wrong thing. Moses knows this because the Lord is working through him as he writes out the law. The people will reject the good. In this, they will say...

14 (con't) **‘I will set a king over me**

The words have consistently been in the singular. It is Israel, the nation, who is being addressed, and it is Israel the nation who will – as a whole – take this path. “Who has led me all along? Look at all the good I have around me! The abundant blessings and productive land. All is marvelous! It’s time for a change for something better.”

For an extended period of time, the land was led by Judges. The Lord raised them up, they served, and then they were replaced as the Lord saw fit. Israel was guided by them, but the Lord was their Head. However, it wasn’t enough. Israel, instead of looking upwards to the Lord, focused their eyes outward – to the nations.

They saw how things worked, and they felt out of place. The sufficiency of the Lord was – to them – insufficient. Moses knew that Israel would want to be...

¹⁴ (con't) **like all the nations that *are* around me,'**

The thinking is perverse, in the extreme. Israel had circumcision on the eighth day. Israel had the Passover. Israel had the Sabbath. Israel had the tabernacle, the Day of Atonement, and the Feast of Sukkoth. Their garments had tassels, and their diet was set apart from all others.

All of this was based on their relationship with the Lord. And yet, they wanted to (well, otherwise) be just like the nations around them in calling for a king. Moses knew it was coming, and it came...

“Now it came to pass when Samuel was old that he made his sons judges over Israel. ² The name of his firstborn was Joel, and the name of his second, Abijah; they were judges in Beersheba. ³ But his sons did not walk in his ways; they turned aside after dishonest gain, took bribes, and perverted justice.

⁴ Then all the elders of Israel gathered together and came to Samuel at Ramah, ⁵ and said to him, ‘Look, you are old, and your sons do not walk in your ways. Now make us a king to judge us like all the nations.’” 1 Samuel 8:1-5

With this petition, the people – who were like none of the nations – decided that in this particular case, they would be like all of the nations. Everything else the Lord had done for them worked fine, but they needed to tweak things to make them better. It’s just a little tweak after all, at least from their perspective –

“But the thing displeased Samuel when they said, ‘Give us a king to judge us.’ So Samuel prayed to the LORD. ⁷ And the LORD said to Samuel, ‘Heed the voice of the people in all that they say to you; for they have not rejected you, but they have rejected Me, that I should not reign over them.’” 1 Samuel 8:6, 7

When (not if!) this were to come about, Moses says...

¹⁵ **you shall surely set a king over you**

The words are emphatic: *som tasum alekha melek* – “setting you shall set over you king.” What will be said about such a king now becomes a point of law.

In the exchange between the Lord and Samuel, the Lord said, “Now therefore, heed their voice. However, you shall solemnly forewarn them, and show them the behavior of the king who will reign over them” (1 Samuel 8:9).

This is what Samuel did, carefully explaining and warning what the consequences of their request would be. That is found in 1 Samuel 8:10-18.

Despite the warnings, the people who are completely unlike any other people decided they wanted to be just like all the other people, well... at least in this one way –

“Nevertheless the people refused to obey the voice of Samuel; and they said, ‘No, but we will have a king over us, ²⁰ 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.’

²¹ And Samuel heard all the words of the people, and he repeated them in the hearing of the LORD. ²² So the LORD said to Samuel, ‘Heed their voice, and make them a king.’”

1 Samuel 8:19-22

The people would ask, and the people did ask. However, there were to be conditions laid out by Moses now that must be heeded...

¹⁵ (con’t) **whom the LORD your God chooses;**

With the people adamant that they wanted a king, 1 Samuel 8 closes out with, “And Samuel said to the men of Israel, ‘Every man go to his city.’” The next chapter then immediately details the account of the selection of Saul as the first king of Israel.

His name means, “Asked For.” It is an appropriate name for what occurred. The people asked for a king, having rejected the Lord in this capacity. When a king is chosen by the Lord, he will be...

¹⁵ (con’t) **one from among your brethren you shall set as king over you;**

In the previous chapter, the appointment of judges and officers was commanded. Further, the line of the high priest had already been established and codified into law. However, the appointment of a king has not been commanded because the Lord is – ostensibly – their King.

