

Senior Religion - Summer Reading

When Bad Things Happen to Good People

Harold S. Kushner. NY: Avon Books, 1983. (ISBN: 0-380-60392-6)

Use the following questions to guide you to key concepts. You can expect a quiz during the first week of class. Enjoy reading this classic about some of life's perennial questions.

1. Briefly describe the circumstances which led to Kushner's decision to write this book (from the Introduction).
2. What questions about God are raised by the issue of the suffering of the innocent?
3. List and briefly explain the traditional explanations for misfortune and suffering in our lives. How does Kushner respond to these and what does he propose instead?
4. What explanations for his suffering does Job consider? How does he deal with God's power and justness and his own goodness? What is his conclusion?
5. Does Kushner's discussion of the randomness of the universe appeal to you? Why, or why not? Does it address the issue of suffering effectively? Can God suffer?
6. Do you agree that nature is "morally blind"? What is the question that Kushner asks, now that this or that tragedy or misfortune has happened?
7. How does Kushner interpret the story of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden?
8. How is death different for us than for animals?
9. What role does freedom play in our humanity?
10. What does Kushner say about the Jewish Holocaust and God?
11. According to Kushner, what image of God did Christianity introduce?
12. What was the first mistake of Job's friends? What should have been their response to Job's grief.
13. What is the meaning of "Job's comforters"? What did Job's friends do right?
14. According to Kushner, why do survivors feel guilt?
15. What did Kushner say to the playmates of the 5-year-old killed by the bus?
16. According to Kushner, what is wrong with being angry with God?
17. What is the problem with petitionary prayer? What good does it do to pray?
18. What is the purpose of religion and God?