

## **The Biblical Influence on Stephen King's Desperation (1996)**

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### **Synopsis:**

This paper demonstrates the biblical Influence on Stephen King's Desperation (DSPN).

The horror-novelist Stephen King (born 1947) writes as a free thinker in the majority of his works. But, in this novel he makes use of biblical elements. The new insight to be gained from this attempt is that the bestseller novelist can use biblical situations, settings, ideas, and paraphrases to give more depth to his novel.

This influence lends the novel authority and an audible voice dressed in the panoramic conflict of Good versus Evil. Not surprisingly, King's conclusion or epilogue to the novel is a restatement of the New Testament message. Above all, the appearance-and-reality theme and non-stop conflict are carried out in a manner that feeds on the guaranteed acceptability of the original source as an inexhaustible text.

### **Introduction**

Stephen King is America's top Novelist and bestselling author. More than 350 million copies of his works have been sold till 2009, according to the Library of Congress website, Stephen King's official website, American Authors Online, the New York Times official website, and Wikipedia. His works awarded him (the Medal for distinguished contribution to American Letters) by the US National Book Foundation in 2003, according to the same sources.

Although he is known to specialize in Horror Fiction, it is hard to locate him under one specific label, because he writes on many levels at the same time: the same novel can be Gothic Fiction, at one angle, Crime Fiction, Dark Fantasy, Science Fiction, Apocalyptic Fiction, Ecocritical Fiction, and Psychoanalytic Fiction from other perspectives. DSPN is one such novel. By general consent, it is one of his profoundest, most Epic-like books. The reason

is that the horror presented therein is not only externally engendered by an evil being which is haunting the desert town. It is also the horrors of the demons dwelling inside the characters of the novel, some of whom do not let sleeping dogs lie, and some of whom get mixed up with the way Mother Nature balances itself out in the Nevada Desert. King proves himself to be attentive to the psychological – spiritual effects of urban, social, and legal pollution caused by the discharge of lethal chemical admixtures as well as toxic gases in the desert. The natives of Desperation Town, the senior officers, the entire community, turn into victims of mass madness or collective insanity. At another level, the whole people of the community of Desperation are victims to the Accuser, the Dark Angel of Death, and only God's chosen ones, God have a chance to survive the plight. The next sections will focus on the spiritual dimension and the structural technique in DSPN.

### Section 1: Desperation and Religious Faith

In his "Religion and Literature", T. S. Eliot (1888-1965) writes:

[It] is just the literature that we read 'for amusement' or 'purely for pleasure' that may have the greatest and least suspected influence upon us.

(Hayward, 1953: 39-40)

Accordingly, DSPN is a novel that readers would approach as a darkly amusing book, or purely for the painful pleasure which a modern reader could derive from Gothic fiction, horror-fiction, and Science Fiction. From the beginning of the novel, the reader learns that it is an epic novel involving the theme of:

'Your Kingdom Come,  
Your will be done,  
On earth as it is in Heaven.'

and the theme of "deliver us from the evil one." (Matthew 6/10-13).

God is revealed to have the utmost power over the underworld false gods. A quotation from Salman Rushdi's Satanic Verses serves as a prologue to the novel:

"The landscape of his poetry was still the desert ...." (DSPN., p. 1)  
Incidentally, this quotation throws much indirect light on the real identity of Desperation Desert Town's anti-heavenly, false god, calling himself Tak An Lah.

## **Section 2: The Importance of the Bible in Desperation**

The Holy Bible always had its importance as an inspiration to literature. S. T. Coleridge (1772-1834) in his often quoted essay "The English Language" (1812) indicated that The Holy Bible affected the style, and the forms of language: "The Bible and Liturgy cloth [the] thoughts not only in the most natural, but also in the most beautiful forms of language."

Moreover, many books of histories of English literature affirm the importance of The Holy Bible as a source of characters, situations, plot, and style. George Sampson's Concise Cambridge History of English Literature (1972) makes a list of authors starting with the Old English poet Cynewulf and goes on to include Medieval William Langland, Geoffrey Chaucer, Renaissance writers such as Marlowe, Shakespeare, Spenser, and the influence continues uninterrupted till now, especially in the use of symbols, methods of narration, idioms, and phrases:

Apart from any questions of dogma and theology, The Holy Bible has all the marks of a classic. Its themes are those of perpetual concern in great literature: God, Man, and the Universe.

