

WHERE IS GOD NOW?

"God"
Fate Sumner
Self
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1. PERHAPS SOME OF YOU ARE FAMILIAR WITH THE STORY OF THE LITTLE BOY WHO WAS TOLD IN RELIGIOUS SCHOOL THAT ~~HA~~ GOD HAD CREATED THE WORLD IN ALL ITS SPLENDOR IN SIX DAYS. AFTER HEARING THE STORY THE LITTLE BOY SAT WRAPPED IN THOUGHT. SUDDENLY HE RAISED HIS HAND, AND HE ASKED THE TEACHER, " IF GOD CREATED THE WORLD WITH EVERYTHING IN IT IN SIX DAYS, WHAT IS HE DOING NOW?".

This was a very smart little boy. He didn't have to be a theologian to understand that if the world was originally created in it's entirety and to a point of complete perfection, then there was nothing for God to do now.

2. A modern mother had to face a similar question from her young child. Where is God, she was asked. How do we know he exists, if we can't see Him?. The mother had a wonderful answer. She poured her son a glass of water, and she handed him a spoon filled with sugar. "Pour the sugar in the water, she said, "and stir it". The child poured the sugar in the glass of water and watched it disappear as he stirred the water. "Now, asked the mother, can you see the sugar? No, replied the boy. But you know it is there. Yes, I know it is there. Now, taste the water. Is it sweeter than it was before. Oh, yes, much sweeter. So, concluded the mother, God is the sugar in the world. We cannot see Him, but we know that the world tastes sweeter because of His presence.

This clever mother would tell us that the function of God thousands of years after the creation of Adam is to sweeten the world, to offset the bitter injections which come from varied sources.

3. The ancient Rabbis had to face the questions of their brilliant young students also. "So the world was created in six days, they were asked, what is God doing now?". THE RABBIS WERE QUICK TO ANSWER "HE IS ARRANGING MARRIAGES". God is a glorified shadchan. The Rabbis, too, were clever. They understood that it is through selective creation that the world progresses, and God, according to their view, used man and woman as His agents. They were now the creative agents in the world, and God spent His time seeing to it that the best matches were made, so that the creation might be beneficial to the world.

4. There is a more profound way to ask the serious question of the young student, and it is not so easy to provide a quick answer. The intelligent adult might well ask, "Six millions Jews were killed by Hitler? Where was God then? Millions more were killed in the past war, Where was God then?". This is a question which must be answered if the religious outlook upon life is to prevail. God put us here upon the earth. Wonderful. But isn't he still a participant in the struggle of justice against injustice, and doesn't he have some say as to whom is killed and who survives? The famed Martin Buber, who approaches Judaism from the point of view of the mystic, has answered this question by saying that God was so pained by the evils performed by mankind that He withdrew from the world, and with His temporary withdrawal, Hitler was able to climb to power on the backs of millions of powerless ~~human~~ beings.

DOES THIS ANSWER SATISFY YOU? IT DOESN'T SATISFY ME.
A GOD WHO ISN'T AT ALL TIMES PRESENT IN THE WORLD ISN'T A GOD AT ALL!

who lived a thousand years after Abraham, the Hebrews had almost ceased using the word *ק'דש*. They used instead a new word *ק'דש*, prophet. God acted through these men, who were not considered as semi-divine beings, but as ordinary humans who were inspired. The Book of the Prophet Isaiah describes God's search for a *ק'דש*, someone who will be ~~an~~ his agent to the Hebrew people. Isaiah writes "AND I HEARD THE VOICE OF THE LORD SAYING? WHOM SHALL I SEND, AND WHO WILL GO FOR US? THEN I SAID; HERE AM I; send ME. AND HE SAID, 'GO AND TELL THIS PEOPLE."

WHAT IS GOD DOING NOW? THE BASIC JEWISH ANSWER IS SIMPLE. HE IS SEARCHING FOR *ק'דש* FOR PROPHETS WHO WILL ACT AS HIS AGENTS? WHO WILL DO HIS WORK ON EARTH. The ancient Hebrews understood that once God had created man, he carved out for ~~him~~ a tremendous area on earth in which man was the responsible party. According to the Biblical concept of human life, we were intended to be co-planners with God. We were given the responsibility of choosing our paths and we were faced with the penalties of our errors and our indifference. Beyond certain limits we could not go, for God was supreme in these areas. Yet within the broad limits outlined for man, we were free souls. Within this area of human society, God interfered only through his *ק'דש* and his *ק'דש*.

