

## B. A proposed definition of human suffering

**Human suffering is the experiencing or enduring of extended or persistent pain or distress. Suffering may be physical, emotional, or spiritual in nature and origin, and may be caused by external or internal factors and/or influences**

## II. THE SCOPE OF HUMAN SUFFERING

### A. Images of Human Suffering

1. From When Bad Things Happen to Good People, by Harold S. Kushner (New York: Avon Books, 1981), pp.1-2, 5

Our son Aaron had just passed his third birthday when our daughter Ariel was born. Aaron was a bright and happy child, who before the age of two could identify a dozen different varieties of dinosaur and could patiently explain to an adult that dinosaurs were extinct. My wife and I had been concerned about his health from the time he stopped gaining weight at the age of eight months, and from the time his hair started falling out after he turned one year old. Prominent doctors had seen him, had attached complicated names to his condition, and had assured us that he would grow to be very short but would be normal in all other ways. Just before our daughter's birth, we moved from New York to a suburb of Boston, where I became the rabbi of the local congregation. We discovered that the local pediatrician was doing research in problems of children's growth, and we introduced him to Aaron. Two months later—the day our daughter was born—he visited my wife in the hospital, and told us that our son's condition was called progeria, "rapid aging." He went on to say that Aaron would never grow much beyond three feet in height, would have no hair on his head or body, would look like a little old man while he was still a child, and would die in his early teens. . . .

. . . Aaron died two days after his fourteenth birthday. This is his book, because any attempt to make sense of the world's pain and evil will be judged a success or a failure based on whether it offers an acceptable explanation of why he and we had to undergo what we did. And it is his book in another sense as well—because his life made it possible, and because his death made it necessary.