

Dr. John Walton, Job, Session 22
God Speech, Part 2, Behemoth and Leviathan
(Job 40:6-41:34)

Resources from NotebookLM

1) Abstract, 2) Audio podcast, 3) Study Guide, 4) Briefing Document, and 5) FAQs

1. Abstract of Walton, Job, Session 22, God Speech, Part 2, Behemoth and Leviathan (Job 40:6-41:34), Biblicalelearning.org, BeL

This lecture by John Walton examines Yahweh's second speech in the Book of Job (chapters 40-41), focusing on the enigmatic creatures Behemoth and Leviathan. Walton argues these creatures are not literal animals but represent "chaos creatures," symbolic figures from ancient Near Eastern literature. He suggests their purpose is not to illustrate cosmic justice but to teach humans the limits of their understanding and the futility of trying to control or understand God. By comparing Job's challenges to God with his inability to control Behemoth and Leviathan, the lecture highlights the need for human trust and submission to God's unknowable power. Job's final response demonstrates his acceptance of this lesson.

2. 17 - minute Audio Podcast Created on the basis of Dr. Walton's, Job, Session 22 – Double click icon to play in Windows media player or go to the Biblicalelearning.org [BeL] Site and click the audio podcast link there (Old Testament → Psalms & Wisdom → Job → Walton).



**Walton_Job_Session
n22.mp3**

3. Briefing Document

Okay, here is a detailed briefing document summarizing the key themes and ideas from the provided excerpts of John Walton's Session 22 on the Book of Job:

Briefing Document: John Walton on Job 40:6-41:34 - God's Second Speech, Behemoth and Leviathan

I. Introduction & Context

- **Focus:** This session focuses on God's second speech to Job (Job 40:6-41:34), specifically examining the figures of Behemoth and Leviathan and Job's subsequent response.
- **Significance:** Walton emphasizes that this section, often considered confusing, is actually crucial to understanding the core message of the book of Job. It shifts the focus from human ignorance to how humans should think about God.
- **Yahweh's Voice:** It's important to note that Yahweh (God's personal name) is speaking, not just Elohim, Shaddai, or Adonai. This gives the speech an Israelite feel, with Yahweh clarifying Job's understanding after Job's speeches about El Shaddai.
- **Shift in Dialogue:** God's approach shifts from answering Job's questions to questioning Job. Job, having exhausted his questions, is now challenged by God.
- **Job's Misunderstanding:** Job has called into question God's justice; God himself states this in verse 8, "Would you discredit my justice? Would you condemn me to justify yourself?" Job has not given God a proper sense of respect.

II. God's Challenge to Job

- **Rhetorical Questions:** God challenges Job with a series of rhetorical questions (40:9-14), asking if Job has the power, glory, and ability to justly govern the world. God basically asks Job to "try being God for a day".
- "Do you have an arm like God's, can your voice thunder like his?" (40:9)
- "Look at all those who are proud and humble them, crush the wicked where they stand." (40:12)
- **Purpose:** The aim is to demonstrate that Job's understanding of divine justice is flawed, as it's based on Job's righteousness. God challenges Job to impose justice on the world.

III. Behemoth and Leviathan: Identity and Nature

- **Not Literal Creatures:** Behemoth and Leviathan are *not* literal, known animals, or extinct species. Their features don't match any known biological creatures (e.g., Leviathan breathing fire).
- **Chaos Creatures:** They are identified as *chaos creatures*, a familiar category in the ancient Near East. These creatures exist on the periphery of the ordered world.
- They are liminal, “one foot in and one foot out.”
- Abstract characteristics are shared by known animals (like hippos and crocodiles), which can be considered the “spawn” of Behemoth and Leviathan.
- They can be composite creatures, like griffins.
- **Created by God:** They are part of God's creation, not inherently evil, and serve as “anti-cosmos” creatures. They represent the potential for non-order, like thorns and thistles in a partially ordered world.
- **Mindless and Potent:** They operate by instinct, not morality, and can cause harm, like a tornado. They are not enemies of God, but can wreak havoc among humans.
- **Behemoth:** An abstraction of the most potent land animal. The plural of the word “cattle”.
- **Leviathan:** An abstraction of the most potent sea creature.

