

SUBMIT YOURSELF UNTO THE LORD YOUR GOD

40 ⁶Jehovah answered Job out of the tempest. He said, ⁷Brace yourself like a man; I will question you, and you shall answer me. ⁸Would you discredit my justice? Would you condemn me so that you might be justified? ⁹Do you have an arm like God's, can you thunder with a voice like his? ¹⁰Adorn yourself with glory and splendor; clothe yourself with honor and majesty. ¹¹Unleash the fury of your wrath; glance at every proud man and humble him. ¹²Glance at every proud man and abase him; trample down the wicked where they stand. ¹³Bury them all in the dust; cover their faces with a shroud in the grave. ¹⁴Then I myself will laud you, for your own right hand is able to deliver you.

¹⁵Look at the behemoth, whom I made together with you; he eats grass like an ox. ¹⁶What strength he has in his loins, what power in the muscles of his belly! ¹⁷He stiffens his tail like a cedar; the sinews of his thighs are tightly knit. ¹⁸His bones are like tubes of bronze, his limbs like rods of iron. ¹⁹He ranks first among the works of God, yet his Maker can approach him with his sword [as his master]. ²⁰The hills bring him food, and all the wild animals play nearby. ²¹He lies under the lotus plants, hidden among the reeds of the marsh. ²²The lotuses conceal him in their shadow; the poplars by the stream surround him. ²³When the river rages, he is not alarmed; he is secure, even when the Jordan River surges to his mouth. ²⁴Can one capture him when he is on watch, can one pierce his nose with barbs?

41 Can you pull the leviathan [out of the water] with a fishhook or tie his tongue with a rope? ²Can you put a cord through his nose or pierce his jaw with a hook? ³Will he keep begging you for mercy? Will he speak to you with gentle words? ⁴Will he make a covenant with you so that you may take him as a life long slave? ⁵Can you play with him as with a bird or put him on a leash for your little daughters? ⁶Will traders barter for him? Will they divide him up among the merchants? ⁷Can you fill his hide with harpoons or his head with fishing spears? ⁸[If] you lay your hand on him, you will remember the battle and not do it again. ⁹Any hope of subduing him is false; one is overwhelmed by the mere sight of him. ¹⁰No one is brave enough to rouse him. (Who [then] is able to stand against me? ¹¹Who has given anything to me that I should repay him? Everything under heaven belongs to me.) ¹²I will not fail to speak of his limbs, his strength, and his graceful form. ¹³Who can strip off his outer armor? Who can penetrate his double coat of mail? ¹⁴Who dares to open the doors of his mouth, ringed about with his fearsome teeth? ¹⁵His back is like rows of shields tightly sealed together, ¹⁶each one is so close to the next that no air can pass between them. ¹⁷They are tightly joined to one another; they are interlocked and cannot be separated. ¹⁸His snorting throws out flashes of light; his eyes are like the rays of dawn. ¹⁹Fire brands stream from his mouth; sparks of fire shoot out. ²⁰Smoke pours from his nostrils as from a boiling pot over a fire of reeds. ²¹His breath sets coals ablaze, and flames dart out of his mouth. ²²His strength resides in his neck; in terror, [creatures] leap before him. ²³The folds of his flesh are tightly joined; they are firm and immovable. ²⁴His chest is hard as rock, hard as a lower millstone. ²⁵When he rises up, the mighty are terrified; before his thrashing they retreat. ²⁶The sword that reaches him has no effect, nor does the spear or the dart or the javelin. ²⁷He treats iron like straw and bronze like rotten wood. ²⁸Arrows do not make him flee; slingshots are like chaff to him. ²⁹A club seems to him to be nothing more than a piece of straw, and he laughs at the whirring of the javelin.

³⁰His undersides are like jagged potsherds, they leave a trail in the mud like a threshing sledge. ³¹He makes the depths churn like a boiling caldron, and he stirs up the sea like a pot of ointment. ³²Behind him he leaves a glistening wake; it makes the deep appear to have white hair. ³³Nothing on earth is his equal—a creature without fear. ³⁴Even all those who are exalted fear him; he is king over all the proud.

