

JOB

Chapter-By-Chapter Through The Greatest Poem in Literature

Session 33 | Job 39:13-40:24

Job 38:1-40:5 | The Lord Speaks to Job, Job Responds

- Job 38:1-39:12 – See session 32
- Job 39:13-18 - God's Wisdom Shown in the Peacocks and Ostrich
 - Translations vary wildly on verse 13. The UBS handbook on translation says, "In the Hebrew text of verse 13a, there is nothing that is fully certain." And the handbook later says of that the second line "is even more uncertain than the first line."¹
 - Why does the King James speak of **peacocks**? Because the Hebrew word רַנְנִים [ranaim] has a meaning of "shrill cry." Not knowing what the word refers to, KJV chose Peacock, which has a shrill cry and **goodly wings**. Others have chosen ostrich as the first bird, and were then forced to choose something else for the second bird, yet the subject in verses 14-18 appears to be an ostrich, so KJV has gone with ostrich on the second part of the verse. In truth, the verse is about some kind of big bird.
 - Verses 14-17 speak of the "negative" characteristics of the ostrich, but then verse 18 speaks about how she **scorneth the horse and his rider**, an allusion to the fact that an ostrich can outrun a racehorse.
- Job 39:19-25 - God's Wisdom Shown in the Horse
 - The strength and confidence of a war horse is displayed in poetic beauty as evidence of God's wisdom.
- Job 39:26-30 God's Wisdom Shown in the Hawk and the Eagle
 - The ability God has given the hawk and the eagle to sustain themselves is shown. Verse 30 speaks of the eagle gathering **where the slain are**, a reference to the battleground (compare Luke 17:37).
- Job 40:1-5 - The Lord gives Job time to respond.
 - In verse 2, note that the word **him** is inserted by translators. Perhaps the Young's is closer: *Is the striver with the Mighty instructed?*
 - Job had contended with God in a judicial sense. The English word **reproveth** is "to display the evidence," as in Job 32:12 where it is translated **convined** and Job 9:33 where it is translated **daysman** (an arbitrator or mediator).
 - Job answers by saying, **I am vile; what shall I answer thee?** The Hebrew word translated **vile** is a word for "of little account" rather than carrying any sense of moral wrongdoing. Recognizing his "smallness" before God, Job uses a Hebraism, saying, **Once have I spoken...Yea, twice**, meaning "repeatedly in the past."
 - In the end, Job recognizes the wisdom of God and the shrouded nature of human thinking.

¹ William David Reayburn, A Handbook on the Book of Job, UBS Handbook Series (New York: United Bible Societies, 1992), 726.

Job 40:6-42:6 | The Lord Speaks the Second Time, Job Responds

- Job 40:6-13 - God's Divine Power Seen Generally
 - Verses 6-7 are almost a repeat of the introduction to the Lord's first speech (Job 38:1-3).
 - In verses 8-13, the Lord speaks in a general sense of His power, and challenges Job to make a self-comparison, if he dare.
- Job 40:14 - God's Response to the Challenge to Job
 - If Job can meet the challenge God gives in verses 6-13, then God says **I will also confess unto thee** that Job can save himself.
 - This is a promise that God can make because He will never have to fulfill it.
- Job 40:15-24 - God's Divine Power Seen Specifically - part 1, the Behemoth
 - The strength and might of the **behemoth** is shown as a display of God's power - for God is **He that made him** (v. 19). The identity of **behemoth** is unknown, thus most translators have coined an English word from the Hebrew (one of only a handful of English words with Hebrew origin). Some identify the animal as a hippopotamus, but the description doesn't fully fit (for a hippo does not have a **tail like a cedar** as in verse 17).
 - The animal's characteristics:
 - A grass eater (v. 15)
 - A strong torso (v. 16)
 - A powerful tail and legs (v. 17)
 - Large/powerful bone structure (v. 18)
 - The **chief** (i.e.: *beginning*) **of the ways of God** (v. 19) NOTE: Genesis 1:24 uses the singular *behemah*.
 - An animal that often was at rest (vv. 20-22)
 - An animal that drank a large volume of water (v. 23)
 - An animal that cannot be captured (v. 24, when translated literally, as in Darby, "Shall he be taken in front? will they pierce through *his* nose in the trap?").
 - To see a possible picture of this animal, look up brachiosaurus.
 - The words of v. 19, **He that made him can make his sword to approach** are cryptic.
 - The literal is *His maker bringeth nigh his sword*.
 - It can be translated (as in TEV) *only the one who made him is able to kill him*.
 - This is an interesting connection if we make the assumption that a dinosaur is in consideration, and that Job perhaps held society's collective memory of the creature, but now knew that God had taken them away from the earth.