

BEHEMOTH

in Job 40:15-24 **was** / **is**...

"Look now at the **behemoth**, which I made along with you; he eats grass like an ox. See now, his strength is in his hips, and his power is in his stomach muscles. He moves his tail like a cedar; the sinews of his thighs are tightly knit. His bones are like beams of bronze, his ribs like bars of iron. He is the first of the ways of God; only He who made him can bring near His sword. Surely the mountains yield food for him, and all the beasts of the field play there." (40:15-20)

"He lies under the lotus trees, In a covert of reeds and marsh. The lotus trees cover him with their shade; the willows by the brook surround him. Indeed the river may rage, yet he is not disturbed; he is confident, though the Jordan gushes into his mouth. Can one take it in his eyes or pierce his nose with a snare?" (40:21-24)

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a gigantic

object lesson (40:19)

(Agree? yes, no, partly)

* * *

at home in

wetlands & mountains

(Agree? yes, no, partly)

* * *

best known

for its great tail (40:17)

(Agree? yes, no, partly)

* * *

controversial but

also still important

(Agree? yes, no, partly)

* * *

evidence of

human-dinosaur coexistence

(Agree? yes, no, partly)

* * *

free and

unhindered by men (40:24)

(Agree? yes, no, partly)

* * *

greater than

any war horse (39:19-25)

(Agree? yes, no, partly)

"See now, his strength is in his hips, and his power is in his stomach muscles. He moves his tail like a cedar; the sinews of his thighs are tightly knit." (40:16-17)

Descriptive



Meditation

likely referring to a now-extinct dinosaur

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like and unlike

Leviathan in chapter 41

(Agree? yes, no, partly)

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not a

great man-made object

(Agree? yes, no, partly)

* * *

part of God's

great final rebuke (40:1-41:34)

(Agree? yes, no, partly)

* *

probably not

a hippopotamus (40:17)

(Agree? yes, no, partly)

* * *

real like

Job & the Creator (40:15,19)

(Agree? yes, no, partly)

* * *

representing

God's independence (40:24)

(Agree? yes, no, partly)

* * *

the Creator's

greatest land animal (40:19)

(Agree? yes, no, partly)

* * *

too great

for Job (40:19, 24, 41:7)

(Agree? yes, no, partly)

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used to

humble Job (40:12-24)

(Agree? yes, no, partly)

Directions: after reading through Job chapters 40 and 41, consider and discuss the ways that Behemoth (40:15-24) is described above. **Do you agree with the various points made?** At the end of the study, discuss the most important descriptive phrases and make applications. Many of the points above are about behemoth's identity, but it is important to think about why behemoth and Leviathan are so prominent near the end of Job. If the main purpose was to humble God's servant, Job, then obviously the main applications for us today as well should be related to pride and humility. — © 2022 by Jon F. Mahar, Hakusan City, Japan and Alexander, Maine, U.S.A.

What was the Creator teaching Job?

The identity of Behemoth is controversial, but God's purpose in describing it to Job is not. As with Leviathan in the next chapter, God was speaking to his servant about human weakness compared to the greatest of certain special animals and himself. Behemoth was so great that it was free and unhindered since it could not be controlled by any human being (40:19-24). Therefore whatever behemoth was, it was a gigantic object lesson.

What are the applications for us?

Lest we miss the point of the Behemoth passage by only focusing on its identity, we have begun with God's purpose. Simply stated, the basic point in Job chapters 40 and 41 is that we should not question the Lord for he is not required to answer us since we are weak, ignorant, and secondary. He does, in fact, often graciously answer us as he did Job in the end, but we must not demand that he do so.

Moreover, in light of God's greatness, we should not focus on human accomplishments, either personal or collective (Daniel 4:30). Rather, we should think about the greatness of the Creator and what he has made.

What was Behemoth?

This is a controversial topic and should not be the starting point. Yet, it is still important because the great animal's emotional impact on Job and us is linked to its identity. Whatever it was, it was gigantic and the greatest of all creatures (40:19) that Job knew. Since Job lived thousands of years ago, however, long before Moses in the time of Abraham, it is probable that Behemoth was alive then but now extinct. Therefore linking it to the largest animals alive today, such as the elephant or the hippopotamus is probably incorrect.

All the animals and birds in Job chapter 39 were local creatures that Job in ancient Arabia knew well. Behemoth, however, dwelt in a land with more water (40:22-23) than where ostrich and donkeys dwell. This probably was somewhere in the interior of Africa beyond the Red Sea.

Was Behemoth a dinosaur?

Many believe that Behemoth was the greatest of all dinosaurs since such would have had a much greater emotional impact on Job than a relatively small hippopotamus or elephant. Moreover, it could not have been a hippopotamus because its tail was like a great cedar tree (40:17). In addition, the hippopotamus is not at home in the mountains (40:20). As for the argument that the mouth of plant-eating dinosaurs not being large enough (40:23), such huge herbivores had small heads compared to their overall size, but their heads and mouths were not small.

How is Behemoth in Job chapter 40 evidence for God?

Whatever Behemoth was, it points to the Creator rather than to the godless theory of evolution. Therefore it makes no sense to begin with a belief in evolution over millions of years and assert that the greatest land animals that God made therefore could not have coexisted with Job. Apparently it did, and what an impact it must have had on him! It should humble us as well.