

## May 22 : Scriptures Job 22-24

### SUMMARY

In today's reading, Eliphaz opens the 3<sup>rd</sup> cycle of speeches, and I must say he gets rather brutal with suffering Job. Job has rebuked his friends for their useless attempts to "comfort him" by continually stating his suffering comes from Job's sin. Why else would God cause (or allow) such suffering to come upon one of His children? Obviously, Job has sinned and sinned big time, judging by the tremendous pain that he's in. God *must* be pressing Job to repent of something.

Eliphaz begins his last words to Job with a rather snarky "A wise man is only useful to himself." In other words, God doesn't need your wisdom, Job, and doesn't need to talk with you despite your demands that He does so (22:2). Elihu asks three rhetorical questions, to which the answer is "no." No, there is no advantage to the Lord if Job is righteous. He gains nothing if Job is perfect ("clean," i.e., blameless). And the Lord certainly isn't doing all of this because you're God-fearing. Instead, the Lord does this because Job is just the opposite, Eliphaz argues. "You're wicked, Job. There's no end to your sin" (22:5, paraphrased). And then Eliphaz launches into a string of accusations of what Job has supposedly done to warrant God's wrath (22:6-9). Eliphaz seems to go so far as to suggest Job is so lost in sin he's blind to his guilt (22:10-11).

Eliphaz accuses Job of presuming that since there is such a great distance between him and God, the Lord won't see him and can do what he pleases (22:12-14). He says Job is walking the wicked person's way, whose lives are undercut and washed away. They want no part of God in their lives, yet He blesses them with that which they've lost. Eliphaz wants none of that! In the long run, the righteous mock them because they wanted nothing to do with God, and thus, they came to nothing (22:20).

Eliphaz concludes with a plea to Job to repent (from what Eliphaz assumes Job must have done, but of which Job is entirely innocent). If he does, then God will surely forgive Job and help him recover. Treasures will rain upon Job, and silver will fly to him (22:25). He will become a great blessing to people, and by his goodness, God will even rescue the sinner by your hands. I love how my Jewish commentary summarizes Eliphaz's point, "His main point is that if someone acts in a sinful manner, thinking that he can hide from God, he will be severely punished. However, if he repents and turns to God, he will receive goodness and blessing. He therefore tells Job: Everything depends on your actions, and you should not blame God for your fate" (*The Steinsaltz Ketuvim [Writings]*, Rabbi Adin Steinsaltz, on Job 22:30).

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Job responds to Eliphaz in chapters 23-24. Job begins by saying it's not him hiding from God, but God is hiding from Job (23:2-3). Job demands a fair and direct trial before God (23:4-7) to prove his blamelessness and innocence and be free from his Judge. And even though Job searches the four corners of the earth (metaphorically speaking), God is nowhere to be seen. But God knows Job and sees him (very true per chapters 1-2), and Job knows that even though the Lord may test him, he will emerge like gold from the furnace – without dross (impurities). How has Job maintained his blamelessness? By continually walking God's way and consuming the Lord's commands as his food (23:12). And yet, Job decries God's justice for making the blameless man suffer and keeping him alive to endure the pain (23:13).

On the other hand, in chapter 24, Job objects to God allowing the wicked to flourish (24:2-4) and never letting the righteous see their judgment. The wicked push the poor around, and the poor endure much hardship under the oppression and heartlessness of the wicked, "yet God pays no attention to this crime" (24:12). Therefore, since God doesn't judge the wicked, God must be okay with it. The wicked ignore God's ways, commit murder and adultery and steal. But Job knows what's in store for them. "They float on the surface of the water" (24:18), i.e., their lives won't endure. Their lives will just float away into oblivion. But even though they do all these bad things (24:19-21), God still sustains them (24:22-23). However, the Lord's eyes are still on them. Verse 24 is tough to understand, so I'll refer to Rabbi Steinsaltz's translation/commentary, "Were the eyes of God to be lifted even briefly from the wicked they would be gone; it is only God's special protection that sustains them. If God's eyes were lowered from the wicked at all, they would be gathered in from their place and cut off, and they would wither and be lost like the top of an ear of corn."