But the precept is not forbidden. Rather, it is an allowance. And yet, in the approval of such an allowance, more commands then logically follow. This one says that only an Israelite was to be set as king over the nation.

The obvious implication is that if the Lord is to be their King, then any king set above the people is to emulate the true coming King, the Messiah. Such will be seen as the prophetic writings later come. This may not have even been on the minds of the people, but it is was – with all certainty – on the mind of the Lord.

When Christ came, it is this verse that the people challenged Him with concerning a matter of law –

“Then the Pharisees went and plotted how they might entangle Him in His talk. ¹⁶ And they sent to Him their disciples with the Herodians, saying, ‘Teacher, we know that You are true, and teach the way of God in truth; nor do You care about anyone, for You do not regard the person of men. ¹⁷ Tell us, therefore, what do You think? Is it lawful to pay taxes to Caesar, or not?’” Matthew 22:15-17

Their question was duplicitous. If the Lord had answered, “Yes,” He would have become a lawbreaker of the Mosaic law and worthy to be condemned by Israel. If He had said, “No,” He would have become a lawbreaker to Rome, and would be condemned by the Romans (of course after being ratted out by the Pharisees).

However, they never considered the third option, an option that implied that even though they could not violate the Mosaic code in the selection of their rulers, they were – by default – set under the authority of Rome by the Lord, and thus they were responsible to Rome while still being responsible to Moses.

Jesus knew this because it is He who gave them the Law of Moses, and it is He who set them under Rome. He anticipated their question, and He shamed them with His response – “*Render therefore to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s, and to God the things that are God’s*” (Matthew 22:21).

As an Israelite, He could not show partiality to the law, nor could He show partiality to Caesar, because it is the Lord who placed Israel under both. As the Lord, He expected compliance for both. For Israel however...

¹⁵ (con’t) **you may not set a foreigner over you, who *is* not your brother.**

The word is *nokri*. It signifies a stranger or something out of place. At times, the term is used for an adulteress. It is something that does not belong because the nature of the thing is foreign. This is then restated in apposition by saying “who *is* not your brother.” In other words, only a brother Israelite could be king, and when he was installed as the king, a king he would be.

Before going on, a point must be made. The leaders of Israel tried to trap Jesus into violating this law in order to obtain justification to have him destroyed. And yet, *while* they were having Him destroyed unjustly, *they* violated this very law that we are looking at right now with their own words –

“But they cried out, ‘Away with Him, away with Him! Crucify Him!’

Pilate said to them, ‘Shall I crucify your King?’

The chief priests answered, ‘We have no king but Caesar!’” John 19:15

They had rejected the Law of Moses, they had rejected the words of Isaiah that the Lord is their King, and therefore, the penalty of the law stood heavily upon them. For those who later failed to acknowledge Christ, their destiny will be a mournful one.

For now, and with Moses' words concerning a brother Israelite ruling over Israel, that still would not mean that he was an absolute sovereign. As is seen in the next words...

¹⁶ But he shall not multiply horses for himself,

In a kingdom, and depending on the structure of that kingdom, a king could ostensibly wield unlimited power. His right to rule was absolute. However, limitations were set upon any future king of Israel.

This is seen immediately after the authorization for the appointment of a king in the words *raq lo yarbeh lo susim* – Only! No shall he multiply to himself horses.” There are numerous reasons for this prohibition, but the main one is that of personal pride or exaltation.

A king with many horses would elevate himself above those under his rule. And more, he would immediately begin to trust in a cavalry above the hosts of Israel that were given by the Lord for them to trust in Him. The thought is expressed in the Psalms –

“Some trust in chariots, and some in horses;
But we will remember the name of the LORD our God.” Psalm 40:7

And again –

No king is saved by the multitude of an army;
A “mighty man is not delivered by great strength.
¹⁷ A horse is a vain hope for safety;
Neither shall it deliver any by its great strength.” Psalm 33:16, 17

Despite this, Solomon, the wisest man who ever lived, failed to apply the wisdom he was given, notably disobeying this precept –

“And Solomon gathered chariots and horsemen; he had one thousand four hundred chariots and twelve thousand horsemen, whom he stationed in the chariot cities and with the king at Jerusalem.” 1 Kings 10:26

Along with this, Moses next says...

