

him to sacrifice Isaac (22:1,2). If this is the "voice" of God to Abraham, it is clear that Abraham understood it within the covenantal context as a test of his faith in God, for in his response when queried by Isaac, he answered, "God will provide for Himself the lamb ..." (v8). This was no legalistic obedience, but it was a response of faith within a gracious covenantal relationship.

We turn briefly to the meaning of the other nouns in parallel with *tôrâ*. The derivative of *tsamar*, *mitsmert* has the idea of "a charge," or "a service" to be carefully kept, preserved or performed. *Miswâ* is usually translated "a command, commandment." Lindars suggests that in Exod 34:11 it is to be connected with the function of the king in promulgating law, though he acknowledges the hazard of building on this idea.¹³ What does seem significant is that the verb *sawâ* is used for the instruction of a farmer to his laborers (Ruth 2:9), of a father to his son (1 Sam 17:20) and of the king's instructions to his servants concerning his burial (2 Sam 21:41). In the wisdom literature *miswâh* is used of the instruction of a teacher to his pupil (Prov 2:1; 3:1). To be sure, when God "commands" He exhibits His power to create (Ps 33:9) and thus demands respect for His authority.

Huqqâ is "a decision, ordinance, enactment," by someone in authority in response to a problem (cf. Exod 18:16) though often it is used of the regulations or customs for observing the feasts (Exod 12:14,17; Lev 23:41) and other priestly regulations.

However, when we ask ourselves if in Gen 26:5 there are distinctions in the use of these words, we would draw the conclusion that they are generally regarded as synonymous. The reason is simple. Has there been any suggestion from the life of Abraham that God's covenant stipulations could be identified as priestly, political or ethical codes? While answering in the negative, we would maintain that God was commending in Abraham his faithfulness and loyalty to the covenantal relationship. Even though at times he faltered, he nevertheless followed the authoritative instructions given to him by the Great King, not out of compulsion for legalistic obedience to some legislation but rather out of heartfelt devotion to the Great King of the covenant. It may be safe to assume from the analogy with the ancient Near Eastern treaties, where the Great King sometimes identified himself as the father, and the vassal was recognized (if not adopted) as the son, that Abraham understood that familial relationship very well. Surely this was part of Isaiah's thought in his covenant lawsuit "Sons I have reared and brought up, but they have rebelled against me" (1:2; cf. Hos 11:1).

One last question needs to be addressed before leaving Gen 26:5. What are the antecedents of "my laws" which Abraham kept? In connection with 22:18 we noted that we could identify the specific reference to "my voice." But here we have the plurals for these synonyms of *tôrâ*. We suggest that because of the covenantal context we have reference here to all those matters dealing with the Abrahamic covenant, in short, all the revelation of God to Abraham which was to be applied to his own life and that of his family. Except for a few imperatives,¹⁴ we find precious little if any that might be classified as legislation.¹⁵ This leads us to the conclusion that "My