

Job Chapter 41

Verses 1-11: "Leviathan is a symbol of evil, drawn in part from Ugaritic myths about a fire-breathing sea dragon (Psalms 74:14; 104:26; Isa. 27:1). Dr. Henry Morris points out that the "Leviathan" was evidently the greatest of the marine reptiles or dinosaurs, something like a plesiosaur, perhaps, though modern commentators tend to call it a crocodile." Ultimately, Leviathan points to Satan, the paragon of evil, whom Yahweh has in control and one day will destroy (e.g., Isa. 27:1; Rev. 20:1-3).

Job 41:1 "Canst thou draw out leviathan with a hook? or his tongue with a cord [which] thou lettest down?"

Leviathan is a large sea creature, whose exact identity is unknown.

"Leviathan": This term appears in 4 other Old Testament texts (Job 3:8; Psalms 74:14; 104:26; Isa. 27:1). In each case Leviathan refers to some mighty creature who can overwhelm man but who is no match for God. Since this creature lives in the sea among ships (Psalm 104:26), some form of sea monster, possibly an ancient dinosaur, is in view. Some feel it was a crocodile, which had scaly hide (verse 15), terrible teeth (verse 14), and speed in the water (verse 32). But crocodiles are not sea creatures and clearly this one was (verse 31). Some have thought it was a killer whale or a great white shark, because he is the ultimate killer beast over all other proud beasts (verse 34). It could also have been some sea going dinosaur.

"Leviathan" means a serpent, or some believe a crocodile or sea monster. God is speaking of the unlikelihood of catching one on a hook, or of tying his tongue down with a rope.

Job 41:2 "Canst thou put a hook into his nose? or bore his jaw through with a thorn?"

Hebrew, אגמון, agmon, a bulrush, that is, a hook like a bulrush, with its head hanging down, as is expressed (Isa. 58:5); into his nose? To hang him up by it for sale, or to carry him home for use, after thou hast drawn him out of the sea or river.

"Or bore his jaw through with a thorn?" Or with an iron hook, or instrument, as sharp as a thorn, wherewith thou uses to carry small fishes. Heath translates the former clause, Canst thou put a bandage about his nose? Meaning, by the bandage, a rope of rushes, which was to tie his mouth fast; as the thorn, or iron instrument, was to prevent him from getting the bandage off. "It is usual," Dr. Dodd says, "to this day, to fasten the jaws of the crocodile when taken."

This is speaking of having this thing in total subjection. The hook in the nose or through his jaw, would make him easier to handle.

Job 41:3 "Will he make many supplications unto thee? will he speak soft [words] unto thee?"

Doth he dread thy anger or power? Or will he earnestly beg thy favor? It is a metaphor from men in distress, who use these means to them to whose power they are subject. Will he make a covenant with thee?

In this particular verse, it is as if this crocodile is human. This is a description of the way captives act sometimes. Could this be hinting at Satan?

Job 41:4 "Will he make a covenant with thee? wilt thou take him for a servant for ever?"

Namely, to do thee faithful service, as the next words explain it.

“Wilt thou take him for a servant for ever”: Canst thou bring him into bondage and force him to serve thee? Will this monstrous creature need, for any reason, to come to terms with you, Job? Are you able to control him? God asked.

Of course this evil animal or serpent, will do none of these things. This serpent would fight to the very end.

Job 41:5 "Wilt thou play with him as [with] a bird? or wilt thou bind him for thy maidens?"

As children play with little birds kept in cages, which they do at their pleasure, and without any fear.

"Or wilt thou bind him for thy maidens?" For thy little daughters, which he mentions rather than little sons, because such are most subject to fear.

This crocodile or serpent, would be far too dangerous to play with, as you would a bird. The maidens liked animals for pets, but this would not be wise to do with this crocodile. It appears that people in the time of Job had pet birds and antelopes and other animals that could be domesticated, but the crocodile could not.

Job 41:6 "Shall the companions make a banquet of him? shall they part him among the merchants?"

Hebrew, יִכְרֹוּ, *jichru*, coincident, Vulgate Latin, cut, or carve, him up? Shall thy friends, who assisted thee in taking him, feed upon him, or make a banquet for him; that is for joy, that thou hast taken him?

"Shall they part him among the merchants?" As is usual in such cases, that all who are partners in the labor and hazard may partake of the profit also, and divide the spoil.

Crocodile is eaten in some countries and perhaps that is what is meant by making a "banquet" of him. The merchants could cut him up, and each take whatever they needed of him.

