



Update . . .

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5771 Tishrei



What can we learn from a Lion?

by Richard D. Weisskopf, chairman

I participated in a series of Knesset meetings just before the current recess about Israel's youth crisis. Various organizations presented their facts, findings and conclusions. Among the highlights from these meetings are over 250,000 of the most at-risk youth in Israel come from single-parent homes.

Approximately 71% of these homes are headed by divorced or separated mothers.

First the bad news – these children are 2 to 3 times likelier to suffer behavior disorders and 11 times more prone to violence than children raised with their biological fathers. Their voices frequently get silenced in divorce court where judges refuse to allow children into their

courtrooms. These kids almost never have independent attorneys appointed to them. Many court-appointed caseworkers do not interview children separately nor take their point-of-view into consideration as they make their decisions.

Israeli divorce courts place children with their mothers 90% of the time. Courts change the children's legal status to "orphan" – though their fathers may live just blocks away and most times want to actively participate in their lives. According to research from the U.S.A., 75% of teen suicides are among kids who had been cut off from their fathers. The first and most serious mistake society makes in the youth crisis is alienating children from their fathers.

Now for the lion part. Two Australian men raised a newborn cub and then released him into the African wild after he matured. Born Free Foundation has extensive footage of their subsequent encounters. The following YouTube video accurately captures the essence of their first reunion after a year of separation in the wild:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zVNTdWbVBgc>

With over 15 million views, it powerfully illustrates primal needs which fathers meet among lion cubs and (all the more so) biological children.

Next, the good news – Israeli society has the ability to substantially reduce the number and severity of children at risk by simply implementing services, programs and incentives which foster relations between divorced fathers and their children rather than alienating them. None of this needs to burden taxpayers; yet could reduce up to 2/3 of the current youth crisis.

This month is the New Year in Israel. The Love for Israel Relief Fund's New Year's resolution is to raise awareness and lobby for improvements to the child welfare system. We have recruited Knesset Members, lobbyists, social workers, and community leaders interested in promoting family values with the most natural and least restrictive environment for at-risk kids. By this Chanukah we

want to begin dedicating community-based centers around the country which can provide education and support groups for families in divorce. Launching the nationwide project will cost \$5,000 and dedicating each center will cost \$3,000. Depending upon location; monthly expenses range from \$1,000 to \$3,000 per center. Larger donations would allow us to add professional counseling services. We can name centers in honor of loved ones for large donations. It would only cost \$25 per month to sponsor each child, which maximizes the effectiveness of any size donation. Thank you for prayerfully considering support of this important project.



You can donate online at:
<http://love4israel.org/donate.html>

Send checks to:
Love for Israel Relief Fund
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