

e-concepts

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Does God Do, or Cause, Evil?

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In the following passages, I have included the KJV because it translates the word for *evil* more consistently.

- **Lamentations 3:38**, *Is it not from the mouth of the Most High that both good and ill go forth? Lamentations 3:38 (KJV) Out of the mouth of the most High proceedeth not evil and good?*
- **Job 2:10**, *But he said to her, "You speak as one of the foolish women speaks. Shall we indeed accept good from God and not accept adversity?" In all this Job did not sin with his lips. Job 2:10 (KJV) But he said unto her, Thou speakest as one of the foolish women speaketh. What? shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil?*
- **Job 42:11**, *Then all his brothers and all his sisters and all who had known him before came to him, and they ate bread with him in his house; and they consoled him and comforted him for all the adversities that the LORD had brought on him. Job 42:11 (KJV) Then came there unto him all his brethren, and all his sisters, and all they that had been of his acquaintance before, and did eat bread with him in his house: and they bemoaned him, and comforted him over all the evil that the LORD had brought upon him:*
- **Isaiah 45:6-7**, *I am the LORD, and there is no other, the One forming light and creating darkness, causing well-being and creating calamity; I am the LORD who does all these. Isaiah 45:6-7 (KJV) I am the LORD, and there is none else. I form the light, and create darkness: I make peace, and create evil: I the LORD do all these things.*
- **Jeremiah 32:42**, *For thus says the LORD, 'Just as I brought all this great disaster on this people, so I am going to bring on them all the good that I am promising them. Jeremiah 32:42 (KJV) For thus saith the LORD; Like as I have brought all this great evil upon this people, so will I bring upon them all the good that I have promised them.*

The word the King James Version translates *evil* here is the Hebrew word רָעָה (*ra*), which can mean "evil, distress, misery, injury, calamity." Here are the ways it is translated in the NASB (with the number of occurrences of that translation): adversity (7), calamity (4), disaster (2), evil (94), harm (2), harmful (1), hurt (1), ruin (3), surely (1), trouble (2), unpleasant (1), wickedly (1), wickedness (1) [NAS Hebrew notes]. רָעָה (*ra*) is a very general Hebrew word, used for anything considered unpleasant. It can refer to moral evil, but as with any word, the context has to determine the meaning.

- In Lamentations 3, רָעָה (*ra*) refers to *things the Lord does not approve* (v. 36).
- In Job 2:10 & 42:11, רָעָה (*ra*) refers to Job's suffering.
- In Isaiah 45, רָעָה (*ra*) is contrasted with peace v. 7. It refers to God going before Cyrus in battle.
- In Jeremiah 32, רָעָה (*ra*) refers to the devastation of Israel while in the Babylonian captivity (v. 36)

We can, therefore, conclude God does not do or cause evil in any moral sense of the word. But,

- God does bring about רָעָה (*ra*) in the form of judgment, which leads to justice which is good (ultimately beneficial).
- God tells us the רָעָה (*ra*) things He disapproves of, which allows people to better understand what is good. This means His disapproving רָעָה (*ra*) words are ultimately beneficial.
- God causes suffering רָעָה (*ra*) which leads people back on the path of righteousness, which is good (ultimately beneficial) for them.
- God causes רָעָה (*ra*) suffering which is good (ultimately beneficial) in ways that He does not explain and we do not understand (as in the case of disproving Satan's claims about Job).

PT: God causes רָעָה (*ra*) in judgment, which is good because justice is good. God causes רָעָה (*ra*) in discipline which brings His people back on the path to ultimate benefit. God causes רָעָה (*ra*) in way that He does not explain – which are none of our business.