

"Satisfied? A happy ending, yes? Much more Jewish than the absurd and tragic Iliad?

"Are you so sure? My dear Jewish friends, what about the ten children who died? Where was God's justice to them? And what about the father, the mother? Can those scars on Job's heart heal, even in a hundred and forty years?

"That is not the worst of it. Think! What was the missing piece that was too much for Job to understand? We understand it, and are we so very clever? Satan simply sneered God into ordering the senseless ordeal. No wonder God roars out of a storm to silence Job! Isn't He ashamed of Himself before His own creature? Hasn't Job behaved better than God?"

Jastrow shrugs, spreads his hands, and his face relaxes in a wistful little smile that makes Natalie think of Charlie Chaplin.

"But I am expounding the Iliad. In the Iliad, unseen powers are at odds with each other, and that brings about a visible world of senseless evil. Not so in Job. Satan has no power at all. He is not the Christian Satan, not Dante's colossal monster, not Milton's proud rebel, not in the least. He needs God's permission to make every move.

"Then who is Satan, and why does God leave him out of the answer from the storm? The word satan in Hebrew means adversary. What is the book telling us? Was God arguing with Himself? Was He asking Himself whether there was any purpose in the vast creation? And in reply pointing, not to the dead glittering galaxies that sprawl over thousands of light-years, but to man, the handful of dirt that can sense His presence, do His will, and measure those galaxies? Above all to the upright man, the speck of dirt who can measure himself against the Creator Himself, for dignity and goodness? What else did the ordeal establish?

"The heroes in the Iliad rise superior to the squabbling injustice of weak and contemptible gods.

"The hero in Job holds to the truth of One Almighty God through the most senseless and horrible injustice; forcing God at last to measure up to Himself, to acknowledge that injustice is on His side, to repair the damage as best He can.

"In the Iliad there is no injustice to repair. In the end there is only blind fate.

"In Job God must answer for everything, good and bad, that happens. Job is the Bible's only hero. There are fighting men, patriarchs, lawgivers, prophets, in the other books. This is the one man who rises to the measure of the universe, to the stature of the