Job 41:7 "Canst thou fill his skin with barbed irons? or his head with fish spears?"

This seems not so well to agree with the whale; whose skin, and the several parts of his body, are to be pierced with harpoons and lances, such as fishermen use in taking whales. And their flesh to be cut in pieces with their knives. But better with the crocodile, whose skin is so hard, and so closely set with scales, that it is impenetrable (See Ezek. 29:4).

Or his head with fish-spears? Fish-spears would have small effect on the head of a crocodile, which is bony and covered by a very tough skin. There is a vulnerable place, however, at the point where the head joins the spine, at which the ancient Egyptians, when they ventured to attack the crocodile, were accustomed to strike.

This would be highly unlikely to do, because of the rough exterior of the crocodile. They might harpoon him, but it would be next to impossible for one man to bring him in.

Job 41:8 "Lay thine hand upon him, remember the battle, do no more."

If thou canst or dares. It is dangerous so to do, either to the whale or crocodile.

"Remember the battle": Or "look for war", as Mr. Broughton renders it; expect a fight will ensue, in which thou wilt have no share with this creature.

"Do no more": If thou canst by any means escape, take care never to do the like again; or thou wilt never do so any more, thou wilt certainly die for it.

It would be a very dangerous thing to reach out a hand against the crocodile. You would be missing a hand, and perhaps a whole body.

Job 41:9 "Behold, the hope of him is in vain: shall not [one] be cast down even at the sight of him?"

That is, the hope of taking, or conquering him.

"Shall not one be cast down, even at the sight of him?" Not only the fight, but the sight of him is most frightful. And such is the sight of the crocodile, by which alone some have been frightened out of their senses.

Someone might be brave enough to go to try to capture him, but just one look at this ferocious thing would cause him to run in fright.

Job 41:10 "None [is so] fierce that dare stir him up: who then is able to stand before me?"

"Who then is able to stand before me?" This was the essential question being asked in both the Behemoth and Leviathan passages. God created these awesome creatures, and His might is far greater than theirs. If Job couldn't stand against them, what was he doing contending with God? He would be better off to fight a dinosaur or a killer shark.

God is saying, "As ferocious as this crocodile is, he is nothing to compare to God who made him". If you would be afraid of a crocodile, how much more you would be afraid of God?

Job 41:11 "Who hath prevented me, that I should repay [him? whatsoever is] under the whole heaven is mine."

God did not need to buy anything; He already owned all things. Paul quoted this (in Rom. 11:35).

No one can prevent God from doing what He wants to do. The Creator can do whatever He desires to do with His creation. When it comes to God, man does not have an opinion. Job's one mistake was thinking he might contend with God over his fate.

Job 41:12 "I will not conceal his parts, nor his power, nor his comely proportion."

The parts of the leviathan; or "his bars", the members of his body, which are like bars of iron.

"Nor his power": Which is very great, whether of the crocodile or the whale.

"Nor his comely proportion": The symmetry of his body, and the members of it; which, though large, every part is in just proportion to each other.

This is just saying, God will not hide any of this.

Job 41:13 "Who can discover the face of his garment? [or] who can come [to him] with his double bridle?"

Who hath uncovered, or made naked, or hath taken off from him, the face of his garment? That is, his skin, which covers the whole body, and may be taken off from it like a garment. "Who dare attempt to touch even his outward skin?" Much less dare any venture to endeavor to strip it off, or to give him a deep or deadly wound. Who can come to him with his double bridle? To put it into his mouth, and lead him by it to thy stable and service, as he might do a horse? Or rather, (because he plainly seems to persist in describing the several parts of the leviathan's body).

"Who can come within his double bridle?" Or as Heath translates it, his double row of teeth? Namely his vast jaws, which have some resemblance to a double bridle; whence the Greeks call those parts of the face which reach to the jaws on both sides the bridle. The crocodile's mouth is exceedingly wide: Pliny says, strongly, "When he gapes, *fit totum os*, he becomes all mouth."

The garment here, is speaking of his outer skin. If this scaly skin were removed, he would be easy to kill.

Job 41:14 "Who can open the doors of his face? his teeth [are] terrible round about."

Or, who hath opened. The "doors of his face" is an expression for his "mouth" which has something artificial and forced in it.

"His teeth are terrible round about": The jaws of the crocodile are very extended; the two rows of long, pointed teeth, thirty-six, it is said, above, and thirty beneath, being bare, as the mouth has no lips, present a formidable appearance.

