

THE CONTEXT :: Following a give and take dialogue between Job and his four friends about the existence of evil in the world (Theodicy), God speaks out from the whirlwind, questioning Job. [This starts at 38:1 through 42] This is the climax and the denouement of the book. God speaks in a poetic series of rhetorically questions asked ironically. Clearly Job cannot answer yes to any of the questions. On the first level God is asserting that God is God and Job is not. But on another level, one that is reached only through the subversion and de-construction of this rhetorical questioning, lies an affirmation of the radical importance of human life. When one begin to de-construct, or look underneath, the affirmation of divine power, we have to ask “what are we then?; that God would care about us?” This is the question asked in Psalm 8, and also in the heart of Adam and Eve as they’re tempted to become god-like in the Garden of Eden (Genesis 2 and 3). We, like Job, are invited not to be passive observers, rather to participate in the realities of creation as creative creature made in the divine image.

“God continues to show Job the wild beauty of creation.. The horse runs and the eagle soars, rejoicing in their freedom. Leviathan, that fiercest of creatures, answers only to its Maker. It cannot be controlled and will not be used by human beings. (Leviathan is, of course, one of the names of the legendary sea dragon in the ancient Near East, a symbol of chaos. See Ps 74:14 and Isa 27:1. For a positive portrayal of Leviathan, as in Job 41, see also Ps 104:25-26.)

Again, humanity, in this vision of the world, is not the center of creation. Instead, creation is made to praise its Maker. At the same time, humanity (in the person of Job) is the only passenger on this grand tour of the cosmos. God invites Job to see the world from a God's-eye point of view, and to delight in its beauty as God does.

Job responds to these speeches of God by recanting (a better translation in vs. 6 than "I despise myself") and by acknowledging that he spoke of things he didn't understand. The world is not a chaotic and disordered place, as Job had claimed (see ch. 9), and God is not vindictive and overly concerned with human sin, as he had argued (7:11-21). God's concern for the world (including humanity) is far more expansive than Job had imagined. Humanity has a place in that world, but it is not what Job or his friends had imagined; that is, humanity as the center of creation and the sole recipient of God's attention. God's concern is for all of life and all of creation, including humanity. In the God-speeches, Job's vision is expanded and Job's hope is fulfilled: He has seen God (42:5; cf. 19:26-27).

Mazzaroth:: The word's precise meaning is uncertain but its context is that of astronomical constellations, and it is often interpreted as a term for the zodiac or the constellations thereof.

Job 38:25-41; 40:1-14; 41:1-8; 42:1-6
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38 ²⁵ “Who has cut a channel for the torrents of rain,

and a way for the thunderbolt,

²⁶ to bring rain on a land where no one lives,

on the desert, which is empty of human life,

²⁷ to satisfy the waste and desolate land,

and to make the ground put forth grass?

²⁸ “Has the rain a father,

or who has begotten the drops of dew?

²⁹ From whose womb did the ice come forth,

and who has given birth to the hoarfrost of heaven?

³⁰ The waters become hard like stone,

and the face of the deep is frozen.

³¹ “Can you bind the chains of the Pleiades,

or loose the cords of Orion?

³² Can you lead forth the **Mazzaroth** in their season,

or can you guide the Bear with its children?

³³ Do you know the ordinances of the heavens?

Can you establish their rule on the earth?

³⁴ “Can you lift up your voice to the clouds,

so that a flood of waters may cover you?

³⁵ Can you send forth lightnings, so that they may go

and say to you, ‘Here we are’?

³⁶ Who has put wisdom in the inward parts,

or given understanding to the mind?

³⁷ Who has the wisdom to number the clouds?

Or who can tilt the waterskins of the heavens,

³⁸ when the dust runs into a mass

and the clods cling together?

³⁹ “Can you hunt the prey for the lion,

or satisfy the appetite of the young lions,

⁴⁰ when they crouch in their dens,

or lie in wait in their covert?

