

Job Chapter 40

Verses 1-2: God again challenged Job to respond: would he dare to bring charges against Him? Job had accused God; now God asked what right he had to do so.

Job 40:1 "Moreover the LORD answered Job, and said,"

The Lord having discoursed largely of the works of nature, in order to reconcile the mind of Job to his works of providence, stopped and made a pause for a little space that Job might answer if he thought fit. But he being entirely silent, the Lord began again.

"And said": As follows.

Job 40:2 "Shall he that contendeth with the Almighty instruct [him]? he that reproveth God, let him answer it."

God challenged Job to answer all the questions he had posed. God didn't need to know the answer, but Job needed to admit his weakness, inferiority, and inability to even try to figure out God's infinite mind. God's wisdom was so superior, His sovereign control of everything so complete, that this was all Job needed to know.

The LORD in the verse above, is Jehovah. Job had spoken a little forward, when he wanted to bring his case to the LORD face to face. We must remember the great stress and pain that Job was under at the time. He truly wanted to know what he had done to deserve this terrible punishment. We also must remember that Job was unaware of the challenge Satan had placed before God in his servant Job. One last thing we must remember is no matter how bad it got, Job did not curse God, as Satan had said he would.

Verses 3-5: Job's first response to God was I am guilty as charged. I will say no more. He knows he should not have found fault with the Almighty. He should not have insisted on his own understanding. He should not have thought God unjust. So he was reduced to silence at last.

Job's reply is one of humble submission in the face of an omnipotent and omniscient God: "Behold I am vile" (verse 4).

With great respect, Job confesses his insignificance in the presence of the Lord in his first response. Covering his "mouth" and refusing to answer signaled that Job clearly regretted his words and would not venture to make yet another mistake. All his complaints against God were empty and futile.

Job 40:3 "Then Job answered the LORD, and said,"

Job, whose confusion had made him silent, at length answered with great humility.

"And said": In the next scripture.

Job 40:4 "Behold, I am vile; what shall I answer thee? I will lay mine hand upon my mouth."

I am a mean, sinful, and wretched creature, and not worthy to speak unto thy majesty.

“What shall I answer thee?” Nor do I know what to answer.

“I will lay my hand upon my mouth”: I will, for the future, check and suppress all passionate thoughts that may arise in my mind, and, by keeping my mouth, as it were, with a bridle, will prevent them from breaking out in intemperate speeches. I will humbly and willingly submit myself to thee.

Job realized that he had spoken a little too boldly to the LORD. He said, "I will say no more".

Job 40:5 "Once have I spoken; but I will not answer: yea, twice; but I will proceed no further."

Or speak again. I confess my fault and folly, and will contend no more with thee.

"Yea, twice": That is, often-times; or again and again. The definite number being used indefinitely.

"But I will proceed no further": In such bold and presumptuous expressions, and accusations of thy providence toward me. Vain, therefore, are the excuses which some interpreters make for Job, as if he were faultless in his foregoing speeches, when God charges him with blame therein. And Job himself confesses that he was to blame.

Job admitted that he had spoken twice, as if he would instruct God and that was a mistake. I do not believe that God would find too much error in this, since Job was really inquiring what he had done wrong.

Verses 40:6 to 41:34: As if the first was not enough, God’s second interrogation of Job commenced along the very same lines, only focusing on two unique animals in God’s creation: Behemoth (40:15-24), and Leviathan (41:1-34), two creatures powerful and fearful who embodied all that is overwhelming, uncontrollable, and terrorizing in this world., Man can’t control them, but God can.

Verses 6-14: God’s second series of questions begins with an affirmation of His administration of the moral order. Job had questioned God’s justice in order to protect his own innocence: “Wilt thou condemn me, that thou mayest be righteous?” (verse 8). God says in essence: “if you are as powerful as I (verse 9), then you bring judgment on the proud (verse 11); then I will admit your power” (verse 14).

God again spoke from the whirlwind, daring Job to try running the universe according to the retribution principle. If Job could do it, then he would vindicate himself (“thine own right hand”).

Job had partially capitulated to his friends’ perspective on retributive judgment. In His second speech, Yahweh presents incontrovertible arguments that nothing compares to Him, not even “Leviathan” (see notes on 41:1-11).