The doors of his face is speaking of those huge jaws with the equally huge teeth. The top and the bottom jaws are covered with teeth. His bite could be vicious.

Job 41:15 "[His] scales [are his] pride, shut up together [as with] a close seal."

This is notoriously true of the crocodile, whose back and tail are covered with scales, which are in a measure impenetrable and invincible. Which all writers concerning it, and travelers that have seen it, agree in (See Ezek. 29:4). But the skin of the whale is smooth; the outward skin is thin, like parchment, and is easily pulled off with the hand.

"Shut up together as with a close seal": Closely compacted together, as things that are fastened together by a seal. This is as applicable, or more so, to the scales of the crocodile; which are so close as if they were sealed together, and are like a shield, its defense, and in which it prides itself.

Job 41:16 "One is so near to another, that no air can come between them."

Which plainly shows that the shields or scales are several; which agrees better to the crocodile than to the whale, whose skin is all one entire piece. Unless there were a sort of whales having thick and strong scales, which some have affirmed, but is not yet known and proved.

Job 41:17 "They are joined one to another, they stick together, that they cannot be sundered."

Literally, they are soldered one to another (compare Isa. 41:7).

This is just speaking of how difficult it would be to get a spear or anything else, between the scales of his outer skin. They are like a shield that could not be penetrated very easily.

Job 41:18 "By his sneezings a light doth shine, and his eyes [are] like the eyelids of the morning."

Literally, His sneezing causes the light to sparkle. If he sneezes or spouts up water, it is like a light shining, either with the froth, or the light of the sun shining through it. The crocodile, in particular, is said frequently to sneeze.

"And his eyes are like the eyelids of the morning": The eyes of the whale are said in the night-time to shine like a flame; and the eyes of the crocodile, although they are dull and dark under the water, yet, as soon as they appear above water, cast a bright and clear light, like that of the morning suddenly breaking forth after the dark night.

The light shining is possibly, when the light shines in his eyes. When he would be lying on the bank at night, the moon might shine in his eyes. They are rather small for such a great sized animal.

Job 41:19 "Out of his mouth go burning lamps, [and] sparks of fire leap out."

The description now becomes highly poetical, and it would be a mistake to endeavor to substantiate it. The intention is to represent the impression which the animal would make on an impressible but unscientific observer viewing it in its native haunts for the first time. Splashing, snorting, and throwing up spray all around, it would seem to be breathing out steam and smoke, from which the idea of fire is inseparable (see the next verse).

Job 41:20 "Out of his nostrils goeth smoke, as [out] of a seething pot or caldron."

Rather, as from a seething pot and rushes; i.e. as from a pot heated by burning rushes.

Job 41:21 "His breath kindleth coals, and a flame goeth out of his mouth."

All the representations of dragons breathing smoke and flames, found in the myths and sagas of so many countries, probably rest upon the observed fact of steam or spray streaming forth from the mouth and widely opened nostrils of the crocodile. The steam has seemed to be smoke, and smoke has naturally suggested flame and fire.

This was speaking of him, as if he was a dragon. Crocodiles do not have fire in their mouths or smoke coming out of their nostrils. The only thing they do that might make a frightened viewer think these things are the wild splashing they do in the water.

Job 41:22 "In his neck remaineth strength, and sorrow is turned into joy before him."

This is thought to be an argument against the whale, which is said to have no neck. But whatever joins the head and body may be called the neck, though ever so small. And the shorter the neck is, the stronger it is. It is also said by some, that the crocodile has no neck also. But the philosopher is express for it, that it has one and moves it: and Pliny speaks of it as turning its head upwards, which it could not do without a neck.

"And sorrow is turned into joy before him": Or leaps and dances before him; it departs from him: he is not afraid of anything, though ever so threatening. Or sorrow and distress at the sight of him, in men and fishes, make them leap, and hasten to get out of the way of him and escape him.

It appears that wherever he goes, everything in his path runs and hides. He has no competitor for his territory.

Job 41:23 "The flakes of his flesh are joined together: they are firm in themselves; they cannot be moved."

The muscles of his hefty body are not flaccid and flabby, but solid and firmly compacted.

“They are firm in themselves; they cannot be moved”: That is, not very easily, not without a large sharp cutting knife, and that used with much strength.

These flakes are possibly, speaking of his skin which is like flakes. They are so well put together, that he appears to be in just one piece. His scales are almost impossible to penetrate. Even his hide underneath is like very tough leather.

Job 41:24 "His heart is as firm as a stone; yea, as hard as a piece of the nether [millstone]."

