

You shall do according to the word that they will tell you ... You shall not deviate from the word that they will tell you, right or left. (17: 10,11)

As faithful Jews we adhere to *emunas chachamim*, faith in our sages – in the sages of each individual generation. Some, although observant, have difficulty accepting the interpretations of the Torah leaders concerning what they believe is fact. In a correspondence to such a misled Jew, *Horav Eliyahu Eliezer Dessler, zl (Michtav M'Eliyahu)*, addresses the disputant who claimed that the Holocaust might have been at least partially averted had the Torah leaders of Eastern Europe encouraged the masses to emigrate to *Eretz Yisrael*. He explains that the Torah teaches us to submit in all moral judgment and outlook, even to what we consider to be fact, to the clarity of vision evinced by our sages. He does not distinguish between “opinion” and “fact,” because even fact is given to interpretation, which allows ample scope for our biased judgment to lead us astray.

As a result of our materialistic bias, we are prone to view the political, economic and military backdrop as the primary juggernaut of any given situation. What about the spiritual factors? While we should not ignore the material factors, it is the spiritual factor that determines the outcome, thus weighing heavily in the sages’ decision. The interpretations of historical events rendered by our sages -- and the measures they took to address them -- have always considered, above all, the spiritual dimension.

In a strong declaration, *Rav Dessler* asserts, “Lack of self-effacement towards our sages is the root of all sin and the precursor of all destruction. All merits are as nothing compared with that root of spiritual progress -- faith in our Sages.”

I think this approach avails us deeper insight into Moshe *Rabbeinu*’s clarion call: *Mi l’Hashem eilai*, “Whoever is for Hashem, join me!” (*Shemos* 32:26) It was following the sin of the Golden Calf, during which a portion of *Klal Yisrael* flagrantly sinned and made a molten calf to replace Moshe, whom they claimed was not returning. The rest of the nation idly stood by demonstrating indifference. Now was the time of reckoning. The perpetrators must be punished. Moshe asked for those who still were part of Hashem’s legion, who did not in any way sin. *Shevet Levi* came forward to join Moshe. We wonder why Moshe added the word *eilai*, to me? Is it not obvious that he was calling for volunteers? Who else would have joined? Moshe could simply have called out, *Mi l’Hashem*, “Whoever is for Hashem!”

Perhaps Moshe was imparting a lesson. It is not sufficient to be for Hashem while ignoring the *eilai*, the Moshe *Rabbeinus* of every generation. Moshe intimated to them, “If you want to be for Hashem, then you must also have *emunas chachamim*. The two go hand-in-hand.”

The uncanny ability to cut through ambiguity and see, understand and interpret situations with amazing clarity is what defines *daas Torah*, the wisdom which comes from one whose life is

suffused with Torah. The following vignettes offer glimpses into this unusual, unparalleled wisdom. *Horav Yosef Kahaneman, zl*, the *Ponovezher Rav*, was blessed with an extraordinary mind, coupled with his vast erudition that afforded him rare insight into circumstances that, for the most part, went over the head of a lesser person. He set for himself the goal to perpetuate the *yeshivos* that reigned in pre-Holocaust Europe and went about his life to realize this vision.

A young teenager, a remnant of the fires that devastated European Jewry, arrived at the Ponovezh *Yeshivah*. The *Rav* accepted him, and he availed himself of the services he required to function and learn in the *yeshivah*. He stayed, learned, grew up and eventually raised a beautiful, impressive Torah family. Many years later, his grandchildren went on a trip to Poland to discover their roots. (Such a trip is quite popular for young adults from all corners of the globe.) While in Poland, they made a point to visit their grandfather's place of birth. When they visited the records department of the local library, they discovered that their grandfather was actually one year older than they had thought. This was not uncommon, since the record system had not been very good. As such, it was possible (probable) that people were unsure of their true birthdate. When the grandchildren returned to *Eretz Yisrael*, they debated sharing their discovery with their grandfather. After all, since he had been born a year earlier than he thought, it meant he had delayed putting on *tefillin* for an entire year.

