

# Reaching the full meaning of God's Words (Part II)

## composition and meaning of Job 40,25–41,26

### I. INTRODUCTION

In the previous *Conferences of the International Society for the Study of Biblical and Semitic Rhetoric*, we have attempted to study the composition of different moments of the section Job 38,1–42,6, offering some proposals of a distinct understanding of God's words to Job<sup>1</sup>. With the present study we attempt the analysis of the composition of the last moment of this section (Jb 40,25–41,26). This moment is strongly connected to the previous one (Jb 40,6–20) already presented and published<sup>2</sup>, and this explains why we have decided to keep the same title “Reaching the full meaning of God's Words”, Part II. In fact, similar to the previous moment (Jb 40,6–24), intensely absorbed in the figure of Behemoth, this last moment centres its attention on another enigmatic figure: Leviathan (Jb 40,25–41,26). Both moments seem to be determined to express the absolute difference of God, in order to bring Job to a different truth and knowledge of God's ways.

The biblical author has built God's answer to Job upon some significant pillars: God's creation and maintenance of the inanimate cosmos (38,4–38); God's unbounded interest in the animate creation and in the judgement of the wicked (38,39–39,30); and finally, the nature of God's supremacy to govern the earth. We can consider this last moment be composed of two different moments: the first centred in the figure of Behemoth and the second in the figure of Leviathan (Jb 40,25–41,26). Through the remarkable parallel of these two enigmatic figures, we can suspect a curious strategy of the biblical author, that converts the figure of Leviathan in an impressive metaphor that exceeds the simple parallel or complement to the previous figure of Behemoth. As we have experienced with the study of the composition of the other parts of God's words to Job, we hope that the study of the composition of Jb 40,25–41,26 will achieve our aim to reach a full understanding of the challenging meaning these words embrace as a whole and in its relationship with each of the different moments of the section.

The text Jb 40,25–41,26 can be considered a sequence composed of three passages: 40,25–41,3; 41,4–16 and 41,17–26 all connected with the initial

<sup>1</sup> L. ALMENDRA, «Some remarks of Composition and meaning in Jb 38,39–39:30», (SECOND INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE OF BIBLICAL AND SEMITIC RHETORIC), Pontifical Gregorian University, Rome 2010; “‘You know! For you were born then’ Jb 38,1–38. Remarks of Composition and meaning in Jb 38,1–38”, (THIRD INTERNATIONAL CONVENTION OF BIBLICAL AND SEMITIC RHETORIC), Pontifical Gregorian University, Rome 2012; “Reaching the full meaning of God's Words. Remarks on the composition and meaning of Job 40:6–24”, (FIFTH INTERNATIONAL CONVENTION OF BIBLICAL AND SEMITIC RHETORIC), Pontifical Gregorian University, Rome 2016.

<sup>2</sup> See, L. ALMENDRA, “Reaching the full meaning of God's Words. Remarks on the composition and meaning of Job 40:6–24”, in R. MEYNET – J. ONISZCZUK, ed., *Studi del quinto Convegno RBS. International Studies on Biblical and Semitic Rhetoric*, RBSem 11, Peeters, Leuven 2017, 35–48.

challenge to Job, this time to face concretely the strength and mighty of Leviathan. The impressive description of this figure points immediately the absolute inability and powerlessness of Job and every human being to deal with, suggesting that only God as Creator can control him.

Can <b>you</b> draw out LEVIATHAN	40,25–41,3
-----------------------------------	------------

I will not keep silence	41,4-16
-------------------------	---------

<b>He</b> IS KING over all that are proud	41,17-26
---	----------

## I. COMPOSITION

### 1. FIRST PASSAGE (JB 40,25 – 41,3): CAN YOU DRAW OUT LEVIATHAN?

The first passage (40,25 – 41,3) is composed of two parts: 40,25-30 and 40,31 – 41,3. These two parts carry a new challenge to Job: be able to use traditional fishing and hunting techniques to capture Leviathan, domesticating Leviathan in a manner similar to God's subjugation of Behemoth (40,24).