IV. Literary Role, Not Identity

- **Focus on Literary Function:** The precise identity of Behemoth and Leviathan is *less* important than their *literary role* in the book. The ancient audience would recognize them, but the author is using them as characters with a specific purpose.
- **Previous References:** Chaos creatures were mentioned earlier in Job: Job's lament (3:8), Job feeling treated like a chaos creature (7:12), Job suggesting God acts like a chaos creature (30:15-23)

V. Behemoth and Job Compared

- **Direct Comparison:** God directs Job's attention to Behemoth (40:15), stating, “Look at Behemoth, which I made along with you.” God has created both.

- **Shared Characteristics:** The passage highlights several similarities between Job and Behemoth. Both are:
 - Content and well-fed.
 - Strong.
 - Rank first among their kind.
 - Cared for.
 - Sheltered.
 - Not alarmed by raging rivers (and neither should Job).
 - Secure and invulnerable (Job should be).
- **Job's Perspective Shift:** Job had complained that God treated him as a chaos creature. Now God says, "you should be a little more like a chaos creature" in this regard - not being intimidated by chaos.

VI. Yahweh and Leviathan Compared (Through Contrast)

- **Job's Inability:** The initial verses of the Leviathan section use the second-person, focusing on what *Job* cannot do to Leviathan (e.g., tame, domesticate, capture). "Can you do this? Can you do that?"
- **Implied Comparison:** The shift to the second-person suggests that Leviathan is being compared to *Yahweh*, but by way of contrast.
- **Yahweh's Superiority:** God isn't *like* Leviathan, but so much *greater* than Leviathan. If Job can't control Leviathan, he certainly cannot control God.
- **Things Leviathan and Yahweh Share:** Cannot be controlled or domesticated.
 - Will not submit or beg for mercy.
 - Cannot be wounded or subdued.
 - Dangerous when riled.
 - Invulnerable.
 - King over the proud.
- **Job's Mistake:** Job has been trying to harness and bridle Yahweh, which is impossible. He can't control, tame or domesticate God just as he can't do the same with Leviathan.

VII. Key Theological Takeaways

- **Not Cosmic Evil:** Behemoth and Leviathan are *not* portrayed as embodiments of cosmic evil or threats to God's power.
- **Not about Justice:** The book isn't primarily about God's ability to bring cosmic justice or subdue threats to order. The book does not assert that God brings justice either to the cosmos as a whole or to human experience.
- **Lessons for Humans:** Respond to chaos with security and trust (like Behemoth).
- Do not try to domesticate or challenge Yahweh, like you can't do it to Leviathan.
- **Job's Second Response:** Job's response in Job 42:2-6 shows he understands these lessons.
- Acknowledges God can do all things and cannot be thwarted.
- Admits he obscured God's plans, which he had thought were based on the retribution principle, without knowledge.
- Recants and submits.
- Admits his statements were "too wonderful" for him, referencing information in the divine realm that is beyond human understanding.

VIII. Job's Repentance

- **Regret:** Job doesn't suggest behavior change, but regrets his previous statements and characterizations of God.
- **Retraction:** He wishes to retract his previous statements and expressions. He's putting his previous statements "out of mind". This is a "reconsideration" of his position.
- **End of Mourning:** He accepts his reality and puts an end to his mourning.

IX. Importance of these Creatures

- **Not about Literal Creatures:** The importance of Behemoth and Leviathan is not about literal creatures, dinosaurs, mythology, or chaos creatures in themselves.
- **Message to Readers:** The importance lies in the message that is revealed through how they are portrayed in this book.

In Summary:

This section of Job isn't about a literal battle against mythical monsters but rather a profound lesson about the nature of God, His relationship to the created order (including chaos), and humanity's limited perspective. Job learns that he cannot control or understand God, and that his prior beliefs about divine justice were incomplete and flawed. This section teaches humility and trust in the face of the incomprehensible, rather than a reliance on a system of retribution.

4. Job Study Guide: Session 22, God Speech, Part 2, Behemoth and Leviathan (Job 40:6-41:34)

Book of Job: Session 22 Study Guide

Quiz

Instructions: Answer each question in 2-3 sentences.

