

"For if they cry out to Me I will surely hear their cry." (22:22)

The *pasuk* implies that Hashem responds to the cries of the oppressed. This statement is enigmatic. If the injustice suffered by the widow or orphan warrants Hashem's intervention, why is Hashem's response contingent upon the sufferer's outcry? If punishment is deserved, then it should be dispensed without the outcry of the oppressed one.

Horav Avigdor Miller, Shlita, suggests that this is a manifestation of Hashem's benignity. The cry for help raises the oppressed one's awareness of Hashem. The pain and anguish reflected by the outcry supplements the guilt of the oppressor and will increase the weight of his punishment. Indeed, Hashem vigorously expedites punishment in order to increase our awareness. He listens to the cries of the afflicted. Thus, Hashem encourages and reinforces the efficacy of human outcry to Him.

Hence, the privation and torment to which the widow or orphan may be subjected is, in reality, intended for their own benefit. The oppressor is actually an agent of Hashem, for the purpose of soliciting their outcry. Thus, the oppressed are enabled to gain an increased awareness of Hashem. As *Horav Miller* notes, the word *hbg*, poor or afflicted man, actually means the "man that cries out" -- derived from the root word *vbg*, "to speak up." The poor man is endeared to Hashem because by crying out to Hashem his perception of Him becomes more intense. Pharaoh and Egypt were punished not only for their persecution of the Jews, but particularly in response to the Jews crying out to Hashem.

We may suggest a pragmatic approach to understanding the purpose of crying out to Hashem. In many instances in which one is either oppressed or slighted by another, the individual's first response is anger and a desire for revenge. We attempt to take matters into our own hands by responding to our persecution in ways that may be unbecoming to the dignity of a Jew. After all, we were hurt, and we feel we must react, regardless of the nature of our own response.

This attitude does not reflect a *Torah* orientation. We must realize that whatever happens to us, whether it is positive or negative in nature, its source is Hashem. The purpose of Hashem's plan is to communicate a message. Our oppressors are mere agents. They will undoubtedly have to prove themselves "worthy" of having been selected to orchestrate injustice against another Jew either individually or as part of a group. The afflicted must cry out to Hashem, since He is the Designer of the plan. This is why the *Torah* emphasizes the need for crying out to Hashem. Only when one recognizes the source of his affliction can he fully acknowledge the reason for it. Blaming the oppressor is just a way of avoiding the real issue.