

IV. THE SPEECHES OF YAHWEH

FIRST SPEECH

Job must bow to the creator's wisdom

- 1 **38** Then from the heart of the tempest Yahweh gave Job his answer
He said:
- 2 Who is this obscuring my designs
 with his empty-headed words?
- 3 Brace yourself like a fighter;
 now it is my turn to ask questions and yours to inform me.
- 4 Where were you when I laid the earth's foundations?
 Tell me, since you are so well informed!
- 5 Who decided the dimensions of it, do you know?
 Or who stretched the measuring line across it?
- 6 What supports its pillars at their bases?
 Who laid its cornerstone
- 7 when all the stars of the morning were singing with joy,
 and the Sons of God in chorus were chanting praise?
- 8 Who pent up the sea behind closed doors
 when it leaped tumultuous out of the womb,
- 9 when I wrapped it in a robe of mist
 and made black clouds its swaddling bands;
- 10 when I marked the bounds it was not to cross
 and made it fast with a bolted gate?
- 11 Come thus far, I said, and no farther:
 here your proud waves shall break.
- 12 Have you ever in your life given orders to the morning
 or sent the dawn to its post,
- 13 telling it to grasp the earth by its edges

- 14 and shake the wicked out of it,
 when it changes the earth^a to sealing clay
 and dyes it as a man dyes clothes;
 15 stealing the light from wicked men^b
 and breaking the arm raised to strike?
 16 Have you journeyed all the way to the sources of the sea,
 or walked where the Abyss is deepest?
 17 Have you been shown the gates of Death
 or met the janitors of Shadowland?
 18 Have you an inkling of the extent of the earth?
 Tell me all about it if you have!
 19 Which is the way to the home of the light,
 and where does darkness live?
 20 You could then show them the way to their proper places,
 or put them on the path to where they live!
 21 If you know all this, you must have been born with them,
 you must be very old by now!
 22 Have you ever visited the place where the snow is kept,
 or seen where the hail is stored up,
 23 which I keep for times of stress,
 for days of battle and war?
 24 From which direction does the lightning fork
 when it scatters sparks over the earth?
 25 Who carves a channel for the downpour,
 and hacks a way for the rolling thunder,
 26 so that rain may fall on lands where no one lives,
 and the deserts void of human dwelling,
 27 giving drink to the lonely wastes
 and making grass spring where everything was dry?
 28 Has the rain a father?
 Who begets the dewdrops?
 29 What womb brings forth the ice,
 and gives birth to the frost of heaven,
 30 when the waters grow hard as stone
 and the surface of the deep congeals?
 31 Can you fasten the harness of the Pleiades,
 or untie Orion's bands?
 32 Can you guide the morning star season by season
 and show the Bear and its cubs which way to go?
 33 Have you grasped the celestial laws?
 Could you make their writ run on the earth?
 34 Can your voice carry as far as the clouds
 and make the pent-up waters do your bidding?
 35 Will lightning flashes come at your command
 and answer, "Here we are?"
 36 Who gave the ibis wisdom
 and endowed the cock with foreknowledge?^c
 37 Whose skill details every cloud
 and tilts the flasks of heaven
 38 until the soil cakes into a solid mass
 and clods of earth cohere together?

38 a. The "clay" is red in color. **b.** The light, or natural element, of the wicked, is the darkness of night. **c.** Both birds credited with foresight; the ibis heralds the flooding of the Nile, the cock announces the dawn.

- 39 Do you find a prey for the lioness
and satisfy the hunger of her whelps
40 when they crouch in their dens
and lurk in their lairs?
41 Who makes provision for the raven
when his squabs cry out to God
and crane their necks in hunger?
1 39 Do you know how mountain goats give birth,
or have you ever watched the hinds in labor?
2 How many months do they carry their young?
At what time do they give birth?
3 They crouch to drop their young,
and let their burdens fall in the open desert;
4 and when the calves have grown and gathered strength
they leave them, never to return.
- 5 Who gave the wild donkey his freedom,
and untied the rope from his proud neck?
6 I have given him the desert as a home,
the salt plains as his own habitat.
7 He scorns the turmoil of the town:
there are no shouts from a driver for him to listen for.
8 The mountains are the pastures that he ranges
in quest of any type of green blade or leaf.
- 9 Is the wild ox willing to serve you
or spend a night beside your manger?
10 If you tie a rope around his neck
will he harrow the furrows for you?
11 Can you rely on his massive strength
and leave him to do your heavy work?
12 Can you depend on him to come home
carrying your grain to your threshing floor?
- 13 Can the wing of the ostrich be compared
with the plumage of the stork or falcon?
14 She leaves her eggs on the ground
with only earth to warm them;
15 forgetting that a foot may tread on them
or a wild beast may crush them.
16 Cruel to her chicks as if they were not hers,
little she cares if her labor goes for nothing.
17 God, you see, has made her unwise,
and given her no share of common sense.
18 Yet, if she bestirs herself to use her height,
she can make fools of horse and rider too.
- 19 Are you the one who makes the horse so brave
and covers his neck with flowing hair?
20 Do you make him leap like a grasshopper?
His proud neighing spreads terror far and wide.
21 Exultantly he paws the soil of the valley,
and prances eagerly to meet the clash of arms.
22 He laughs at fear; he is afraid of nothing,
he recoils before no sword.
23 On his back the quiver rattles,
the flashing spear and javelin.