So, Job refutes Eliphaz's claim about divine justice that the righteous live extraordinary lives and the wicked suffer. In Job's experience, God's justice allows the wicked to have extraordinary lives while the blameless, God-fearing people suffer. Where is God's justice in that?

### INSIGHT

I can't tell you how often I agree with Job throughout this book. I confess I'm a newshound, and I often spend more time than I should be reading through internet news sites to see what is going on that day. I have to admit, I understand Job's frustration. I see obviously wicked people getting away with murder, adultery, theft, and all kinds of "in-Your-face, God" behaviors. What's most frustrating is that I've seen many who have lived long and prosperous lives, seemingly without a care in the world. I don't walk in their shoes or know what they're feeling or going through. Maybe they *are* experiencing God's

judgment through bad things that I don't see happen to them. But on the surface, they seem to be raking in their ill-gotten gain and smirking because they believe there is no God to hold them accountable. Meanwhile, I see innocent people suffering under the same wicked people's abuse. All I can say is I'm confident that the Lord will work it out either in this life (sometimes) or the next (most certainly). I don't understand the ways of God's justice, but I trust in His justice, and everything will be accounted for and either punished or rewarded in the end.

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## May 23 : Scriptures Job 25-27

### SUMMARY

Well, then. Chapter 25 is short, and so is Bildad with Job. "Job, there is no way you can be justified before God. He sees all and knows all, and you won't be vindicated. If the heavenly powers aren't pure before God, what makes you think a human can ever be?"

In chapter 26, Job responds to Bildad sarcastically, saying, "Wow! Some help you are!" (26:2-3). Bildad only says what everybody else says (the conventional wisdom re: God and suffering). He agrees with Bildad that God is mighty and awesome (26:5-8). And yet, God "keeps His throne obscured from view" (26:9). Job says though God is great, He's mysterious, His world is chaotic, and people can only grasp a "fringe" of His ways (26:14).

Job continues into chapter 27 with a charge that God has dealt with him unjustly, but Job will not be unjust by speaking lies and deceits by agreeing that his friends are right about him (27:2-4). As his friends claim, Job continues to hold his position that he's done nothing wrong to warrant his suffering. Eliphaz, Zophar, and Bildad claim God is acting against Job because of his wickedness (obviously) because the righteous do not suffer God's punishment. The three friends' big mistake is assuming what has happened to Job is punishment, not anything else.

Job acknowledges the wicked person's ultimate end, and while his friends were saying it applies to him, Job defends his blamelessness and warns them of their judgment for speaking wrongly against him (27:7).

I admit I've been struggling over verses 27:7-12. So I went to various translations to see what insights I might get. The Contemporary English Version says, "*I pray that my enemies will suffer no less than the wicked. Such people are hopeless, and God All-Powerful will cut them down, without listening when they beg for mercy. And that is what God should do because they don't like him or ever pray.*" These verses are an imprecatory prayer that asks for God's judgment against someone. Job vehemently claims his innocence (27:5-6). Here it seems he regards his friends as enemies since they've spoken harshly, unfairly, and unjustly against him. Then he hurls their own words back at them (27:12). They, not he, will face the punishment of the wicked and what follows is Job's description of what they will face (27:13-23).

### INSIGHT

It's tough to be misunderstood and maligned. Job is correct that his integrity is intact. He

was walking right with God, so much so that God bragged about Job to His Adversary, which started this whole ball of suffering. Job's integrity is so set that he refuses to accept a false accusation against himself even though his situation doesn't make sense. Out of his integrity, he intensely asks God to explain what's going on and why. It's okay to struggle with suffering and wrestle with the Lord. Even in silence, trust Him.

## May 24 : Scriptures Job 28-30

### SUMMARY

You may have noticed that in the third cycle of speeches, Eliphaz had his say (Job 22), and Bildad spoke his peace (Job 25), but Zophar had no speech for Job. Instead, Job has two speeches. The first one is about his friends, the wicked, and wisdom (Job 27-28).

In chapter 28, Job describes how difficult it is to find precious metals and gems. Those things aren't just lying about, and men have to dig hard to find them (28:1-11). But where does someone find wisdom? Wisdom is more challenging to find (28:12-14) and more precious (28:15-19) than treasures of the earth. Where can it be found (28:20-22)? Only with God (28:23-28). Fear of the Lord is wisdom, and turning from evil is understanding (28:28).

