

2Kings 22:8 Then the high priest Hilkiyah said to the scribe Shaphan, “I have found a scroll of the Teaching in the House of the LORD.” And Hilkiyah gave the scroll to Shaphan, who read it... **10** The scribe Shaphan also told the king, “The high priest Hilkiyah has given me a scroll”; and Shaphan read it to the king.

2Kings 22:11 When the king heard the words of the scroll of the Teaching, he rent his clothes... **13** “Go, inquire of the LORD on my behalf, and on behalf of the people, and on behalf of all Judah, concerning the words of this scroll that has been found. For great indeed must be the wrath of the LORD that has been kindled against us, because our fathers did not obey the words of this scroll to do all that has been prescribed for us.”

2Kings 22:16 **16** ...Thus said the LORD: I am going to bring disaster upon this place and its inhabitants, in accordance with all the words of the scroll which the king of Judah has read. **17** Because they have forsaken Me and have made offerings to other gods and vexed Me with all their deeds, My wrath is kindled against this place and it shall not be quenched. **18** But say this to the king of Judah, who sent you to inquire of the LORD: Thus said the LORD, the God of Israel: As for the words which you have heard — **19** because your heart was softened and you humbled yourself before the LORD when you heard what I decreed against this place and its inhabitants — that it will become a desolation and a curse — and because you rent your clothes and wept before Me, I for My part have listened — declares the LORD. **20** Assuredly, I will gather you to your fathers and you will be laid in your tomb in peace. Your eyes shall not see all the disaster which I will bring upon this place.”

Well, I wonder if that got our attention? Most Sundays, our lessons from the Bible are probably not that dramatic. But this sounds like serious business. Well, it was. And, it still is. Just as last Sunday tried to highlight the belief that THE SABBATH really matters, especially keeping it and remembering it, today is going to be another kind of a message. And, it is another *Secret of the Bible* in a sense, because most people I meet in churches are not familiar with much of what will be explored today. So are we ready for another Secret of the Bible, in this case the matter of *the Scroll that was lost in the closet*? Let's go in that closet.

I was joking with Mike Mikula earlier this week about this passage, because I knew that he would get it. Mike was a builder in his career. Lots of buildings were put together or redone by Mike and others. This happens. Well, this happened in the past too. We literally have a story here at the END

of what we call Second Kings, and we know that Solomon's Temple was still there, and in fact, it was getting refurbished. Some workers were working on rooms inside the Temple. And the workers, as they were working, found something that looked important. It was just like cleaning out an old closet, full of things that haven't been touched for a long time. They are dusty, maybe they are crumpled up a bit. We have all done this. Well these workers found something! And this is where our story today begins.

What is this dusty relic they have found? They simply call it "Sepher HaTorah," which means "A Scroll of the Teaching." They don't know exactly what it is. So they call this man Hilkiyahu, who is the High Priest of the Temple. And there is another man involved, Shaphan who is a scholar or a "Scribe." They unroll this scroll, and behold, it is probably an ancient version of what comes to be the Scroll known as Devariim, or as we call it, the Book of Deuteronomy. By the way, we should understand that word. It is our word, it is Greek, and it literally means "Second Law." That title is actually a mistake, because it is not some Second Law. (I can explain later if anyone really wants to know.) These are words of Moses, designed for when the people enter the Promised Land to which Moses has lead them for 40 years. Moses himself will not enter, which is tragic. But God will let him see it. But these words of Moses are literally trying to lay out do's and dont's for the people of God. There are wonderful words of life within, including the Shema, the teaching that there is only One God, and that we are to love God with all of our Lev (meaning the control place of our lives), with all of our Nephesh (meaning our life itself), and with all of our MeOd (meaning ALL that we are). And we will put these things into our children from generation to generation. The words of Moses from this Sepher HaTorah, this Scroll of the Teaching, ***these words could not be more important*** especially for these people at this time. But here it is... where did they find this thing again? If you have these crucially important words, words that need to be read by the leaders, and proclaimed to the people of God, where should these

words be located? Anyone? How about, not in a closet covered with assorted junk!

So the good King Josiah hears these words of the hidden Scroll of the Teaching, and he tears his clothes and cries! He knows that his people have been going downhill, and that they are in big trouble. Within the next 30 or 40 years, Jerusalem will be destroyed by invaders from Babylon. Solomon's Temple will be destroyed. And the people will be left with no leaders. An amazing thing is that the Book of Deuteronomy knows all about the Exile to come. All about it!

So what is the Secret of the Bible for us to know and understand today? Well, there are two things really. 1) They actually had this Scroll of the Teaching, but, someone seems to have left it in a closet where it was covered over and forgotten. That is terrible, and that is something that we must know. But here is the second big secret, and it is big. 2) Please move us to our next slide. I couldn't have started off with this, or you would have hit the snooze button :-)

DEUTERONOMIC HISTORY. That sounds exciting! Actually, it really is. And what exactly is this DEUTERONOMIC HISTORY thing? You will see on our next slide. In the original version of these biblical books, there are these books, and in this order: Deuteronomy, Joshua, Judges, Samuel, and Kings. We have these books.

So, what do these books say? Well, they tell the BIG story, from the Teaching of Moses to the people, as they are going into the Promised Land. At the end of that story, Moses dies, and is actually buried by God, in a place that no one ever knows. And a new leader takes over, named Yehoshuah. We call him Joshua. So in this next book, Joshua, and then Shophatim (or Judges as we call it) the people go into the Promised Land. They get settled in and we have the books of SAMUEL, which is where things start to go really wrong. What is the big crime of the people in Samuel? They want to have a King so that they can be just like their neighbors. By the way, they are NOT supposed to be like their neighbors! But in Samuel they will cry out for a king, and they will get their first king Shaul, whom we call Saul. And he is

lousy! And then comes David, then Solomon, and on. And then we get the books of Kings, which are about a lot of bad kings, and about 2 great Prophets of God, Eliyahu and Elisha, the Man of God. And the danger grows in Kings. The people keep going in the wrong direction. And they keep NOT reading Sepher HaTorah. Until they find it, by accident, during some Temple remodeling.

At the end of Kings, Jerusalem will be destroyed, lots of people killed, and the leaders taken to Exile in Babylon. But it is at this point that the magic/secret VCR rewind function kicks in: just like when we used to watch our movies, what would happen when it got to the end? It would automatically rewind back to the beginning. And this is exactly what Deuteronomic History seems to do.

King Josiah cries out and tears his clothes and says “If only we had been reading Sepher HaTorah. Maybe we wouldn’t be in this mess.” But it was too late for them. It is not too late for us. I have enjoyed saying this throughout my preaching career, ***“The world has changed in the last 3,000 years! But human beings have not changed at all.”*** I still believe that. So, why should we read these sacred stories? Because it is hoped that we will see the mistakes of others, and not walk down those same roads.

Where are our Bibles? Maybe they are put away on a book shelf somewhere. Maybe they sit on a coffee table for all to see, but never to open. As a people we say we believe in this book, although we usually never read it in any meaningful way. We can say how great it is. Wonderful Words of Life. But then in reality we are not that different from the others long ago who let the Scroll of the Teaching of God get put out of sight, out of mind. And then the trouble comes. And sometimes it is too late. What will we do? Just like keeping the Sabbath in a real way, we can choose to read our own Scroll of the Teachings of God. Will we do it? Or will it get lost in a closet as well. It is our choice. May we choose wisely. AMEN.