

## SUMMARY OF JOB 8-15

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...I don't know, oh  
How I'm gonna get through?  
What have I, what have I, what have I done to deserve  
this? How I'm gonna get through?  
What have I, what have I, what have I done to deserve  
this?

Throughout these chapters of Job, the central themes revolve around the nature of suffering, the justice of God, and the question of human righteousness. Job's friends maintain that suffering is a direct result of sin, while Job asserts his innocence and struggles to understand the reasons for his afflictions.

Chapters 8-15 feature a series of dialogues between Job and his friends, particularly Bildad, Zophar, and Eliphaz.

### *Job 8: Bildad's Speech*

Bildad contends that Job's suffering must be due to his or his children's sin. He insists that God is just and doesn't pervert justice.

He advises Job to seek God and plead for mercy, suggesting that if Job is pure and upright, God will restore him. His tone is much more critical than that of Eliphaz.

### *Job 9-10: Job's Response*

Job acknowledges God's power and justice but expresses frustration over the apparent injustice of his suffering. He feels that no human can contend with God.

He laments his situation, describing his feelings of hopelessness and despair. Job questions why God allows the innocent to suffer.

### *Job 11: Zophar's Speech*

Zophar argues that Job's claims of innocence are unfounded. Zophar believes that Job's punishment is deserved and might even be less severe than what he deserves. He advises Job to repent and turn back to God, promising that if he does, he will find peace and restoration.

### *Job 12-14: Job's Response*

Job refutes his friends' accusations, maintaining his innocence and questioning their wisdom. He points out that even the wicked prosper and the righteous suffer.

He then appeals directly to God, seeking an explanation for his suffering and expressing his desire for vindication. He laments the brevity and suffering of human life.

### *Job 15: Eliphaz's Second Speech*

He reiterates his belief that Job's suffering is due to his sin and criticises Job for his boldness in questioning God.

Eliphaz warns Job that continuing to argue against God will only lead to further suffering.

Whatever we make of the *cause* behind the disasters that befell Job, what we cannot deny or forget is that something very like the scenario sketched here does happen all the time on this planet. Parents do lose children—sometimes all of them at once. Disaster and disease come to people who are as lovely and precious people as you could hope to meet. And such chaos is pretty indiscriminate, too. Hurricanes, tsunamis, and earthquakes do not generally flatten the houses of mafia types and drug kingpins while leaving churches, synagogues, mosques, and the domiciles of the faithful standing. Pandemic flu outbreaks like COVID-19 don't target the really nasty people who work for a given company while leaving untouched the kind and gentle souls on the payroll. Disaster and disease come to all when they strike.

One of the main beliefs of Hinduism going back up to 5000 years is Karma. The belief that the lives we currently live have been earned by our actions in are last life and that the quality of our next life- even the form that life will take-will be determined by our actions in this life.

Sophocles 2500 years ago was writing plays about the causes of evil in the world and in particular the question about whether all suffering was the consequence of the sufferers bad actions.

One of the facets of nature that deeply disturbed Charles Darwin (and that caused him to wonder about the goodness of the God he had been raised to believe in) was the actions of the ichneumonidae wasp. This particular species of wasp lays its eggs inside a certain kind of grub. As the larvae develop inside the grub, they feast on the internal organs of their host. Worse, they do this organ feast in a very clever order, consuming first the organs that the grub can do without for at least a while, thus reserving the more vital organs—whose absence will finally kill the host—for last. People like Darwin—and now more recent writers of the Richard Dawkins variety—look at such disgusting and disturbing spectacles and declare that this must prove that no God designed this world (or that if there is a God who designed this wretched mechanism for wasp reproduction, then he's a pretty nasty deity after all). Similar apparent defects of design are trotted out by those who want to say that the world as it stands demonstrates that there cannot be a God.

But Christians (and Jews) have long alleged that the world as we encounter it now does not necessarily reflect in its every detail the desires of God. Indeed, it's that kind of thing that points to the need for a Saviour, for a re-making of all things, for a cosmic salvage operation.

In Job we have one very basic scenario that seems an endemic part of the human condition: the asking of the question "Why?"

Everybody asks that question. But whereas the irreligious have nowhere to lodge the query, religious people find themselves in the unenviable position of knowing exactly to whom they should pose the question but then discovering that for that very reason, the question pinches and hurts a whole lot more. As Job knew, it is actually possible to make suffering worse in case you are convinced that at the core of the cosmos there is supposed to be a God with our best interests at heart, a God who is supposed to be just and good, a God who created the

entire universe (but who presumably did not create it only for the purpose of watching his creatures writhe in agony at the end of their various ropes). We have already heard Job's wife and Eliphaz and now Bildad and Zophar join in the conversation. The 3 friends had originally come to Job to support him in his troubles but now faced by Job's denial that he has in any way gone against God they seem to turn against him - although they would argue that getting him to admit what they saw as the truth that his woes must be the consequences of his bad thoughts and actions.

*Lyrics from "What have I done to deserve this?" by the Pet Shop Boys*