

JOB

Chapter 40

And the LORD said to Job: 2 “Shall a faultfinder contend with the Almighty? He who argues with God, let him answer it.”

40:1–2 The conclusion of the first divine discourse. Once again, God challenges Job to answer him. (CSB)

38:1–40:2 In the whirlwind, Job comes face-to-face with the reality of his humanity. Although Job accused the Lord of being unfair, God responded with a mild, yet firm counteraccusation. The Lord reminded Job that He not only created the world but also continues to care for it. We, too, question God and wonder whether He is actually in charge of the daily events of our lives. Coming face-to-face with our Creator brings us to our knees. Yet the fearsome face of the Creator also smiles on Job and shows him mercy. • Thank You, Lord, for answering us face-to-face in the person of Your Son. His life, death, and resurrection give us answers to our deepest questions. Your love is awesome. Amen. (TLSB)

Job Promises Silence

3 Then Job answered the LORD and said: 4 “Behold, I am of small account; what shall I answer you? I lay my hand on my mouth. 5 I have spoken once, and I will not answer; twice, but I will proceed no further.”

40:3–5 Job, duly chastened and no longer “like a prince” (31:37), is unwilling to speak another word of complaint. (CSB)

40:4–5 In the face of God’s overwhelming questions, Job remains silent. *I am ... small*. He is humbled by the Lord’s questions, just as he was made small by the afflictions of his life. Job must stop himself from even responding. Earlier (6:24), he had agreed to be silent. Job seems ready to drop his case, but the Lord is not done with him. (TLSB)

40:4 *I am of small account*. The Hebrew for this word can also mean “small” or “insignificant.” (CSB)

40:5 *once ... twice*. Normally, such number patterns are not to be taken literally but are a poetic way of saying “many.” (CSB)

After Job’s humble submission, we might wonder why God does not immediately bless Job and restore his property and wealth. God continues to speak to Job because Job needs to learn that God’s relationship to Job is a gospel relationship, not a law relationship. (PBC)

40:3–5 Like Job, we, too, may become silent before the Lord, but it is often to plan our further defense or to pout in rebellious self-righteousness. How much we miss by trying to justify our own lives! God continues to wait for us and loves us with a never-ending love, which is ours in Christ. With the hymn writer, we can break our silence and sing, • “When darkness veils His lovely face, I rest on His unchanging grace; In ev’ry high and stormy gale My anchor holds within the veil. On Christ, the solid rock, I stand; All other ground is sinking sand.” Amen. (LSB 575:2) (TLSB)

The LORD Challenges Job

6 Then the LORD answered Job out of the whirlwind and said: 7 “Dress for action like a man; I will question you, and you make it known to me. 8 Will you even put me in the wrong? Will you condemn me that you may be in the right? 9 Have you an arm like God, and can you thunder with a voice like his? 10 “Adorn yourself with majesty and dignity; clothe yourself with glory and splendor. 11 Pour out the overflowings of your anger, and look on everyone who is proud and abase him. 12 Look on everyone who is proud and bring him low and tread down the wicked where they stand. 13 Hide them all in the dust together; bind their faces in the world below. 14 Then will I also acknowledge to you that your own right hand can save you. 15 “Behold, Behemoth, which I made as I made you; he eats grass like an ox. 16 Behold, his strength in his loins, and his power in the muscles of his belly. 17 He makes his tail stiff like a cedar; the sinews of his thighs are knit together. 18 His bones are tubes of bronze, his limbs like bars of iron. 19 “He is the first of the works of God; let him who made him bring near his sword! 20 For the mountains yield food for him where all the wild beasts play. 21 Under the lotus plants he lies, in the shelter of the reeds and in the marsh. 22 For his shade the lotus trees cover him; the willows of the brook surround him. 23 Behold, if the river is turbulent he is not frightened; he is confident though Jordan rushes against his mouth. 24 Can one take him by his eyes, or pierce his nose with a snare?

40:6–41:34 Second round of questions. Again illustrates Job’s lack of understanding and thoughtless inquisitiveness. By describing the most incomprehensible land and sea monsters to Job, God demonstrates His power over all things. In fact, the words about Behemoth and Leviathan hint at God’s conflict with and supremacy over Satan—the most dangerous “beast” in creation. (TLSB)

40:6 See 38:1 and note (*storm*. See 40:6. Elihu had imagined the appearance of the divine presence as a display of “golden splendor” and “awesome majesty” (37:22). He also had anticipated the storm or whirlwind (see note on 37:22), from which Job would hear the voice of God. Job had said, “Let the Almighty answer me” (31:35). He now receives the Lord’s answer.). (CSB)

40:7 The format of God’s response is to ply Job with rhetorical questions, to each of which Job must plead ignorance. God says nothing about Job’s suffering, nor does he address Job’s problem about divine justice. Job gets neither a bill of indictment nor a verdict of innocence. But, more important, God does not humiliate or condemn him—which surely would have been the case if the counselors had been right. So by implication Job is vindicated, and later his vindication is directly affirmed (see 42:7–8). The divine discourses, then, succeed in bringing Job to complete faith in God’s goodness without his receiving a direct answer to his questions.). (PBC)