16 (con't) **nor cause the people to return to Egypt to multiply horses,**

l'maan harboth sus – “to end purpose multiply horse.” In other words, the people might say, “We are not returning to Egypt to live. Nor are we returning there for some other ignoble cause. Rather, We are going there with the set purpose of building up Israel. Thus, it is ok for us to do this.” Moses says otherwise.

Israel had left Egypt. They were not to return there. This was not a temporary prohibition. One might think, “Moses meant this as a short-term expedient until we are established in the land. After that, returning to Egypt would not involve a national departure as it might have back then.”

This thinking would be incorrect. First, it is spoken into the same law that all other commands are placed, and it is done so without any qualifiers. It is a matter of law, and to disobey it is to disobey the law.

Secondly, the issue had nothing to do with the possible desire for a national return to Egypt, thus abandoning the land of Canaan. This is evidenced, perfectly and clearly, by the prophet Isaiah –

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

Many hundreds of years after Israel was in the land, at a time when they were deeply rooted there, with no chance of the people packing up and moving back to Egypt, Isaiah repeated the sentiment found in this verse now.

For all intents and purposes, Egypt represents defeat. For Israel to go back and seek assistance for their kingdom, from a kingdom the Lord had defeated, was to implicitly reject the Lord who had gained them the victory in the first place!

In type, Egypt pictures bondage to sin. Who delivered us from that? The Lord. To go back to where we were in our sin in order to find a remedy to our plight is to reject the One who delivered us from sin in the first place: “I have this addiction, and to get myself through, I will return to where the addiction came from.”

The path back to Egypt was to be cut. There was (and there is) to be only a reliance on the Lord. Throughout the prophets, horses are mentioned in relation to war or foreign assistance. In this, the people were trusting in something other than the Lord for their continuance.

What is it we need? Another drink? Another shot of dope? Another click on a porn site? Rather, it is the Lord to whom we are to look, and in Him we are to place our trust.

“Take words with you,
And return to the LORD.
Say to Him,
‘Take away all iniquity;
Receive us graciously,
For we will offer the sacrifices of our lips.
³ Assyria shall not save us,
We will not ride on horses,
Nor will we say anymore to the work of our hands, “You are our gods.”
For in You the fatherless finds mercy.” Hosea 14:2, 3

Despite this, Solomon – who according to 1 Kings 3:12 is the wisest man who ever lived – failed to apply the wisdom he was given, notably disobeying this precept –

“Also Solomon had horses imported from Egypt and Keveh; the king’s merchants bought them in Keveh at the current price. ²⁹ Now a chariot that was imported from Egypt cost six hundred shekels of silver, and a horse one hundred and fifty; and thus, through their agents, they exported them to all the kings of the Hittites and the kings of Syria.” 1 Kings 10:28, 29

¹⁶ (con’t) **for the LORD has said to you, ‘You shall not return that way again.’**

This was not a minor, temporary prohibition. Nor was it a suggestion. It is a word of law. The way back to Egypt was not to be traveled again. The king was so warned. And more...

¹⁷ **Neither shall he multiply wives for himself,**

This was, and remains today in some places, the practice of many kings. The multiplication of wives has a variety of purposes including increasing one’s offspring. Some purposes may be valid while others are not.

However, this cannot be taken as a verse forbidding polygamy. If that were so, we would have a contradiction in Scripture. When the Lord spoke through Nathan the prophet to David, He said –

“I gave you your master’s house and your master’s wives into your keeping, and gave you the house of Israel and Judah. And if that had been too little, I also would have given you much more!” 2 Samuel 12:8

Not only did David have his own wives, but the Lord gave him more, and avows that He would have even given him more. At what point having multiple wives becomes multiplying wives is not stated, but us to judge as to one, ten, or twenty falls under the fallacy of the beard. If the Lord provides, it cannot be considered wrong.

However, any good purpose and point of having a variety of wives was exceeded by David’s son, Solomon. Despite being the wisest man who ever lived, he failed to live out the wisdom he was given, notably disobeying this precept –

“But King Solomon loved many foreign women, as well as the daughter of Pharaoh: women of the Moabites, Ammonites, Edomites, Sidonians, and Hittites— ²from the nations of whom the LORD had said to the children of Israel, “You shall not intermarry with them, nor they with you. Surely they will turn away your hearts after their gods.” Solomon clung to these in love. ³And he had seven hundred wives, princesses, and three hundred concubines.” 1 Kings 11:1-3

There was a specific reason Moses now provides this law...

