

Deuteronomy 4:44

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And this is the law which Moses set before the children of Israel:

Analysis

And this is the law which Moses set before the children of Israel.

A new section begins with *vezo't haTorah* (וְזֹאת הַתּוֹרָה, 'and this is the law/instruction'). The Hebrew Torah encompasses more than legal code—it means instruction, teaching, guidance for life. Moses 'set' (*sam*, שָׂם) this Torah 'before' (*liphnei*, לִפְנֵי) Israel, presenting it for their consideration and response. Torah is placed before them as a path to walk, not merely rules to follow mechanically.

This verse functions as a superscription introducing the covenant stipulations that follow in chapters 5-26. The structure parallels ancient Near Eastern suzerainty treaties: historical prologue (chapters 1-4), stipulations (chapters 5-26), blessings and curses (chapters 27-28), and witnesses (chapter 30:19). Israel would recognize this format from their cultural context, understanding covenant renewal as a solemn, binding commitment.

The phrase 'children of Israel' (*benei Yisra'el*) emphasizes corporate identity. Torah was given not to individuals in isolation but to a covenant community. God's instruction assumes communal implementation and mutual accountability. Individual piety that ignores community responsibility misunderstands the Torah's purpose. Law shapes a people, not merely persons.

Historical Context

This verse marks a transition to the formal presentation of the law code that follows. Speaking from the plains of Moab around 1406 BC, Moses prepares to detail the statutes and ordinances that would govern Israel's life in Canaan. This introduction frames chapters 5-26 as covenant renewal for the new generation.

Related Passages

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Psalms 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Study Questions

1. How does understanding Torah as 'instruction for life' rather than merely 'law' change your approach to Old Testament commands?
2. What does it mean that God's law was given to a community, not just individuals, and how should that shape Christian ethics today?

Interlinear Text

וְזֹאת	הַתּוֹרָה	אֲשֶׁר	שָׁם	מֹשֶׁה	לִפְנֵי	בְּנֵי
H2063	And this is the law	H834	set	which Moses	before	the children
	H8451		H7760	H4872	H6440	H1121
יִשְׂרָאֵל:						
of Israel						
H3478						