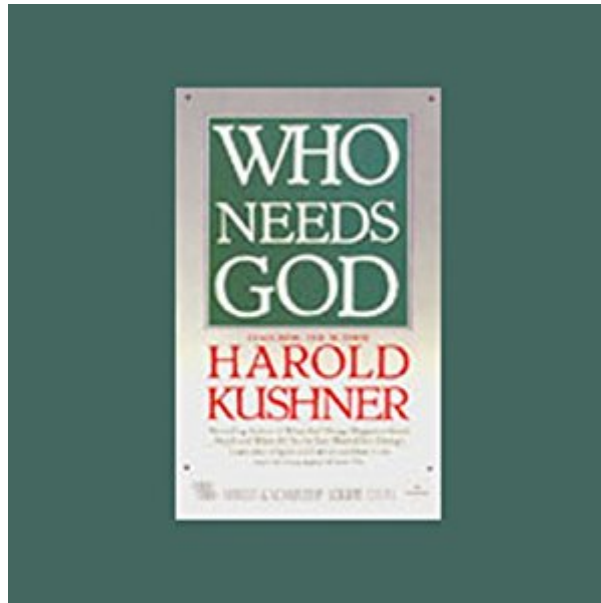


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# Who Needs God



## Synopsis

If you have lost faith or have never known it, or if you have ever wondered "What can religion offer?" here are wise and thoughtful answers. With the warmth, insight, and understanding that distinguished his phenomenal bestsellers *When Bad Things Happen to Good People* and *How Good Do We Have to Be?*, Harold Kushner addresses a critical issue in the lives of many: a spiritual hunger that no personal success can feed. Rabbi Kushner shows how religious commitment does have a place in our daily lives, filling a need for connection, joy, and community. For anyone who has ever wanted a more fulfilling life or wished to make a difference in the lives of others...for anyone who has ever felt guilty, afraid, or alone...Rabbi Kushner shares a path to faith that offers new sources of comfort and strength for all of us. Powerful, provocative, and persuasive, *Who Needs God* is a message of universal appeal. --This text refers to the Paperback edition.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

....I hide nothing about my search for spiritual awareness. If you've followed along some of the book reviews I've done in .com--and other places, because I do write articles under pseudonyms in other venues--you would know I've read a lot in the religious and spiritual and philosophical arena. Rabbi Kushner has written many books on how modern folks could cope in today's trials and tribulations starting with the great "When Bad Things Happen to Good People" which, in my estimation, still is one of the best books on the searching I have ever read. This book, "Who Needs God" is written for those who are too-- should I say 'distracted' by everything to find the love God gives us through the fellowshiping and community of churches, and a hope that can be strengthened by belief in and

awareness of someone greater than our poor selves. Kushner writes passages that are sheer beauty...in a chapter entitled "Can Modern People Pray" he says Psalm 73 is a "Spiritual Masterpiece" in which the author comes to experience God and "in the light of that experience, all doubt, all philosophical and intellectual questions melt away" and "once we have tasted the prescence of God, we will no longer envy the wicked..." I cannot adequately describe how stirring and how helpful this book has been for me. It is has been a lifechanging expeience for me. You will have to get it and read it to find out for yourself..The "full of sky" quote comes from Kushner's introduction in a fable about a Sky Maiden who leaves her earth-husband after he's opened the box she asked him not to...it was to the husband empty, but to the Maiden, it was full of that which she came to know and love from her celestial existence....

Well, I have to let you know that I had some difficulty getting into this book. That lasted all the way through the introduction. The only reason I gave this book four stars was that I had some difficulty following the author's train of thought at times. I am reading the book for the second time. I have found this book excellent for focusing on my own doubts on being Jewish and my relationship or lack there of between myself and G-d. This book provided the perspective I needed to reach inside and think of my own needs and the needs that G-d may have for me. This book is a great read and one that you will like to own.

I'm glad I read this book, but I'm afraid I will disappoint Rabbi Kushner with my response. A quick background on myself: Once I was a moderately observant Jew (went to High Holidays, tried not to work on Sabbath, etc..) A few years ago I read Dawkins, Harris, Hitchens, and a few others and completely lost all belief in God. With an open mind, I read Who Needs God to see if there was any chance I might regain some faith. I regret to say, that while I thought the book was enjoyable and passionate, it did not at all convince me that God or religion is necessary (or true) anymore. Rabbi Kushner's arguments for God (see p.177, where he says God is "found in the courage of the human soul....") just aren't compelling. The courage of human beings is evidence that some human beings have courage, nothing more. An empiricist like myself wants a little more evidence of God's existence. I find another non-religious Jew, Steven Weinberg, more convincing: "Remembrance of the Holocaust leaves me unsympathetic to attempts to justify the ways of God to man." If a reader joins a congregation after reading this book, more power to him or her. But it won't be me.

A nice, innocuous, not-too-deep book- designed not for scholars but for the sort of person who

might believe in God but feels no particular Divine command to do anything and is turned off by organized religion. Thus, this is not a book for Christian fundamentalists or observant Jews, but for people who are trying to decide between some sort of liberal religion and no religion at all. Kushner's goal is to defend religion to such people. He asserts that religion "helps us not by changing the facts, but by teaching us new ways of looking at those facts"- for example, to see food as "a bounty which calls for admiration and gratitude", rather than taking reality for granted. Similarly, religion enables us to deal with crises more effectively. A religious life makes tragedy easier to handle, because a religious community can console us more effectively than the odd friend here and there. And feeling forgiven by God enables people to think about their sins without feeling paralyzed by them. (By contrast, human feedback can make people feel crushed and hopeless if we are criticized too aggressively or patronized if their errors are treated as too minor). He also suggests that religion caters to other psychological needs as well, including our needs for (a) a feeling that life is significant, (b) reverence and awe, to be aware of the things we can't control (the very reasons mighty animals like tigers tend to attract more interest in zoos than smaller animals), and c) our need to acknowledge our limitations. Most of this book struck me as pretty obvious, elementary stuff. But one or two things grabbed me. Kushner tries to explain why Jews now prefer smaller synagogues than they once did. He speculates that because of the size of the baby boom generation, they spent their school and work lives "being anonymous members of somebody's army" and as a result wanted a more intimate religious experience instead of wanting "that sense of awe and confidence that came from being a member of God's mighty army." (I wonder what Kushner would think of the recent rise of megachurches - and of that trend's failure to spread into Judaism).

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