Which must be understood not of the substance but of the qualities of it, being bold, courageous, undaunted, and unmerciful. Which is true both of the whale and crocodile, and particularly of the crocodile.

He has a heart of stone. Anything in his way is destroyed without repentance. A millstone has a hole in the middle to fit on the wheel. This is just saying the crocodile or whatever he is, has no heart for anyone or anything.

Job 41:25 "When he raiseth up himself, the mighty are afraid: by reason of breakings they purify themselves."

“Mighty” (Exodus 12:12), refers to angels and demons who also fear Leviathan just as humans do. Only God can control this beast.

This could be a description of a crocodile or it could easily be a description of Satan himself. The traits of the crocodile, serpent, and Satan are very similar. Fear caused many people to worship the crocodile. Fear drives many to worship Satan, too. They feel they are headed for certain death when a crocodile breaks upon them.

Job 41:26 "The sword of him that layeth at him cannot hold: the spear, the dart, nor the habergeon."

It is either broken by striking at him, or however cannot pierce him and stick in him. But since a sword is not used in fishery, rather the harpoon may be meant. Which cannot enter into the crocodile, being so fenced with scales. But the whale being struck with it, it enters deep into his flesh, and is wounded by it. Wherefore this and what follows in the next verses seems best to agree with the crocodile, or some other fish.

"The spear, the dart, nor the habergeon": That is, neither of these can fasten upon him nor enter into him. And yet it is certain that the whale, after he has been struck and wounded by the harpoon, men approach nearer to him and thrust a long steeled lance or spear under his gills into his breast, and through the intestines, which dispatches him. Darts are not designed for use in the whale fishery. As for crocodiles, as Peter Martyr says, they are not to be pierced with darts. The habergeon (scale armor), or coat of mail, being a defensive piece of armor, seems not to be designed, as being never used in taking such creatures. Rather therefore a javelin or hand dart may be intended.

A sword would be no defense against a crocodile. "Habergeon" is a javelin here. Not any of these weapons of war would penetrate the rough skin of the crocodile. He would snap any of the above weapons in two with his giant jaws.

Job 41:27 "He esteemeth iron as straw, [and] brass as rotten wood."

(Rather, bronze) as rotten wood. Even the hardest metals are useless against the crocodile. Moderns observe that even firearms are of little avail against him. The back and tail, at any rate, resist musket-balls; and a rifle bullet will glance aside if it strikes one of the scales (see verse 15).

The hardest metals are useless against the crocodile. It would take the bullet of a very large gun to kill a crocodile. A bullet from a 22 would bounce off his skin, like it would off solid steel.

Job 41:28 "The arrow cannot make him flee: sling stones are turned with him into stubble."

The arrow cannot make him flee; literally, the son of the bow (compare Lam. 3:13, where arrows are called "sons of the quiver").

"Sling stones are turned with him into stubble": Are no more regarded by him than if stubble was cast at him. Not only stones out of a sling, but out of an engine. And such is the hardness of the skin of the crocodile that, as Isidore says, the strokes of the strongest stones are rebounded by it. It is even said to withstand against musket shot.

A stone in a sling was enough to kill the giant Goliath in the hands of David. The crocodile has no exposed places where a stone could hit him however. It would be impossible for an arrow to penetrate his skin.

Job 41:29 "Darts are counted as stubble: he laugheth at the shaking of a spear."

Darts being mentioned before, perhaps something else is meant here. According to Ben Gersom, the word signifies an engine out of which stones are cast to batter down walls; but these are of no avail against the leviathan.

"He laugheth at the shaking of a spear": At him, knowing it cannot hurt him. The crocodile, as Thevenot says, is proof against a combined spear and battle axe. The Septuagint version is, "the shaking of the pyrophorus", or torch bearer. One that carried a torch before the army, who, when shook, it was a token to begin the battle. Which the leviathan being fearless of, laughs at it (see Obad. 1:18).

None of these weapons of man would be counted as anything by the crocodile.

Job 41:30 "Sharp stones [are] under him: he spreadeth sharp pointed things upon the mire."

According to this translation the sense is, his skin is so hard and impenetrable, that the sharpest stones are as easy to him as the mire, and make no more impression upon him. But the words are and may be otherwise rendered, as continuing the former sense, They (to wit, the arrows, darts, or stones cast at him), are or fall under him, like (which particle is oft understood), sharp shreds, or fragments of stones.