Their grandfather was not oblivious to their covert discussions and inuendo. He would not be the first Holocaust survivor whose stated birthdate did not coincide with his real birthdate. He approached them and said, "I am certain that you are hesitating to show me the records that you discovered while in Poland. Do not worry. The *Ponovezher Rav* was quite aware of these errors. Thus, he insisted that every boy who was housed in his *Batei Avos* (the *Ponovezher Rav* had established an orphanage for children who survived the Holocaust without their parents) should begin putting on *tefillin* when he reached the age of twelve. I see now what I did not understand then. Indeed, I began putting on *tefillin* on my twelfth birthday, which was actually my *bar mitzvah*."

Following World War II, *Horav Zev Rosengarten, zl* and *Horav Moshe Soloveitchik, zl*, established a yeshiva in Lucerne, Switzerland. Their goal was to bring in a Torah scholar of repute to serve as Rosh Yeshivah once the yeshivah had a functioning student body. They turned to *Horav Yechezkel Levinstein, zl*, for a recommendation, being that he, together with the *Mirr* *Yeshivah*, had escaped to Shanghai. Certainly, he knew confirmed *talmidei chachamim* who could satisfy the criteria vital for the *yeshivah's* growth. They explained the significance of having a *yeshivah gedolah* in Switzerland which could ultimately be a source of scholarship to produce the future leaders of European Jewry. Furthermore, a *yeshivah* of such caliber would influence the entire country and its environs. Not only did *Rav Chatzkel* not give them names, he dissuaded anyone from taking the position. With no other recourse, *Rav Moshe Soloveitchik* took it upon himself to lead the *yeshivah* temporarily. As a result of his brilliance in Torah, his personality and his ethical, moral character refinement, the yeshivah grew into the Torah center of Europe, with *Rav Moshe* as the Torah giant that led European Jewry until his passing. *Rav Zev Rosengarten* later mused,

“This was all from Hashem. Rav Chatzkel saw that Rav Moshe was the perfect and best candidate for the position. Thus, he discouraged others from accepting it, thereby compelling Rav Moshe to assume the leadership position.”

The *Chazon Ish*, *zli*, was endowed with *Ruach haKodesh*, Divine Inspiration. He saw what others could not see; he understood what others could not understand. His life was guided by Heaven Above – as is all of ours; only he was aware of it. He was “in touch” with Heaven at all times, so divested was he of physicality. His knowledge of medicine was legend. His ability to see what medical experts could not was a clear indication of his medical expertise -- or classic *Ruach haKodesh*.

Numerous stories concerning this topic abound, of which I chose one, because it clearly demonstrates the *Ruach haKodesh* of the *Chazon Ish*. Doctors had insisted that a *Yerushalmi* woman undergo serious brain surgery. The *Chazon Ish* disagreed, insisting that the woman be taken to America. He provided travel expenses and a place to stay with *Horav Shmuel Greineman*, with specific instructions: No surgery, under any circumstances. Rav Greineman brought the woman to a world-renowned specialist, Dr. Lazarus. After examining the woman, Dr. Lazarus said that the case did not fall within his area of expertise. He referred the woman to his colleague, Dr. Globus.

Appointments with a specialist were hard to come by. The earliest Dr. Globus was available was in a month. Rav Greineman prevailed upon Dr. Lazarus to personally call Dr. Globus to see the woman as soon as possible, which he did. Dr. Globus examined the woman and declared that she required a specific treatment which was available at a leading New York hospital. The family thanked Dr. Globus profusely. As they left the office, Dr. Globus suffered a fatal heart attack. *Hashgacha Pratis*, Divine Providence, had allowed him to live long enough to save this woman's life! If this is not a clear indication of the *Ruach haKodesh* of the *Chazon Ish*, what is?