

FROM JED TO JOB

Learning Sefer Iyov through The West Wing

Chapter by Chapter Summary of Sefer Iyov

Chapters 1–2 Iyov introduced as a wealthy and righteous man. Satan challenges God, claiming Iyov is only faithful because of his blessings. God allows Satan to test Iyov. Iyov loses his wealth, children, and health but refuses to curse God. Three friends—Eliphaz, Bildad, and Tzofar come to comfort him.

Chapter 3 Iyov curses the day he was born - wishes he has never existed.

Chapters 4–5 Eliphaz suggests Iyov's suffering must be the result of sin and advises Iyov to repent to regain God's favor.

Chapters 6–7 Iyov responds, insisting he is innocent, accusing G-d of targeting him unfairly - laments the misery of human existence.

Chapters 8–10 Bildad argues Iyov's children must have sinned - urges Iyov to seek God's forgiveness. Iyov counters, questioning God's justice and why he was created if only to suffer.

Chapters 11–14 Tzofar rebukes Iyov, claiming Iyov deserves worse. Iyov mocks his friends' lack of understanding, asserts his innocence, and reflects on life's shortness and suffering.

Chapters 15–17 Eliphaz accuses Iyov of arrogance and hidden sins. Iyov responds by lamenting his hopeless situation and the failure of his friends to support him.

Chapters 18–21 Bildad describes how the wicked are destroyed, but Iyov rebuts, pointing out that the wicked often prosper.

Chapters 22–24 Eliphaz accuses Iyov of specific sins, like exploiting the poor, but Iyov denies it. He longs to give his case before God and laments the success of the wicked.

Chapters 25–31 Bildad argues humans are insignificant before God. Iyov responds, reflecting on God's greatness, his own innocence, and the contrast between his past prosperity and current suffering. He swears an oath of integrity.

Chapters 32–37 - Elihu, a younger bystander, rebukes both Iyov and his friends. He claims that suffering can teach and refine people, praising God's justice and wisdom.

Chapters 38–41 - God speaks to Iyov from a whirlwind, challenging Iyov's understanding of creation and the universe. God emphasizes the vastness of His wisdom and power, leaving Iyov humbled.

Chapter 42 - Iyov acknowledges God's greatness and repents for questioning Him. God rebukes Iyov's friends for their misguided speeches and restores Iyov's fortunes.

Excerpt from the Screenplay for “Two Cathedrals” – Aaron Sorkin

BARTLET

[tired] You're a son of a b***h, you know that?

He slowly walks up the center aisle.

BARTLET

She bought her first new car and you hit her with a drunk driver. What, was that supposed to be funny? "You can't conceive, nor can I, the appalling strangeness of the mercy of God," says Graham Greene. I don't know who's ass he was kissing there 'cause I think you're just vindictive. What was Josh Lyman? A warning shot? That was my son.

What did I ever do to yours but praise his glory and praise his name? There's a tropical storm that's gaining speed and power. They say we haven't had a storm this bad since you took out that tender ship of mine in the north Atlantic last year.

68 crew. You know what a tender ship does? Fixes the other ships. Doesn't even carry guns. Just goes around, fixes the other ships and delivers that mail. That's all it can do. [angry] Gratias tibi ago, domine. Yes, I lied. It was a sin. [holds out arms]

I've committed many sins. Have I displeased you, you feckless thug? 3.8 million new jobs, that wasn't good? Bailed out Mexico, increased foreign trade, 30 million new acres of land for conservation, put Mendoza on the bench, we're not fighting a war, I've raised three children...

He ascends the stairs to the Inner Sanctuary.

BARTLET

[pleading] That's not enough to buy me out of the doghouse? Haec credam a deo pio? A deo iusto? A deo scito?

He stops at the top of the stairs and extends his arms.

BARTLET

Cruciatus in crucem! Tuus in terra servus nuntius fui officium perfeci. [angry] Cruciatus in crucem. [waves dismissively] Eas in crucem!

Bartlet turns away in anger. He descends to the lower sanctuary and lights a cigarette.

He takes a single puff, drops the butt to the floor, and grinds it defiantly with his shoe. He looks back at the altar.

BARTLET

[betrayed] You get Hoynes!

Bartlet holds back tears as he walks down the aisle.

Translation

Thank you Lord

Am I really to believe that these are the acts of a loving God? A just God? A wise God? To hell with your punishments. I was your servant here on Earth. And I spread your word and I did your work. To hell with your punishments. To hell with you!

Iyov 38:4-7

איפה היית בִּיסְדִי־אָרֶץ הַגֹּד אִם־יָדַעְתָּ
מִי־שָׁם מִמֶּדִּיָּה כִּי תִדַּע אוֹ מִי בִּינָה :
עַל־מָה אֲדַנֶּיהָ הִטְבַּעוּ נָטָה עָלֶיהָ קוֹ :
בְּרוֹיַחַד כּוֹכְבֵי אוֹ מִי־יָרָה אָבֹן פָּנְתָה :
בִּקְר וַיִּרְעוּ כָּל־בְּנֵי אֱלֹהִים :

Where were you when I laid the earth's foundation? Tell Me, if you have understanding. Who set its measurements, if you know? Or who stretched the line upon it? On what were its bases sunk? Or who laid its cornerstone, when the morning stars sang together and all the angels shouted for joy?

