

9<sup>th</sup> August 2020

## Cushioning

**“Grant me protection, merciful Lord,  
prostrate here at your door;  
Guard me and keep me, Friend of the humble,  
weary from wandering far.  
You love the devout and recover the sinful;  
to you alone I address this prayer:  
Take me and hold me, merciful Lord,  
carry me safely to joy.”**

*Sikh Scriptures, Adi Granth ‘Var Jaitasari’*

When I moaned about being overweight, I was often met with the response, “I wouldn’t worry. If you fall over, you won’t hurt yourself. You’ve got too much cushioning for that!” Thank you *very* much! *I’m* trying to deal with a weight problem and *you’re* saying I should keep my cushioning to protect me from serious injury if I fall. Who needs such advice?

The Book of Job in the Old Testament is full of advice like that, from people known as “Job’s Comforters”. Job is having a terrifying and distressing time, and he has people trying to help him find a purpose for it all. There’s too much in the Book of Job to go into here, but there’s a theme from the Comforters that’s something like: if you had more faith and been a better man, you would have had enough cushioning to protect you from this. You wouldn’t have hurt yourself so badly when you fell.

Bad things happening because we don’t have enough faith? If we had enough faith we’d be cushioned from bad things? That’s not the faith I have, and it’s not the comfort Job needed. Faith is not, and never has been, an antidote to suffering, nor a cushioning from sorrow and tragedy. Bad things happen, no matter what. The deal for Job was not to curse God for taking his cushioning away, but to find God in the midst of the tragedy.

The Sikh Scriptures have it right. I have a God who takes me, holds me and carries me safely – *especially* when I fall over, and when I have no cushioning to protect me from life’s inevitable tragedies.

### **A prayer for today**

*Steady me when I stumble; hold me when I fall;  
restore me with hope when I get up and begin again. Amen.*

*An original reflection by © Tom Gordon*

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