

According to the Teaching that they will teach you. And according to the judgement that they will say to you, shall you do; you shall not deviate from the word that they will tell you; right or left. (17:11)

Torah leadership expound *da'as Torah*, the perspective as seen by the *Torah*. It is therefore imperative that we listen and follow their instructions. These are people whose *Torah* scholarship is part of their essence. They are imbued with a holiness and purity that emanates from them, a *yiraas Shomayim*, fear of Heaven, that permeates their every endeavor. Their perspective is *Torah* perspective. It is the purpose of this thesis neither to validate the importance of listening to *da'as Torah* nor to confirm its Divine origin, but rather to indicate that a person who achieves the status of rendering *da'as Torah* is not an average person. His insight is piercing, and his outlook is visionary.

The following story, which is cited by *Yalkut Lekach Tov*, sends home this profound message: The *Brisker Rav*, *Horav Yitzchok Zev Soloveitchik, zl*, was a young man when he assumed the leadership of the community of Brisk. While he was young, he was an accomplished *Torah* scholar, widely respected for his erudition and *Torah* insight. The story takes place when the *Rav* was twenty-three years old. It was *Rosh Hashanah*. Two officers came to the *shul* to ask the *Rav* to come quickly with them to recite *vidui*, confessional, with a Jewish prisoner who had been condemned to death. Not wishing to disturb the *Rav* who was at the moment in middle of saying *Shemonah Esrai*, they said they would return a bit later. A few of the members of the congregation suggested asking another one of the *rabbanim* to meet with the prisoner. The officers responded that they had orders to bring the *Rav* of Brisk, not just any *rabbi*.

When the *Brisker Rav* concluded his *tefillah*, prayer, the people rushed over and told him what had occurred. They understandably encouraged him to go immediately. He gave the matter some thought, finally deciding that he was not going. Fearing reprisal from the authorities, they demanded that the *Rav* acquiesce and go with the officers. A number of committee members were insolent enough to tell the *Rav* that he was endangering the lives of the entire community. The *Rav* would not change his position. He was not going.

The officers returned during the *Mussaf Shemonah Esrai*. Sensing their presence, the *Rav* continued standing as if he was still praying. The congregation's patience had reached a bursting point, when one of the older, more distinguished looking members of the *shul*, came forward to the officers and claimed that he was actually the *Rav*. They believed him and proceeded to go with him to the jail.

After *davening*, services, two policemen came to the *Brisker Rav's* home. His family feared that they were coming to arrest him for refusing to go with the original messengers. They quickly

discovered that these policemen were from a different community. They had been sent to stop the *Rav* from going to the jail. Apparently, the accused Jew was not guilty; it was a case of mistaken identity and he would not be executed. It was, however, too late. The “elder”, who was so clever and had “replaced” the *Rav*, had inadvertently caused the death of an innocent Jew. Had they only listened to the young *rav*, had they only accepted his *da’as Torah*, a Jew would be alive, a tragedy would have been averted.

We must ask ourselves; How often do we choose to ignore the instructions of our *gedolim*, *Torah* leadership? How often do we think we have all the answers, asserting that they are not attuned to the “times”? How often do we realize too late that our impulsiveness and arrogance have created situations that unfortunately have had tragic consequences?