(pp. 148-149)

Arthur Compton-Rickett's History of English Literature (English Universities Press, 1999) believes that the vast body of English literature goes back to only a few sources: Anglo-Celtic, Anglo-Saxon, Anglo-Norman, the Classics of Greece and Rome, as well as The Holy Bible. Even the "Gothic" is a reworking of older stories found in the biblical narratives of God Versus Evil. (pp. 7-10)

Thus, Stephen King combines pre-existing literary material, and recycles it to produce a novel which seems modern but is actually an older tale retold. In addition to his indebtedness to The Holy Bible, King is indebted to various other sources, previous novels, travel guides, and various publications in his attempt to make the novel appeal to the present-day setting of time and place.

### Section 3: Desperation and Its Method of Composition

Before dealing with the biblical influence, it is necessary to think that Stephen King uses material from various sources to fill in the gaps of 720 pages that compose the 5 parts of the novel. The underlying design and the foundation of this novel reveal both the theory and practice of King's novel-writing. While King's novel is impressive, memorable, seemingly fresh and original, it seldom presents any new ideas, themes, or stories. It is old stuff but in a different attire. In his interview with Joseph B. Mauceri in the "World of Fandom" 2006, he says about this novel:

I had this other idea and I started to see a way that a number of different things could be put together. That's sometimes what I think writing a novel is all about. It's this synthesis of these ideas where you see how everything links together and you say to yourself, 'Yea, I can do that.

(WWW.

HorrorKing.

Com/Interview1.html.)

In the above, Stephen King confirms in a way what he alludes to in Danse Macabre (1982) and On Writing (2001): that his writing is repeated from previous authors and writings. This means that there is a degree of synthesis, or loan ideas, or even paraphrase.

The unbiased reading of DSPN reveals that this bestselling novel written by the bestselling Stephen King is a strange but subtle, and unusual mix, a combination of various elements. The following is the sources of DSPN as novelistic text that lay the foundation for its structure: their significance will be explained hereafter:

- 1- Movies: These include: Black and White movies such as *The Mummy*, *Frankenstein*, *John Wayne Movies*, *Jack Palance Movies*, *The Jurassic Park*, *Ace Ventura*, and others.
- 2- Movie stars including: John Wayne, John Lennon, James Dean, Ingrid Bergman, Elvis Presley, Humphrey Bogart, Chales Heston, Doris Day, Rock Hudson, Sophia Loren, Gregory Peck, Kirk Douglas, Jane Mansfield, and Marilyn Monroe.
- 3- Cartoon shows such as *Looney Toons*, *Warner Brothers Cartoons*, *Tweety*,

*Betty the Poop, and Robokops.*

- 4- Journals, newspapers, periodicals, magazines such as: *Life, Time, Daily News, Premiere, People, Lesbo Sweethearts, Harper's.*
- 5- TV shows such as *Twilight Zone.*
- 6- Literary Allusions to : Salman Rushdie's Satanic Verses, H. G. Wells's The Island of Dr. Moreau, Milton's Paradise Lost, The Fairy Tales, The Arabian Nights, Grimm's Tales, Conrad's Lord Jim, Dean Koontz, Danielle Steele, as well as mythology from both the Old World and the New World.
- 7- The Holy Bible. This serves as the cement that binds all the above together.

How can a writer like King make use of such diverse stories? He makes each of the items above a head-scene. The novel, structurally speaking, can be seen as a series of tableaux starting from one reference to another till the entire 720 pages of the narratives are over. The first invisible structural pillar is from *The Mummy*. The mad policeman chasing Peter and Mary Jackson on Page 1 is just a reworking of the Mummy after its victims.

Actually, the bulk of the novel is the outcome of connecting/combining scenes from the above-listed references in a disguised form. The significance of the above sources for the process of literary creativity is that it saves the author much time and much effort. Johnny is described as the Elvis Presley of literature (p. 72) which saves the author the effort of saying that Johnny became "a big shot" very quickly, and suffered from SUBSTANCE ABUSE as quickly as the ROCK STAR did. This method backfires in that the readers who are uninterested in Rock, Elvis, and show business will be in the dark. It is more like using cultural icons as trite expressions, ready-made clichés. Combined with the paraphrases, quotes, and parallels with The Holy Bible, a large portion of the book will be found to be repeated chunks from other sources recycled. In a way, this is the situation of the literary scene in the best-sellers' market of fiction from 1996. It is old wine in new bottles. It really is a new remix, remake, and recycle.