#### First part (40,25-30)

This first part is composed of three pieces of two segments: 25-26, 27-28 and 29-30. The first piece (25-26), in continuity with the precedent words of God to Job (40,24), assumes the shape of an interrogation since the beginning, although the interrogative particle only appears in the verb *h<sup>a</sup>tāšim* («can you put»). The subject of the speech is God, that defies Job, implicit in the second person of masculine singular of the verbs (*tīmšōk* «can you draw»... *tašqia* ' «can you put») and the suffix of second masculine singular of the three parts of face (*l<sup>e</sup>šōnō* «his tongue», *b<sup>e</sup>'appō* «in his nose», *leḥ<sup>y</sup>ō* «his jaw»). The second piece (27-28) keeps God as the subject of the speech and the interrogation, now is clearly signed in the interrogative particle of the verbs *h<sup>a</sup>yarbeh* («will he make many») *h<sup>a</sup>yikrōl* («will he make a covenant»). The emphasis on the third person of the verbs moves the attention to Leviathan and shows that now the focus is the possibilities that Leviathan can have to interconnect with Job. The second piece (29-30) retakes the focus on Job abilities to deal with Leviathan, coming back to second person of the

masculine singular of the verbs (*hašaheq* «will you play», *tiqš'rennû* «will you put», *yikrû* «will bargain *yeh'šûhû* «will they divide»). The mention to images of small animals or to human beings (birds, girls, traders and merchants) establish a contrast with the initial challenge (25-26) centered in the traditional fishing and hunting techniques to capture strong animals. No matters what Job do or use, his incapacity to control Leviathan is evident. The piece at the centre (27-28), considering an eventual and ironic reaction from Leviathan to relate with Job, underlines the irony of these rhetorical questions. The impossibility to domesticate and subjugate Leviathan is similar to the one of Leviathan to relate or submit to Job doing «many supplications» or speaking «soft words»; making «a covenant» or «be taken as servant».

+ 25 <b>Can you</b> draw out – or with a cord	Leviathan press down	with a fishhook, <i>his tongue?</i>
+ 26 <b>Can you</b> put – or pierce	a rope with a hook	in his nose, <i>his jaw?</i>
-----		
– 27 <b>Will he</b> make – <b>Will he</b> speak	<b>to you</b> <b>to you</b>	many supplications? soft words?
– 28 <b>Will he</b> make : to be taken	<b>with you</b> as your servant	a covenant forever?
-----		
:: 29 <b>Will you</b> play :: or <b>will you</b> put him	with him on leash	as with a bird, for your girls?
. 30 Will traders . or will they divide him up	bargain among	over him the merchants?

### Second part (40,31-41,3)

The second part is composed of two pieces (40,31-32; 41,1-3). The first piece (31-32) is composed of two segments, that repeat the challenge to Job's capability to fight with the tremendous fearful Leviathan, already begun in 40,25. The verb *hatmallê'* («can you fill») retakes the second person of masculine singular and the interrogative particle, and the focus on Leviathan is well expressed in the suffix of third person masculine singular of the parts of the face (*'ôrô* «his skin», *rô'šô* «his head»). The second piece (41,1-3) begins with the interjection *hên* («See! ») (1). The repetition of the suffix of third person masculine singular (*tôhaltô* «hope on hum», -*ālāyw* «the sight of him») points to Leviathan, whose incapability of controlling is emphasised by the parallelism of the two words «false» and «overwhelmed». The two following segments (2-3) develop the previous

declaration under the interrogative pronoun *kî* («who»).<sup>3</sup> The specific use of this interrogative pronoun and the expression «under the heaven» enlarges the challenges to every being, affirming that nothing neither nobody will be safe in a confrontation with Leviathan.

:: <sup>31</sup> <b>Can you</b> fill	with harpoons	his skin	
:: or with spears	fishing	his head?	
: <sup>32</sup> Lay	on him	your hands	
: remember	the battle;	you will not do it again!	
-----			
: <sup>41,1</sup> See!	Hope in him	is false;	
. is not also	the sight of him	overwhelmed?	
– <sup>2</sup> Is he not ferocious	when	roused?	
– <b>Who can</b> stand	before	him <sup>4</sup> ?	
+ <sup>3</sup> <b>Who can</b>	confront him	and be safe?	
+ under	the whole	heaven,	<b>who?</b>

#### *The ensemble of the passage*

Both parts 40,25-30 and 40,31–41,3 are guided by the challenge God directs to Job. This challenge moves from a direct «you» (25-26) to a «he» (27-28), returning to the «you» (31-32), creating a pressure between the affirmation of Job's capability to dominate Leviathan and the tremendous strength of this animal. Both parts mention several parts of the body of Leviathan: tongue, jaw, nose (25-26) and skin, head (41,1), all used to emphasise his terrifying strength. The text suggests that even if by some extraordinary feat Job did capture Leviathan and