Chapter 29 begins Job's second speech. It's simple to summarize. Job longs for the days when things were going so well for him (29:1-10) and how everyone was pleased with him (29:11-25). As Job describes it, these were his glory days.

But in chapter 30, Job's life has been upended. Job is treated with contempt by worthless people. In the culture of Job's day, a young man would automatically respect an older man simply because of his age. A foolish and "no-good" man would at least respect a God-fearing and esteemed man like Job. These no-good men (30:1-8) are so worthless that Job says he wouldn't even place them with his dogs (an unclean animal). But now, these worthless men's sons (younger men) treat him with contempt (30:9-15). Now *that's really bad!* Their treatment is one of utter disdain, disrespect, and contempt. That's how low Job believes the Lord has brought him. God has turned against him and brought him to the lowest point a person can sink (30:16-19).

How does Job say God responds to his pleas for help? "I cry, but You ignore me. Rather than help me, You just look at me, You harass me, You blow me around by the circumstances of my life, and You'll drop me into death" (30:20-23). Job demands to know what he did to deserve this treatment from God (30:24). The HCSB says Job's question implies that God is "kicking a man when he's down."

Now, Job lets it all out. "I comforted others. Why doesn't someone comfort me (30:25-26)? I'm in emotional turmoil and can't rest because of my suffering, my body is black with sores, I'm all alone in my physical misery, and the only song I sing is a lament" (30:27-31).

**INSIGHT**

“But wisdom, where can it be found; where is the place of understanding? Humankind doesn’t know its value; it isn’t found in the land of the living” (28:12-13). I’ve known and observed many unwise people throughout my life. I’ve seen the results of many unwise (okay, foolish) decisions that have permanently bruised and broken lives. I’ve also known and observed many wise people throughout my life. Their wisdom often comes through experience, usually after doing something foolish first.

Knowledge with experience is an excellent source of wisdom. But what we have read about King Solomon tells us the best source of wisdom is that which comes from the Lord. Wisdom’s value is found in its ability to keep us on God’s path and out of trouble. Wisdom’s value is realized when we’re in trouble, and it helps us find our way out. And wisdom’s value is found in inescapable circumstances when it tells us to trust the Lord because we’ll find the strength we need to endure it (Isaiah 40:31).

## May 25 : Scriptures Job 31-33

### SUMMARY

In chapter 31, we reach the climax of Job's argument, "Where have I done wrong to deserve this?" which brings us back to the questions from The Bible Project's video about the book of Job:

"Is God just in character?

Does God run the universe on the strict principle of justice?

How is Job's suffering to be explained?"

The big assumption is that "Everything that happens in the universe should operate according to the strict principle of justice."

Job's closing argument is the defense of his blameless life. I like the way these translations help me understand Job's preface in 31:1-4, "I promised myself never to stare with desire at a young woman. God All-Powerful punishes men who do that. *In fact, God sends disaster on all who sin, and he keeps a close watch on everything I do*" (Contemporary English Version, italics – author). "I made a solemn pact to never to undress a girl with my eyes. So what can I expect from God? What do I deserve from God Almighty above? Isn't calamity reserved for the wicked? *Isn't disaster supposed to strike those who do wrong? Isn't God looking, observing how I live? Doesn't he mark every step I take?*" (The Message, italics - author).

And so, Job lays out the evidence of his godly life for the Lord's (and his accusers') examination. It takes the form of, "If I have done this, then I deserve what I get." But Job knows if he has done these things, he will face the Almighty's wrath. The implication is that since he hasn't done these things, why (as it seems to Job) has God's wrath fallen on him. God's wrath is so terrifying to Job, it's kept him from sinning (31:23).

To Job, God is silent, but his accusers are not. There is no one on his side (31:35). Job invites the Lord to lay down a valid charge against him, and he would freely admit his guilt. And Job would even lay out the truth of the accusation for all to see (35:35-37).

Job ends his defense by calling down a curse upon himself if he is guilty (31:38-40). What more could he say? "After saying these things, Job was silent."

