

“And it will be in front of the eyes of the assembly.” (15:24)

The Torah refers to leadership, the Sanhedrin, as the *einei ha'eidah*, the eyes of the assembly. Their ability to see far beyond that of the common person; their penetrating insight; their global perspective; their clear vision and comprehension of a situation makes this *nom de guerre* highly appropriate. Their vision and perception is honed and refined by their constant immersion in the sea of Torah. The eyes that never leave the *Gemora* are capable of seeing beyond the limits imposed by nature.

Horav Yitzchak Zilberstein, Shlita, relates that Horav Isser Zalmen Meltzer, z.l., was able to look at a vessel and ascertain if it had been *toiveled*, immersed in a *mikvah*, prior to its first use. He said that a *keili*, vessel, that has been immersed has the *Shem Havaya*, Ineffable Name of Hashem, in it. We cannot see the Name, but someone of Rav Isser Zalmen's holy stature can. When this was related to the Brisker Rav, z.l., he was unimpressed. He said, “Do you think this is something surprising? Do you have any idea who Rav Isser Zalmen is? Do you even begin to understand his *sichas chullin*, simple, mundane conversation? In other words, when one begins to fathom the greatness of Rav Isser Zalmen, one is not surprised by his spiritual perception.

Horav Zilberstein continues, explaining that the distinction of the Torah giant does not extend itself only to the great actions that he performs. On the contrary, it is the little things, the simple activities, the everyday actions that distinguish a *gadol b'Yisrael*, our nation's Torah leaders. He cites the following incident that left an indelible impression on him. He was a young student in *Yeshivas Eitz Chaim* in *Eretz Yisrael*, and Rav Isser Zalmen, the *Rosh HaYeshiva*, was escorting his son-in-law, Horav Aharon Kotler, z.l., and grandson, Horav Shneur Kotler, z.l., prior to their return to America. Rav Aharon and Rav Shneur had recently been saved miraculously from the clutches of Satan's representatives – the Nazis. They had spent a short while in *Eretz Yisrael* and were now about to journey on to America. Rav Shneur was a *chassan*, whose marriage would take place upon his arrival in America.

Rav Isser Zalmen accompanied them down the steps, but did not continue on to the street where the taxi to take them to the airport was waiting. He bid them an emotional good-bye on the steps. The students who observed their *rebbe's* actions were somewhat taken aback by his reluctance to walk them to the street. They knew that everything their *rebbe* did, or did not do, was by design. What was his reason? Finally, someone conjured up the courage to ask Rav Isser Zalmen the rationale behind his actions. He gave a response that tears the heart and should cause us to shudder.

“Not all of my grandson's friends were fortunate enough to be in the situation he is in today. Most of them were slaughtered after being persecuted in the most heinous and brutal manner. They were sacrificed *Al Kiddush Hashem*, sanctifying G-d's Name. How can I walk them down to the street and publicly kiss them good-bye, knowing that there are others who did not attain such a moment? How many mothers and fathers lost their children? How can I not be sensitive to their

emotions?”

When one plumbs the depths of these words and is cognizant of the true sense of caring that is emitted by this special human being, it is no longer any wonder how this person could sense whether Hashem's Name was on a vessel or not! We now understand why the Brisker Rav was not impressed when he heard about Rav Isser Zalmen's supernatural powers. Apparently, Rav Shneur inherited the unique sensitivity and caring for another human being that exemplified Rav Isser Zalmen's character. He, too, exhibited incredible sensitivity for others, as demonstrated by the following little-known episode. As mentioned before, Rav Shneur was engaged to his rebbetzin prior to the outbreak of World War II. The two miraculously survived the war by Divine design. A short time after they had been reunited, Rav Shneur received a letter from his intended. She wrote that due to the war's hardships, her physical condition was no longer as fit as when they had first become engaged. She, therefore, was absolving him from the engagement, and she would have no complaint if he were to decide to break the engagement and seek another bride.

What did Rav Shneur, the man who was Rav Aharon's son and successor to head the greatest Torah center in the world, answer to his kallah? He said, “You lost your father during the war. You no longer have the material wealth that you once had. Your health is no longer what it used to be. You have undergone much pain and anguish. Do you think that I, too, your chassan, will also forsake you at a time like this? Never – it will never be!”

The rest is history. Rav Shneur, z.l., and tibatel l'chaim, his rebbitzen, married and raised a family that includes some of the greatest Roshei Yeshiva and marbitzei Torah of our generation. This is how Torah is built – on the small things – on the simple concerns – on caring and sensitivity to all people. The small acts define great people.