

## Now, O' Yisrael, what does Hashem, your G-d, ask of you? Only to fear. (10:12)

*Horav Chaim Soloveitchik, zl*, offers an outstanding insight into the enjoinder that one fear Hashem. Every moment of one's life one must ask himself, "What does Hashem ask of me – now?" An hour later, he should ask himself again, "Now, what does Hashem ask of me?" This is the depth of the meaning of *v'atah*, now. Every moment of one's life, throughout every circumstance, the question that he should ask is: "What does the Almighty want of me now? How should I act in this situation?" Fear of Hashem is a way of life. One does not simply punch in the speed/level that he assumes for himself, and place his life on cruise control. He must augment his fear in accordance with the challenges and changes that he confronts. Every day is a new day and, thus, presents a new imperative. We do not live today as yesterday, because today is a new and different day. Furthermore, we change. Yesterday's *tefillos*, prayers, elevated me. Today, I must *daven* differently, because I am no longer the same person.

In his *hesped*, eulogy, for the *Brisker Rav, zl*, *Horav Yechezkel Abramsky, zl*, mentioned that it was impossible to characterize *Rav Chaim Brisker* (father of the *Brisker Rav*) as merciful, or attribute any other specific quality to him, because he was constantly changing with the demands of a given situation. One moment he could be viewed as merciful; while the next moment he could come across as uncompromising. It all depended on what he was involved in, and how *halachah* guided his actions. He acted in the exact manner that the Torah enjoined him. His total self-abnegation to the Torah was unequivocal. What yesterday might have been permissible (in accordance with the situation) might today (under different circumstances) be prohibited.

His son, the *Brisker Rav*, maintained the same attitude. In his *hesped* for the *Brisker Rav, Horav Yechezkel Levinstein, zl*, observed that while the *Chazon Ish, zl*, was alive, the *Brisker Rav* hardly responded to *halachic* queries, always deferring to the *Chazon Ish*. After the *Chazon Ish's* *petirah*, passing, however, the *Brisker Rav* became a prolific writer and speaker, devoting much time to people and their *halachic* questions. His greatness was his ability to change his manner seamlessly in accordance with the need. The *Chazon Ish* had been the *gadol hador*, preeminent leader of the generation. With his passing, the *Brisker Rav* was viewed as his able successor.

Both foresight and insight are critical components of wisdom and leadership. In any given situation, all variables must be considered. A conference of *gedolim*, Torah giants, was convened to discuss the best way to respond to a cruel government edict. This took place in Poland over a century ago. For all the leaders of the generation to convene meant that this was a dire emergency. In fact, even the saintly *Chafetz Chaim* was in attendance. In middle of an important discussion, one of the participants suggested they should break to *daven Minchah*. The *Chafetz Chaim*, who was careful and counted each word, said, *Minchah ligt ihr oifem kup?* "Minchah is on your mind?" The *Chafetz Chaim* implied that certainly *tefillas Minchah* – as well as all prayers – is of inestimable value and import; at certain times, however, when Jewish lives are hanging in the balance, one needs to keep

his mind attuned to the present need.

*Horav Chaim Soloveitchik* encountered a man who confided in him by revealing that, for reasons of poor health, he was forced to eat on *Yom Kippur*. He was very saddened by what he felt was a lapse in his religious commitment. *Rav Chaim* responded to this man's display of religious virtue by saying, "He who rules that a *bris milah* on the eighth day should be performed on *Shabbos* will, at times, rule that one who is ill must eat on *Yom Kippur*! *Hashem Yisborach* Who commands not to perform *melachah*, creative labor, on *Shabbos* will, at times, command us to engage in *melachah* on *Shabbos*, such as, if it is the eighth day after a boy's birth. Likewise, Hashem, Who commands us to fast on *Yom Kippur*, will at times, instruct us to eat to maintain our health. Fasting on *Yom Kippur* and performing labor on *Shabbos* are not intrinsically absolute. It all depends on the *ratzon Hashem*, will of the Almighty, which is the only absolute that matters.