

DEUTERONOMY 17:1 You shall not sacrifice to the LORD your God an ox, or a sheep, in which is a defect, or anything evil; for that is an abomination to the LORD your God.

All sacrifices to be without blemish, Deu 17:1. Of persons consisted of idolatry and their punishment, Deu 17:2-7. 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, Deu 17:8-13. The king that may be chosen to be one of their brethren; no stranger to be appointed to that office, Deu 17:14, Deu 17:15. He shall not multiply horses to himself, nor cause the people to return unto Egypt, Deu 17:16. Nor multiply wives, money, etc., Deu 17:17. 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, Deu 17:18-20.

Verse 1

Wherein is blemish - God must not have that offered to him which thou wouldst not use thyself. This not only refers to the perfect sacrifice offered by Christ Jesus, but to that sincerity and uprightness of heart which God requires in all those who approach him in the way of worship.

DEUTERONOMY 17:2 If there is found in your midst, within any of your gates which the LORD your God gives you, a man or woman who does that which is evil in the sight of the LORD your God, in transgressing his covenant,

DEUTERONOMY 17:3 and has gone and served other gods, and worshipped them, or the sun, or the moon, or any of the stars of the sky, which I have not commanded;

DEUTERONOMY 17:4 and you are told, and you have heard of it, then you shall inquire diligently. Behold, if it is true, and the thing certain, that such abomination is done in Israel,

Verse 4

If it be told thee - In a private way by any confidential person. And thou hast heard of it; so that it appears to be notorious, very likely to be true, and publicly scandalous. And hast inquired diligently - sought to find out the truth of the report by the most careful examination of persons reporting, circumstances of the case, etc. And, behold, it be true - the report is not founded on vague rumor, hearsay, or malice. And the thing certain - substantiated by the fullest evidence. Then shalt thou bring forth that man, Deu 17:5. As the charge of idolatry was the most solemn and awful that could be brought against an Israelite, because it affected his life, therefore God required that the charge should be substantiated by the most unequivocal facts, and the most competent witnesses. Hence all the precautions mentioned in the fourth verse must be carefully used, in order to arrive at so affecting and so awful a truth.

DEUTERONOMY 17:5 then you shall bring out that man or that woman, who has done this evil thing, to your gates, even that same man or woman; and you shall stone them to death with stones.

DEUTERONOMY 17:6 At the mouth of two witnesses, or three witnesses, he who is to die shall be put to death. At the mouth of one witness he shall not be put to death.

Verse 6

Two witnesses - One might be deceived, or be prejudiced or malicious; therefore God required two substantial witnesses for the support of the charge.

DEUTERONOMY 17:7 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 your midst.

DEUTERONOMY 17:8 If there arises a matter too hard for you in judgement, between blood and blood, between plea and plea, and between stroke and stroke, being matters of controversy within your gates; then you shall arise, and go up to the place which the LORD your God chooses.

Verse 8

If there arise a matter too hard for thee - 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.

DEUTERONOMY 17:9 You shall come to the priests who are Levites, and to the judge who shall be in those days. You shall inquire, and they shall give you the verdict.

DEUTERONOMY 17:10 You shall do according to the decisions of the verdict which they shall give you from that place which the LORD chooses. You shall observe to do according to all that they shall teach you:

DEUTERONOMY 17:11 according to the decisions of the law which they shall teach you, and according to the judgement 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.

DEUTERONOMY 17:12 The man who does presumptuously, in not listening to the priest who stands to minister there before the LORD your God, or to the judge, even that man shall die. You shall put away the evil from Israel.

Verse 12

The man that will do presumptuously - 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.

DEUTERONOMY 17:13 All the people shall hear, and fear, and do no more presumptuously.

DEUTERONOMY 17:14 When you have come to the land which the LORD your God gives 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";

DEUTERONOMY 17:15 you shall surely set him king over yourselves, whom the LORD your God chooses. You shall set as king over you one from among your brothers. You may not put a foreigner over you, who is not your brother.

Verse 15

One from among thy brethren shalt thou set king over thee - It was on the ground of this command that the Jews proposed that insidious question to our Lord, Is it lawful to give tribute to Caesar, Or No? Mat 22:17; for they were then under the authority of a foreign power. Had Christ said Yes, then they would have condemned him by this law; had he said No, then they would have accused him to Caesar. See this subject discussed in great detail in the notes, Mat 22:16 (note), etc.

DEUTERONOMY 17:16 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 the LORD has said to you, "You shall not go back that way again."

Verse 16

He shall not multiply horses - 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.
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DEUTERONOMY 17:17 He shall not multiply wives to himself, that his heart not turn away. He shall not greatly multiply to himself silver and gold.

Verse 17

Neither shall he multiply wives - For this would necessarily lead to foreign alliances, and be the means of introducing the manners and customs of other nations, and their idolatry also. Solomon sinned against this precept, and brought ruin on himself and on the land by it; see 1Kgs 11:4.

DEUTERONOMY 17:18 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.

Verse 18

He shall write him a copy of this law - משנה התורה הזאת mishneh hattorah hazzoth, an iteration or duplicate of this law; translated by the Septuagint, το δευτερονομιον τουτο this deuteronomy. From this version both the Vulgate Latin and all the modern versions have taken the name of this book; and from the original word the Jews call it Mishneh. See the preface to this book.

Out of that which is before the priests the Levites - It is likely this means, that the 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.

DEUTERONOMY 17:19 It shall be with him, and he shall read from 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;

Verse 19

And it shall be with him, etc. - It 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.

DEUTERONOMY 17:20 that his heart not be lifted up above his brothers, and that he 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 children, in the midst of Israel.

Verse 20

He, and his children, in the midst of Israel - 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.