

Because Avraham obeyed My voice and observed My safeguards, My commandments, My decrees, and My Torahs. (26:5)

Hashem gifted the Holy Land to Avraham *Avinu* due to his fidelity in obeying Hashem's word. The Torah speaks of four categories of commandments which cover the entire corpus of Biblical and Oral Law, including Rabbinic enactments that were established to safeguard the Torah from incursion. Avraham did all this without Hashem commanding him to do so. He was able to perceive the entire Torah through *Ruach HaKodesh*, Divine Inspiration, and he observed it voluntarily (*Ramban*). *Chazal* teach that Avraham even adhered to the law of *Eiruv Tavshilin*, joining two cooked foods, in order to prepare on *Yom Tov* for *Shabbos*. How did he know to do this? It is possible to say that with his extraordinary intellect, Avraham discerned those *mitzvos* that are rational and which the intellect can grasp. What about *chukim*, *mitzvos* whose rationale defies our cognition? How did Avraham perceive them?

Horav Tzadok HaKohen, zl, quotes *Chazal* who teach that Hashem said to Moshe, "To you, I will reveal the reasoning behind the *Parah Adumah*, Red Heifer (the ultimate *chok*)." Indeed, all *chukim* have reasons. It is just that they are beyond the ken of the human mind. Therefore, Avraham perceived even the *chukim* to be "rational" *mitzvos*. In conclusion, all *mitzvos*, including *chukim*, were admonitions that Avraham was able to perceive through his exemplary intellect. He understood the prohibitions, to the point that he distanced himself from them as one would stay far away from feces and waste; they are disgusting. Likewise, the prohibited areas of behavior were foul-stench-filled areas and endeavors from which he distanced himself.

This is why *Chazal* teach that in the future, after the advent of *Moshiach Tziddkeinu*, the *mitzvos* will be nullified. This means that *Klal Yisrael's* intellect will be so advanced and refined that they will, on their own, perceive the root source of the entire Torah: *Anochi Hashem Elokecha*, "I am Hashem, your G-d," simple unity and infinity. Once one perceives the positive essence of Hashem, he will not need to be told what not to do. It will all be clear to him.

Rav Tzadok explains, however, this will all apply in the days of *Moshiach* when our perception will be on the positive *seder* of *Anochi*, based upon a clear understanding of the Divine. In this world of human failing, it is critical that the *seder*, order of sequence, be *sur meira v'asei tov* – first turn away from evil and only then focus on the positive of doing good. Currently, we require the Torah and its *mitzvos* to steer us in the right direction

We now understand why when the gentile came to Hillel to be converted on the condition that Hillel teach him the entire Torah while he stands on one foot, Hillel told him, "That which is hateful to you, do not do to another." Why did Hillel not teach him the positive aspect of that aphorism, "Love your fellow as yourself"? In this world, *sur meira* precedes *asei tov*.

Focusing on *tov*, good, performing acts of love, being tolerant of others by “turning the other cheek,” are wonderful qualities. Religious dogma founded on such positive action can be beneficial – indeed, the ideal way of life – once one has expunged the *ra*, evil, from within himself. For certain people to preach love, however, while carrying out heinous acts of violence against anyone who does not adhere to their faith, is not just hypocrisy; it has defined the culture and character of their religion for many years.