17 (con’t) lest his heart turn away;

The issue is not because more than one wife was wrong. It is because a multitude of wives would lead the king down the wrong path, away from the Lord – exactly as happened to Solomon –

“...and his wives turned away his heart. ⁴ For it was so, when Solomon was old, that his wives turned his heart after other gods; and his heart was not loyal to the LORD his God, as was the heart of his father David. ⁵ For Solomon went after Ashtoreth the goddess of the Sidonians, and after Milcom the abomination of the Ammonites. ⁶ Solomon did evil in the sight of the LORD, and did not fully follow the LORD, as did his father David. ⁷ Then Solomon built a high place for Chemosh the abomination of Moab, on the hill that is east of Jerusalem, and for Molech the abomination of the people of Ammon. ⁸ And he did likewise for all his foreign wives, who burned incense and sacrificed to their gods.” 1 Kings 11:3-8

17 (con’t) nor shall he greatly multiply silver and gold for himself.

v'keseph v'zahav lo yarbeh lo meod – “and silver and gold no shall he multiply to himself greatly.” Based on the words here, David could be accused of violating this precept. He had in his possession one hundred thousand talents of gold, one million talents of silver, and bronze beyond measure.

But his wealth must be considered an exception to this precept, for one particular reason. He had acquired it with the set purpose of building the house of the Lord (see 1 Chronicles 22:14). On the other hand, along came his son, Solomon. Despite being the wisest man who ever lived, he failed to apply the wisdom he was given, notably disobeying this precept –

“All King Solomon’s drinking vessels were gold, and all the vessels of the House of the Forest of Lebanon were pure gold. Not one was silver, for this was accounted as nothing in the days of Solomon.” 1 Kings 10:21

It is as if Moses had Solomon in mind when he looked into the future, and it is as if the chronicler of the life of Solomon had Moses’ words in mind as he wrote out his words. The case is that the Lord purposefully included these words in both to show us the tragedy of relying solely on one’s personal wisdom without relying on the Lord for its application.

The often-repeated thought in Scripture says –

“The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom,
And the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding.” Proverbs 9:10

In other words, true wisdom only begins with the fear of the Lord. If it begins with it, then it must continue with it, and it must end with it. If one were to say, “The best gas is the beginning of the race,” it is a statement that only the best gas is what can win the race.

Hence, it logically follows that the continuance of the race and the finishing of the race are dependent on that same gas. All of the wisdom in the world is pointless if the Lord is not the center of focus in the application of the wisdom.

The record of the wisdom, the wealth, and the power of Solomon is permanently tarnished because he failed to remember the precept of his own proverb. In his rush to find enlightenment apart from the Lord, he ultimately found that only in the Lord is found true enlightenment –

“Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter:
Fear God and keep His commandments,
For this is man’s all.

¹⁴ For God will bring every work into judgment,

Including every secret thing,
Whether good or evil.” Ecclesiastes 12:13, 14

In order to ensure that the king of Israel, whoever he may be, would comply with these precepts, Moses next gives another command to the would-be king...

A book to study, seeking out its veins of gold
A king’s adventure as he seeks the Lord’s face
The Torah of God, daily to unfold
Lessons for the throne in every generation; in the king’s place

What will speak out to him on today’s trek?
This law seems so vast and complicated some of the time
Will the day’s meditation be a burden on his neck?
Or will what he reads seem glorious and sublime?

“Open my eyes, O Lord, to what lies ahead
Direct my understanding and also guide my heart”
This is what the king petitions; looking to be fed
This is what he asks for, each day upon his start

Show the king the riches of Christ in his reading of the book
Be with him as he opens it, and for life’s direction he does look

II. A Copy of This Law (verses 18-20)

¹⁸ “Also it shall be, when he sits on the throne of his kingdom,

v’hayah kesivto al kise mamlakto – “And according to the sitting upon throne his kingdom.” In other words, when he begins to reign.” This would, ostensibly, be the first true duty of his kingship. That duty is...