Job 40:6 "Then answered the LORD unto Job out of the whirlwind, and said,"

See the notes at (Job 38:1). God here resumes the argument which had been interrupted in order to give Job an opportunity to speak and to carry his cause before the Almighty, as he had desired (see Job 40:2). Since Job had nothing to say, the argument, which had been suspended, is resumed and completed.

Job 40:7 "Gird up thy loins now like a man: I will demand of thee, and declare thou unto me."

And prepare to give an answer to what should be demanded of him. The same way of speaking is used (in Job 38:3; see notes).

This message, like the previous message spoken from the whirlwind, was spoken to Job by God. He will show Job the workings of God more fully in this.

Verses 8-14: God unleashed another torrent of crushing rebukes to Job, in which He mocked Job’s questionings of Him by telling the sufferer that if he really thought he knew what was best for him rather than God (verse 8), then he should take over being God! (Verses 9-14).

Job 40:8 "Wilt thou also disannul my judgment? wilt thou condemn me, that thou mayest be righteous?"

Wilt thou not only contend with, but set aside My judgment or justice in the government of the world?

"Wilt thou condemn me": Declare Me unrighteous, in order that thou mayest be accounted righteous (innocent; undeservingly afflicted).

God had not said that Job had sinned. He reprimanded Job for questioning His judgement. He realized that Job thought himself to be a righteous man. God knew Job was a righteous man in His sight, but he did not want Job thinking he was righteous in his own right.

Job 40:9 "Hast thou an arm like God? or canst thou thunder with a voice like him?"

Hast thou, a poor, weak worm of the earth, an arm comparable to his, who upholds all things? The power of creatures, even of angels themselves, is derived from God, limited by him, dependent on him. But the power of God is original, independent, and unlimited: he can do everything without us; we can do nothing without him. And therefore, we have not an arm like God. The meaning is: Thou art infinitely short of God in power, and therefore in justice: for all his perfections are equal and infinite. Injustice is much more likely to be in thee, an impotent creature, than in the Almighty God (see Job 40:2).

"Canst thou thunder with a voice like him?" No: his voice will soon drown thine; and one of his mighty thunders will overpower and overrule thy weak speeches. Therefore, do not presume to contend with him.

God felt that He must continue showing Job His power and greatness. Job had apologized for speaking out of line, but God wanted Job to further realize his position.

Job 40:10 "Deck thyself now [with] majesty and excellency; and array thyself with glory and beauty."

God is at all times "clothed with majesty and strength" (Psalm 93:1). "With glory and beauty" (Psalm 104:1). He "decks himself with light as with a garment" (Psalm 104:2). Job is challenged to array himself similarly.

God was describing his own dress. He is Majesty and Strength at all times. God is engulfed in Light so bright, it is above the light of the sun. God showed Job that he could not dress himself with such as this. God had dressed Job in his robe of righteousness however.

Job 40:11 "Cast abroad the rage of thy wrath: and behold every one [that is] proud, and abase him."

Work thyself up into a passion, at least seemingly; put on all the airs of a wrathful and enraged king on a throne of state, whose wrath is like the roaring of a lion, and as messengers of death. Pour out menaces plentifully, threatening what thou wilt do; and try if by such means thou canst humble the spirit of a proud man, as follows.

"And behold everyone that is proud, and abase him": Look sternly at him, put on a fierce, furious, and menacing countenance, and see if thou canst dash a proud man out of countenance, and humble him before thee, as I am able. Among the many instances of divine power the Lord settles upon this one, and proposes it to Job to try his skill and power upon, the humbling of a proud man.

God was showing Job, that power of this kind belonged to God alone.

Job 40:12 "Look on every one [that is] proud, [and] bring him low; and tread down the wicked in their place."

Hide them in the dust together; and bind their faces in secret. The idea of (verse 11), is still further insisted on. Let Job manifest himself as a power among men, if he cannot rival God in nature. Let him set the world to rights. Then he may claim to be heard with respect to the moral government of God.

Job 40:13 "Hide them in the dust together; [and] bind their faces in secret."