Iyov 10:8-9

יָדֶיךָ עֲצָבוּנִי וַיַּעֲשׂוּנִי יַחַד סָבִיב
וַתִּבְלַעֵנִי : זָכֹר־נָא כִּי־כַחֲמֶר עָשִׂיתָנִי
וְאֶל־עָפָר תִּשְׁיִבֵנִי :

Your hands fashioned and made me, yet You destroy me utterly. Remember that You molded me like clay; will You now turn me to dust again?

Iyov 12:2

אֲמַנָם כִּי אַתֶּם־עִם וְעַמְּכֶם תָּמוּת
חֲכָמָה :

Indeed, you are the [voice of] the people, And wisdom will die with you.

Iyov 1:11

וְאוֹלָם שְׁלַח־נָא יָדְךָ וְגַע בְּכָל־אֲשֶׁר־לוֹ
אִם־לֹא עַל־פָּנֶיךָ יִבְרַכְךָ :

But lay Your hand upon all that he has and he will surely (יִבְרַכְךָ) You to Your face.

Metzudat Tzion on Iyov 1:11

יברכך. לשון כנוי כלפי מעלה :

"He will bless you"—This is a euphemism when referring to the Divine.

Podcast: West Wing Weekly, Two Cathedrals (Part II, w/Aaron Sorkin and Kirsten Nelson)

“Dialogue is like music. Sometimes the sound is the meaning. We didn’t need the translation.”

“You didn’t need to understand the literal meaning of what he was saying, just that he was continuing to get all up in G-d’s face and now we’re going to do it in your language. I don’t need you pandering to me by understanding English”

Iyov 13:3

Indeed, I would speak to the Almighty. I insist on arguing with God.

Iyov 42:7

וַיְהִי אַחֲרֵי דִבֶּר יְהוָה אֶת־הַדְּבָרִים
הָאֵלֶּה אֶל־אֵיּוֹב וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֶל־אֱלִיפָז
הַתִּימָנִי חָרָה אַפִּי בָּךְ וּבִשְׁנֵי רֵעֶיךָ כִּי
לֹא דִבַּרְתֶּם אֵלַי נְכוֹנָה כְּעַבְדִּי אֵיּוֹב:

After the LORD had spoken these words to Job, the LORD said to Eliphaz the Temanite, "I am incensed at you and your two friends, for you have not spoken the truth about Me as My servant Job did.

Iyov 1:19

וַהֲנִיחַ רוּחַ גְּדוֹלָה בָּאָה מֵעֶבֶר הַמִּדְבָּר,
וַיִּגַע בָּאֲרְבַּעַת פְּנוֹת הַבַּיִת, וַיִּפֹּל עַל
הַנְּעָרִים וַיָּמָתוּ; וָאִנִּי מִלְּטָה רַק־אֲנִי
לְבַדִּי, לְהַגִּיד לָךְ

And behold, a great wind came from across the wilderness and struck the four corners of the house, and it fell upon the young men, and they died; and I alone have escaped to tell you.

Midrash Tanchuma 22

Iyov 19:13

אֲחֵי מַעְלִי הִרְחִיק וַיִּדְעִי אֲדֹזָרוּ מִמֶּנִּי:

My relatives have failed me, my close friends have forgotten me.

Excerpt from the Screenplay for “Two Cathedrals” – Aaron Sorkin

MRS. LANDINGHAM

You know, if you don't want to run again, I respect that. [stands up] But if you don't run 'cause you think it's gonna be too hard or you think you're gonna lose... well, God, Jed, I don't even want to know you.

Mrs. Landingham walks out and gently closes the Oval Office door behind her. President Bartlet stands, walks into the open door onto the portico and lets the wind blow on him and the rain wash over his face. He looks up into the sky. Music starts.

Iyov 33:13-14

מדוע אליו ריבות כי כל־דבריו לא
יענה: כי־באחת ידבר־אל ובשתיים לא
ישורנה:

Why do you complain to Him that He responds to no one's words? For God does speak—now one way, now another—though no one perceives it.

Iyov 33:27-28

ישׁר על־אנשים ויאמר חטאתי וישׁר
העניתי ולא־שׁוה לי: פדה נפשו מעבר
בשחת וחייתו באור תראה:

He will sing to others and say, 'I have sinned, I have perverted what is right, but I did not get what I deserved. God has delivered me from going down to the pit, and I shall live to enjoy the light of life.

Iyov 42:5-6

לשמע־אזן שמעתיך ועתה עיני ראתך:
על־כן אֶמַּס ונחמתי על־עפר ואפר:

'I had heard of You by the hearing of the ear, and now my eye has seen You. Therefore, I recant and repent in dust and ashes.

Rav Joseph B. Solovetichik – Kol Dodi Dofek

When the “Child of Destiny” suffers, he says in his heart, “There is evil, I do not deny it, and I will not conceal it with fruitless casuistry. I am, however, interested in it from a halakhic point of view; and as a person who wants to know what action to take. I ask a single question: What should the sufferer do to live with his suffering?