

# Job 24:3

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

They drive away the ass of the fatherless, they take the widow's ox for a pledge.

## Analysis

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**They drive away the ass of the fatherless**—The Hebrew *yatom* (יָתוֹם, fatherless) and *almanah* (אַלְמָנָה, widow) represent society's most vulnerable members, those without male protection in patriarchal culture. The donkey was essential for the poor person's livelihood—used for transportation, farming, and carrying goods. Seizing it condemned the fatherless to destitution. Exodus 22:22-24 explicitly forbids afflicting widows and orphans, promising divine wrath against violators.

**They take the widow's ox for a pledge** (יָחַבְלִי, *yachbelú*) uses the verb *chabal*, meaning to take as security or collateral. Mosaic law regulated pledges carefully: creditors couldn't enter homes to seize pledges (Deuteronomy 24:10-11), couldn't keep a poor person's cloak overnight (Exodus 22:26-27), and specifically prohibited taking millstones—tools necessary for daily bread (Deuteronomy 24:6). Taking a widow's ox as pledge violated all these principles—it was her means of plowing, threshing, and survival. This wasn't legitimate lending but legal extortion, using the law as oppression's instrument.

## Historical Context

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Ancient Near Eastern law codes (Hammurabi, Hittite) regulated debt and pledges, but Israel's covenant law uniquely prioritized protecting the vulnerable. Widows and orphans lacked legal advocates in patriarchal society—their exploitation was endemic unless covenant community enforced protective law. Job's complaint

exposes the gap between law's existence and its enforcement, a problem Jesus later condemned in Pharisaic practice (Mark 12:40—devouring widows' houses).

## Related Passages

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**Revelation 20:12** — Judgment according to deeds

**Matthew 25:31** — Final judgment

## Study Questions

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1. How does your church or community protect modern equivalents of widows and orphans—single mothers, refugees, the elderly?
2. What does it mean that God 'hears the cry' of the exploited (Exodus 22:23) even when human courts fail?
3. How can believers ensure financial transactions don't exploit vulnerable people who lack negotiating power?

## Interlinear Text

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הַמּוֹר	יְתוֹמֵי יִם	יִנְהוּ גוֹ	לְחֵבֶל וְ	שׁוֹר	אֶלְמָנָה:
the ass	of the fatherless	They drive away	for a pledge	ox	the widow's
H2543	H3490	H5090	H2254	H7794	H490

## Additional Cross-References

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**Deuteronomy 24:6** (Parallel theme): No man shall take the nether or the upper millstone to pledge: for he taketh a man's life to pledge.