

AN INHERITANCE*

תּוֹרָה צְוֵה־לָנוּ מֹשֶׁה
מוֹרְשָׁה קְהֵלֵת יַעֲקֹב:
וַיְהִי בִישֻׁרוּן מֶלֶךְ
בְּהִתְאַסֵּף רָאשֵׁי עַם
יַחַד שְׁבֵטֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל:

Moses commanded us a law,
an inheritance of the congregation of Jacob.
And He was king in Jeshurun,
when the heads of the people were gathered,
the tribes of Israel together.

Moses commanded us a law—Moses taught that whatever happens to us, we are to cleave to the Torah, because it is our light and the blessing of our lives, the true source of knowing ourselves, creation, and God. *An inheritance of the congregation of Jacob*—The Torah is to be “accepted by us and our children as an inheritance” (Sforno). It is to be the eternal possession of the Jewish people, and thus each generation is bound to sustain and pass it to the next generation. This may be likened to a king’s son who has been taken captive and removed from an inheritance: “Should he desire to return, even after a hundred years, he will not be embarrassed to do so, because he can say, ‘I am returning to my inheritance’” (Sifre). *And He was king in Jeshurun, when the heads of the people were gathered, the tribes of Israel together*—God was sovereign over all Israel only when together “they accepted and affirmed” God’s sovereignty (Sforno), as Torah commands us. The name of God will be praised and the word of God will guide the nation when all the tribes of Israel together “form one unified group” (Sifre), all learning and living Torah. Then Am Yisrael will walk in the path of righteousness.

* Deuteronomy 33:4-5 (in V’zot Habrakha)