

# Deuteronomy 17:16

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

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 the LORD hath said unto you, Ye shall henceforth return no more that way.

## Analysis

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**But he shall not multiply horses to himself** (לֹא־יַרְבֶּה־לְךָ סְוסִים) —horses symbolized military might and Egyptian-style chariot warfare. Yarbeh (multiply) means accumulate excessively. God forbids royal militarism that trusts in armaments rather than divine protection.

**Nor cause the people to return to Egypt** identifies the deeper issue: horses came from Egypt, and acquiring them meant Egyptian alliances, trade relationships, and cultural influence. Egypt represents the world system, slavery, and false security. Returning to Egypt—physically or spiritually—reverses the exodus. Isaiah 31:1-3 denounces this exact sin: 'Woe to them that go down to Egypt for help; and stay on horses, and trust in chariots.' Solomon spectacularly violated this command (1 Kings 10:26-29), accumulating 1,400 chariots and 12,000 horsemen, with Egyptian trade relationships that contributed to his apostasy.

## Historical Context

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In ancient Near Eastern warfare (circa 1400-1000 BCE), horses and chariots represented cutting-edge military technology, particularly associated with Egypt and later the Hittites. Israel entered Canaan as infantry; God's strategy was faith-based warfare (Joshua 11:6-9 specifically commands hamstringing captured

horses). Deuteronomy 17:14-20 restricts kingship three ways: military power (horses), political alliances (wives), and economic wealth (gold/silver). Moses anticipates monarchy's temptations 200 years before Saul's anointing. Solomon's violation of all three restrictions led directly to the kingdom's division (1 Kings 11-12).

## Related Passages

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**Romans 10:9** — Confession and belief for salvation

**Ephesians 2:8** — Salvation by grace through faith

## Study Questions

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1. What modern equivalents to 'multiplying horses' tempt God's people to trust in human strength rather than divine provision?
2. How does pursuing worldly security and alliances represent a spiritual 'return to Egypt'?

## Interlinear Text

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אַתָּה לֹא בָּקַר  
H7535 H3808 But he shall not multiply  
H7235 H0 horses  
H5483 סִיסְיָה  
H3808 לֹא יָבַר  
H853 return  
H7725

לֹמַעַם מִצְבֵּה יְמָה  
H4616 But he shall not multiply  
H7235  
to himself nor cause the people to Egypt  
H5971 H4714  
H0

לֹא לֹכֶד אֶמְרָה יְהִי  
H3808  
horses forasmuch as the LORD hath said  
H5483 H3068 H559  
H0

עִזּוֹד: בְּזַה בְּזַה לֹשֶׁב  
H5750 H2088 H1870  
unto you Ye shall henceforth return no more that way  
H3254 H7725

## Additional Cross-References

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**Deuteronomy 28:68** (References Lord): And the LORD shall bring thee into Egypt again with ships, by the way whereof I spake unto thee, Thou shalt see it no more again: and there ye shall be sold unto your enemies for bondmen and bondwomen, and no man shall buy you.

**Ezekiel 17:15** (References Egypt): But he rebelled against him in sending his ambassadors into Egypt, that they might give him horses and much people. Shall he prosper? shall he escape that doeth such things? or shall he break the covenant, and be delivered?

**Psalms 20:7** (References Lord): Some trust in chariots, and some in horses: but we will remember the name of the LORD our God.

**Hosea 11:5** (References Egypt): He shall not return into the land of Egypt, but the Assyrian shall be his king, because they refused to return.

**Exodus 13:17** (References Egypt): And it came to pass, when Pharaoh had let the people go, that God led them not through the way of the land of the Philistines, although that was near; for God said, Lest peradventure the people repent when they see war, and they return to Egypt:

**1 Kings 4:26** (Parallel theme): And Solomon had forty thousand stalls of horses for his chariots, and twelve thousand horsemen.

**Exodus 14:13** (References Lord): And Moses said unto the people, Fear ye not, stand still, and see the salvation of the LORD, which he will shew to you to day: for the Egyptians whom ye have seen to day, ye shall see them again no more for ever.

**1 Kings 1:5** (Parallel theme): Then Adonijah the son of Haggith exalted himself, saying, I will be king: and he prepared him chariots and horsemen, and fifty men to run before him.

**Hosea 14:3** (Parallel theme): Asshur shall not save us; we will not ride upon horses: neither will we say any more to the work of our hands, Ye are our gods: for in thee the fatherless findeth mercy.

**1 Samuel 8:11** (Parallel theme): And he said, This will be the manner of the king that shall reign over you: He will take your sons, and appoint them for himself, for his chariots, and to be his horsemen; and some shall run before his chariots.

