

God of Israel, while sitting on an ash heap; Job, a poor skeletal broken beggar.

"Who is Job?"

"Nobody. 'Job was never born and never existed,' says the Talmud. 'He was a parable.'

"Parable of what truth?"

"All right, we have come to it now. Who is it in history who will never admit that there is no God, never admit that the universe makes no sense? Who is it who suffers ordeal after ordeal, plundering after plundering, massacre after massacre, century after century, yet looks up at the sky, sometimes with dying eyes, and cries, 'The Lord our God, the Lord is One'?"

"Who is it who in the end of days will force from God the answer from the storm? Who will see the false comforters rebuked, the old glory restored, and generations of happy children and grandchildren to the fourth generation? Who until then will leave the missing piece to God, and praise His Name, crying, 'the Lord Has given, the Lord has taken away, blessed be the Name of the Lord'? Not the noble Greek of the Iliad, he is extinct. No! Nobody but the sick, plundered skeleton on the ash heap. Nobody but the beloved of God, the worm that lives a few moments and dies, the handful of dirt that has justified Creation. Nobody but Job. He is the only answer, if there is one, to the adversary challenge to an Almighty God, if there is One. Job, the stinking Jew."

What shall we say to these answers to the question of the root causes of suffering?

When Rabbi Kushner is finished with Job, he is left with a God who is good and a man who is good; but his god is limited, not all-powerful, and not in control of all things in the universe. In this manner Kushner solves the problem of fixing responsibility for suffering in the world. God is not to blame for human suffering since He can't help it.

Although this is one way to "get God off the hook" of moral responsibility for suffering, we who are committed to the controlling authority of Scripture cannot take this way, since the Bible teaches very clearly that God is not limited, that He is all-powerful, and that He is in control of all events and things in the universe.

The answers of fatalism and stoicism and escapism are all non-solutions. The universe is not an impersonal machine, and the alternatives of bearing pain without emotion or of fleeing from it do not deal with the source of human suffering.