

You shall not persecute any widow or orphan. If you will persecute him...for if he will cry out to Me, I shall surely hear his cry. (22:21,22)

Hashem issues a guarantee: If the widow or orphan cry out to Him, He will listen to their cries. Understandably, the widow and orphan are among the loneliest people in our society. Does this mean that they should be guaranteed access to Hashem over everyone else? *Horav Tzvi Partzovitz, Shlita*, quotes *Chazal (Rosh Hashanah 18a)* who say the following: Two men went up to the scaffold, each about to be executed; or two men went to the executioner to have his head severed from the rest of his body. One succeeds in leaving, while the other falls victim to the executioner's skill. Why? What is it that catalyzes one to leave, while the other one dies? *Chazal* teach that one prayed *b'shleimus*; thus, he was spared, while the other one did not pray a *tefillah shleimah*, whole, perfect/complete prayer, thus, he was not spared. This implies that, if he would have prayed a *tefillah shleimah*, Hashem would have surely listened to his prayer. Furthermore, the only reason that Hashem did not respond favorably to this prayer was that his *tefillah* was not perfect. What is the meaning of this, and what constitutes a *tefillah sheleimah*?

We must say that when one walks up the steps to the scaffold, he knows this is it. Unless Hashem answers his heartfelt prayer, he is soon to become history. There is no going back – alive – from the scaffold or the executioner's block. It is at this point that the supplicant knows that only prayer, if accepted by Hashem, can save him. All options are over. This is it. When one prays with the realization that his only option for salvation is Hashem, it constitutes a *tefillah shleimah*. The widow and orphan are acutely aware that they have no one other than Hashem. Thus, their prayer to Him is *sheleimah*, complete. They have no false beliefs that someone will come to their aid. They are all alone in the world. Therefore, when they pray to Hashem, He listens.

David *Hamelech* expresses this idea in *Tehillim* 142:5, "Looking to the right and see that I have no friend; every escape is lost to me; no one seeks to save my life." Why did David *HaMelech* underscore the fact that he has no friend, no savior; he is literally up against a wall with nowhere to go and no one to whom he can turn? Would having another option preclude or diminish his obligation to pray to Hashem? Apparently, if he would have had "other" options, it would have diminished his prayer. It would not be *shleimah*. As long as options exist, they remain in the back of our minds, impeding us from complete prayer. It is only when one's entire *tikvah*, hope, depends upon Hashem that prayer has its true efficacy.