Either in the dust of death, that they may be seen no more in this world, in the same place and circumstances where they showed their pride and haughtiness. Or in the dust of the grave, and let them have an inglorious burial, like that of malefactors thrown into some common pit together. As, when multitudes are slain in battle, a large pit is dug, and the bodies are cast in together without any order or decency. Or it may be rendered "alike", let them be treated equally alike, no preference given to one above another.

"And bind their faces in secret": Alluding, as it is thought, to malefactors when condemned and about to be executed, whose faces are then covered, as Haman's was (Esther 7:8). Or to the dead when buried, whose faces are bound with napkins, as Lazarus's was (John 11:44). The meaning of all these expressions is, that Job would abase and destroy, if he could, every proud man he met with, as God does, in the course of his providence, sooner or later. There had been instances of divine power in this way before, or in the times of Job, which might come to his knowledge. As the casting down of the proud angels out of heaven (2 Peter 2:4); and of casting proud Adam out of paradise (Gen. 3:24); the drowning the proud giants of the old world (Gen. 7:23). And of dispersing the proud builders of Babel, (Gen. 11:8); and of destroying Sodom and Gomorrah by fire (Gen. 19:24), one of whose reigning sins was pride (Ezek. 16:49); and of drowning proud Pharaoh and his host in the Red sea (Exodus 15:4).

Of course He was not intending for Job to do these things. He was showing Job that vengeance is of the LORD. Job could not and would not try to right all the wrong in the world. That is the job of God.

Job 40:14 "Then will I also confess unto thee that thine own right hand can save thee."

If you can do all this, it will be full proof that you can save yourself, and that you do not need the divine interposition. If he could do all this, then it might be admitted that he was qualified to pronounce a judgment on the divine counsels and dealings. He would then show that he had qualifications for conducting the affairs of the universe. But since thou can do none of these things, it behooves thee to submit to me, and to acquiesce in my dealings with thee.

The Right Hand of God is the Savior of the world. Job's right hand, or for that matter, not anyone else's right hand can save anyone. There is only one way to be saved, and that is through Jesus Christ (the Right Hand of God).

Verses 40:15 – 41:34: The rest of the speech is taken up with a description of "behemoth (40:15-24), and "leviathan (41:1-34). These are certainly literal, not mythical, creatures since they are

observable and because the rest of the Lord's questions deal with real animals. There have been numerous suggestions as to the identity of these creatures: a hippopotamus, a crocodile, a dinosaur, etc. The descriptions of both are filled with hyperbole: "he drinketh up a river" (40:23); "a flame goeth out of his mouth (41:21), compare the earlier hyperbolic description of the horse (in 39:19-25). The point of referring to these animals is this: if Job cannot master just a marvel of physical strength within God's creation, how can he expect to stand as a combatant with God who knows more than he.

In verses 15-24: "Behemoth": While this is a generic term used commonly in the Old Testament for large cattle or land animals, the description in this passage suggests an extraordinary creature. The hippopotamus has been suggested by the details in the passage (verses 19-24). However, the short tail of a hippo is hardly consistent with verse 17, where tail could be translated "trunk". Some believe God is describing His most impressive creation of land animals, the dinosaur species, which fit all the characteristics.

Many scholars think that "behemoth" refers to the hippopotamus, though the description "seems to match that of a great land dinosaur, such as the tyrannosaurus" according to Dr. Henry Morris. The word is a transliteration of a Hebrew word that means "super-beast". No person could contend with such a creature. So how could Job pretend to be God's equal when he could not even control what God had created?

Job 40:15 "Behold now behemoth, which I made with thee; he eateth grass as an ox."

The identification of behemoth has always been a great difficulty with commentators. The word in Hebrew is really the natural plural of behēmāh, which means domestic cattle. And this fact would suggest the idea that more than one animal may be meant in the description (Job 40:15-24). Which scarcely seems to answer to one and the same. In this way (Job 40:15-20), would describe very well the elephant, and (Job 40:21-24), the hippopotamus. The objection to this is, that behēmāh is commonly used of domestic cattle in contrast to wild beasts. Whereas neither the elephant nor the hippopotamus can come under the category of domestic animals. There is a word in Coptic (p-ehe-emmou, meaning water-ox), used for the hippopotamus, which may, perhaps, lie concealed in behemoth. Then the difficulty is to make the description answer throughout to the hippopotamus (e.g., Job 40:20), since the hippopotamus does not frequent mountains, neither does it exactly eat grass like an ox (Job 40:15).