<sup>3</sup> The first half of 41,2 is clear, but in the second half, the Hebrew manuscripts are divided between 'who is able to stand against him' or who is able to stand against me'. Some authors wait for the following verse to decide. Since 41,3 is clearly first-person speech, the text should be understood as God's describing the inability of anyone to confront the powerful Leviathan [cf. E. DHORME, *A Commentary on the Book of Job*, 631; H. ROWLEY, *The book of Job*, Grand Rapids, MI 1976, 271; R. GORDIS, *The Book of Job: Commentary. New Translation, and Special Studies*, New York, NY 1978, 483.]. However, some others keep the first-person in 41,3 interpreting it as referring to God. They also choose this first-person pronoun in 41,2 considering Leviathan as a point of comparison for God [cf. N. HABEL, *The Book of Job*, 555; J.E. HARTLEY, *The Book of Job*, NICOT, Grand Rapids, MI 1988, 531-32].

<sup>4</sup> The Hebrew Ms are divided between the first and third person of the personal pronoun. Those who prefer to read the third person 'before him' see that it preserves the consistency of the context, that begins with God declaring the intention to describe Leviathan's appearance. Those who prefer the first person 'before me' interpret it as referring to God, considering Leviathan as a point of comparison for God.

control him, he could never domesticate him to the point where he was a trusted servant (25-30). This impossibility is confirmed in the second part mostly in the statement of the impossibility of doing a combat with Leviathan (40,31-32). Leviathan's appearance is so terrifying that any would be opponent normally buckles at the knees and loses hope at the mere sight of him (41,1-3). Curiously, in both parts, the ability to subjugate Leviathan is expressed with the use of arms of various kinds: fishhook, cord, rope, hook (25-26) and harpoons, fishing spears (31), suggesting a battle of two powers.

<sup>25</sup> Can <b>you</b> draw out LEVIATHAN with a fishhook,	or with a cord press down <b>his tongue</b> ?
<sup>26</sup> Can <b>you</b> put a rope in <b>his nose</b> ,	or pierce with a hook <b>his jaw</b> ?
<sup>27</sup> Will <b>he</b> make many supplications to you?	Will <b>he</b> speak soft words to you?
<sup>28</sup> Will <b>he</b> make a covenant with you	to be taken as your servant forever?
<sup>29</sup> Will <b>you</b> play with him as with a bird,	or will <b>you</b> put him on leash for your girls?
<sup>30</sup> Will traders bargain over him?	Will they divide him among the merchants?
<hr/>	
<sup>31</sup> Can <b>you</b> fill <b>his skin</b> with harpoons,	or <b>his head</b> with fishing spears?
<sup>32</sup> Lay your hands on him; think of the battle;	<b>you</b> will not do it again!
<sup>41,1</sup> See! Any hope will be disappointed;	even at the sight of him overwhelmed?
<sup>2</sup> Is he not ferocious when roused?	<b>Who can</b> stand before him?
<sup>3</sup> <b>Who can</b> confront him and be safe?	under the whole heaven, who?

The author keeps in both parts the strategy of rhetorical inquiring, mainly in the contrast and in the irony that he establishes between the strength of Leviathan and the possibilities of relating with Job (25-30 and 31-32). This strategy creates a sense of the absurd also suggested in the picture of a violent sea monster being fondled as a pet like the tiny birds (29-30). For Job to transform this chaos monster into a pet with which children may play exceeds the bounds of credibility. This very same absurd is well suggested in the second part (40,31-41,3), extending Job's incapability to the whole creature.

## 2. SECOND PASSAGE (JB 41,4-16): I WILL NOT KEEP SILENCE

The second passage (41,4-16) is composed of two parts (41,4-6; 7-16). The entire passage is focused on an astounding description of Leviathan, that surpasses any human possibility to deal with.

### First part (41,4-6)

The first part (4-6) is composed of a single piece of three segments. The first segment (5) begins with a verb in the first person *lō' 'ah<sup>a</sup>rîš* («I will not keep silence») bringing God into the speech as the one who will speak openly about

Leviathan's mighty strength. This declaration is followed by two segments (5-6) marked by the repetition of the interrogative pronoun *mī* («who»). This repetition suggests an inclusion of Job among all creatures that are incapable to deal with Leviathan. The verbs *gillā* («strip off»), *yābō* («penetrate») and *pittēah* («open») insinuate an awkward power to deprive and dominate Leviathan.

– <sup>4</sup> I will not keep silence – or his mighty	concerning strength,	his limbs, or his splendid frame.
:: <sup>5</sup> <b>Who can strip off</b> :: his double coat	his outer of mail	garment? <b>who can penetrate?</b>
– <sup>6</sup> The doors – all around	of his face his teeth	<b>who can open?</b> there is terror

### Second part (41,7-16)

The second part is composed of three pieces (7-9; 10-13; 14-16) all focused in the amazing body of Leviathan.

