

KEEP THE WAY*

כִּי יִדְעֵתִיו לְמַעַן אֲשֶׁר יִצְוֶה

אֶת־בְּנָיו וְאֶת־בֵּיתוֹ אַחֲרָיו

וְשָׁמְרוּ דֶרֶךְ יְהוָה

לְעֲשׂוֹת צְדָקָה וּמִשְׁפָּט

For I have known him, so that he may command
his children and his household after him,
that they may keep the way of Adonai,
to do righteousness and justice. . . .

For I have known him—God and Abraham were intimate, sharing love and affection. There was a “special degree of intimacy” between them (N. Sarna) because of the “special consideration” given to one who places him or herself “completely under the guidance of God” (S.R. Hirsch). *So that he might command*—The divine aim was that Abraham should be the surrogate of the Almighty, guiding all those within his sphere of responsibility, on whose behalf he was able to act. *His children and his household after him*—To direct them and, through them, all future generations on the path of the one true God. “The generation must be born and brought up not to a ‘belief in God,’ but to ‘fulfilling His commandments’” (S.R. Hirsch). *That they may keep the way of Adonai*—That is, “living humanely and benevolently” in community, which must be based on a “pure moral life before God. . . . [since] a generation that is degenerating morally has no social future. . . .” (S.R. Hirsch) *To do righteousness and justice*—Which is to say, that they—like Abraham and Sarah—practice and teach that what “God has given everybody the right [to expect]” takes precedence over what “a person has the right to demand from another. . . . so that the poor can stand up before the rich, and . . . the rich consider themselves merely as administrators of a treasury which belongs to the poor” (S.R. Hirsch).

* Genesis 18:19 (in Vayaera)