"Which I made with thee": Fellow creatures of thine, to inhabit the world with thee: thus skillfully reminding him that he had a common origin with the beasts.

"He eateth grass as an ox": Marvelous in an animal living so much in the water; also strange, that such a monster should not be carnivorous.

Behemoth is speaking of some large animal, such as an elephant, or a hippopotamus. God was telling Job that he created this animal larger in stature than other animals, and yet it was an eater of grass. God can do with His creation whatever He chooses to do.

Job 40:16 "Lo now, his strength [is] in his loins, and his force [is] in the navel of his belly."

He hath strength answerable to his bulk, but he is of a mild disposition, and his strength, by God's wise and merciful providence, is not an offensive strength, consisting in, or put forth by, horns or claws, as it is in ravenous creatures, but only defensive, and seated in his loins.

"And his force is in the navel of his belly": From hence Bochart argues that behemoth cannot be the elephant, as is generally supposed: because the strength of an elephant consists not in his belly; for though his hide on the back is very hard, yet on the belly it is soft. And therefore, the rhinoceros, contending with him, aims chiefly at his paunch, knowing, as it were, that to be a soft place, and more capable of being injured. On the other hand, the description, he urges, agrees well with the hippopotamus, which is remarkable, both for the strength of his belly and navel, as well as other parts of his body. The skin being so firm and thick as to be almost impenetrable, and able to resist the force of spears and darts.

Whatever the animal was, it was very muscular in its stomach and had great power in its legs.

Job 40:17 "He moveth his tail like a cedar: the sinews of his stones are wrapped together."

Though the tail be but short, both in the elephant, and in the hippopotamus; yet, when it is erected, it is exceeding stiff and strong.

"The sinews of his stones are wrapped together": Rather, of his thighs, as the Hebrew may be rendered. The thighs and feet of the river horse are so sinewy and strong that one of them is able to break or overturn a large boat.

The hippopotamus was possibly, the one described here. He has a short fat tail that is as strong as a cedar tree.

Job 40:18 "His bones [are as] strong pieces of brass; his bones [are] like bars of iron."

Than which nothing is stronger. The repetition is made for greater illustration and confirmation. But what is said is not applicable to the elephant, whose bones are porous and rimous, light and spongy for the most part, as appears from the osteology of it. Excepting its teeth, which are the ivory; though the teeth of the river horse are said to exceed them in hardness; and artificers say they are wrought with greater difficulty than ivory.

This is just saying his bones are very strong. Hippopotamus or elephants, walk through a jungle knocking down everything in front of them. Their strength is very great. Nothing can seem to stop either of them, when they are angry.

Job 40:19 "He [is] the chief of the ways of God: he that made him can make his sword to approach [unto him]."

In size and strength. The word rendered "chief" is used in a similar sense (in Num. 24:20). "Amalek was the first of the nations;" that is, one of the most powerful and mighty of the nations.

"He that made him can make his sword approach unto him": According to this translation, the sense is, that God had power over him, notwithstanding his great strength and size, and could take his life when he pleased. Yet this, though it would be a correct sentiment, does not seem to be that which the connection demands. That would seem to require some allusion to the strength of the animal. And accordingly, the translation suggested by Bochart, and adopted substantially by Rosenmuller, Umbreit, Noyes, Schultens, Prof. Lee, and others, is to be preferred: "He that made him furnished him with a sword." The allusion then would be to his strong, sharp teeth, having a resemblance to a sword, and designed either for defense or for the purpose of cutting the long grass on which it fed when on the land. The propriety of this interpretation may be seen vindicated at length in Bochart, i.e. the sickle or scythe, which was ascribed to the hippopotamus by some of the Greek writers.

This was just saying that he was the largest of the animals God had made. He was not easy to kill. It seemed at the time this was written, only God could stop this great mass of an animal.