24 Quivering with impatience, he eats up the miles;
 when the trumpet sounds, there is no holding him.
 25 At each trumpet blast he shouts "Hurrah!"
 He scents the battle from afar,
 hearing the thundering of chiefs, the shouting.

26 Does the hawk take flight on your advice
 when he spreads his wings to travel south?
 27 Does the eagle soar at your command
 to make her eyrie in the heights?
 28 She spends her nights among the crags
 with an unclimbed peak as her redoubt
 29 from which she watches for prey,
 fixing it with her far-ranging eye.
 30 She feeds her young on blood:
 wherever men fall dying, there she is.

1
31 **40** Then Yahweh turned to Job, and he said:

2
32 Is Shaddai's opponent willing to give in?
 Has God's critic thought up an answer?

3
33 Job replied to Yahweh:

4
34 My words have been frivolous: what can I reply?
 I had better lay my finger on my lips.
 5
35 I have spoken once . . . I will not speak again;
 more than once . . . I will add nothing.

SECOND SPEECH

God is master of the forces of evil

6 Yahweh gave Job his answer from the heart of the tempest. He said:

7
8 Brace yourself like a fighter,
 now it is my turn to ask questions and yours to inform me.
 9
10 Do you really want to reverse my judgment,
 and put me in the wrong to put yourself in the right?
 11
12 Has your arm the strength of God's,
 can your voice thunder as loud?
 13
14 If so, assume your dignity, your state,
 robe yourself in majesty and splendor.
 15
16 Let the spate of your anger flow free;
 humiliate the haughty at a glance!
 17
18 Cast one look at the proud and bring them low,
 strike down the wicked where they stand.
 19
20 Bury the lot of them in the ground,
 shut them, silent-faced, in the dungeon.
 21
22 I myself will be the first to acknowledge
 that your own right hand can assure your triumph.

Behemoth

23
24 Now think of Behemoth;
 he eats greenstuff like the ox.
 25
26 But what strength he has in his loins,
 what power in his stomach muscles!
 27
28 His tail is as stiff as a cedar,
 the sinews of his thighs are tightly knit.

18 His vertebrae are bronze tubing,
 13 his bones as hard as hammered iron.
 19 He is the masterpiece of all God's work,
 14 but his Maker threatened him with the sword,
 20 forbidding him the mountain regions
 15 where all the wild beasts have their playground.
 21 So he lies beneath the lotus,
 16 and hides among the reeds in the swamps.
 22 The leaves of the lotus give him shade,
 17 the willows by the stream shelter him.
 23 Should the river overflow on him, why should he worry?
 18 A Jordan could pour down his throat without his caring.
 24 So who is going to catch him by the eyes
 19 or drive a peg through his nostrils?

