

Why Do Bad Things Happen to Good People?

by Rabbi Aron Moss

Answer:

Are you sure you want an explanation? Do you really want to know why the innocent suffer? I think not. You are far better off with the question than with an answer.

You are bothered by the fact that people suffer undeservedly. As you should be. Any person with an ounce of moral sensitivity is outraged by the injustices of our world.

Abraham, the first Jew, asked G-d, "Should the Judge of the whole World not act fairly?" Moses asked, "Why have You treated this people badly?" And today, we still ask, "Why, G-d, why?"

But what if we found the answer? What if someone came along and gave us a satisfying explanation? What if the mystery were finally solved? What if we asked why and actually got an answer?

If this ultimate question were answered, then we would be able to make peace with the suffering of innocents. And that is unthinkable. Worse than innocent people suffering is others watching their suffering unmoved. And that's exactly what would happen if we were to understand why innocents suffer. We would no longer be bothered by their cry, we would no longer feel their pain, because we would understand why it is happening.

Imagine you are in a hospital and you hear a woman screaming with pain. Outside her room, her family is standing around chatting, all smiling and happy. You scream at them, "What's wrong with you? Can't you hear how much pain she is in?" They answer, "This is the delivery ward. She is having a baby. Of course we are happy."

When you have an explanation, pain doesn't seem so bad anymore. We can tolerate suffering when we know why it is happening.

And so, if we could make sense of innocent people suffering, if we could rationalise tragedy, then we could live with it. We would be able to hear the cry of sweet children in pain and not be horrified. We would tolerate seeing broken hearts and shattered lives, for we would be able to neatly explain them away. Our question would be answered and we could move on.

But as long as the pain of innocents remains a burning question, we are bothered by its existence. And as long as we can't explain pain, we must alleviate it. If innocent people suffering does not fit into our world-view, then we must eradicate it. Rather than justifying their pain, we need to get rid of it.

So keep asking the question, why do bad things happen to good people. But stop looking for answers. Start formulating a response. Take your righteous anger and turn it into a force for doing good. Redirect your frustration with injustice and unfairness, and channel it into a drive to fight injustice and unfairness. Let your outrage propel you into action.

When you see innocent people suffering, help them. Combat the pain in the world with goodness. Alleviate suffering wherever you can.

We don't want answers, we don't want explanations, and we don't want closure. We want an end to suffering. And we dare not leave it up to G-d to alleviate suffering. He is waiting for us to do it. That's what we are here for.