1. What is significant about Yahweh speaking directly to Job in this section, compared to previous interactions with other divine names?
2. According to Yahweh, what specific error did Job commit regarding God's justice?
3. How does the lecture describe the identity of Behemoth and Leviathan, and why is their specific identity less important than their literary role?
4. What does the lecture propose about the nature and function of "chaos creatures" in the ancient Near East, and how do Behemoth and Leviathan fit into that category?
5. What comparison does God draw between Behemoth and Job, highlighting their similarities?
6. In the section about Leviathan, how does the speaker indicate a shift in comparison from Job to God?
7. According to the lecture, what is a common misunderstanding regarding what the text says about God's relationship to Leviathan?
8. What does God's description of Leviathan reveal about His own nature and power?
9. In Job's response, what does the lecture identify as the key points of his understanding and his change of heart?
10. According to the lecture, what is significant about Job's use of the word "repent" in his final speech?

Quiz Answer Key

1. The use of "Yahweh" is significant because it's the personal name of God, used in the prologue and here at the end, which adds an Israelite feel. Job had spoken of El Shaddai, but Yahweh is speaking to clarify, which also emphasizes the personal relationship aspect of God speaking directly to Job.

2. Job discredited God's justice by questioning it and demanding justification for his suffering, thereby challenging God's reputation and not responding well to his situation. Job's righteousness was used as a basis for questioning God's justice.
3. Behemoth and Leviathan are described as "chaos creatures," not natural or extinct species, based on their physical descriptions. Their specific identity is less important than their literary role as powerful, untamable figures who reveal important theological points.
4. Chaos creatures are liminal beings from the periphery of the ordered world, recognizable in the ancient Near East. They are not evil, but operate by instinct and represent non-order within the ordered world, and may be represented by composite or abstract characteristics.
5. God points out that both Behemoth and Job are creations of God, well-fed, strong, and cared for. Job should take comfort in the security of Behemoth because he, like Behemoth, has been content, secure, and invulnerable.
6. The shift to second person when describing Leviathan, "Can *you* do this, can *you* do that?" demonstrates how Leviathan is to be compared to Yahweh, not Job. God's power and untamable nature is highlighted in the description of Leviathan, and the questions point to a comparison between God and the chaos creature.
7. The common misunderstanding is that God is defeating or controlling Leviathan, but the text doesn't present it this way. The text uses Leviathan as a comparison to God's nature; that neither can be controlled and are invulnerable.
8. God's description of Leviathan reveals his own uncontrollable nature, untamable power, and invulnerability. If Job cannot subdue Leviathan, he cannot expect to subdue God.
9. Job understands that God's plans are beyond human understanding and that he cannot domesticate God for his own purposes. Job acknowledges that he spoke without knowledge, accepts that he has seen God, and humbly submits.
10. Job's use of "repent" is a retraction of his previous statements rather than a change in behavior. This mirrors God's language in other texts when He changes his mind, and Job repents in the sense that he dismisses his previous arrogance and understanding.

Essay Questions

1. Analyze the literary function of Behemoth and Leviathan within the Book of Job. How do they serve to challenge Job's understanding of God and justice?
2. Discuss how the concept of "chaos creatures" in the ancient Near East context is used to interpret Behemoth and Leviathan. How does this understanding impact the message of the Book of Job?
3. Compare and contrast the way God is presented through the descriptions of Behemoth and Leviathan. How does this portrayal of God differ from Job's expectations?
4. Explore the significance of Job's final response in chapter 42 in light of God's speeches regarding Behemoth and Leviathan. How does Job's understanding of himself and God change?
5. Argue for or against the assertion that the primary message of the Book of Job, as understood through the second speech of God, is not centered on justice. How do Behemoth and Leviathan support this interpretation?

Glossary of Key Terms

Yahweh: The personal, covenantal name of God in the Hebrew Bible, often associated with God's intimate relationship with his people, which emphasizes the relationship aspect of God speaking to Job directly here.

El Shaddai: One of the names of God used in the Hebrew Bible, often translated as "God Almighty" or "God of the Mountains." It has a more remote connotation than Yahweh.

Behemoth: A chaos creature, portrayed as the most potent land animal imaginable, an abstraction representing the power of land creatures and used to compare with Job.

Leviathan: A chaos creature, portrayed as the most potent sea creature imaginable, and is used to compare with and portray the power of God.

