



No Big Answer, by Harold Kushner

If logic tells us that life is a meaningless accident, says Ecclesiastes at the end of his journey, don't give up on life. Give up on logic. Listen to that voice inside you which prompted you to ask the question in the first place. If logic tells you that in the long run, nothing makes a difference because we all die and disappear, then don't live in the long run. Instead of brooding over the fact that nothing lasts, accept that as one of the truths of life, and learn to find meaning and purpose in the transitory, in the joys that fade. Learn to savor the moment, even if it does not last forever. Moments of our lives can be eternal without being everlasting. Can you stop and close your eyes and remember something that happened for only a moment or two many years ago? It may have been the view of spectacular landscape, or a conversation that made you feel loved and appreciated. In a sense it did not last very long at all, but in another sense it has lasted all those years and is still going on. When we stop searching for the Great Answer, the Immortal Deed which will give our lives ongoing meaning, and instead concentrate on filling our individual days with moments that gratify us, then we will find the only possible answer to the question, 'What is life about?' It is not about writing great books, amassing great wealth, achieving great power. It is about loving and being loved. It is about enjoying your food and sitting in the sun rather than rushing through lunch and hurrying back to the office. It is about savoring the beauty of the moments that don't last, the sunsets, the leaves turning color, the rare moments of true human connection. It is about savoring them rather than missing out on them because we are too busy and they will not hold still until we get around to them. The author of Ecclesiastes spent most of his life looking for the Grand Solution, the Big Answer to the Big Question, only to learn after wasting many years that trying to find one Big Answer to the problem of living is like trying to eat one Big Meal so that you will never have to worry about being hungry again. [...] When we come to that stage when we are less able to accomplish and more able to enjoy, we will have attained the wisdom that Ecclesiastes finally found. -- Harold Kushner