40:8–14 The prologue to the second divine discourse, which ends at 41:34. Unlike the first discourse, God here addresses the issues of his own justice and Job’s futile attempt at self-justification. In chs. 21 and 24, Job had complained about God’s indifference toward the wickedness of evil men. Here the Lord asserts his ability and determination to administer justice—a matter over which Job has no control. Therefore by implication Job is admonished to leave all this, including his own vindication (see v. 14), under the power of God’s strong arm (see v. 9). (CSB)

40:8 *Would you condemn me that may be in the right?* In 19:6, Job had said, “God has wronged me.” (CSB)

When the Lord challenges Job with these questions and statements, he does so to remind him that it is presumptuous on Job’s part to judge the Lord. Job is guilty of assuming the rights and privileges of God, who alone can render perfect judgment. (PBC)

40:10–14 *glory and splendor.* The Lord’s brilliant appearance fills the heavens (Ps 96:6; 104:1; 111:3). If Job would be God, he should also demonstrate divine ability to execute justice on the wicked (vv 11–12). Then he would be able to save himself (v 14). Otherwise, the Lord is graciously present, ruling everything justly, and willing and able to help Job in his times of greatest need.. (TLSB)

40:10 *adorn yourself with majesty and dignity.* The Hebrew underlying this clause describes God in Ps 104:1: “you are clothed with splendor and majesty.” The Lord here challenges Job to take on the appearance of deity—if he can. (CSB)

40:13 *dust.* Of the netherworld, as in Mesopotamian descriptions of it. (CSB)

40:14 *your own right hand can save you.* Wealth cannot buy escape from death—not even one’s “redeemer” can accomplish it (cf. Ex 21:30; Lev 25:47–49). Only God himself can redeem a life from the grave). (PBC)

40:15–24 The first of two poems (ch. 41 constitutes the second) in this discourse, each describing a huge beast and resuming the animal theme of ch. 39. (CSB)

40:15 *behemoth.* The word is Hebrew and means “beast par excellence,” referring to a large land animal (for possible identifications see. Much of the language used to describe him in vv. 16–24 is highly poetic and hyperbolic. (CSB)

From common Hbr word for “animal” or “beast.” Unique plural form used with singular verbs, “the Beast.” Scholars often suggest that the animal being described is a hippopotamus, because at this point in the speech the term depicts a rather docile, gargantuan herbivore. Some see in the description an antediluvian sauropod like dinosaur. Because of the plural form, some scholars understand the term as typological, representing the worst form of bestial behaviors and not a real animal at all. This unusual creature teaches Job how the Lord’s mysterious ways are beyond human understanding. (TLSB)

which I made. He is one of God’s creatures, not a mythical being. (CSB)

40:18 *iron.* See note on 19:24 (Iron did not come into common use in the ancient Near East until the 12th century B.C.). (CSB)

One of the most abundant elements on earth that was known among the earliest civilizations (28:2; Gn 4:22). Mention of iron and bronze gives the sense that Behemoth is “hard as nails.” (TLSB)

The picture is that of metal that has been beaten into shape. Perhaps the colloquial expression “hard as nails” would be appropriate. (PBC)

40:19 *first of the works of God.* The Hebrew underlying this phrase is translated “first of his works” in Pr 8:22 with reference to the creation of wisdom (see Pr 8:12). Here the descriptive phrase stresses the importance of the behemoth as an example of a huge animal under the control of a sovereign God. (CSB)

Hbr expression, “the best,” “the chief.” Does not mean that Behemoth was the first creature that God created. *sword!* Even the Lord arms Himself before approaching. (TLSB)

No single human being could contend with that large animal. (PBC)

40:20 *wild beasts play* – Those smaller creatures apparently felt no need to keep their distance but were secure in the vicinity of that huge animal. (PBC)

40:21–23 *reeds in the marsh ... poplars ... Jordan.* The area described is probably the Huleh region, north of the Sea of Galilee. (CSB)

We can conclude from these verses that the behemoth was an animal that also enjoyed his leisure. (PBC)

40:21 *lotus ... lies.* Not the water-lily lotus, but a treelike thorny plant (*Zizyphus lotus*) that grew in swampy regions of Israel as well as in Africa. Under such large and lush vegetation, many animals would rest. Behemoth takes its place as the monarch of the marshland. (TLSB)

40:22 *lotus trees.* Cf v 21. *willows.* Trees growing near banks of rivers and in watery places where Behemoth would rest secure. (TLSB)

40:23 *Jordan.* The Lord connects the Israelite readers to this text by referring to a Jordanlike stream. Hippos (see note, v 15) at one time lived in eastern Mediterranean rivers (e.g., the Orantes River). Job probably lived farther east. (TLSB)

40:24 The proposal to capture the behemoth forms a transition to the similar proposal concerning the leviathan in 41:1. (CSB)