***42** Then Job replied to Jehovah, ²I know that you can do all things; no plan of yours can be thwarted. ³Who is this that obscures deliberation with his lack of knowledge? Surely I spoke of things I did not understand, matters that are too wonderful for me to know. ⁴Listen now and I will speak; I will inquire and may you instruct me. ⁵My ears had heard of you, but now my eyes have seen you. ⁶Consequently, I abhor [my words] and recant in dust and ashes. (Job 40:6-42:6)*

Introduction

Job was in danger of attempting a blasphemous role reversal: seeking to exchange places with the Judge of all the earth; proclaiming himself to be just and righteous at the expense of God's own justice and righteousness.

In defense of His own divine position and out of mercy to Job, the LORD addresses this issue. He asks Job, *"Would you discredit my justice?"* (40:8a.) Note: The Hebrew word (פָּרַךְ), which may here be translated "discredit," or, "impugn," has the meaning, "to break, to violate, to declare void, to reduce to nothing."

"In defending his own innocence so emphatically and lashing out so vehemently at God because of his suffering, Job has essentially charged God with acting unjustly. For a mortal to presume himself guiltless and to impugn God's just governance of the world approaches the sin of presumptuous pride ... It is important to observe that Jehovah does not accuse Job of any specific sin, thereby agreeing that Job has lived a righteous life" (Hartley, p. 519.)

But Job has come very close to the point of trusting more in his own upright conduct than in the LORD. By focusing exclusively on his own innocence, Job is in danger of disparaging or even denying God's justice; that is why the LORD asks Job, *"Would you condemn me so that you might be justified?"*

In seeking to deliver Job from an attitude of self-righteousness that leads to blasphemous assertions against God's own righteousness and justice, the LORD confronts Job with two great truths about Himself: 1) His identity as the Majestic King who shall overthrow the proud; and 2) His identity as the Sovereign Lord who exercises a righteous rule over all His creation.

The LORD's message to Job is basically the same as that expressed by the Holy Spirit through the apostle Peter: *"God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble."*

⁶Therefore, humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, so that he may exalt you at the appointed time” (1 Pet. 5:5b-6.)

I. Submit Yourself unto the LORD Your God, Recognizing that He is the Majestic King Who Shall Overthrow the Proud

The LORD asks Job, *“Do you have an arm like God?”* (40:9a.) Does Job possess the awesome power of God that enables Him to enforce His will and accomplish His own sovereign purposes? Note Exodus 15:6, *“Your right hand, O Jehovah, is majestic with power; Your right hand, O Jehovah, has smashed the enemy to pieces”* and Isaiah 40:10a, *“Look! The Lord Jehovah is coming with power, and his arm will rule for him.”* Again the LORD asks, Can Job thunder with a voice like God’s? (40:9b)—*“God thunders marvelously with his voice; he does great things that are beyond our comprehension”* (37:5.) *“By the word of Jehovah the heavens were made, their starry host by the breath of his mouth”* (Psl. 33:6.)

Job is now challenged to do what only the LORD can do: *“Adorn yourself with glory and splendor; clothe yourself with honor and majesty”* (40:10.) Earthly rulers exhibit their position and authority by means of regal dress and displays of splendor; the LORD’s sovereign position and authority are exhibited by a display of His own divine dignity and majesty.

Next Job is challenged to exert himself as only the LORD can. The LORD challenges Job, *“Unleash the fury of your wrath”* (40:11a.) The unleashing of the LORD’s righteous indignation is described in terms of a mighty torrent of brimstone being poured out upon the ungodly, like the erupting of a mighty volcano, compare Nahum 1:6, *“Who can withstand his indignation? Who can endure his fierce anger? His wrath is poured out like fire; the rocks are shattered before him.”* The objects of the LORD’s righteous anger are the proud and the wicked (40:11b-12)—all those who exalt themselves in ungodly self-confidence and blasphemous arrogance; all those who willfully and persistently violate the divine standards of holiness and righteousness. When the LORD exerts Himself in His anger, the proud are *“abased”* and brought low, and the wicked are *“trampled down,”* or trampled under foot.

