

If he is poor and his means are not sufficient. (14:21)

The Torah goes out of its way to be sensitive to the needs of one who is impoverished. I refer to one who simply has no means of providing for his family. Poverty is, for the most part, something either we hear about – but do not actually experience – or towards which we conveniently close our eyes because it makes us feel uncomfortable and guilty. This does not mean that it does not exist. Serious pockets of poverty exist all over, especially in families who have made Torah their life's endeavor. Since, *baruch Hashem*, most of us remain spectators, the feelings of hunger and hopelessness that some people experience are beyond our ability to understand.

Horav Yitzchak Zilberstein, Shlita, relates the story of one of *Klal Yisrael's* greatest Torah giants who, at the beginning of his rise to distinction, was living in abject poverty. Once he was invited to attend the *Pesach Seder* of a prominent family. The family had *davened Tefillas Maariv* earlier in order to usher in the *Yom Tov*. As a result, the family returned home while it was still daylight. This *gadol* asked to make *kiddush* immediately. The host family was surprised. "On the *Seder* night, it is appropriate to make *kiddush* after *tzeis ha'kochavim* (nightfall; the time when three stars are visible in the sky). His rejoinder is a comment we should all take to heart: "*Chazal* teach that one who is need of the support of others, who looks to them for his sustenance, his world is dark and bleak. My world is also dark – so dark that, even if the sun is still shining outside, for me, it is dark enough to recite *kiddush*." Having said this, *Rav Zilberstein* observes that such words coming from the mouth of a *gadol b'Yisrael* should engender within us feelings of empathy for those who have less than we do. I think that empathy is not sufficient. We must do something about it.