

- 5 [This is] because Avraham heeded My voice and guarded what I placed in his charge: My commandments, My statutes and My teachings.
- ה לֵקַבֵּב אֲשֶׁר־שָׁמַע אֶבְרָהָם בְּקוֹלִי
וַיִּשְׁמַר מִשְׁמַרְתִּי מִצְוֹתַי חֻקֹּתַי
וְתוֹרָתִי: שְׁנֵי

father. But there was famine there, too. Then God appeared to him and commanded him not to seek help from any man. His charge was to maintain obedience to God.

שָׁכַן, dwell quietly, is more than גֹּר but less than יָשָׁב.

Scripture repeats the phrase הארצות האל. Precisely *these* lands, which you have frequently seen affected by drought and famine, do I give to you and to your descendants, so that, by observing My commandments, you will bring these lands such blessing that all the nations of the world will learn from your example how a person, through his own actions, brings blessing upon himself.

- 5 עִקֵּב — see above, 25:26.

וישמר משמרתִי. שמר denotes, in a most general way, what is required of us as regards God's Torah. The Torah is a treasure that has been entrusted to us, and we have been appointed its שומרים. We are to guard it, and to use it in accordance with the Will of the Owner, but we have no right to do with it as we please.

A שומר has two duties:

(a) Constant *attentiveness*. That which is entrusted to him should always be on his mind. Thus the common interpretation: ושמרתם זו משנה: (Toras Kohanim in many places). שמירת התורה (guarding the Torah) means "learning," for to truly engage in learning means to be ever mindful of God's Will in all its aspects and ramifications.

(b) *Protection*: to safeguard that which is entrusted to him, so that it remains intact. Thus the *conscientiousness* that distinguishes the Jewish nation, which guards itself with precautionary measures — תקנות and גזרות. Avraham, too, practiced this conscientiousness, by keeping away from anything that even appeared to be morally repugnant, and by

6 *Thereupon Yitzchak remained in Gerar.*

וַיֵּשֶׁב יִצְחָק בְּגֵרָר:

guarding himself against doing wrong and against anything likely to lead to such wrongdoing.

מצותי צוה — related to **צבא**, as already noted (above, 2:1) — means: to station someone at his post. The commander's will is carried out in the widest circles by his deputies; his personality, as it were, extends its range (**צבה**). By being a **מְצַוָּה**, he creates for himself a **צבא**.

מצות, then, in the narrow sense, are those orders by which the Divine purposes are carried out, purposes of justice (**משפט**) and benevolence (**צדקה**), which God wants in His world. **מצות** include the duties of justice and compassion, kindness and love, and so forth.

חקותי, from the root **חקק** (see *Collected Writings*, vol. VIII, p. 43): the rules that limit the sensual will; the laws of morality and of the sanctity of bodily life.

ותורתי, in our opinion, stems not from the root **ירה** but from the root **הרה**, like **הוליד** from the root **הלך**. **הרה** means: to absorb seed. The *hif'il* **הוֹרָה** means: to plant a seed; by extension, it means: to implant the seeds of truth and goodness, of knowledge and morality; i.e., to teach. **תורות**, then, are the teachings of truth and goodness that were revealed by God. We are to absorb these teachings in our minds and hearts, so that they should beget in us the awareness of truth and the desire for good.

מצוה is the mission we are to accomplish. **חוק** makes the person fit for this mission. **תורה** provides the requisite knowledge.

The duties that Avraham fulfilled correspond to the content of his mission as expressed above, 18:19. **מצותי** corresponds to **עשות צדקה ומשפט**. **חקותי** corresponds to **ושמרו דרך ה' לעשות וגו'**; the **חוקים** are the way that leads to such **עשייה**. **תורתי** corresponds to **ביתו ואת בניו ואת** — teaching and educating toward such a life (see Commentary above, 18:19).

- 6–11 See above, 12:10ff. and chapter 20. Yitzchak's concern was not unfounded; for as soon as the true relation between Rivkah and Yitzchak became known, Avimelech found it necessary to protect them by a decree of the death penalty for any assault.