Verse 13 depicts the final destiny God has ordained for the proud and the wicked: They are buried in the dust—they are covered with dust, an expression of humiliation and contempt. Their faces are covered with a shroud in the grave (𐤁𐤏𐤁𐤏.) The Hebrew term (𐤁𐤏𐤁𐤏) has been variously interpreted as “a dungeon,” “the dark recesses of Sheol,” “the infernal crypt,” (Hartley, p. 521, footnote #7.) In light of New Testament revelation, all of these are part of the destiny reserved for the ungodly, compare Matthew 25:41, 46, *“Then he will say to those on his left, ‘Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels.’ ... ⁴⁶Then they will go away to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life.”*

Note: The emphasis of these verses is on the LORD's indignation and burning anger directed against the ungodly and expressing itself in devastating judgments against them—a testimony to the LORD's righteousness and the revelation of His righteousness in acts of judgment.

If Job is able to display the majestic grandeur and accomplish the great acts of judgment depicted in verses 11-13, then the LORD will confess of Job, *"your own right hand is able to deliver you"* (40:14) If Job could undertake and accomplish the great acts of God in defeating the wicked and overthrowing them, he would not need God; he would not need to protest and complain about God's apparent disinterest in the cause of justice, Job could execute justice himself and on his own behalf. But, obviously, such is not the case. Therefore, Job should submit himself to the LORD his God, the majestic King of heaven who is committed to justice and who will execute judgment in His time.

Let us submit ourselves to the Lord our God; recognizing that He is the majestic King who shall overthrow the proud and judge the wicked:

... [the LORD] will judge the peoples with equity ... ¹¹Let the heavens rejoice, let the earth be glad ... ¹³... for he is coming, he is coming to judge the earth. He will judge the world with righteousness and the peoples with his truth" (Psl. 96:10c, 11a, 13)

II. Submit Yourself unto the LORD Your God, Recognizing that He is the Sovereign Lord Over All His Creation

The LORD calls upon Job to look at *"the behemoth;"* i.e., the hippopotamus (40:15-24.) At the very outset the LORD asserts that He has made both behemoth and Job (40:15a.) This great creature, like Job himself, is one of the works of God's hand; there is a connection between Job and behemoth, both are made by God.

The LORD directs Job's attention to the great strength of behemoth (40:15b-18.) The fact that behemoth eats straw compares him to the ox, an animal known for its great strength. A wide variety of terms are used to emphasize the might of this creature: his strength, his power, the muscles of his belly, he stiffens his tail like a cedar, the sinews of his thighs, his bones are like tubes of bronze, his limbs are like rods of iron.

Behemoth is said to *"rank first among the works of God;"* he is pre-eminent among God's creatures, the king of the animal realm (40:19-22.) It is immediately stated, *"his Maker can approach him with his sword as his master]"* (40:19)—God is the sovereign Lord over His creatures.

"The hills bring him food" (40:20.) The double meaning of the Hebrew word (בּוֹלֵ)—"food" and "tribute"—indicates that the hills are pictured as paying

tribute to behemoth, while all the wild animals play nearby before him, secure under behemoth's "kingship" (Hartley, p. 525.) Behemoth lies under the lotus plants and the poplars by the stream surround him (40:21-22)—he lies secure and at ease in his natural pavilion of lush foliage and shady trees.

There is nothing that can threaten behemoth, he is secure in his position as king in the natural realm (vs. 23-24.) He is secure in the face of natural disaster: *"if the river rages, he is not alarmed;"* on the contrary, *"he is secure, even when the Jordan River surges to his mouth"* (40:23.) Behemoth is secure from all predators, even from human hunters: when he is on watch there is no one who can capture him (40:24.)

