

Psalms 147:19

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

He sheweth his word unto Jacob, his statutes and his judgments unto Israel.

Analysis

He sheweth his word unto Jacob, his statutes and his judgments unto Israel. The psalm transitions from God's universal providence (weather, creation) to His particular revelation to Israel. The Hebrew maggid devarav leYa'akov (מַגִּיד דְּבָרָיו לְיַעֲקֹב) uses maggid (declares, makes known), emphasizing God's initiative in revelation. **"Jacob"** and **"Israel"** in parallel Hebrew poetry refer to the covenant people by both patriarchal names—Jacob the man, Israel the nation.

"His statutes and his judgments" (chuqqav umishpatav, חֻקָּיו וּמִשְׁפָּטָיו) specify the content of revelation. Chuqqim (statutes) are prescribed ordinances, often ceremonial laws; mishpatim (judgments) are judicial decisions establishing justice principles. Together they encompass God's entire revealed will—torah in its fullness. While God's power is evident in creation (general revelation), His specific covenant will is disclosed only through special revelation to Israel.

This verse celebrates Israel's unique privilege: access to God's revealed will. Deuteronomy 4:7-8 declares, "What nation is there so great, who hath God so nigh unto them... And what nation is there so great, that hath statutes and judgments so righteous?" Paul acknowledges this advantage: "What profit hath the Jew?... chiefly, because that unto them were committed the oracles of God" (Romans 3:1-2). Yet this privilege entails responsibility—"to whom much is given, of him shall much be required" (Luke 12:48).

Historical Context

Post-exilic Judaism centered on torah observance, recognizing that covenant unfaithfulness caused the Babylonian exile. Ezra the scribe reintroduced systematic torah instruction (Nehemiah 8), and the synagogue system developed to teach God's law. This psalm celebrates Israel's distinctive identity as recipients of divine revelation, a theme central to Second Temple Judaism. The giving of the law at Sinai distinguished Israel from all nations, establishing covenant relationship based on God's gracious revelation.

Related Passages

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Study Questions

1. How should Christians today understand our relationship to Israel's unique privilege of receiving God's revealed word?
2. In what ways does having access to Scripture increase both privilege and responsibility in the life of faith?
3. How does God's specific revelation (Scripture) complement and interpret His general revelation (creation)?

Interlinear Text

מִן יֵד	דִּבְרֵי	לְיַעֲקֹב	חֻקֵּי	וּ מִשְׁפָּטֵי	לְיִשְׂרָאֵל:
He sheweth	his word	unto Jacob	his statutes	and his judgments	unto Israel
H5046	H1697	H3290	H2706	H4941	H3478

Additional Cross-References

Malachi 4:4 (Judgment): Remember ye the law of Moses my servant, which I commanded unto him in Horeb for all Israel, with the statutes and judgments.

Psalms 78:5 (Word): For he established a testimony in Jacob, and appointed a law in Israel, which he commanded our fathers, that they should make them known to their children:

Deuteronomy 4:1 (Judgment): Now therefore hearken, O Israel, unto the statutes and unto the judgments, which I teach you, for to do them, that ye may live, and go in and possess the land which the LORD God of your fathers giveth you.

Deuteronomy 5:22 (Word): These words the LORD spake unto all your assembly in the mount out of the midst of the fire, of the cloud, and of the thick darkness, with a great voice: and he added no more. And he wrote them in two tables of stone, and delivered them unto me.

Deuteronomy 5:31 (Judgment): But as for thee, stand thou here by me, and I will speak unto thee all the commandments, and the statutes, and the judgments, which thou shalt teach them, that they may do them in the land which I give them to possess it.

Psalms 103:7 (References Israel): He made known his ways unto Moses, his acts unto the children of Israel.

Psalms 76:1 (References Israel): In Judah is God known: his name is great in Israel.

Romans 9:4 (Word): Who are Israelites; to whom pertaineth the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises;

Romans 3:2 (Parallel theme): Much every way: chiefly, because that unto them were committed the oracles of God.

Deuteronomy 4:8 (Judgment): And what nation is there so great, that hath statutes and judgments so righteous as all this law, which I set before you this day?