^{18 (con’t)} that he shall write for himself a copy of this law in a book,

v’katav lo eth mishneh ha’torah ha’zot al sepher – “and write to himself copy the Torah the this upon book.” Whether the king wrote out the law himself or had a scribe do it is debated.

To me, it seems to ignore the obvious to say a scribe could write it out. Otherwise, one would think Moses would say, “He shall be provided a copy of this law.” Rather, the words seem personal and directive in nature: “The king shall write it out.”

However, in 2 Chronicles 23, a boy king, Joash, was installed at the age of seven. He would have been too young to make such a copy. Because of this, it explicitly says –

“And they brought out the king’s son, put the crown on him, gave him the Testimony, and made him king. Then Jehoiada and his sons anointed him, and said, ‘Long live the king!’” 2 Chronicles 23:11

As a side note, the words translated as “copy the law,” as found in the Greek translation, form the basis of the word Deuteronomy. The words are *deuteros* and *nomos*, or literally, “second law.”

Together, in Greek, they read *to deuteronomion touto*, In other words, one could say, “He shall write for himself the Deuteronomy.” It is from this that both the Latin and the English derive the name we now use. The words are found again in Joshua 8:32 when Joshua wrote a second copy on the stones of the altar Israel built on Mount Ebal.

However, it seems apparent that the phrase as it is given here for the king certainly does not mean only the book of Deuteronomy, but rather the entire Torah – meaning the five books of Moses.

The king was to be versed in the creation, the history of sin, the anticipation of the Messiah, the call of the patriarchs, the bondage of his people, their redemption from Egypt, the giving of the law, the turning of their hearts away from the Lord, of His faithfulness to them in punishment, the anticipated establishment of them in the land, and even of the prophecy of the Song of Moses that calls to attention both heaven and earth of the future apostasy of Israel.

All of this was to be copied by the king. Just as the law copied by Joshua on the altar stood as a guide, a warning, and a witness to Israel, so the copy the king made was to have the same purpose. That book copied by the king was to be...

¹⁸ (con’t) **from *the one* before the priests, the Levites.**

This is referred to in Deuteronomy 31 –

“So it was, when Moses had completed writing the words of this law in a book, when they were finished, ²⁵ that Moses commanded the Levites, who bore the ark of the covenant of the LORD, saying: ²⁶ ‘Take this Book of the Law, and put it beside the ark of the covenant of the LORD your God, that it may be there as a witness against you; ²⁷ for I know your rebellion and your stiff neck. If today, while I am yet alive with you, you have

been rebellious against the LORD, then how much more after my death?”

Deuteronomy 31:24-27

The original was kept in the sanctuary. Any copy of it was to be directly from it, and it was probably carefully checked by someone qualified to verify it as an authentic rendering. As far as the king's copy...

¹⁹ And it shall be with him, and he shall read it all the days of his life,

This is a command. To not read it would be a violation of the law. Thus, the burden of being a king actually bears more weight of judgment than that of others, at least in this regard. The thought is reminiscent of the words of James 3:1 –

“My brethren, let not many of you become teachers, knowing that we shall receive a stricter judgment.” James 3:1

One who is expected to lead, or instruct, from the law must know the law. This is what makes Solomon's violations of it so perplexing. It seems as if he read the first words Moses penned that we have already looked at, and then he decided to see how merciful the Lord could actually be by violating them all.

The king of Israel was given a command to read the law every single day of his life. This was so that he was aware of the law. Though no such explicit requirement is made under the New Covenant, the intent behind the precept is still there.

A person cannot teach what he does not know. And one cannot know that which he is not familiar with. And familiarity with something such as biblical precepts will not be remembered if they are not read and meditated on constantly.

And, for the Christian in the pew, there is – likewise – no excuse for you to be misled through incorrect instruction. This is especially so in today's world. The word is available, it can be accessed at any time and almost during any activity we pursue. If it is to be the rule and guide of your life, it can only be so if you know it. For the king of Israel, it was so...