+ <sup>7</sup> <b>His back</b> + shut up	is made of shields as with a seal	in rows, closely
: <sup>8</sup> One : that no air	to another can come	is so near between them.
: <sup>9</sup> They are joined : they clasp	one each other	to another; and cannot be separated.
-----		
+ <sup>10</sup> <b>His sneezes</b> + and <b>his eyes</b>	flash forth are like the eyelids	light, of the dawn.
– <sup>11</sup> From <b>his mouth</b> – sparks	torches of fire	go flaming; leap out.
: <sup>12</sup> Out of <b>his nostrils</b> : from a pot	comes boiling	smoke, and burning rushes.
+ <sup>13</sup> <b>His breath</b> + and a flame	coals out of <b>his mouth</b>	kindles, comes.
-----		
– <sup>14</sup> In <b>his neck</b> – and before him	abides dances	strength, terror.
: <sup>15</sup> The folds : it is firmly	of <b>his flesh</b> cast	(cling) together; and immovable.
+ <sup>16</sup> <b>His heart</b> + as hard	is as hard as millstone	as stone, lower.

The first piece (7-9) underlines the strength of the Leviathan's back. The three segments use several images of its strong closing: «made of shields»... «with a seal» / «so near»... «no air can come» / «joined one to another»... «cannot be separated». The second piece (10-13) moves to Leviathan's face. The four segments present a movement that goes from nose to the mouth (10-11 and 12-13) forming a composition parallel ab / a'b'. The strength of Leviathan emerges in his power: of sneezing flash forth light and having nostrils that expel smoke (10 and 12), his mouth torches go flaming (11 and 13). The third piece (14-16) keeps the attention on Leviathan's body, namely in his neck, flesh and heart. The first segment offers a curious parallel between the two verbs *yālîn* («abides») and *tādūš* («dances») spirited with the forms of Leviathan's powerful body. The second and third segment (15-16) turn the attention to Leviathan's flesh and heart, both described through a parallel between the two expressions: «as firmly cast and immovable» and «hard as millstone lower».

*The ensemble of the passage*

4 <sup>4</sup> <b>I</b> will not keep silence concerning his limbs, or his mighty strength, or his splendid frame.	
5 <b>Who can</b> strip off his outer garment?	<b>Who can</b> penetrate his double coat of mail?
6 <b>Who can</b> open the doors of his face?	There is terror all around his teeth.
7 <b>HIS BACK</b> is made of shields in rows,	shut up closely as with a seal.
8 One is so near to another	that no air can come between them.
9 They are joined one to another;	they clasp each other and cannot be separated.
10 <b>HIS SNEEZES</b> flash forth light,	and his eyes are like the eyelids of the dawn.
11 From <b>HIS MOUTH</b> go flaming torches;	sparks of fire leap out.
12 Out of <b>HIS NOSTRILS</b> comes smoke,	as from a boiling pot and burning rushes.
13 <b>HIS BREATH</b> kindles coals,	and a flame comes out of his mouth.
14 In <b>HIS NECK</b> abides strength,	and terror dances before it.
15 The folds of <b>HIS FLESH</b> cling together;	it is firmly cast and immovable.
16 <b>HIS HEART</b> is as hard as stone,	as hard as the lower millstone.

The passage (41,4-16) starts with a part focused in an explicit reference to the subject of the speech, an I that assures to have words about the body and the strength of Leviathan. Rather than Job, this «I» can speak, and in his words, he manifests an exclusive knowledge he seemed to have once silenced (4-6). He is the one who will not keep silence and knows very well the amazing strength of Leviathan. The second part (7-16) is all centred in the amazing body of Leviathan, described by this «I». The images succeed one to another, all emphasising strength and dreadfulness, advising Job that his incapability to control and dominate Leviathan is similar to the impossibility to take his stand before God and dominate the way he governs the world. The body of this monster is completely impenetrable. There is no way one can get beneath his skin, prise open his jaws or penetrate behind the interlocking pieces of armour which cover his body (5-6). He is protected like a mighty warrior with a double coat of mail (13) and with a row of war shields along his back (14), which are interlocking and tightly sealed

(16-17). The mention to the heart of stone expresses that the most features of Leviathan are his body, both within and without and explains why ordinary weapons of warfare are useless against Leviathan (19-21).<sup>5</sup>

### 3. *THIRD PASSAGE (JB 41,17-26): HE IS KING OVER ALL THAT ARE PROUD*

The third passage is also composed of two parts (17-21; 22-26) that continue the astounding description of Leviathan's body in his amazing and dreadful mighty.