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And now we meet Elihu, whose name means “He is my God.” What’s unique about Elihu is that his name, his father’s name (Barachel the Buzite), and his family’s name (Ram) are all Israelite names, whereas Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar are not. Also, according to the HCSB commentary, “Buz was the brother of Uz and Abraham’s nephew (Genesis 22:20-21). Job was from the land of Uz (Job 1:1)” or Uz’s land if you will.

Job’s three friends have tried to explain Job’s suffering as self-inflicted due to sin. Their assumption via conventional/traditional wisdom is that the wicked are punished for their sin and justly so. The punishment comes in a myriad of ways but results in suffering. Job is suffering, so, therefore, Job must have sinned. He is not as blameless as he claims and lacks integrity by saying he’s clear of sin. Job sees his suffering as a punishment, but an unjust one, since he sees no reason for it. Why would God lower the boom on an innocent person? In short, “What did I ever do to deserve this? Nothing! So why has it come upon me? God is unjust to punish the righteous.” Job’s friends claim the wicked are always punished, but Job counters with, “But not always. God’s punishment comes to the wicked either now, in the future, or both. *But I’m not wicked! So, your arguments and accusations don’t apply to me. Your so-called wisdom is misapplied in my case.*”

Elihu now stands up to make his speech. He is a younger man (32:6) and respectfully stayed silent while his elders spoke. Now it’s his turn. He’s ticked because he hears Job justifying himself rather than justifying God (32:2) and that Job’s friends “failed to rebuke Job and yet had condemned him” (32:3). The three friends just didn’t have a good answer to Job’s question. Elihu goes for it.

He begins by saying wisdom is not the sole possession of the aged (32:9-10). He has some wisdom to share. The three friends’ wisdom didn’t cut it because they couldn’t refute Job (32:12-13). Elihu feels compelled to speak, and if he doesn’t, he’ll burst (32:19). Fun fact: During the fermentation process, wine produces carbon dioxide. If the animal skin that holds the fermenting wine isn’t vented, it’ll pop like a balloon! So, Elihu will vent his thoughts and feelings regarding Job without partiality, so he doesn’t metaphorically burst (32:21).

Elihu’s speech is in four parts – chapters 33, 34, 35, 36-37. In chapter 33, Elihu says he will present his case to Job (33:1-4) and invites Job to refute him (33:5). “Don’t worry, Job, though I’ll be direct, I won’t stomp on you” (33:7). Elihu declares what Job said is wrong by claiming that he is guiltless and God is unjustly punishing him (33:8-11), and Job is out of line by demanding God answer his questions (33:12-13). But although God doesn’t answer him in the way Job wants, God does indeed speak. He speaks through dreams (33:15-18) or pain (33:19-22) or through messengers (33:23-30) to reprimand and discipline

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them so they'll turn from their straying ways and come back to God. *Chapter 33's point is that God is great and gracious despite what Job has experienced.* And with that, Elihu prepares Job for his following argument.

### INSIGHT

One of the things I was taught in pastoral training was a series of statements that don't help a suffering person's situation. These are statements like, "Don't cry," "Cheer up," "It could be worse," "It's not that bad," "Everything will be fine," or "Look at the bright side." Why are these not helpful? Because they dismiss the person's trouble. Don't throw the person's situation aside. Sit with them in it. You don't have to speak, but when you do, it's good to acknowledge their pain simply.

There are many others, but one I often hear from fellow Christians is, "God must be trying to teach you something." Is that true? Most of the time, no. In a few instances, yes. I say that because it's happened to me. I've had troubles hit me that have rocked my world. But it's usually well after I've emerged from them that I see something in all the mess that the Holy Spirit points out as His counsel to me. So what Elihu says about God using suffering as a way to send a message is not necessarily wrong. But I've found it's a rare thing.

That said, I often find a message as a result of suffering, especially if it's self-inflicted suffering. Usually, it's "Next time, don't be an idiot. Use wisdom instead." Yup, see yesterday's reading.

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## May 26 : Scriptures Job 34-36

### SUMMARY

In chapter 34, Elihu moves from God's greatness and graciousness to God's justice, which is the book of Job's primary focus.

