

The Value of a Tear

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, zl, 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, zl, once related that 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 that 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!"