**WHY IS THERE SUFFERING IN THE WORLD?**
**Rabbi Dan Moskovitz – Temple Sholom – 604-401-5153 cell**

**THE PROBLEM**

**A 12-YEAR-OLD JEWISH GIRL IS DIAGNOSED WITH CANCER. SHE WILL HAVE TO UNDERGO MONTHS OF PAINFUL TREATMENTS AND STAYS IN THE HOSPITAL. WHY DO BAD THINGS HAPPEN TO GOOD PEOPLE?**

QUESTION #1 – WHY IS THERE SUFFERING

If God knows everything, then God knows about all evil. If God is all-powerful, then God can prevent all evil. If God is perfectly good, then God should prevent all evil. And yet, evil exists.

***How can this be true?***

QUESTION #2 - AREN'T JEWS SUPPOSED TO BE PROTECTED FROM SUFFERING?

According to the Torah, the covenant at Sinai, in which the Israelites agreed to follow the commandments, established that the Jews would be rewarded if they followed God's ways. And yet, suffering often seems to happen randomly. Righteous people suffer and wicked people prosper.

***How can this be reconciled with the covenantal relationship between God and the Jews?***

Vocabulary: The challenge of justifying God, despite the existence of evil is known as **theodicy**.

**Five Common Answers – which one most closely matches what you think?**

Text 1:
"No harm befalls the righteous, but the wicked have their fill of misfortune."

(Proverbs 12:21)

*Suffering is seen as punishment for a person's sin or wrongdoing*

Text 2:
"Bear in mind that Adonai your God disciplines you just as a parent disciplines a child."

(Deuteronomy 8:5)

*Just as a parent sets limits (which may include punishments), so does God.*

Text 3:
Rabbi Yannai says: "It is not in our powers to explain either the well-being of the wicked or the sufferings of the righteous."

(Avot 4:19)

*Suffering has a reason, and while we might suffer now the good will be rewarded in the afterlife*

Text 4:
When Rabbi Akiva is tortured at the end of his life, he said, "All my life, I strived to love God with all my soul. Now that I have the opportunity to fulfill it, I do so with joy!" With his dying breath, he sanctified God's name by crying out the words of Shema.

(Brachot 61a)

*Suffering is in some way beneficial therefore it's not really suffering.*

Text 5:
Many post-Holocaust theologians have developed responses to the unique problems raised by the suffering of the Jews during the Shoah. From "God is hiding" to "God is dead,". (Richard Rubenstein)

*Since the Holocaust contradicts the covenant, we can only deduce one thing: God must be dead.*

***THAT'S ALL PRETTY BLEAK, MAYBE THERE IS A BETTER ANSWER ON THE BACK OF THIS PAGE?***

AN ANSWER FOR THE TIMES WE LIVE IN AND OUR UNDERSTANDING OF THE WORLD:

**What then is the purpose of suffering? Maybe there is no purpose at all.**

Suffering simply exists as part of the human condition. If suffering is part of the human experience, what then is God's role? Perhaps God is there to be with us in times of adversity.

The next verse after Psalms 93:4 reads: "Happy is the person who You discipline, Adonai, the person you instruct in Your teaching, to give the person tranquility in times of misfortune…"

This is the perspective taken by Rabbi & Author Harold Kushner in When Bad Things Happen To Good People:

*"If God is a God of justice and not of power, then God can still be on our side when bad things happen to us. God can know that we are good and honest people who deserve better. Our misfortunes are none of God's doing, and so we can turn to God for help. We will turn to God, not to be judged or forgiven, not to be rewarded or punished, but to be strengthened and comforted."*

*(When Bad Things Happen To Good People p.44)*

**What do you think?**