

"Any widow or orphan you shall not afflict. If you afflict them in any way, for if they cry out to Me I will surely hear their cry." (22:21,22)

We may note the double usage of the verbs in this *pasuk*, a highly irregular style in *Tanach*. The *Kotzker Rebbe z.l.*, notes that the affliction one causes a widow or an orphan is different from the affliction of other individuals. If one inflicts physical or emotional discomfort upon another person, in as much as the distress may even be severe, it is only a single incident with which the individual must deal. When one harms a widow or an orphan, however, the pain is complicated by the stirring of old memories of the pain of widowhood or the loss of a parent. The widow and orphan must contend with much more. Their pain is compounded for they feel, "If my husband/parent would have been alive, this would not have happened, or, I would have had someone to whom to turn." When they cry, it is a two fold cry. When Hashem listens to them, it is with "increased" empathy!