

The Lakeside



Message in a bottle

Verse of the day for Monday January 27, 2025 - Joshua 10:25

25 Joshua said to them, "Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged. Be strong and courageous. This is what the LORD will do to all the enemies you are going to fight."

Read Joshua 10 for meditation and inspiration.



Photo used with permission from The David M. Rubenstein National Institute For Holocaust Documentation

United States Holocaust Memorial Museum

Dear Lakesiders and friends,

Today is “International Holocaust Memorial Day. It is a good time to reflect on the spiritual challenge that comes from suffering.

Out of a parent’s worst nightmare with his son ill and dying, Rabbi Harold Kushner wrote “When Bad Things Happen to Good People”. It was his attempt to share what he learned from his own heartbreak and then to help others with the many tragedies humans face and help them move through loss and suffering.

Rabbi Kushner’s main thought is God chooses not to intervene to protect people from tragedies, nor will he punish or reward them for their actions, preferring that humans use their free will without interference. The thinking continues in the idea that, bad things can happen to good people by accident or from malicious people, and in remedy God offers only His support and love. People must find meaning and purpose from their own strength in the face of suffering. They must find their own resolve in overcoming adversity.

As the centerpiece of his argument, the author recounts the book of [Job](#) from the Bible. Job is a good and pious man whose faith is tested when God burdens him with multiple disasters until, naked, ill, and with only three friends, Job finally demands an accounting. God visits him and makes it clear that His purpose is not to satisfy human needs. Job, recognizing God’s majesty, relents, and God rewards him with health, wealth, and children. Kushner believes everyone, including good people, must contend with tragedy without expecting God’s intercession. Many who suffer conclude that God is cruel or uncaring, but Kushner makes the radical counterargument that God does care yet simply will not intervene to prevent our misfortunes.

Pain and suffering aren't entirely useless, since they teach us to avoid actions that injure us. As for malicious damage caused by evil people, such as Hitler's Holocaust, God shares our anger but will not intercede because this would abrogate human free will and discourage us from doing the good works that, over time, greatly exceed the bad deeds. Though God does not step in to prevent bad things from happening, He does offer love and strength to those who ask for His aid. In praying, not for exemption from suffering but for the fortitude to overcome it, people often find they have more than enough power to prevail over disaster.

Kushner thus counsels his readers to accept tragedy as a part of life and, in partnership with God and their community, summon the strength to rise up and rebuild a life of love and participation.

I do agree with that last thought, but I also have seen God's love, through Jesus Christ, intervene to call witness to God's power and love. God does not do this often or at our demands or timing, but God does respond to prayer often in miraculous ways. God does answer pray, always. Not always what we want but the answer will reveal God's grace, mercy and love in special and profound ways.

We never give up our hope but know that God has already won the believers' victory and is waiting to place the robe of righteousness on his children as they come home to him.

Living in Hope,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Roger".

Roger