

## **You shall not cause pain to any widow or orphan. (22:21)**

The obligation to identify and care for the needs of the widow and orphan (and anyone who, likewise, has no one to care for him) extends beyond their physical and material needs. One must act toward them as a father acts towards his children, providing material, as well as spiritual, sustenance. We must endeavor to provide a Torah education for the orphaned child, just as we do for our own. This (I feel) applies as well (and possibly more so) to those children who can sadly be referred to as *lebedik yesomim*, living orphans, children whose parents are physically alive, but, for some reason, are unable or ill-prepared to care for them – or simply do not care. These children are no less orphans, since nobody is home for them. (Obviously, one must act diplomatically and with utmost subtlety, otherwise, one will create a situation that will only hurt the child.) To give a child a slice of bread without teaching him how to make a *brachah*, blessing, on the bread is performing half the job. How far does the responsibility to care for an orphan's spiritual growth extend?

*Horav Bentzion Yadler, zl*, was called the *Maggid HaYerushalmi*. He was a well-known *Maggid* who mesmerized his listeners with his ethical discourses. He was very much involved in *kiruv*, outreach, attempting to inspire Jews from all walks of life throughout the Holy Land. He even organized a trip which included the most illustrious rabbinic personalities in Yerushalayim to travel to the *moshavim*, settlements, of the north to reach out to the settlers and teach them what it means to be a Jew. He established the Bais Yaakov HaYashan in the Old City, laying out his own money, so that he could provide a proper Torah *chinuch* for the girls of Yerushalayim. He rented an apartment whose rooms were converted into classrooms. He even took it upon himself to raise the necessary funds to provide salaries for teachers. It was a wonderful dream that had lasted a few months until his funds were depleted. He made every attempt to raise the money, to no avail. The parent body was unable to participate. These parents had enough difficulty putting food on the table. The school was on the brink of closing, unless an injection of funds could somehow make its way to the creditors.

*Rav Bentzion* decided to speak with his close friend, *Horav Yitzchak Yeruchem Diskin, zl*, son of the *Maharil Diskin*, the *Rav* of Brisk, who had guided the Yerushalayim community during the previous generation. *Rav Diskin* presently directed *Diskin Orphans' Home*, a project founded by his father. It was the preeminent orphans' home in the Holy Land. *Rav Yitzchak Yeruchem* offered to write a check from the orphans' home account to tide the Bais Yaakov over for a while. *Rav Bentzion* was about to take the check when he suddenly stopped and said, "How can I take *tzedakah* money from one charity to another? This money was designated for the orphanage. It is improper to use it for another purpose. I cannot take it for the school."

*Rav Yitzchak Yeruchem* saw the *Maggid's* quandary and responded, "Let me share a story that occurred concerning my saintly father. Perhaps, you will realize the appropriateness of using this money. Years ago, my father engaged the services of two *talmidei chachamim*, who were experts in the laws of *mezuzah* and *safrus*, writing *ashuris* script, with the intent of having them go from

door to door in Yerushalayim, checking the *mezuzos*, and, when necessary, replacing them with *mehudar mezuzos* whose script adhered to the stringencies of the law. My father was not a wealthy man. From where did he obtain the funds for this endeavor? The money came from the orphans' home. My father determined the propriety of this decision based upon the following logic. The orphans' home had limited funds. Every child added to the home's roster placed an added toll on the account payables. Obviously, the home's goal was to decrease its enrollment. What better way to decrease enrollment in an orphan's home than by having parents live a full, long life? The Torah gives us a prescription for longevity – *L'maan yirbu yemeichem*. When one is meticulous in observing the laws of *mezuzah*, he has earned a merit that will lengthen his life. Therefore, it was in the best interests of the orphans' home to check the *mezuzos* of Yerushalayim's residents.

“A similar idea applies with regard to providing the finest Torah education for the girls of our community. Every father who has a son that is G-d-fearing and erudite wants to find a proper wife for him. Thus, by seeing to it that our girls study well under the auspices and guidance of

G-d-fearing teachers, we are also saving *bnei Torah*. Otherwise, whom will they marry? Therefore, I feel very comfortable supporting the Bais Yaakov with funds from the orphanage.”