¹⁹ (con't) that he may learn to fear the LORD his God and be careful to observe all the words of this law and these statutes,

Moses uses the same word he so often does, *l'maan*, or “to end purpose.” The daily reading was to be the king's vital connection between himself and his relationship with the Lord. If he failed to do as instructed, that could not exist. And if he failed to do so, he could not comply. And, fellow follower of Christ, neither can you. Of this, Adam Clarke rightly states –

“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 vicegerents of Jehovah.”

But does not this apply to us as well? We have the authoritative word of God. We cannot add to it, and we cannot take from it. Therefore, our conduct in relation to it, our training concerning it, and even the reception of someone’s training from it, must be in accord with what is presented in the word. Nothing else can or will suffice. Again, Joseph Benson rightly states –

“It is not enough to have Bibles, but we must use them, yea, use them daily. Our souls must have constant meals of that manna, which, if well digested, will afford them true nourishment and strength.” Joseph Benson

The instruction for the king is instruction for you because the precept remains true for both. If Joseph Smith took to heart the words of Scripture, his heart would not have been lifted up against the Lord to start Mormonism. And if the followers of Joseph Smith were acquainted with the word, they would not face the certain prospect of an eternal swim in the Lake of Fire.

But this is exactly what they will face because they simply failed to abide by the precept. As for the king, in fearing the Lord and knowing his law and statutes, it was so...

²⁰ that his heart may not be lifted above his brethren,

The king was a king because the Lord chose him to be so. Saul obviously failed to observe the precept before us now. When he was first called as the king, he said to Samuel –

“Am I not a Benjamite, of the smallest of the tribes of Israel, and my family the least of all the families of the tribe of Benjamin? Why then do you speak like this to me?”

1 Samuel 9:21

However, because he failed to heed the word of law, his kingship was removed from him –

“But Samuel said to Saul, ‘I will not return with you, for you have rejected the word of the LORD, and the LORD has rejected you from being king over Israel.’

²⁷ And as Samuel turned around to go away, Saul seized the edge of his robe, and it tore. ²⁸ So Samuel said to him, ‘The LORD has torn the kingdom of Israel from you today, and has given it to a neighbor of yours, who is better than you. ²⁹ And also the Strength of Israel will not lie nor relent. For He is not a man, that He should relent.’”

1 Samuel 15:26-29

The word was to protect the king from such error, and it is intended to do so for us today as well. In the case of the king...

^{20 (con't)} **that he may not turn aside from the commandment to the right hand or to the left,**

The king cannot stay on the right path unless the requirements of how to do so are known. Without the law, he is like a blind man in the dark. With the law –

“Your word is a lamp to my feet
And a light to my path.” Psalm 119:105

It is that simple. In the dark, we don't know if we are turning right, turning left, or going straight. And the fact is, that we will not go straight for very long. The natural inclination in the dark is to veer, and it happens very quickly. But with the light of the word, we will continue on the path without turning aside.

*As I sat typing these words on 8 March of 2021, I was thinking in my head, “How many people who hear them (or read them) will actually take what I am typing to heart?” All I can do is convey. In conveying, the words will hopefully convict. And in conviction, may there be willful and wholehearted compliance. The path is set, and the word is the lamp to illuminate it. What will you do?

And there is a good reason for what is conveyed...

^{*20 (fin)} **and that he may prolong *his* days in his kingdom, he and his children in the midst of Israel.**

There is no “and” in the Hebrew. The addition is unfortunate because the previous clause also began with “that.” But the word here, *l'maan*, is not in the previous clause. Here it says, “to end purpose.” In other words, there is a goal to be attained through the reading and meditation of the word.

Not turning aside is the action, but in not turning aside, the king would prolong his days. For Saul, this did not occur. For other kings, it did not occur. When the king departed from the word, even the most disastrous of calamities came upon him –

“Because you have not walked in the ways of Jehoshaphat your father, or in the ways of Asa king of Judah, ¹³ but have walked in the way of the kings of Israel, and have made Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem to play the harlot like the harlotry of the house of Ahab, and also have killed your brothers, those of your father's household, who were better than yourself, ¹⁴ behold, the LORD will strike your people with a serious affliction—your children, your wives, and all your possessions; ¹⁵ and you will

become very sick with a disease of your intestines, until your intestines come out by reason of the sickness, day by day.” 2 Chronicles 21:12-15