#### **First part (41,17-21)**

:: <sup>17</sup> When he raises :: at his crashing	the mighty men they are beside.	are afraid;
: <sup>18</sup> Reaches him, : nor does the <b>spear</b> ,	<b>the sword</b> <b>the dart</b> ,	and does not avail, or the <b>javelin</b> .
-----		
. <sup>19</sup> He counts . and as rotten	as straw wood	<b>iron</b> , <b>bronze</b> .
: <sup>20</sup> Cannot make him flee : chaff	the son is turned	of the <b>arrow</b> for him <b>sling</b> -stones,
: <sup>21</sup> as chaff : laughs	are counted at the rattle	<b>clubs</b> ; of <b>javelin</b> .

The first part (41,17-21) is composed of two pieces (17-18 and 19-21). The first piece (17-18) keeps the attention on Leviathan's mighty constructing a parallel between the ability that Leviathan has to terrify even the mightiest men and the impenetrability of his body. The specific use of the word's «sword», «spear», «dart» and «javelin» stipulates that ordinary weapons of warfare are useless against Leviathan.<sup>6</sup> He is impervious to the traditional weapons used by mighty men.

#### **Second part (41,22-26)**

The second part (41,22-26) is composed of two pieces (22-24 and 25-26) both focused on Leviathan's power and distinctiveness.

<sup>5</sup> It is not like Behemoth, against whom his maker has drawn a sword to keep him in check (40,19). Perhaps Job is invited by this image to look into his own heart (cf. Ez 36,26).

<sup>6</sup> Cf. 40,19 where the Maker of Behemoth drew a sword to keep him in check and that once he crushed the many heads of Leviathan (Sl 74,14).



+ <sup>22</sup> His underparts + that spreads	are like sharp like sledge	potsherd; on the mire.
:: <sup>23</sup> He makes boil :: the sea	like a pot he makes	the deep; (like a pot of) ointment.
: <sup>24</sup> Behind him : one would think	(he leaves) a shining the deep	wake; to be white-haired.
-----		
+ <sup>25</sup> There is not + a creature	on earth without	equal fear.
:: <sup>26</sup> Everything :: he is <i>a king</i>	that is lofty over all	he surveys; sons of proud.

The first piece (22-24) is composed of three segments. The first segment begins with the mention to Leviathan's underparts (22). Leviathan is the sea, the deep or abyss suggesting it as the greatest primordial sea monster. It churns up the ocean's deeps and makes them seethe in turmoil (23). The surface of the water deep is so tumultuous in his wake that it appears to have a head of white hair (24).

The second piece (25-26) is composed of a single piece of two segments, that functions as a summary that announces the status of Leviathan. The author depicts him as King of chaos and invincible. No one from 'on the dust' can dominate this monster from the watery deeps.<sup>7</sup> Although made as Behemoth (40,15), Leviathan is king of all proud creatures and as king it looks down on all who are disdainful beneath him.

### *The ensemble of the passage*

The passage (41,17-26) composed of two parts (17-21 and 22-26) both focused in the portrayal of Leviathan. In general, the first part (17-21) upholds Leviathan as a figure impenetrable and surrounded by terror; filled with fire and breaths forth flames that even gods fear his terror.<sup>8</sup> The second part (22-26) continues to depict the portrayal of Leviathan underlining his impossibility to be captured by

<sup>7</sup> The term 'dust' is a major thematic term in the book of Job. It may refer to dust as such (2,12); to the underworld or domain of death (7,21): 17,16; to the surface of the earth (14,19; 39,14); or to the mortality (4,19). In Job it does not seem to mean the earth or world in general. Those 'on the dust' apparently refers to mortal creatures as opposed to God their creator [cf. N. HABEL, *Job*, London 1985, 574].

<sup>8</sup> The syntax of the line is awkward, and some translators follow the Greek text of Symmachus and the Syriac, reading 'the gods were cast down at the sight of him', which would require only a modest emendation of the Hebrew. Those who accept this emendation defend that the fear of the gods is a frequent motif in both Ugaritic and Mesopotamian myth [cf. *ANET*, 130].

traditional weapons of war and his ability to create tremendous turmoil in the greatest deep.

<sup>17</sup> When **he** raises himself up the mighty men are afraid; at the crashing they are beside.

<sup>18</sup> Though the sword reaches him, it does not avail, nor does the spear, the dart, or the javelin.

<sup>19</sup> It counts iron as straw, and bronze as rotten wood.