Job 40:20 "Surely the mountains bring him forth food, where all the beasts of the field play."

Though this creature be vastly great, and require much food, and no man cares for it; yet God provides for it out of his own stores, and makes even desert mountains to afford him sufficient sustenance. The hippopotamus also, though he lives mostly in the water, fetched his food from the land, and from the mountains or hills, which are nigh unto the river Nile.

"Where all the beasts of the field play": They not only feed securely, but sport themselves by him or with him, being taught by experience that he is gentle and harmless, and never preys upon them.

These mountains were not speaking of truly high mountains, which neither the elephant, nor the hippopotamus dwelt in. It was possibly speaking of the rolling hills near the river. All of the wild animals would stay in an area where they could readily find food and water.

Job 40:21 "He lieth under the shady trees, in the covert of the reed, and fens."

This may be thought to agree very well with the river horse, the inhabitant of the Nile, where reeds in great plenty grew, and adjoining to which were fenny and marshy places, and shady trees. And, as historians relate, this creature takes its lodging among high reeds, and in shady places. Yea, the reeds and sugar canes, and the leaves of the papyrus, are part of the food on which it lives. And hence the hunters of them sometimes cover their bait with a reed to take them.

Job 40:22 "The shady trees cover him [with] their shadow; the willows of the brook compass him about."

Under which it lies, (as in Job 40:21); which is thought not so well to agree with the elephant, since, according to Aelianus and other writers, it lies not down, at least but rarely, but sleeps standing. It being very troublesome to it to lie down and rise up again; and besides it is

represented by some authors as higher than the trees, and therefore this is supposed to agree better with the river horse; especially since it follows.

"The willows of the brook compass him about": Or the willows of the Nile, as some choose to render it; which would put it out of all doubt that the river horse is intended, if it could be established, it being an inhabitant of that river.

Both the hippopotamus and the elephant were known to lounge under the trees and roll around in the sand near the water. The hippopotamus liked to eat the reeds near the water.

Job 40:23 "Behold, he drinketh up a river, [and] hasteth not: he trusteth that he can draw up Jordan into his mouth."

God was not saying this creature lived in the Jordan River, but rather, recognizing that the Jordan was familiar to Job, used it to illustrate how much water this beast could ingest. "He can draw up Jordan into his mouth". It was a word used to refer to something of enormous size and threatening power.

Either one of them could drink enough water to make the river appear to go dry. The Jordan here, is possibly speaking of any fairly large river. Some scholars believe it to be speaking of the Nile. It really does not matter which river it is. It is just speaking of the vast amount of water the large animal could consume.

Job 40:24 "He taketh it with his eyes: [his] nose pierceth through snares."

Rather, shall one take him when he is looking on? "Can he be captured." i.e. "when his eyes are open, and when he sees what is intended? No. If captured at all, it must be by subtlety, when he is not on the watch."

"His nose pierceth through snares": Rather, or can one bore his nostril with cords? I.e. can we lead him away captive, with a ring or hook passed through his nose, and a cord attached (compare the next chapter, verse 2)?

This was just saying that it would be difficult to snare him. It would be almost impossible if he saw you coming. He would fight with his nose. This would be true of either the elephant or the hippopotamus.

Job Chapter 40 Questions

1. The LORD, in verse 1, is _____.
2. What are some of the things we must remember about Job?
3. How did Job answer God?

4. Job admitted that he had spoken _____.
5. Why does the author believe God would not find too much error with Job?
6. Where did the voice of God come from to Job?
7. What was the difference in God speaking here than when He spoke earlier to Job?
8. God reprimanded Job for what?
9. What question does God ask Job in verse 9?
10. God told Job to deck himself with _____ and _____.
11. God is engulfed with Light so bright, it is brighter than the _____.
12. The Right Hand of God is the _____ of the world.
13. Behemoth is speaking of what?
14. It could be speaking of what two animals?
15. This animal was larger than other animals, but ate _____.
16. Where is this animal's strength manifested?
17. He moveth his tail like a _____.
18. His bones are like _____.
19. What is this large animal called in verse 19?
20. Where does he lounge?
21. He is so big, it appears he drinks up a _____.