So, in this respect, the biblical restatements in DSPN embody what Michel Foucault says in "The Order of Discourse":

In every society, the production of discourse is at once controlled, selected, organized, and redistributed by a certain number of procedures whose role is to ward off its powers, to gain mastery over its events, to evade its ponderous, formidable materiality.

(Philip Rice and Patricia Waugh, p.  
272)

Thus, Stephen King selected, organized, and redistributed the biblical influence to gain mastery over the powers presented in his narrative.

#### **Section 4: Tracing the Biblical Influence in Desperation**

The subtitle to Part I shows the first sign of biblical allusions as it mentions "the house of the wolf and the house of the scorpion." This subtitle refers to "the ferocious wolves" in "Sheep's Clothing" (Matthew: 8/15). The main trouble-maker in the novel, i.e. the corrupt policeman Collie Entragian is shown and spoken of as a wolf. The town of Desperation belongs to him, who is a wolf-like official. Desperation is the house of the wolf indeed. This is confirmed when Johnny Marinville the writer encounters with him:

'Johnny thought, Oh, Mr. Policeman, what big teeth you have.'

(p.  
88)

Talking about problems of doubt, identity, and road accidents, the corrupt policeman assures Johnny Marinville that he knows what he is talking about:

'I can tell you that because I am a wolf.'  
(p. 90)

Johnny Marinville is much disturbed by this statement. How could a human being be a man and a wolf at the same time unless there is something wrong going on? Either Collie Entragian is possessed by the demonic spirit of the devil (symbolized in Matthew by "wolf") or he is merely joking. The course of the events proves later on that there is very little jocular humor in the novel. The narrative dwells on a bit on this point:

'He was interrupted by a long, trembling howl that chilled his blood ... not just because it was clearly the sound of a

wild animal but because it was close ... [It] was a mangy canine with thin legs and scanty, starved-looking sides ... 'My God!' he murmured.

'What's that?'

'Coyote', the cop said ... 'Some people out here call them desert wolves.'

(p. 94)

Johnny is forced to take a seat in the police car, like an offender. Overwhelmed by the policeman's physical strength, Johnny is arrested and really kidnapped by this corrupt officer. He had no refuge, no shelter other than God. In times of trouble, people turn to God:

'Let the cellular work,' he prayed to ... God. 'Please let the d...ned phone work, God, please ... give me a chance to use the phone in the first place....'

(p.

104)

This incident in the novel seems to be a situation inspired by the Psalms Nos. 7, 11, and 16. In Psalm 7:10, the biblical quotations say:

'My shield is God Most High.'

In Psalm 11:1

'In the Lord I take refuge.'

In Psalm 16:1-2:

'Keep me safe, O God,  
For in you I take refuge.'

This is reflected in DSPN immediately after Johnny prays to God in silence, in the following way:

'As if in answer to this part of his prayer, the big cop passed

the driver's door of his cruiser without even looking at it and walked to Johnny's motorcycle.

...He [Johnny] took the Motorola cellular phone ... Come on, God, please, he thought...'Yes!' Johnny whispered. 'Yesss!'

(pp. 104

- 05)

It seems that because Johnny had faith in God, he was saved against all odds in the wilderness, where there is no network coverage of the cellular telecommunications service. In other words, because Johnny is afraid of God, not the wolf-like officer, God saves him.

Under very uncomfortable circumstances, Johnny has to answer the corrupt officer what "pneuma, sarx, and soma" mean. These three are explained in the light of the Gospel of John:

'Sarx is not the body; Soma is the body. Sarx is the flesh of the body. The body is made of flesh – as the Word was reputedly made flesh by the birth of Jesus Christ – but the body is more than the flesh that makes it. The sum is greater than the parts.'

(p.

116)

Apparently, the above quotation is more or less a paraphrase of John 1:14:

'The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us.'

The corrupt policeman takes Johnny to the town jail, where other inmates are held in captivity. Collie Entragian shouts in the jail, annoying all inmates:

'Are you thinking about God?' the cop asked. 'Don't bother. Out here, God's country stops at Indian Springs ... There's no God in desperation....'

(p.

163)

Obviously, Stephen King is being inspired here by the contents of Psalm 10:2 – 5:

'In his arrogance, the wicked man hunts down the weak... in his thoughts there is no room for God.'

