

Deuteronomy 33:4

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Moses commanded us a law, even the inheritance of the congregation of Jacob.

Analysis

Moses commanded us a law, even the inheritance of the congregation of Jacob.

The Hebrew Torah tzivvah-lanu Moshe ("Moses commanded us a law") emphasizes Torah's Mosaic mediation while affirming divine origin (previous verses establish Yahweh as ultimate source). Torah means instruction, teaching, guidance—not merely legal code but comprehensive covenant wisdom for all of life. Tzivvah (commanded) implies authoritative, non-negotiable covenant stipulations binding on all generations.

Morashah qehilat Ya'akov ("inheritance of the congregation of Jacob") designates Torah as covenantal property—morashah (inheritance/possession) suggests something bequeathed from ancestors, permanent family treasure. Qehilat (congregation/assembly) emphasizes corporate identity; Torah belongs to the whole community, not individuals in isolation. The name "Jacob" recalls patriarchal promises, connecting Sinai covenant to Abrahamic covenant—the law isn't innovation but fulfillment of God's ancient purposes.

This verse establishes Torah's enduring authority and Israel's unique stewardship role. Paul develops this theology in Romans 3:1-2 and 9:4-5: Israel was entrusted with the 'oracles of God,' a privilege and responsibility. Yet Torah as 'inheritance' also anticipates its limitations—it cannot justify (Romans 3:20) but testifies to the

Righteous One who can (Romans 3:21-26). Torah is glorious inheritance, yet it witnesses beyond itself to Christ.

Historical Context

Moses mediated the law at Sinai (Exodus 19-20) and expounded it in Moab (Deuteronomy). The description of Torah as 'inheritance' emphasizes its perpetual relevance across generations—what Moses commanded remains authoritative for Israel in Canaan, exile, and beyond. The 'congregation of Jacob' language stresses covenant continuity from patriarchal promises through Exodus deliverance to Canaan settlement.

Ancient Near Eastern law codes (Hammurabi, Hittite laws) served royal propaganda and administrative functions but lacked this 'inheritance' theology. Israel's law was divine gift, family treasure, covenantal identity marker—qualitatively different from surrounding legal traditions. The rabbis later developed elaborate traditions around Torah study and observance, seeing it as Israel's greatest treasure and distinguishing mark among nations.

Related Passages

1 John 4:8 — God is love

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

Study Questions

1. How does viewing Torah as 'inheritance' rather than arbitrary rules change your approach to Old Testament law?
2. In what ways is Scripture itself an 'inheritance' for the church, and how should this shape our stewardship of God's word?

Interlinear Text

קָרְבָּן תְּזַבְּחֵנִי כִּי כִּי מֹשֶׁה לְכָה צִוָּה מִזְרָחֵנִי תְּזַבְּחֵנִי
us a law commanded Moses even the inheritance of the congregation

H8451 H6680 H4872 H4181 H6952

יעַבְרִים

of Jacob

H3290

Additional Cross-References

Psalms 119:111 (Parallel theme): Thy testimonies have I taken as an heritage for ever: for they are the rejoicing of my heart.

John 1:17 (Word): For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.

John 7:19 (Word): Did not Moses give you the law, and yet none of you keepeth the law? Why go ye about to kill me?

From KJV Study • kjvstudy.org