⁴¹ Who provides for the raven its prey,

when its young ones cry to God,
and wander about for lack of food? ...

40 ¹ And the Lord said to Job:

² “Shall a faultfinder contend with the Almighty?
Anyone who argues with God must respond.”

Then Job answered the Lord:

⁴ “See, I am of small account; what shall I answer you?
I lay my hand on my mouth.

⁵ I have spoken once, and I will not answer;
twice, but will proceed no further.”

⁶ Then the Lord answered Job out of the whirlwind:

⁷ “Gird up your loins like a man;
I will question you, and you declare to me.

⁸ Will you even put me in the wrong?
Will you condemn me that you may be justified?

⁹ Have you an arm like God,
and can you thunder with a voice like his?

¹⁰ “Deck yourself with majesty and dignity;
clothe yourself with glory and splendor.

¹¹ Pour out the overflowings of your anger,
and look on all who are proud, and abase them.

¹² Look on all who are proud, and bring them low;
tread down the wicked where they stand.

¹³ Hide them all in the dust together;
bind their faces in the world below.

¹⁴ Then I will also acknowledge to you
that your own right hand can give you victory.

41 ¹ “Can you draw out **Leviathan** with a fishhook,
or press down its tongue with a cord?

² Can you put a rope in its nose,
or pierce its jaw with a hook?

³ Will it make many supplications to you?
Will it speak soft words to you?

THE CREATION STORY IN THE QUESTIONS ::

underneath the questions from God is the creation story, the themes of light being created from darkness, of the dry earth being separated from the waters, or order being created within the primordial chaos.

GENESIS 1: (NRSV)

1 In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth, 2 the earth was a formless void and darkness covered the face of the deep, while a wind from God swept over the face of the waters. 3 Then God said, “Let there be light”; and there was light. 4 And God saw that the light was good; and God separated the light from the darkness. 5 God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And there was evening and there was morning, the first day.

6 And God said, “Let there be a dome in the midst of the waters, and let it separate the waters from the waters.” 7 So God made the dome and separated the waters that were under the dome from the waters that were above the dome. And it was so. 8 God called the dome Sky. And there was evening and there was morning, the second day.

9 And God said, “Let the waters under the sky be gathered together into one place, and let the dry land appear.” And it was so. 10 God called the dry land Earth, and the waters that were gathered together he called Seas. And God saw that it was good. 11 Then God said, “Let the earth put forth vegetation: plants yielding seed, and fruit trees of every kind on earth that bear fruit with the seed in it.” And it was so. 12 The earth brought forth vegetation: plants yielding seed of every kind, and trees of every kind bearing fruit with the seed in it. And God saw that it was good. 13 And there was evening and there was morning, the third day.

14 And God said, “Let there be lights in the dome of the sky to separate the day from the night; and let them be for signs and for seasons and for days and years, 15 and let them be lights in the dome of the sky to give light upon the earth.” And it was so. 16 God made the two great lights—the greater light to rule the day and the lesser light to rule the night—and the stars. 17 God set them in the dome of the sky to give light upon the earth, 18 to rule over the day and over the night, and to separate the light from the darkness. And God saw that it was good. 19 And there was evening and there was morning, the fourth day.

20 And God said, “Let the waters bring forth swarms of living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth across the dome of the sky.” 21 So God created the great sea monsters and every living creature that moves, of every kind, with which the waters swarm, and every winged bird of every kind. And God saw that it was good. 22 God blessed them, saying, “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the waters in the seas, and let birds multiply on the earth.” 23 And there was evening and there was morning, the fifth day. (*continued on the next page...*)

Leviathan :: The Hebrew Leviathan was a development of the earlier Canaanite sea monster Lôtān. Sea serpents feature prominently in the mythology of the Ancient Near East. In the First Testament, specifically in Genesis 1 and Job, this sea creature is lifted up as the competitor with God, the representation of the forces of chaos and evil from which creation is brought and with which God invites us to struggle to continue the movement of creation (ordering the chaos).