As previously noted, at the very outset of this passage it is emphasized that just like Job, behemoth, too, is one of God's creatures. However great and powerful he may be, it must be remembered that behemoth derives his strength from God and is subservient to the Lord of creation.

Next the LORD directs Job's attention to *"leviathan;"* i.e., the crocodile (41:1-34.) Whereas the strength of behemoth is emphasized, it is the terror of leviathan that is prominent. By means of rhetorically questions, it is implied that Job cannot master leviathan (41:1-5.) Job cannot catch leviathan, as he would hook a fish from the river (41:1.) Nor can Job pierce leviathan's nose and put a rope through it, as he would muzzle a domesticated work animal or beast of burden (41:2.) Leviathan will not beg Job for mercy, nor make a covenant with Job to be his slave (41:3-4)—leviathan will not acknowledge Job to be his master and commit himself to Job as a domesticated animal or household pet. Indeed, Job cannot play with leviathan as with a bird, or present him to his daughters as a docile pet (41:5.)

Traders do not barter for leviathan as they would for an ox or some other beast of burden, nor can leviathan be divided up among the merchants as fishermen would divide a catch of fish to sell at the market (41:6.) Leviathan cannot be conquered with harpoons or fishing spears, as though he were a great fish or even a whale (41:7.)

Job is warned, *"[If] you lay your hand on him, you will remember the battle and not do it again;"* it is futile and extremely dangerous to contend with leviathan (41:8-11.) The mere sight of leviathan causes one to despair of ever being able to conquer him (41:9.) No man is brave enough, or, so fierce, (i.e.; no one is so savage and animal-like,) as to challenge leviathan to mortal combat (41:10a.) If none dares to challenge leviathan, what man can hope to stand against the LORD—the Creator of leviathan and his sovereign Lord? (41:10b-11.)

The LORD now presents a detailed description of leviathan's anatomy, emphasizing that he is an unconquerable foe (41:12-17.) Leviathan is a powerfully built creature that possesses mighty strength (41:12.) He has an

impenetrable coat of armor: *“Who can strip off his outer armor? Who can penetrate his double coat of mail?”* (41:13.) No one dares to pry open *“the doors of his mouth”* (i.e.; his jaws;) if they did, they would be confronted with leviathan’s sharp sword-like teeth that provoke terror (41:14.) Leviathan’s back is like *“rows of shields ... tightly joined to one another”* (41:15-17)—it is as though there were a whole army of shield-bearing soldiers standing guard over him (Hartley p. 527.)

Not only is this monster secure in his defenses, but when he takes to the offense he is terrifying (41:18-25.) Leviathan is described as a fire-breathing dragon: *“Fire brands stream from his mouth; sparks of fire shoot out. ²⁰Smoke pours from his nostrils”* (41:18-21.) “In these verses the poetic imagery moves beyond a real animal to a mythical dragon” (Hartley, p. 532.) “In terror, [creatures] leap before him” (41:22)—the very sight of leviathan leaves both man and beast terror-stricken and fleeing to escape.

Leviathan is invincible: *“The folds of his flesh are tightly joined; they are firm and immovable. ²⁴His chest is hard as rock, hard as a lower millstone”* (41:23-24.) The description in these verses emphasizes his hardness; he moves all other creatures to terror, but he knows no fear himself, he can be confident in his defense and his strength. It is reiterated that leviathan is a cause of terror to all whom he encounters: *“when he rises up, the mighty are terrified”* (41:25.)

No human weapon can avail against leviathan (41:26-29.) Neither the sword nor the spear, neither the dart nor the javelin, can do him mortal harm (41:26.) Indeed, leviathan is so invincible that he treats iron like straw and bronze like rotten wood (41:27.) The uselessness of human weapons against leviathan is reiterated: the arrow, the slingshot, the club, the javelin—he holds them all in contempt (41:28-29.)