<sup>20</sup> The arrow cannot make him flee; sling stones, for him, are turned to chaff.

<sup>21</sup> Clubs are counted as chaff; laughs at the rattle of javelins.

<sup>22</sup> **HIS UNDERPARTS** are like sharp potsherds; spreads like sledge on the mire.

<sup>23</sup> It makes the deep boil like a pot; it makes the sea like a pot of ointment.

<sup>24</sup> It leaves a shining wake behind him; one would think the deep to be white-haired.

<sup>25</sup> There is not on earth equal, a creature without fear.

<sup>26</sup> **He** surveys everything that is lofty; he is king over all that are proud.

The two parts (5-15 and 16-26) are strongly connected by the insistence in the physical power of Leviathan, insisting in a connection with the different parts of his body. Leviathan has a dreadful power in his body, suggesting an understanding of his power only as a creature. This understanding finds a relation with the final declaration of Leviathan, as ‘a creature without fear’ and as king of all that are proud (25-26).

#### 4. THE SEQUENCE

The three passages of the sequence (40,25 – 41,3; 41,4-16 and 41,17-26) have God as subject of the discourse. In the first passage (40,25 – 41,3) God challenges Job directly – «Can You...?» – using the strategy of a rhetorical inquiry. The questions follow without creating any space for answer, as God was only interested in defying Job and not listening what he has to say. The object of the inquiry appears immediately in this first passage: Job’s capability to hunt Leviathan (40,25-30), and to face him or lay his hands upon him (40,31 – 41,3).

The second passage (41,4-16) begins mentioning the ‘I’ of God, who affirms not keeping silence concerning the mighty strength and splendid frame of Leviathan and with the interrogative ‘who?’, moving the speech from Job to every human being. This strategy suggests that the incapability of Job to control such dreadful monster of the chaos is common to every human being. The author insists in displaying Leviathan as far beyond human understanding and strength, multiplying images describing his powerful body. The third passage (17-26) stresses Leviathan as force whose place in the world cannot be ignored (17-24). This passage ends with the affirmation of Leviathan in all of his supremacy, ironically only as King of the proud, suggesting that he is no threat to God (25-26). Job that had been challenged to look at/for? every proud one and bring him

low, here is confronted in the greatness of Leviathan the greatness of God; that far from being brought low is king.

40, <sup>25</sup> CAN YOU draw out <b>LEVIATHAN</b> with a fishhook, or <b>HIS TONGUE</b> with a cord?	
26 CAN YOU put a rope in <b>HIS NOSE</b> ,	or pierce <b>HIS JAW</b> with a hook?
27 Will he make many supplications to you?	Will he speak soft words to you?
28 Will he make a covenant with you	to be taken as your servant forever?
29 Will you play with him as with a bird,	or will you put him on leash for your girls?
30 Will traders bargain over it?	Will they divide him up among the merchants?
31 CAN YOU fill <b>HIS SKIN</b> with harpoons,	or <b>HIS HEAD</b> with fishing spears?
32 Lay hands on him; think of the battle;	you will not do it again!
41, <sup>1</sup> Any hope of capturing him will be disappointed;	even the gods overwhelmed at the sight of him?
<sup>2</sup> Is him not ferocious when roused?	Who can stand before him?
<sup>3</sup> Who can confront him and be safe?	under the whole heaven, who?
4 <sup>4</sup> <b>I</b> will not keep silence concerning <b>HIS LIMBS</b> ,	or his mighty strength, or his splendid frame.
<sup>5</sup> WHO CAN strip off his outer garment?	Who can penetrate his double coat of mail?
<sup>6</sup> WHO CAN open the doors of his face?	There is terror all around his teeth.
<sup>7</sup> <b>HIS BACK</b> is made of shields in rows,	shut up closely as with a seal.
<sup>8</sup> One is so near to another	that no air can come between them.
<sup>9</sup> They are joined one to another;	they clasp each other and cannot be separated.
<sup>10</sup> <b>His sneezes</b> flash forth light,	and his eyes are like the eyelids of the dawn.
<sup>11</sup> From <b>HIS MOUTH</b> go flaming torches;	sparks of fire leap out.
<sup>12</sup> Out of <b>HIS NOSTRILS</b> comes smoke,	as from a boiling pot and burning rushes.
<sup>13</sup> <b>His breath</b> kindles coals,	and a flame comes out of his mouth.
<sup>14</sup> In <b>HIS NECK</b> abides strength,	and terror dances before him.
<sup>15</sup> The folds of <b>HIS FLESH</b> cling together;	he is firmly cast and immovable.
<sup>16</sup> <b>HIS HEART</b> is as hard as stone,	as hard as the lower millstone.
<sup>17</sup> When <b>he</b> raises himself up the mighty men are afraid;	at the crashing they are beside themselves.
<sup>18</sup> Though the sword reaches him, he does not avail,	nor does the spear, the dart, or the javelin.
<sup>19</sup> He counts iron as straw,	and bronze as rotten wood.
<sup>20</sup> The arrow cannot make him flee;	sling stones, for him, are turned to chaff.
<sup>21</sup> Clubs are counted as chaff;	laughs at the rattle of javelins.
<sup>22</sup> <b>HIS UNDERPARTS</b> are like sharp potsherds;	pleads himself like a threshing sledge on the mire.
<sup>23</sup> He makes the deep boil like a pot;	he makes the sea like a pot of ointment.
<sup>24</sup> He leaves a shining wake behind him;	one would think the deep to be white-haired.
<sup>25</sup> On earth he has no equal,	a creature without fear.
<sup>26</sup> <b>He</b> surveys everything that is lofty;	<b>HE IS KING</b> over all that are proud.