- ⁴ Will it make a covenant with you
to be taken as your servant forever?
- ⁵ Will you play with it as with a bird,
or will you put it on leash for your girls?
- ⁶ Will traders bargain over it?
Will they divide it up among the merchants?
- ⁷ Can you fill its skin with harpoons,
or its head with fishing spears?
- ⁸ Lay hands on it;
think of the battle; you will not do it again!
- ⁹ Any hope of capturing it will be disappointed;
were not even the gods overwhelmed at the sight of it?
- ¹⁰ No one is so fierce as to dare to stir it up.
Who can stand before it?
- ¹¹ Who can confront it and be safe?
—under the whole heaven, who?

42 ¹Then Job answered the Lord:

- ² “I know that you can do all things,
and that no purpose of yours can be thwarted.
- ³ ‘Who is this that hides counsel without knowledge?’
Therefore I have uttered what I did not understand,
things too wonderful for me, which I did not know.
- ⁴ ‘Hear, and I will speak;
I will question you, and you declare to me.’
- ⁵ I had heard of you by the hearing of the ear,
but now my eye sees you;
- ⁶ therefore I despise myself,
and repent in **DUST AND ASHES**.”

Matthew 6:25-34

New Revised Standard Version | (NRSV)

[Jesus, teaching this crowds, said:] ²⁵ “Therefore I tell you,
do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you
will drink, or about your body, what you will wear. Is not

GENESIS 1 CONTINUED ::

²⁴ And God said, “Let the earth bring forth living creatures of every kind: cattle and creeping things and wild animals of the earth of every kind.” And it was so. ²⁵ God made the wild animals of the earth of every kind, and the cattle of every kind, and everything that creeps upon the ground of every kind. And God saw that it was good.

²⁶ Then God said, “Let us make humankind[c] in our image, according to our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the wild animals of the earth,[d] and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth.”

²⁷ So God created humankind in his image,
in the image of God he created them;
male and female he created them.

²⁸ God blessed them, and God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth.” ²⁹ God said, “See, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit; you shall have them for food. ³⁰ And to every beast of the earth, and to every bird of the air, and to everything that creeps on the earth, everything that has the breath of life, I have given every green plant for food.” And it was so. ³¹ God saw everything that he had made, and indeed, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day.

DUST AND ASHES: these are the biblical symbols for repentance, mourning, grief and brokenness. Throughout the Bible those in mourning and/or repentance cover themselves with them, or rip their garments in two.

do not worry:: The insistence of Jesus is clear through the repetition in the text.

AS YOU READ AND REFLECT ON THESE TEXTS:

- ✧ When are you overwhelmed with worry, or anxiousness? How do you step back from the brink of that worry?
- ✧ How do you experience the power of God as reassuring?; as reframing of what you're encountering in life?
- ✧ How do you understand God's call for us to be present in creation, but not part of the catalogue of creatures named by Yahweh? How are we called to be participants in God's on-going work of creation?
- ✧ How might our participation in creation, through the life of Jesus of Nazareth, be the way to overcome worries and anxiety, to be present here and now for what God is giving to us?

life more than food, and the body more than clothing? ²⁶ Look at the birds of the air; they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? ²⁷ And can any of you by worrying add a single hour to your span of life? ²⁸ And why do you *worry* about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they neither toil nor spin, ²⁹ yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not clothed like one of these. ³⁰ But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which is alive today and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you—you of little faith? ³¹ Therefore *do not worry*, saying, 'What will we eat?' or 'What will we drink?' or 'What will we wear?' ³² For it is the Gentiles who strive for all these things; and indeed your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. ³³ But strive first for the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.

³⁴ "So *do not worry* about tomorrow, for tomorrow will bring *worries* of its own. Today's trouble is enough for today.