"He spreadeth sharp pointed things": (To wit, the pieces of swords or darts which were flung at him, and broken upon him), upon the mire. The fragments of broken weapons lie as thick at the bottom of the water in the place of the fight as little stones do in the mire, or as they do in a field after some fierce and furious battle. Or thus, with him (or for him, i.e. for his defense), are sharp stones; he spreadeth himself like an arrow or threshing instrument (which is filled and fortified with iron).

"Upon the mire": Or mud in the bottom of the water. So he doth not describe his resting place, but rather his back, which he not unfittingly compares to sharp stones or threshing instruments, because the darts or stones cast at him pierce no more into him than they would do into them if they were thrown at them.

Even the hide underneath his stomach was very tough. He crawled across jagged rocks, and they did not break his skin. The only thing that happened, was the stone was just pressed down into the sand on the bank of the water as he crawled over them.

Job 41:31 "He maketh the deep to boil like a pot: he maketh the sea like a pot of ointment."

The rush of the crocodile through the water of the stream or pool in which he dwells causes a stir and a commotion which is forcibly compared to the boiling of water in a caldron. He maketh the sea like a pot of ointment. It is generally allowed that by "the sea" here is meant the Nile, (as in Isa. 18:2; 19:5; Nah. 3:8). The swirl of the Nile, as the crocodile makes his rush, is like the heaving of a pot of boiling oil or ointment.

This is speaking of the water being disturbed, as he turned or spewed water upward.

Job 41:32 "He maketh a path to shine after him; [one] would think the deep [to be] hoary."

He leaves a white trail behind him as he passes from sand bank to sand bank through the shallows. It is as if the Nile had grown old and put on hoary hairs.

The river where his habitation was, is what is called being (hoary), old. When he moved in the water, there would be a white stream of bubbles which followed him.

Job 41:33 "Upon earth there is not his like, who is made without fear."

Hebrew, "Upon the dust." The meaning is, that no other animal can be compared with him; or the land does not produce such a monster as this. For size, strength, ferocity, courage, and formidableness, no animal will bear a comparison with him. This can be true only of some such fierce creature as the crocodile.

"Who is made without fear": Margin, "Or, behave themselves with fear." The meaning is, that he is created not to be afraid; he has no dread of others. In this respect he is unlike other animals. The Septuagint renders this, "He is made to be sported with by my angels."

Job 41:34 "He beholdeth all high [things]: he [is] a king over all the children of pride."

He looks without fear on everything that is high and great. Nothing alarms him; nothing disturbs his equanimity.

"He is a king over all the children": (Literally, sons).

"Of pride": (compare Job 28:8). He feels himself superior to all other animals that come within his domain. They may be "sons of pride," but he has more to be proud of than the proudest of them. Ordinarily, the lion poses as "the king of beasts;" but here he is, as it were, deposed, and relegated into the second position (Job 38:39), the crocodile being exalted into his place.

The crocodile is not afraid of anything on the earth. He could be classified as king of his territory. Again, this description fits that serpent the devil well. Satan is king over those filled with pride.

Here end the words of God to Job, whereby he sets forth his wisdom and power, in the works of the creation. From whence Job might be led to infer, that the wisdom and power of God being so immense, men ought to speak most reverently of him, and think most humbly and lowly of themselves. Persuaded that, though we cannot always see the reason why the divine providence suffers certain things to come to pass, yet we ought to rest assured that they are wisely, and therefore justly, ordered, and therefore we should resignedly submit ourselves to the divine will in all things.

Job Chapter 41 Questions

1. What does "leviathan" mean?
2. What unlikelihood is God speaking of in verse 1?
3. What is verse 2 talking about?
4. In verse 3, what observation did the author make of leviathan?
5. This evil serpent would fight to the _____.
6. Why could they not make a pet of him?
7. What was meant by the "banquet" in verse 6?
8. Why would it be difficult to get a barb under his skin?

9. If you put out a hand to him, what would happen?
10. Just one look at that ferocious thing would cause a person to _____.
11. If you could not stand before leviathan, how could you stand before _____.
12. What was the garment in verse 13?
13. What were the doors of his face?
14. They were covered with _____.
15. Why would it be so hard to get a spear through his scales?
16. What is the light that is shining?
17. What are verses 19, 20, and 21 describing?
18. What was unusual about his neck?
19. What were the flakes of his flesh?
20. His heart is as a _____.
21. The author believes verse 25 could be a description of what?
22. When a crocodile came toward them, they were filled with _____.
23. What was the "habergeon", in verse 26, speaking of?
24. Darts were counted as _____ by him.
25. He maketh the deep to boil like a _____.