

SUMMARY OF JOB 36:24-JOB 42

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Cause now, it's Judy's turn to cry
Judy's turn to cry, Judy's turn to cry
Cause Johnny's come back
(Johnny's come back, come back) to me.

In the book of Job, chapters 36:24 through 42, we encounter the final speeches from Elihu and God, followed by Job's response and the conclusion of the story. Here are the main arguments presented in these chapters:

Job 36:24-37: Elihu's Speech

Elihu continues to extol God's greatness, wisdom, and justice. He emphasizes God's power over nature and His ability to control the weather. Elihu argues that God is just and that suffering can serve as discipline or a way to draw people closer to Him. He insists that God's ways are beyond human understanding and that people should trust in His wisdom.

Job 38-41: God's Response

God's Challenge to Job: God speaks to Job out of a whirlwind, challenging him with a series of questions that highlight God's omnipotence and the complexity of creation. God asks Job about the foundations of the earth, the boundaries of the sea, and the intricacies of the natural world.

God describes various aspects of His creation, including the stars, weather patterns, animals, and mythical creatures like the Behemoth and Leviathan. These descriptions serve to underscore God's unparalleled power and wisdom.

Job 42: Job's Response and Restoration

Job responds to God's speech with humility and repentance. He acknowledges God's greatness and admits that his understanding was limited. Job expresses his awe and reverence for God.

The opening verse of Chapter 42, "I know you can do anything," is an admission of God's power. But having now read the whole book we know that Job has, in fact, been confessing the All-Powerful God all along. The power of God is, in fact, the very basis of Job's complaint, as in: "I believe God can do anything. So why is God doing ... (gesturing broadly to all the world's brokenness and, in particular his own)... this?" In other words, Job's pressing complaint all along isn't that God is not powerful but that God is not just. And that is the complaint that is resolved in the following verses.

In verses 3-4 Job quotes God's words in Job 38:2-3 back to God as a way of conceding God's argument. God's purposes are great and, therefore, often inexplicable to human beings. Note that Job's answer doesn't imply he understands God's purpose but that God's purpose is rooted in God's character which is, among other things, justice. So God may be just even if we can only see the unjust underside at any particular moment.

This comes to fullest expression in verse 5 where Job professes to see God. Bible scholar Robert Alter argues that "the seeing of the eye is a testimony to the persuasive power of the poetry that God has spoken ... Job has been led to see the multifarious character of God's vast creation, its unfathomable fusion of beauty and cruelty, and through this he has come to understand the incommensurability between his human notions of right and wrong and the structure of reality."

God rebukes Job's friends for their incorrect arguments and instructs them to offer sacrifices, with Job praying for their forgiveness. God restores Job's fortunes, giving him twice as much as he had before. Job is blessed with a new family, long life, and prosperity.

This final prologue of Job makes a claim that many people of faith have found difficult to accept: that after all his suffering, God makes it right by giving him a double portion of joy. This comes into starkest relief in the "replacement" of one set of children with another, which simply doesn't correlate to real life. And that is our reminder to look again at the genre of the book of Job, specifically as a work of wisdom literature, a fable of sorts since the etymology of "Ur" as the Hebrew word for "counsel" or "advice" (inviting) one to construe this as the Land of Counsel." The book ends in the folktale world of the fairy story or perhaps parable. Which is looking at the question asked through the ages: if God is a loving God, why does suffering exist - in particular the suffering of good people.

These chapters emphasise themes of divine wisdom, the limits of human understanding, and the need for humility before God. Job's ultimate vindication and restoration highlight the idea that suffering is not always a result of personal sin and that trust in God's wisdom and justice is paramount. But, just like in an early series of QI the answer ultimately is "Nobody knows".

What I hope we have learned is there's nothing wrong with asking why. Nothing wrong with screaming a bit at God. He's heard it before and he can take it. "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me!?" That may be history's most shattering plea for a divine explanation in the face of suffering. But even if so, the person who remains history's most famous poser of the question must be the man called Job.

Lyrics from "Judy's turn to cry" by Lesley Gore