With this type of approach to religion, ~~it is a simple matter to answer~~ *we can get an acceptable* the question, "Where was God when Hitler raged". The answer is that if God ~~were~~ seemed not to be present, it is only because HE CALLED AND NOONE ANSWERED, he searched for *ק'דש* and *ק'דש* and noone said with Isaiah, "Here am I; send me" and none responded. He pleaded, WHOM SHALL I SEND AND WHO WILL GO FOR US, and noone said as had Isaiah, "HERE AM I; SEND ME". Think back to those days and see if you can remember half a dozen people who criticized Hitler vigorously. President Roosevelt was threatened with impeachment because he dared to criticize Hitler in his famous Chicago speech. Rabbi Stephen Wise was accused of war-mongering because he ~~wept~~ *called for a protest against Hitler* loudly over the bier of hundreds of thousands of Jews. There, indeed, was a time for decision, a point of no return, and the voices of the *ק'דש*, Franklin Roosevelt, Stephen Wise and a handful of others went unheeded. They were voices crying in the wilderness.

Question If we claim to be more than mere puppets who respond to the strings pulled by an all-powerful God, then we must accept the responsibility for the tragedy initiated by Hitler. We could *legitimately* ~~turn our backs upon~~ God only if there had been no prophecy, only if there had been no malachim. But the warning was sounded, it went unheeded. IT WAS NOT GOD WHO WITHDREW FROM THE WORLD? IT WAS WE WHO WITHDREW FROM HIM ~~AND HIS AGENTS~~

WHAT IS GOD DOING NOW IN THIS DAY WHEN EVERY MAN SUSPECTS HIS NEIGHBOR AND DESPISES EVEN MORE THE ALIEN. I PRESUME TO SAY WITH MY FATHERS, GOD IS SEARCHING? HE IS SEARCHING FOR *ק'דש* EVEN NOW I HEAR HIS VOICE PLEADING, WHOM SHALL I SEND AND WHO WILL GO FOR US?

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HE'S SIMPLY A SOMETIME-GOD WHO WHEN THE GREAT CRISES OF HISTORY OCCUR HANGS OUT A SIGN? "Out to lunch" or "Closed for the ~~Holidays~~"^{meditation}. This is not a God; this is an invention of the mystic who insists that God is so powerful that no evil can possibly exist so long as God is present, ~~but he isn't present for long.~~ But the trouble with this God of the mystic is that he takes vacations, and the world can be destroyed while his God is out fishing.

No, there's a better answer to the question-What is God doing now, and what was he doing when Hitler was around? Let us turn to the earliest pages of our Bible and see what they tell us about God's actions after the Creation. Throughout the pages of the Old Testament from Abraham through Daniel, we are not told merely that God is arranging marriages; we are not told merely that God is the sugar in the ~~water~~ atmosphere; we are not told merely that God is withdrawing from the earth, -we are told on the contrary that the hand of God is imprinted strongly upon all human activity. According to the Bible, God is one of the chief instruments in the progress of mankind, involved in man's defeats as well as his victories, suffering with man as well as rejoicing with him, punishing him as well as upholding him and granting him mercy and forgiveness. The Bible never gives the impression for one second that the world was created complete and perfect in six days. It says, "in the beginning" God set up the world, but it does not say that God pre-determined every act and situation; it does not suggest that God's role is confined to the beginning alone. Look throughout this unequalled history of a people and you will note that God is considered close to man at all times, inspiring him, directing him, and offering him consolation and hope when man despairs.

What is God doing?, the Bible has a simple answer. He is laboring at all times with man to build human character, to aid in the establishment of an earthly society of peace and justice, which the Hebrews called the ~~kingdom of heaven on earth~~, the kingdom of heaven on earth. How does God work with man? -this is the other side of the query. What is God doing now? How does the Creator of the world attach Himself to mere human beings? How does a God who is outside the world, become part of it? This question is as crucial for us today as it was for the ancient Hebrews. Perhaps their answer can be of help to us. What did they answer? Their answer lies in two words-
מַלְאָךְ + נָבִיא. MESSENGER AND PROPHET.

The first word מַלְאָךְ is usually translated by modern people as Angel, it means simply, however, messenger. God sent his messengers to administer to the needs of man. When Abraham went to the door of his tent at sun-down, he saw three men walking across the desert. The Bible does not speak of three semi-divine creatures with wings. This is a later Christian ~~conception~~ of מַלְאָךְ. Abraham saw three human forms. And through these messengers, these human messengers, Abraham had contact with God. Through them Abraham was inspired, and through them, Abraham himself became a מַלְאָךְ in the real sense, a messenger of God, teaching men how to live the decent life. TO THE QUESTION WHAT IS GOD DOING NOW, ABRAHAM WOULD ANSWER? HE IS SEARCHING FOR נָבִיא. HE IS LOOKING FOR MEN WHO WILL ACT AS HIS AGENTS, DOING GOD'S WORK ON EARTH.

The second crucial word in the Bible which can help explain what God is doing now is the word מַלְאָךְ which means Prophet, one who proclaims the word of God. By the time of the Literary Prophets

or one who helps to bring to reality.