## 5. BIBLICAL CONTEXT

### *The character of Leviathan*

The biblical author describes Leviathan in terms that clearly evoke the mythic traditions. He is rendered in images of violence, fire and turmoil.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>9</sup> In fact, both in Ugaritic mythology and in the Bible, Leviathan is the name of a sea monster with which Yhwh, Baal and Anat do battle. In the Baal epic, the god Mot refers to a victory of Baal:

We can find, in the biblical narrative, the psalmist praises Yhwh, saying: “It was you who split open the sea by your power; you broke the heads of the monster in the waters. It was you who crushed the heads of Leviathan and gave him as food to the creatures of the desert” (cf. Ps 74,13-14). In Is 27,1 the biblical author describes the eschatological future as involving a similar action: “In that day Yhwh will punish with sword, his fierce, great and powerful sword, Leviathan the gliding serpent, Leviathan the coiling serpent; he will slay the monster of the sea.” But we also have Ugaritic quotations suggesting Leviathan as one of a group of closely related figures, all of whom are associated with the sea in his symbolic value as chaotic power, represented in the Bible by Rahab the dragon (cf. Jb 9,13; 26,12; Ps 89,10; Is 51,9) and the sea monster (cf. Jb 7,2; Ps 74,13; Ez 29,3; 32,2).

This aspect brings us to suspect that the introduction of this figure in this final part of the narrative of God’s speeches has an intention to recover this mythical and biblical mention of Leviathan in its character not only of a powerful figure, but something more. In fact, the fluid boundary between the mythical and nonmythical, as well as the ambivalent status of the chaotic in relation to creation, is suggested by the biblical texts in which *tannîn* and Leviathan are creatures formed by God and not at all hostile. We can notice that in Gn 1,21 the *tannîmim* are sea animals created as part of the work of the fifth day of creation, concerning whom God said: “it was good”. And in Ps 148,7 the *tannînim* are also called upon to praise God as part of the universal praise. Similarly, Leviathan in Ps 104,26 is an animal that God has formed to play in the sea. We can consider that the representation of Leviathan here draws associations from both the mythic tradition represented in Gn 1,21 and in Ps 104,26; 148,7. The emphasis is not on Job’s or God’s victory over the chaos monster, seen as hostile, but a celebration of the awesome and terrifying power of Leviathan, that culminates in the affirmation that he is unequalled on earth; king over all the children of pride.

### *A heart of stone*

The explicit reference to Leviathan, a dreadful and terrifying creature, as having a heart of stone is unexpected, requests an understanding at the light of Ez 36,26 where we find this same expression. The context of Ezequiel expression is the one of witness of the manifestation of God’s holiness at work in Israel’s history (36,23), through a restorative plan: first God will gather the scattered Israelites from all the countries to which they have been dispersed and bring them into their homeland. Once the people have been purified from all their iniquities, God will replace their heart of stone – obstinate, rebellious, unfeeling – with a heart of flesh, and infuse them with God’s own spirit (36,26). Purified, transformed and totally

“When you killed Lotan, the Fleeing Serpent, finished off the Twisting Serpent, the seven headed monsters.” Elsewhere, the goddess Anat says: “Didn’t I demolish El’s Darling, Sea? Didn’t I finish off the divine river, Rabbim? Didn’t I snare the Dragon? I enveloped him, I demolished the Twisting Serpent, the seven headed monsters [cf. M. COOGAN, *Stories from Ancient Canaan*, Philadelphia 1978, 92.106].

obedient, the people will be able to live in the promised land. Moreover, God will renew the covenant with them (Ez 36,28). Although a creature, Leviathan belongs to a world of chaos. God knows him, but he does not know or interrelate with God and this is, certainly, the main reason for his hear of stone.