“After all this the LORD struck him in his intestines with an incurable disease. ¹⁹ Then it happened in the course of time, after the end of two years, that his intestines came out because of his sickness; so he died in severe pain. And his people made no burning for him, like the burning for his fathers.” 2 Chronicles 21:18, 19

As far as the words, “he and his children in the midst of Israel,” that was literally true on occasion as well –

“So they took the king and brought him up to the king of Babylon at Riblah, and they pronounced judgment on him. ⁷ Then they killed the sons of Zedekiah before his eyes, put out the eyes of Zedekiah, bound him with bronze fetters, and took him to Babylon.” 2 Chronicles 25:6, 7

These, and countless other such terrible events, could have been avoided if the kings of Israel had simply taken the word to heart –

“Blessed is the man
Who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly,
Nor stands in the path of sinners,
Nor sits in the seat of the scornful;
² But his delight is in the law of the LORD,
And in His law he meditates day and night.
³ He shall be like a tree
Planted by the rivers of water,
That brings forth its fruit in its season,
Whose leaf also shall not wither;
And whatever he does shall prosper.” Psalm 1:1-3

But such was not to be. And the reason for this is that these men, like each of us, is fallen and fallible. To have a copy of the word, and to even hold it as close as meditation on the mind, is still insufficient to keep us from death.

This is proven in good kings as well as bad kings. And the reason for this is that our minds are pre-infected with the sin of our first father. The law could only be a guard for the king, not a ticket to restoration and life.

The king was to write out, read, meditate upon, and know this word to guard him until the time when the embodiment of this word, meaning Christ Jesus would come and fulfill it –

“Then I said, ‘Behold, I have come—
In the volume of the book it is written of Me—
To do Your will, O God.’” Psalm 40:7

David, a king of Israel, knowing full well that he had turned from the path in his life, prophesied of One who would come and not do so. Instead, He would not only walk on the straight path, He would be that straight path – the way, the truth, and the life.

As the embodiment of the law, we find our restoration with God through Him because He lived out this impossible body of law for us. This is the lesson of the law, and it is a lesson of the King who sits on the throne of His kingdom.

It is a kingdom that will be prolonged for eternal days, and it is one to be enjoyed by His children forever. The final words of the verse and the chapter are summed up in the words of Hebrews 2 –

“Here am I and the children whom God has given Me.” Hebrews 2:13

Thank God for Jesus Christ. And all of God’s people say. “Amen.”

Closing Verse: “He does not delight in the strength of the horse;
He takes no pleasure in the legs of a man.

¹¹ The LORD takes pleasure in those who fear Him,
In those who hope in His mercy.” Psalm 147:10, 11

Next Week: Deuteronomy 18:1-8 *This didn’t come about by chance...* (The Lord is His Inheritance) (54th Deuteronomy Sermon)

The Lord has you exactly where He wants you. He has a good plan and purpose for you. But He also has expectations of you as He prepares you for entrance into His Land of Promise. So, follow Him and trust Him and He will do marvelous things for you and through you.

A King Over Israel

“When you come to the land
Which the LORD your God is giving you,
when it shall be
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, him
and not another
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

But he shall not multiply horses for himself
Nor cause the people to return to Egypt to
multiply horses

-----as I now say

For the LORD has said to you
'You shall not return again that way

Neither shall he multiply wives for himself
Lest his heart turn away

Nor shall he greatly multiply silver and gold
for himself

It shall not be this way

"Also it shall be, when he sits on the throne
of his kingdom

That he shall write for himself a copy; yes,
be sure he writes

Of this law in a book

From the one before the priests, the Levites

And 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

And be careful to observe all the words of
this law

And these statutes in the land which he
shall trod

That his heart may not be lifted above his
brethren

That he may not turn aside from the
commandment

-----to the right hand or to the left, as to
you I tell

And that he may prolong his days in his
kingdom

He and his children in the midst of Israel

Lord God, turn our hearts to be obedient to
Your word

Give us wisdom to be ever faithful to You

May we carefully heed each thing we have
heard

Yes, Lord God may our hearts be faithful
and true

And we shall be content and satisfied in You
alone

We will follow You as we sing our songs of
praise

Hallelujah to You; to us Your path You have
shown

Hallelujah we shall sing to You for all of our
days

Hallelujah and Amen