Now we are given a description of leviathan as he slithers through the muddy riverbank and into the water (41:30-32.) Because his underside is like jagged potsherds, he leaves marks in the mud like a threshing sled—an instrument used by the ancients to crush grain (41:30.) When he slips into the water he makes the depths churn like a boiling cauldron (41:31.) As he swims away he leaves behind him a glistening wake; it makes the deep appear to have white hair (41:32.)

The description of leviathan now concludes with the declaration: *“Nothing upon earth is his equal ... he is king over all the proud”* (41:33-34.) Because of his great strength and his ability to inflict terror into the hearts of all other creatures, leviathan is the proudest of the proud. But note that there is none comparable to him *“upon earth;”* the implication is that leviathan, despite all his fearsomeness, is subject to his Maker who is none other than the God of heaven; note Job 41:11b, where the LORD declares, *“Everything under heaven belongs to me.”*

Note that the descriptions of behemoth and leviathan go beyond that of a natural hippopotamus and crocodile; especially the description of leviathan takes on mythical proportions (note, in particular, 41:18-21.) “As earthly beasts (Behemoth and Leviathan) are identified as the hippopotamus and the crocodile respectively ... Nevertheless, into the factual description the author skillfully blends fanciful metaphors drawn from mythic accounts of monsters in order that these beasts may represent both mighty terrestrial creatures and cosmic forces” (Hartley, pp. 521-522.) In this present passage the mythical theology of Israel’s pagan neighbors is employed as a means of vividly declaring Jehovah’s lordship over all of His creation, both the creatures of the realm of nature, (such as the mighty hippopotamus and the fiercely terrifying crocodile,) as well as all the spiritual hosts, including the devil himself. As noted earlier in the book, the devil must gain permission to test Job and limits are imposed on the extent of his testing: *“Jehovah said to Satan, ‘Look, everything that he has is in your power; only do not lay your hand upon the man himself”* (1:12.) In contrast to the pagan theology, (in which Baal is able to defeat the terrible sea monster only after fierce combat; Hartley, p. 530,) Scripture declares that all creatures (both spiritual as well as earthly) have been created by the LORD God and are at all times under His sovereign control.

Let us submit ourselves to the LORD our God; recognizing that He is the sovereign Lord over all His creation and over every creature, both spiritual and earthly.

Conclusion

At the conclusion of the LORD’s great discourse, Job responds in humble submission to the LORD his God. Addressing the LORD, Job acknowledges, *“I know that you can do all things; no plan of yours can be thwarted”* (42:2.) Job admits that the LORD, Jehovah, is the sovereign Lord over all creation—this was also the testimony of Nebuchadnezzar after he in his pride had a humbling encounter with the LORD: *“[The LORD] does as he pleases with the army of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth. No one can push away his hand, or demand of him, ‘What are you doing?’”* (Dan. 4:35b.)

Job admits that he has spoken from a position of ignorance: *“Surely I spoke of things I did not understand, matters that are too wonderful for me to know”* (42:3.) Job now recognizes that from his limited human perspective, and by simply focusing upon himself and his present experience, he has not been in any position to take into account the cosmic scheme of things and the purpose of his present experience of trial. Note: Job has been unaware of what has been transpiring in the courts of heaven as those things have been revealed to us in chapters 1-2.

As a result of this present encounter with God, Job has come to a far deeper appreciation of who Jehovah is and, consequently, he now declares, *“I abhor [my*

words] and recant in dust and ashes" (42:6.) *"To abhor [my words]"* means that Job is now ashamed of what he has said and what attitude he has entertained with regard to the LORD and His justice. Note: The Hebrew נָחַם, often translated "repent," does not necessarily bear the idea of sorrow for some wrong, but means "to retract" a declared action (Hartley, p. 535, footnote #5.)

Just as Job responded with humble submission to the LORD, so may we, especially when we are tempted to presumptuously challenge His dealings with us, humbly submit ourselves to the LORD our God: *"humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, (so that he may exalt you at the appointed time), ⁷by casting all your cares upon him, because he cares for you"* (1 Pet. 5:6-7.)