Elihu begins by stating Job's claim, "Job claims he is innocent and God is guilty of mistreating him. Job also argues that God considers him a liar and that he is suffering severely despite his innocence" (34:5-6). Elihu refutes Job because he derided others and God as well, "For he has said, 'A man gains nothing when he becomes God's friend.'"

Elihu points out that God can't act unjustly and treats everyone fairly according to what they deserve (34:10-11). Therefore, Job's claim that God is unjust is flat-out wrong. Yehovah is sovereign over the world with the power over life and death, and he alone is qualified to run the world. Who dares to condemn the God who is greater than rulers and is impartial to all? He sees all and knows what's in every person already, so He has no need to bring them to court (34:23). And even if God *seems* to let the wicked walk freely, He has His eye on them, counter to what Job asserted earlier (34:29).

Elihu tells Job to leave open the possibility that he did wrong and even assume it, and ask the Lord to point out what that wrong is. He sees Job demanding God meet his terms ("I'm innocent so relieve my suffering") rather than Job meeting God's terms ("Your suffering may be a prompt from Me to check yourself"). Elihu suggests perhaps Job must suffer more (as if he could) for talking like a sinner does (34:36). *Chapter 34's point is that God is a God of justice despite what our circumstances tell us or how we feel about Him. He's sovereign, and we live on His terms.*

Elihu's third point, in chapter 35, now condemns Job's self-righteousness and his question, "What does it profit You, and what benefit comes to me, if I do not sin?" To Elihu, those two statements contradict each other. On the one hand, he's heard Job hold fast to his profession of blamelessness before God. On the other hand, Elihu says Job has lamented, "What good does it do You, Lord, for me to not sin if this is the way I'm treated. There's no difference" (35:2-3). Elihu points out that a person's sin or righteousness doesn't harm or help God in any way. The only one that sin hurts is the sinner, and the only one that piety helps is another person (35:8). As the Contemporary English Bible puts it, "The evil or good you do only affects other humans," but not God. In the other direction, God answers people when they cry for mercy in their distress, but they soon forget Him when they're relieved (35:9). As for the wicked, God won't answer them because of their pride. So if the Lord ignores "empty prayers" (CEV), why would He

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bother to answer your demand that answer your case against Him (35:14)? God hasn't punished you fully, Job, so you just keep babbling. *Chapter 35's point is that God is absolutely just and answers to no one.*

For his final point in chapter 36, Elihu turns to God's greatness. "Job, you've misjudged God. He *does* deal with evil people and gives justice to the suffering ones. He keeps His eye on the righteous, contrary to what you've been saying. If someone suffers, the just God tells them what they've done wrong and invites them to change their ways. But the choice is up to them" (36:8-12). Wicked people refuse to ask God for help. Elihu declares that Job's suffering isn't from God ignoring Him, but his pain is God's mercy to keep Job from straying off the path, like a warning. And now that God has his attention, Job should watch his anger and words against God (36:17). Don't look for wealth or death for relief. You've been tested by affliction to keep you from doing wrong.

Elihu proclaims that God is exalted by His power and doesn't need anyone to school Him. Job should praise Him for His tremendous works and incomprehensible being, far beyond our ability to truly know Him. The HCSB says, "Rather than finding fault with God, Job should join all mankind in singing His praise." Elihu then points out God's greatness as seen in nature, specifically in storms. Now, this is an interesting thing for Elihu to focus on because God is about to appear to Job in a whirlwind storm to confront him face to face as he wanted.

### INSIGHT

Elihu points out what Job has said, "A man gains nothing when he becomes God's friend." I have a buddy who sounds just like Job, and he has struggled in his life, but nothing of the caliber Job faced. I've struggled for many years to answer him, and I realize there's really not much I can say that will give him the answers he seeks. Instead, I've learned to turn the conversation away from himself and toward more positive things while not minimizing his troubles.

## May 27 : Scriptures Job 37-39

### SUMMARY

Elihu finishes his speech in chapter 37 with a magnificent vista of God's glory as seen in the expanse and power of His creation (37:1-13). Then he turns to Job and asks him if he was in any way able to understand or explain God's creation. Since Job can't, maybe he shouldn't be challenging God to a debate about how the Lord has treated him. Does Job have any right to question God or make demands on such a holy being?

