

## **The tenth one shall be holy to Hashem. (27:32)**

According to *halachah*, the tenth animal to pass through the pen is designated as *maaser beheimah*, tithe of animals, and becomes holy – even if the owner does not actually verbalize the words, *Kodesh l'Hashem*, “Holy to Hashem.” Nonetheless, the Torah demands that one articulate the words. *Horav Moshe Feinstein, zl*, derives an important lesson from here, which can – and should – be applied not only to educating and raising our children, but, indeed, to all interpersonal relationships. Even if something is already holy, its *kedushah*, sanctity, must be maintained. If not – it will lose its sanctity. Likewise, although a human being is born with an innate capacity for *kedushah*, it is not like “money in the bank.” The parents cannot assume that their child will automatically grow into a great, holy Torah giant without parental educational input. We take so much for granted: good boy/girl; right school; proper friends – what can go wrong? Sadly, “things happen,” and the most perfect scenario can become a horror story without supervision, guidance and vigilance.

The flipside is also true. A student might hail from a less-than-desired background, be born without the greatest innate talents, or deal with a host of issues, both personal and/or social, and still grow into a great Torah scholar, a distinguished lay leader, a credit to his people and to Hashem. It takes someone who cares, who gives of himself to reach out and make a difference in a young boy or girl's life. It might be something as innocuous as a smile, a compliment, an acknowledgement that he/she is relevant, doing a good job, is noticed and well-liked. That can make the difference in a young person's life trajectory.

*Horav Isser Zalmen Meltzer, zl*, maintained a profound sense of gratitude toward *Horav Reuven Zelig Bengis, zl*. This was obvious at the funeral cortege of the latter, when *Rav Isser Zalmen*, who at the time was elderly and one of the generation's preeminent *gedolim*, Torah giants, walked the distance behind the coffin, weeping bitterly. It was the *Liflegos Reuven* who had made the difference in *Rav Isser Zalmen's* life.

The boy who would one day inspire and teach the Torah world with his magnum opus, *Even Ha'Ezel*, entered the *Volozhin Yeshivah* in total abject poverty. His clothes were tattered and no longer fit, and, as a result, overwhelmed with shame, he had in his mind to take his bag and return home. He had difficulty concentrating on his learning, because he was so self-conscious about his appearance. The very next day, *Rav Reuven*, who, at the time, was one of the *yeshivah's* premier students, approached him and related with great excitement that the *Netziv, zl*, the *Rosh Yeshivah* of Volozhin, had the other day told the older students that a young student by the name of *Isser Zalmen* had stunned him with a brilliant explanation to a question that he had. *Rav Reuven* did not stop with this one comment, but circled around from group to group of students in the *yeshivah*, spreading the word concerning this special young man that had just enrolled in Volozhin. It was these insightful, warm complimentary words that gave *Rav Isser Zalmen* the courage to ignore his clothes, forget about his abject poverty, and focus entirely on his spiritual growth. It was *Rav Reuven's* thoughtfulness that turned what could have been a downward spiral into upward growth,

and the making of *Rav Isser Zalmen – Rabban shel Yisrael*.

It is noteworthy to relate that in an attempt to demonstrate the *hasmadah*, diligence, of *Rav Isser Zalmen*, *Rav Reuven* said that, one day, in order to accommodate an event, it was necessary to empty the *bais hamedrash*, study hall, of its chairs. The students who were moving the chairs did not notice until later that when they moved *Rav Isser Zalmen's* seat, they moved it with him sitting in it. He never realized that they were moving – so engrossed was he in his learning.