Also, this policeman's speech is a restatement of Psalm 14:1:

'The fool says in his heart, 'There is no God.' They are corrupt, their deeds are vile;'

To confirm his wickedness and corruption, Collie Entragian adds:

'No God in France, either, Trooper. Take it from *moi*. Just Cinzano and escargots and women who don't shave their armpits.'

(p.

164)

There is no God in Desperation, Nevada, or in France. What is actually there is the desire of the flesh: meals, wine, and immorality. Nevertheless, the young boy David Carver is praying to God, thinking of a way to escape the jail, and struggling to keep his mind uncontaminated by the policeman's ungodly humor. David Carver trusts God; God's "genuineness was beyond question" to him. (p.166) In his prayer to God, he hears the Holy Voice:

'Who are you?

Who I am, the voice said, and then fell silent, as if that actually explained something.'

(p.

182)

"I am", "I am who I am", "I am He", are all biblical expressions used to refer to God, for instance Matthew 26:64; Mark 14:62; Luke 22:70; and John 18:8.

David recalls having prayed for the healing of his half-dead friend Brian. Just as the prayer of Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead (John 11:41-44), the prayer of David Carver restores Brian to Life:

'Make him better, ... God, make him better.'

(p. 184)

In his attempt to save the imprisoned group (consisting of Ralph Carver, Ellie Carver, Mary, Tom, and Johnny), David prays to God but he also hears another voice:

'If you want to pray, pray to me, it said, why would you pray to God?'

(p.

195)

David Carver knows from his spiritual teacher, Rev. Martin, whose voice belongs to whom. He recollects an old dialogue with the said Pastor, to help him distinguish the Voice of God from the voice of the other one;

'Like God, Satan tends to speak to us most clearly in our prayers and meditations.'

(p.195)

David Carver is in this scene an embodiment of Psalm 16:4;

'The sorrows of those will increase who run after other gods.'

Despite the temptation of Satan, David Carver sticks to God and piously prays:

'Tell me what to do, God. Tell me what You want. And if it is Your Will that we should die here, help me not to waste time being mad or being scared or yelling for an explanation.'

(p.

196)

The answer to this prayer is almost the ordeal of the prophet Daniel (Daniel 6) retold. In the original biblical story, Daniel is locked inside the den of the hungry lions. Being a righteous man, Daniel accepts everything from God and prays for his Will to be done. So, God sends his Angel to shut the mouths of the lions. Likewise, David Carver in this situation can later on escape his cage and kill the wild Coyote guarding the jail.

The wicked officer makes fun of David's prayer, as expected from the evil spirit inside him:

'Do all the praying you want, David, but don't expect it to give you any help. Your God isn't here, anymore than He was with Jesus when Jesus hung dying on the cross with flies in his eyes.'

(Part II. p.

233)

The above speech is a rephrase of Matthew 27:39-44:

"He saved others," they said "but he cannot save himself! He's the King of Israel! Let him come down now from the cross, and we will believe in him. He trusts in God. Let God rescue him now if He wants him."

Shortly after Entragian, the corrupt policeman locks the cell, leaving the Coyote behind as a ferocious guard, David Carver starts to carry out God's plan. He recalls the Pastor's instructions that the believer's job is "to meet God, to know God, to trust God, to love God." (p. 254) David Carver recalls the entire Bible in his mind, from A to Z and backwards, with the last part of John's Book of Revelation. He particularly remembers The Book of Daniel, 6:16:

'The God whom thou servest in your days and nights will

deliver thee.'

(Part II, p.

256)

Just a few miles outside the jail, Cynthia and Steve, who come to look for the prisoners, hit upon small idols spread almost everywhere in the offices of Diablo Mining Company. Each idol is a little stone representing Satan in his wolverine manifestation:

'It was a rendering of what might have been a wolf or a coyote, and although it was crude, it had enough power to make them both forget, at least for a few seconds, that they were standing sixty feet from the leftovers of a mass murder. The beast's head was twisted at a strange angle (a somehow hungry angle), and its eyeballs appeared to be starting out of their sockets in utter fury.'

(p.

270)

Other descriptions of these statues liken them to alligators and snakes. (p. 272)

These small statues look like phallic symbols of sexual organs, to entice the viewers, physical desires. It is understood that all acts of fornication and erotic feelings come from Satan. So, Steve and Cynthia, being young, alone, together with no one to disturb them, could practice physical love. However, their fear of God, their love of the Almighty, can purify them and keep them away from impure or indecent contact.