He closes his case with this, "The Almighty—we cannot reach him—he is exalted in power! He will not violate justice and abundant righteousness; therefore, men fear him. He does not look favorably on any who are wise in heart" (37:23-24). *Chapter 36-37's point is God is exalted, absolutely just, and righteous and shows no favoritism, even to the wise. Therefore, we should simply fear God, i.e., deeply revere Him.*

And then it happens.

God shows up!

Chapter 38 opens with a bang, and Job gets what he's been asking for, but it doesn't work out quite the way he expected.

God speaks out of a mighty whirlwind, similar to the atmospheric manifestations Elihu was just recounting. "You want the truth. Job? You can't handle the truth! Do you want an audience with Me, Job? Sit down, listen, and get ready to answer Me" (38:2-3).

And then a torrent of rhetorical questions flies at Job. Where were you when I established the earth? Who runs creation? Have you explored its farthest reaches?" (38:4-20). God presses into Job, "Don't you know? You were already born; you have lived so long!" (38:21). And then God continues. He challenges Job to reveal the scope of his knowledge vs. the Almighty's understanding. "So, Job, do you know how the weather works? Are you in charge of it? (38:22-30). The Lord then moves from the earth out into the cosmos, referring to the constellations of the Pleiades, Orion, and Ursa Major, the Bear. What God created, Job knows only as tiny flickers of light from the billions of galaxies and stars, and who knows what else God crafted with His own hands (38:31-32). Then God shifts back to the atmosphere and implies that no person has the wisdom to control the weather as He does (38:33-38). "If not that, how about the complex relationship of predator and prey in nature or how animal life cares for its young?" (38:39-41).

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Chapter 39 opens with the Lord questioning Job about his knowledge of animal life on earth. Do you understand the animals' reproductive cycle? Can you wrangle wild animals and tame them? (39:1-12). Of course, all of this implies God can. I chuckle a bit because now God takes it down to just a few specific examples of what He's created – the ostrich, horse, and birds of prey. Did Job make the ostrich without sense and yet can outrun a horse? And speaking of horses, did Job gives horses strength and fearlessness? Or did Job teach birds to fly or build nests at great heights? Again, the rhetorical answer is no.

What is God doing? Opening Job's eyes and mind to bigger things than his suffering – the Lord and His magnificent works.

### **INSIGHT**

Even though Elihu's speech may seem like a harsh rebuke, it really isn't. Yes, Elihu tells Job's three friends their wisdom is nothing but "conventional wisdom," blaming Job for unspecified or assumed sins indicated by his suffering. Yes, he admonishes Job for his claim that God is unfair. But Elihu's speech is about raising our eyes above our suffering to focus on God Himself, from the earth to the heavens. We need to look at our situation from God's perspective rather than our own because only God knows everything about it, and only He can reveal all aspects of what we're going through. And often, God won't. We'll likely learn more in the next life as we see our lives from God's point of view, and the Spirit explains things to us. But for now, Elihu is right. Let's first fill our eyes with God's majesty and appreciate Him for all He is and does. And then let's be reverent, fear the Lord, and walk humbly before Him, trusting that He has everything under control.

## May 28 : Scriptures Job 40-42

### SUMMARY

At the start of chapter 40, it's now a time for Job to answer Almighty God. The Lord invites him to argue back (40:1-2), but God's display of His incomprehensible exalted being compared to Job's limited capacity completely overwhelms Job, and he's left speechless.

The Lord launches back into His cross-examination of the stunned Job, demanding that he answer Him (40:7). His question hits at the core of Job's questions about his suffering. God asks, "Would you question my justice, deem me guilty so you can be innocent?" (40:8). I can't imagine how that question rattled Job and perhaps put the fear factor to him.

"How are you like Me? Can you do what I can? If so, then I'll admit you can save yourself" (40:9-14).

Behemoth – Some say it's the hippopotamus that hides in the stream (40:21-26) or an elephant that feeds on grass (40:15-16, 20), but neither of those powerful beasts has a "tail like a cedar tree," and neither matches the living place of the other. A friend of mine believes this fits the description of a dinosaur, like a brontosaurus. Who knows? The point is this beast is so humungous and strong no one but God can subdue it, thus emphasizing Job's smallness compared to God.

