

How Do You Say “Law” in Hebrew?

Hebrew	Usual translation	Meanings and contexts
<i>torah</i>	law, law of Moses	teachings, instructions
<i>mishpat</i>	judgment	pronouncement of a verdict, standards of behavior
<i>huqqah</i>	statute, ordinance	custom, manner, decree, portion, order, prescription, limit
<i>hoq</i>	statute, ordinance	the masculine form of <i>huqqah</i> , used in place of <i>huqqah</i> (note: <i>statute</i> and <i>ordinance</i> do not appear together in the Book of Mormon)
<i>mitzvah</i>	commandment	frequently signifies divine commandments, <i>bar mitzvah</i> = “son of the commandment”
<i>edut</i>	testimony, witness	often a monument, stele, or book of the law

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Key Scriptures 2 Nephi 5:10; Mosiah 6:6; Alma 8:17; 30:3; 58:40; Helaman 3:20; 15:5; 1 Kings 2:3

Explanation The Hebrew language uses at least six different words that are translated into English as the word *law*. *Torah* refers to the law, especially the law of Moses, while *mishpat* signifies judgment or standards based on the law. *Huqqah* and *hoq* are similar in meaning, suggesting not only formal ordinances but also general codes of behavior. *Mitzvah* denotes divine commandments in general, and *edut*, while a more ambiguous term, often signifies a written law. For example, King David counseled Solomon to keep God’s “statutes [*huqqot*], and his commandments [*mitzvot*], and his judgments [*mishpatim*], and his testimonies [*edut*], as it is written in the law [*torah*] of Moses” (1 Kings 2:3). Similarly, Nephi states that his people observed “the judgments, and the statutes, and the commandments of the Lord in all things, according to the law of Moses” (2 Nephi 5:10). The striking similarities between these texts reveal that the Hebrew-speaking Nephites and the ancient Israelites conceived law in much the same way.

Source John W. Welch, “Statutes, Judgments, Ordinances, and Commandments,” in *Reexploring the Book of Mormon*, ed. John W. Welch (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and FARMS, 1992), 62–65.