## 6. INTERPRETATION

### *Who can stand before him?*<sup>10</sup>

This question well placed in God's challenge to Job to face and to control Leviathan using traditional techniques seems to hide an important key of understanding. Despite evoking the ordinary hunting implements or weapons that ironically would have been useless against such chaos monster, and underlining his mythic dimensions in the images that point his capacity to breathe flames from the fire burning within (41,10-13), to strike terror into the hearts of goods (41,17) and to stir up the waters of the primordial abyss (41,22-24) and his invincible character that 'sneezes flashes of lightning' (41,10) and has his red eyes like 'eyelids of dawn' (41,12), or his heart is hard as a millstone (41,16) the biblical author intends more than just to terrify Job. His description of Leviathan should be understood as more than an exercise of terror. Otherwise the implied answer to God's question 'Who can stand before him?' would be simply nobody.

### *He is king over the proud*

In fact, the extraordinary portrayal of Leviathan should be understood in the context of God's challenges to Job. Once placed there we recognize that Job is not challenged to control such monster, but to be able to recognize in himself his own fulminations and arrogant claims, they are in some way comparable to those of Leviathan and as him also Job is among the children of the proud.

The image of Leviathan as king of the proud t also recalls the boast of Job that he would approach his adversary as a 'prince' wearing his opponent's charges as a crown (31,37). As in a mirror, Job is shown Leviathan rousing up chaos. In fact, God has insinuated that Job has taken on heroic proportions and that like a chaos figure he has roused God to appear and challenged him. However, Job cannot be compared with God and his mighty arm which controls chaos and evil. God's lordship involves controlling the most dreadful forces, and Job needs to recognize that he is part of that world.

God moves the focus from Job's concern for personal vindication before the court to the wider question of Job's own responsibility for cosmic governance and

<sup>10</sup> The reading of some of the Hebrew Manuscripts, who prefer the use of the first person of the personal pronoun 'I', suggest that Leviathan should be taken as a point of comparison for God. In this case we can interpret the text as saying that if Job (or any human being) cannot confront Leviathan, how much less could Job confront God. This interpretation is not impossible, since God has mockingly challenged Job to gird his loins (40,7) and has rhetorically asked if he has an arm and a voice like God (40,9).

control. By juxtaposing God's subjugation of Behemoth (40,24) and the challenge for Job to capture Leviathan by similar means, God is reinforcing his opening challenge: 'Have you an arm like God' (40,9).

#### RIASSUNTO

Con il presente studio osiamo l'analisi della composizione di Jb 40,25 – 41,26. Questo testo è connesso all'analisi dell'anteprima (Jb 40,6-20), fortemente assorbito nella figura di Behemoth. Il testo pone la sua attenzione su un'altra figura enigmatica – Leviathan - che insieme a la precedente figura di Beemoth sembra essere determinato ad esprimere la differenza assoluta di Dio. La strategia sembra essere quella di portare Giobbe ad un'altra verità e conoscenza delle vie di Dio. La composizione in una sequenza composta da tre passi (40,25-41,3; 4-16;17-26) stabilisce due diversi momenti di quest'ultima sfida a Giobbe: la sua incapacità di dominare il Leviatano e quella di essere in grado di riconoscere in se stesso, nelle sue stesse fulminazioni e affermazioni arroganti, che sono in qualche modo paragonabili a quelli del Leviatano, ponendolo tra i figli degli orgogliosi.

*Parole chiave:* affrontare, possente, terrorizzare, catturare, temere, orgoglioso

#### ABSTRACT

With the present study we attempt the analysis of the composition of Jb 40,25 – 41,26. This text is connected to the previous one (Jb 40,6-20), strongly absorbed in the figure of Behemoth. The text focuses its attention on another enigmatic figure: Leviathan, that with the previous figure of Behemoth seem to be determined to express the absolute difference of God. The intention is to bring Job to another truth and knowledge of God's ways. The composition in a sequence composed of three passages (40,25-41,3; 4-16; 17-26) establishes two different moments of this last challenge to Job: his inability to dominate Leviathan as God does and Job's capability to recognize in himself, and in his own fulminations and arrogant claims, that they are in some way comparable to those of Leviathan, placing him among the children of the proud.

*Keywords:* confront, mighty, terror, capturing, fear, proud