In chapter 41, the Lord continues His whirlwind speech concerning another mysterious and terrifying creature – Leviathan. Some think the writer is referring to a whale or an immense crocodile, and others claim it was another dinosaur-like creature or something about which the myth of dragons was concocted. God says Leviathan is uncapturable and uncontrollable by any person, but by implication of the rhetorical questions, God can do it. God is greater than Leviathan! "Hey, Job, if you can't stand up to Leviathan..." therefore, "Nobody is fierce enough to rouse him; who then can stand before me? Who opposes me that I must repay? Everything under heaven is mine" (41:10-11).

And now we come to some fascinating descriptions of Leviathan. "Who can strip off his outer covering? Who can penetrate his double layer of armor?" (41:13). That's interesting, but the word for armor can also mean "bridle." Bridle may actually be a better translation because the next verse refers to Leviathan's strong jaws and terrifying teeth (41:14).

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However, the following verses are particularly interesting, “His pride is in his rows of scales, closely sealed together. One scale is so close to another that no air can pass between them. They are joined to one another, so closely connected they cannot be separated. His snorting flashes with light, while his eyes are like the rays of dawn. Flaming torches shoot from his mouth; fiery sparks fly out! Smoke billows from his nostrils as from a boiling pot or burning reeds. His breath sets coals ablaze, and flames pour out of his mouth” (41:15:21). Now you know why some think it’s referring to a mythical dragon or some pagan ideas about primordial creatures and creation. The rest of the chapter explodes with vivid imagery of Leviathan, reminding me of Smaug from *The Hobbit* with his impenetrable scaly hide.

But perhaps there’s another explanation. According to some Jewish sources, Leviathan represents God’s Adversary, Satan, the exact figure seen at the beginning of Job. Why? Because of the last verse in chapter 41, “He has no equal on earth—a creature devoid of fear! He surveys everything that is haughty; he is king over all the proud beasts” (41:34). “But that says proud beasts, Pastor Jay.” I know. But the literal reading is, “Every high thing he doth see, He [is] king over all sons of pride.” Which is it? I think it could go both ways with the literal version explaining why the Hebrew speaking rabbis say it refers to Satan, the king over all proud people.

Another point is Satan is described as a dragon, reminiscent of Leviathan (Revelation 12:4, 7, esp. 9, and 20:2). Literal, figurative, or symbolic, God’s point is the same. Even the mightiest of all beasts of His creation are no match for the Lord. How much less is Job who demands an audience with God so He can explain why Job was allowed to suffer despite Job’s righteous life.

Chapter 42 concludes our *Cruisin’ Through The Bible Job Roadmap*. Finally, Job has the proper perspective, and he’s gob-smacked! After focusing on his suffering and demanding God account for it, Job focuses on the Lord’s sovereignty as the all-powerful, all-knowing, and all-wise God. *Now* Job repents, and it’s for his foolishness of overstepping His bounds with God (42:6). Does God smite Job for his rash words driven by pain and anguish?

No. God rebukes Job’s friends because they didn’t speak the truth about the Lord with their “conventional,” traditional wisdom, and He commends Job. Job may have been rash, but he was honest as he wrestled with his thoughts, under-informed and self-focused though they were. God demands the three friends let Job make an offering for them, as Job had done for his children for any sins they may have committed, remember?

After that, all is settled. The Lord restores Job's family and fortune, double the amount He allowed the Adversary to take away from Job.

And Job lived happily ever after. The End.

### **INSIGHT**

We get so wrapped up in our worlds, don't we? When we're not looking forward, we're usually looking down. In times of trouble, where does our focus turn? Yup, just like Job, our eyes turn inward toward our problems. One of the fun and refreshing things I like to do is watch thunderheads build in the afternoon heat and humidity. Their immensity and growing activity deeply impress me that there are things that are so much larger than me. And that makes me feel good because, like Job's conclusion, I know my Heavenly Father is bigger than all. He spun out the entire universe from His hand, spoke our solar system into existence, and yet formed me cell by cell in my mother's womb (Psalm 139:13). That sustains me in troubled times if I just keep it in mind.