They leave the premises unimpressed by the Satanic temptations. Meanwhile, Mary Jackson believes Enragian to be the Angel of Death. According to the Book of Proverbs, 8:36, God is love and Satan, His enemy, is death. So, the long-standing conflict of Good versus Evil is also the conflict of Love against Death. Those who know love, i.e., God will be saved because Death will pass them by, unable to harm them. Thus, the Nevada desert scorpions, large and thorny as they are, could not hurt them. They want to, but could not. (p. 325)

Another incident which is typically biblical is inspired by Isaiah 11:6, "And a little child shall lead them." David Carver, a young boy, leads a group of grown-ups in a manner reminiscent of King David who led his people when he was very young. The Isaiah verses state that the said child will lead all: wolf, lamb, calf, and lion. He has power and authority from God. Thus,

'Marinville stepped off the sidewalk and into the street, his

long gray hair blowing out and making him look like an Old Testament Prophet.'

(p.

350)

A little later on:

"Come on," David said. "Let's go."

They clustered in the street. "And a little child shall lead them," Marinville said. "So come on, child—lead."

(p.

362)

Keeping within the ordeal of God's people in the wilderness, Johnny Marinville says:

'It is the story of the Angel of Death in Exodus.'

(p. 366)

Another biblical echo is found when David Carver prays to God:

'God, please bless this food we are about to eat.'

(p. 403)

In the abandoned movie-theatre called "the Wild West", the group led by David Carver is very hungry, but there are only a few crackers and a few sardines. Like the miracle spoken of in Luke 9:10, when Jesus Christ used five loaves and two fish to feed 5000 men, David Carver could feed the group by distributing the Blue Fjord Fancy Sardines and a small box of Ritz Crackers.

It had gone all the way around the group, everyone had at least half a dozen crackers (Billingsley might have taken even more; the old goat was really cramming them in), but that cylinder of waxed paper was still in there, and Johnny could have sworn that it was still half-full; that the number of crackers in it had not changed at all.

(Part III, p.

406)

It is just like in Luke 10:17:

"They all ate and were satisfied, and the disciples picked up twelve basketfuls of broken pieces that were left over."

There is also another direct quotation from John 20:27, when Jesus Christ tells skeptical Thomas "Stop doubting and believe." It is used in this way when Johnny tries to prove to Audrey that Collie Entragian controlled the canine

animals somehow: "Still a doubting Thomas?" (p. 408)

The conflict between Good and evil is illustrated by the hostility between the demon-possessed Audrey and David Carver:

'God wanted to talk to him, not the other way around...Pray in your closet and not in the street, the Bible said, and David thought that was excellent advice.'

(p.

478)

Another allusion is made to the power of Joseph to interpret the dreams:

““And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, I have dreamed a dream,”” someone said, ““and I have heard say of thee, that thou canst understand a dream to interpret it.””

(p. 513) (Based on Genesis

41:15)

Again, the way Mary and the group overcome their sea of trouble is compared to "the way Moses had supposedly parted the Red Sea." (p. 615)

As the novel nears its conclusion, more quotations from the Bible become frequent:

All the Bible I knew was John three-sixteen, on account of it's always on the signs the zellies ... 'For God so loved the world'." (p. 645)

“What are zellies?”

“Zealots ... “Anyway, I didn't know anything about Jacob and Esau or Joseph's coat of many colors or Potiphar's wife....”

(p.646)

The novel concludes with a self-sacrificial deed similar to the ultimate act of love done by Jesus Christ and much inspired by it: Johnny sacrifices himself to finish the wickedness of Tak so that the rest of the group could be set free and be able to go home. The novel concludes with 1 John 4:8: "God is love."

From the examples above, one could see that the novelist made numerous references to the Bible, making use of the Scriptures in the plot, situation, name of characters, and inspiration.

### **Section 5: Conclusion**

In conclusion, Stephen King approached someone else's words and ideas and used them for a work claimed to be his own. It is not like theft because he keeps referring to the extracts from The Scriptures. It is not piracy because

The Holy Bible is supposed to be public property and every body is welcome to quote from it. Stephen King did not deprive the "Author" of The Holy Bible of profit, or credit. He did not take the exact biblical wording, but he took the atmosphere and setting (Deserts, Wilderness, Pit, Sorrowful events). No exact wording, but a close paraphrase of the original is sensed. This calls for a linguistic and lexical study of Stephen King's language: the language of the bestseller American Author is based on biblical English. Does this mean that his creativity is paraphrase? Or does it mean that the reading public is so distant from the biblical source that they do not recognize the paraphrase? More important, Stephen King's work is, on the whole, a variation of an old idea (God is Love) from *1 John, New Testament*.