Chaos Creatures: Liminal beings existing on the periphery of the ordered world in ancient Near Eastern cosmology, embodying non-order and operating by instinct rather than morality.

Retribution Principle: The belief that good actions are always rewarded and bad actions are always punished by God, a concept Job and his friends believed to be the basis of God's justice.

Liminal Creatures: Beings that exist on the boundary or threshold between two realms or states, in this context between order and chaos, and can be abstractly represented by other creatures.

Niphal: A grammatical form of a Hebrew verb that indicates a passive or reflexive action, specifically related to Job's "repent" where he retracts statements, not changes behavior.

Pele: A Hebrew word that refers to information that is in the divine realm that is beyond human understanding.

5. FAQs on Walton, Job, Session 22, God Speech, Part 2, Behemoth and Leviathan (Job 40:6-41:34), Biblicalelearning.org (BeL)

Frequently Asked Questions about Job's Encounter with Behemoth and Leviathan

1. **Why does God shift from answering Job's questions to questioning Job in his second speech?** God's shift is not about providing answers to Job's specific complaints. Instead, God's questions aim to challenge Job's presumption that he understands God's justice and how the world operates. Job, having exhausted his questions and demands, is now being challenged by God to consider his own limitations and the vastness of God's power and understanding.
2. **What is the significance of the creatures Behemoth and Leviathan in God's speech to Job?** Behemoth and Leviathan are not literal animals but rather serve as literary characters representing chaos creatures, beings on the edge of order and non-order. They are not symbols of evil but demonstrate God's power and that they are not able to be tamed or controlled by humans. Behemoth is used to compare to Job and suggests that Job should also be secure and trusting. Leviathan is used to compare with God, highlighting his untameable and uncontrollable nature. These creatures are not objects of God's victory but serve as a lesson for Job about the limitations of human power and understanding.
3. **How should we understand the identity of Behemoth and Leviathan?** Behemoth and Leviathan are not intended to be identified with specific known animals. Rather, they belong to a category of "chaos creatures," which were well-known in the ancient Near East. These creatures, often composite in nature, are not strictly zoological but represent the untamed and powerful forces within God's creation that exist on the periphery of order. It is not essential to assign biological identities to these creatures, as their function is to serve as literary characters within the narrative.
4. **How are Behemoth and Leviathan used to contrast Job and Yahweh, respectively?** Behemoth is compared to Job, highlighting that both are created by God and should possess certain attributes like security and invulnerability. God is not acting like a chaos creature toward Job, but rather encourages Job to embrace a kind of security like Behemoth. Leviathan is used to compare with God to show how much greater and uncontrollable God is. Just as no one can control Leviathan, no one, including Job, can control or domesticate Yahweh. God is far

superior to Leviathan, and so Job should not think he can challenge or control him.

5. **What is the primary message of God's speech about these chaos creatures?** The core message is not about cosmic justice or God's victory over chaos, but rather about human limitations and God's transcendence. These creatures are used as examples to demonstrate that if Job cannot handle these chaotic but created creatures, how can he presume to understand or challenge the creator. The speech does not claim that God brings justice to the cosmos, as Job and his friends assumed through the retribution principle.
6. **How does Job's response to God's speech indicate that he has understood the point?** Job's response in chapter 42 demonstrates a significant shift in his understanding. He recognizes that God's plans are beyond human comprehension and admits his presumption in challenging God's justice. He acknowledges his ignorance and regrets his previous statements and his attempt to domesticate God through demanding answers. He submits to God's greater understanding, realizing he cannot tame or control him.
7. **What does Job mean when he says he "repents in dust and ashes?"** The Hebrew word for "repent" here is not about changing behavior but retracting previous statements. It reflects regret over his presumptuousness in thinking he could understand or challenge God. He is reconsidering and putting out of his mind his dust and ashes—his previous situation. He is accepting his reality and ending his mourning.
8. **Why are Behemoth and Leviathan such important figures in understanding the Book of Job?** These creatures are not just figures from mythology or symbols of cosmic evil but are literary characters that serve a crucial purpose in the book's message. They demonstrate the limits of human knowledge, the untamed power of God, and the futility of trying to control or understand God's ways through human metrics of justice. They are also examples of how human beings should respond to God by being more trusting in and less demanding of God. They are used to highlight the greater truths about God and humans within the story of Job.