

## **“You shall not persecute any widow or orphan.” (22:21)**

One tear. Who can estimate the value of a tear shed by a lonely man, weeping over his sorry lot in life? Who can imagine the power and influence of a tear shed by a poor widow, bemoaning her fate, grieving over her loss, which is magnified every time she senses that vacuum in her life, the loneliness and feeling of helplessness that have now become her partner? Indeed, we cannot begin to calculate the value, the power and the influence which the tears of the broken-hearted generate. Every tear pierces through the heavens and is gathered before the Heavenly Throne where Hashem holds it near to Him, cherishing every drop.

*Horav Yitzchak Zilberstein, Shlita*, relates a poignant story that illustrates the value of a tear: It was time to elect a Chief Rabbi for Yerushalayim. The people were encouraged to vote for *Horav* Chaim Yaakov Levine, a very suitable candidate for the position. When *Horav* Levine heard this he made it a point to see who else had been nominated for the position. He noticed that *Horav* Betzalel Zolty, *z.l.*, was also a candidate for the position. He immediately said that under no circumstances would he run for the position. Even after a number of great *rabbonim* attempted to dissuade him, he remained adamant – he would not compete with *Horav* Zolty for the position of Chief Rabbi. After awhile, he explained the reason for his refusal to his close friends.

Apparently, his father, the venerable *Horav* Aryeh Levine, *z.l.*, related that once he was walking through the alleyways of Yerushalayim at night when he came upon a woman who was mending socks by the light of a small torch. Perhaps today we cannot relate to this profession, but seventy years ago, when one’s socks had a hole in them, they were repaired. Usually, it was some poor woman who darned these socks for the meager pay it generated. “Why are you doing this?” asked *Rav* Aryeh of the woman, “and especially with so little light.” “I am a poor widow. With the few coins I make, I am able to pay the *rebbe* who learns *Torah* with my orphaned son.” The woman kept on sewing, as her tears trickled down on the socks that she was repairing.

“Do you know who this widow was?” *Rav* Chaim Yaakov asked. “She was *Rav* Betzalel Zolty’s mother! Is it possible to estimate the value and effect of her tears? *Rav* Zolty should become the *Rav* of Yerushalayim. His spiritual growth was catalyzed on a field irrigated by the tears of a widow!”