Leviathan

25 Leviathan, too! Can you catch him with a fishhook
 20 or run a line around his tongue?
 26 Can you put a ring through his nose
 21 or pierce his jaw with a hook?
 27 Will he plead and plead with you,
 22 will he coax you with smooth words?
 28 Will he strike a bargain with you
 23 to become your slave for life?
 29 Will you make a pet of him, like a bird,
 24 keep him on a lead to amuse your maids?
 30 Is he to be sold by the fishing guild
 25 and then retailed by merchants?
 31 Riddle his hide with darts?
 26 Prod his head with a harpoon?
 32 You have only to lay a finger on him
 27 never to forget the struggle or risk it again!
 28 **41** Any hopes you might have would prove vain,
 1 for the mere sight of him would stagger you.
 2 When roused, he grows ferocious,
 1 no one can face him in a fight.
 3 Who can attack him with impunity?
 2 No one beneath all heaven.
 4 Next I will talk of his limbs
 3 and describe his matchless strength.
 5 Who can unloose the front of his coat
 4 or pierce the double armor of his breastplate?
 6 Who dare open the gates of his mouth?
 5 Terror dwells in those rows of teeth!
 7 His back is like rows of shields,
 6 sealed with a seal of stone,
 8 touching each other so close
 7 that not a breath could pass between;
 9 sticking to one another
 8 to make an indivisible whole.
 10 When he sneezes, light leaps forth,
 9 his eyes are like the eyelids of the dawn.
 11 From his mouth come fiery torches,
 10 sparks of fire fly out of it.
 12 His nostrils belch smoke
 11 like a caldron boiling on the fire.

¹³₁₂ His breath could kindle coals,
 so hot a flame issues from his mouth.
¹⁴₁₃ Strength has made a home in his neck,
 fear leaps before him as he goes.
¹⁷₁₆ When he stands up, the waves themselves take fright,
 the billows of the sea retreat.
¹⁵₁₄ The folds of his flesh stick together,
 firmly set in it, immovable.
¹⁶₁₅ His heart is as hard as rock,
 unyielding as a millstone.
¹⁸₁₇ Sword may strike him, but cannot pierce him;
 no more can spear, javelin or lance.
¹⁹₁₈ Iron means no more to him than straw,
 nor bronze than rotten wood.
²⁰₁₉ The arrow does not make him run,
 sling stones he treats as wisps of hay.
²¹₂₀ A club strikes him like a reed,
 he laughs at the whirring javelin.
²²₂₁ He has sharp potsherds underneath,
 and moves across the slime like a harrow.
²³₂₂ He churns the depths into a seething caldron,
 he makes the sea fume like a scent burner.
²⁴₂₃ Behind him he leaves a glittering wake—
 a white fleece seems to float on the deeps.
²⁵₂₄ He has no equal on earth,
 being created without fear.
²⁶₂₅ He looks the haughtiest in the eye;
 of all the sons of pride he is the king.

Job's final answer

¹ **42** This was the answer Job gave to Yahweh:
² I know that you are all-powerful:
 what you conceive, you can perform.
³ I am the man who obscured your designs
 with my empty-headed words.
 I have been holding forth on matters I cannot understand,
 on marvels beyond me and my knowledge.
⁴ (Listen, I have more to say,
 now it is my turn to ask questions and yours to inform me.)
⁵ I knew you then only by hearsay;
 but now, having seen you with my own eyes,
⁶ I retract all I have said,
 and in dust and ashes I repent.

V. EPILOGUE

Yahweh rebukes the three Sages

⁷ When Yahweh had said all this to Job, he turned to Eliphaz of Teman.
 "I burn with anger against you and your two friends," he said, "for not speaking
⁸ truthfully about me as my servant Job has done. 'So now find seven bullocks
 and seven rams, and take them back with you to my servant Job and offer a
 holocaust for yourselves, while Job, my servant, offers prayers for you. I will
 listen to him with favor and excuse your folly in not speaking of me properly
⁹ as my servant Job has done.'" ·Eliphaz of Teman, Bildad of Shuah and Zophar

of Naamath went away to do as Yahweh had ordered, and Yahweh listened to Job with favor.

Yahweh restores Job's fortunes

- ¹⁰ Yahweh restored Job's fortunes, because he had prayed for his friends.
¹¹ More than that, Yahweh gave him double what he had before. •And all his brothers and all his sisters and all his friends of former times came to see him and sat down at table with him. They showed him every sympathy, and comforted him for all the evils Yahweh had inflicted on him. Each of them gave
¹² him a silver coin, and each a gold ring. •Yahweh blessed Job's new fortune even more than his first one. He came to own fourteen thousand sheep, six
¹³ thousand camels, a thousand yoke of oxen and a thousand she-donkeys. •He had
¹⁴ seven sons and three daughters; •his first daughter he called "Turtledove," the
¹⁵ second "Cassia" and the third "Mascara." •Throughout the land there were no women as beautiful as the daughters of Job. And their father gave them inheritance rights like their brothers.
¹⁶ After his trials, Job lived on until he was a hundred and forty years old, and
¹⁷ saw his children and his children's children up to the fourth generation. •Then Job died, an old man and full of days.