Indeed, the *Form* of the expression (huge, bulky, panoramic, epic novel) is more important to King than the basic plot idea. Indeed, King's basic plot ideas are very small in number. They are the same ideas expressed by any other horror-fiction writer around the English-speaking world. However, the Form is what counts, not really the preaching. King departs from the Form of the original source, but uses it to his advantage. He does not use the structure of the original source, but makes the entire original source one of the foundations for HIS OWN NOVEL STRUCTURE.

He uses biblical ideas, images, symbols, references, allusions to the extent that one no longer recalls the idea itself (love) but recalls its antithesis (Hatred, Evil) as the villainous power to be combated by the protagonists of the novel. Thus, King's biblical influence invokes authority and lends seriousness to the text: a kind of authority and seriousness that it is doubtful if King could have accomplished by using his own voice. As such, King's novel is well evaluated, well-appreciated perhaps for the part which does not belong to him personally.

DSPN is a powerful novel indeed, but King is not really the originator of its powerful parts. The credit of the originator belongs to biblical source. It is, in a sense, a novel (ghost-written) by the author of The Holy Bible. However, the result of the book (a good read & a good moral instruction) is not to be taken out of the account.

The truth of literary creativity cannot be hidden - real literary creativity involves much more than paraphrasing. It is amazing that in the age of post-modernism so much stuff can pass as original when it is based on and inspired by basic reading (Holy Bible reading extracts). It is a phenomenon worthy of much study. King's authorship is, in our opinion, best understood as "implicit multiple authorship", that is he is the author who builds on the ideas & achievements of other authors. He *did not* pass somebody else's work as his

own. But it is not very much different from that. No serious offence is made, he is expected to write a number of books every year and he must not run out of inspiration. So, he relies on the source of inspiration that cannot get him legally involved with problems of intellectual property. We expect more authors to go for inspiration from problem-free sources like the Holy Scriptures and Epics of the Heroic Age. Not because they are pious or religious but because these sources do not raise the problem of intellectual property or copyright arguments.

Finally, DSPN is a sort of novelistic study covering the relationship between the physical environment and the spiritual initiative reaction of man asking himself: How can all this mess make sense? What lessons do we take from all that spiritual apocalyptic ecological pollution? Indeed, only a Supernatural power, only a huge loving heart of a Supreme Being, God Almighty, can heal and bring back to life the Dead Desert and its inhabitants. Amidst of the immensely complex global system where energy, economy, mining, ideas and interests interact, this may sound as a distress call, a call against total desperation.

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**الخلاصة باللغة العربية**  
**"تأثير الكتاب المقدس على رواية اليأس (1996) للروائي الأمريكي ستيفن كينج"**

ستيفن كينج أشهر روائي على قيد الحياة ويمثل رواية اليأس أفضل انتاجاته و أوسعها انتشارا و تأثيرا. ومن هذا البحث يتضح للقارئ ان الأدب الأمريكي المعاصر و بالأخص الأدب الروائي يستمد الكثير من موضوعاته و عباراته من الكتاب المقدس بعهديه القديم و الجديد. و يثبت هذا البحث ان المؤلف ستيفن كينج (المولود عام 1947) يستفيد استفادة ملحوظة و كبيرة من أسفار الكتاب المقدس و خاصة في رواية اليأس التي نشرها عام 1996. ما جاء في هذا السرد الروائي عبارة عن رحلة صراع الخير ضد الشر و انتصار النور على الظلام من خلال رحلة مجموعة من الناس التائهين على الطريق السريع رقم 52 في صحراء نيفادا. و مع ان الأحداث تجري في عام 1996، الا انها بمجملها مأخوذة عن قصص و مواقف و تأملات جاءت في الأسفار القديمة و لكن بلغة عصرية جديدة. و ستيفن كينج بارع جداً في جعل كتابه يبدو معاصراً في الوقت الذي يكرر فيه المفاهيم الايمانية الكتابية روحاً و ليس نصاً على الدوام.