

Reaching the full meaning of God's Words

Remarks on the composition and meaning of Job 40:6-24

1. INTRODUCTION

This present analysis proceeds with the study of the composition of the section Job 38:1– 42:6, usually mentioned as God's Speeches. Some parts of this study were already presented in two previous *Conferences of the International Society for the Study of Biblical and Semitic Rhetoric*¹. These previous presentations had focused its attention on the composition of the unit 38:1-38, considered a sequence (38:4-38), started by God's direct challenge to Job to show his knowledge (Job 38:1-3). Apparently, reaching no immediate response from Job, God continues with a series of questions, all focused in cosmological features (38:4-38). From Job 38:39 God's challenging questions turn from the cosmological universe to the animal kingdom, bringing together different aspects of this hidden wisdom in creatures of the wild. A second sequence was clearly delimited (38:39 – 39:30), beginning with a passage (38:39-41) centered on Job's inability to provide for life, and with two more sub-sequences (39:1-12; 39:13-25), that establish two main aspects of God's participation in this design of the cosmos: God knows the times (1-4) and God gives freedom (13-12). The two first sequences of God's Speech (38:4-38 and 38:39 – 39:30) maintain the focus on the weakness of Job's knowledge of the universe, as a paradigm of the weakness of Job's knowledge of God's ways in relation to him.

I will question YOU and YOU will let me know!	38:1-3
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DO YOU KNOW the laws of heavens or place its rule ONEARTH? YOU KNOW! For you were born then...	38:4-38
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DO YOU KNOW the time of giving birth of the MOUNTAIN-GOATS? Is it from your <i>understanding</i> soars the FALCON?	38:39 – 39:30
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¹ Specifically, in the SECOND INTERNATIONAL CONVENTION OF BIBLICAL AND SEMITIC RHETORIC, Pontifical Gregorian University, Rome 2010, and in the THIRD INTERNATIONAL CONVENTION OF BIBLICAL AND SEMITIC RHETORIC, Pontifical Gregorian University, Rome 2012. Both presentations were published as: L. ALMENDRA, "Some Remarks on composition and meaning of Job 38:39 – 39:30", in R. MEYNET – J. ONISZCZUK, ed., *Retorica Biblica e Semitica 2*, Bologna 2011, 19-34; L. ALMENDRA, " 'You know! For you were born then' Job 38:1-38. Some Remarks of Composition and Meaning", in R. MEYNET – J. ONISZCZUK, ed., *Studi del terzo convegno della RBS, Retorica Biblica e Semitica 3*, GBPress, Roma 2013, 41-64.

After having stressed God's involvement in the animate creation and in the judgement of the wicked (38:1-38 and 38:39–39:1-30), the biblical author restarts God's speech (40:6) developing a new argumentation that apparently seems to accomplish what had been said during the first declarations of God's creation and maintenance of the inanimate cosmos (38:4-38). From 40,6 the biblical author enhances two new metaphors (*behemoth* and *leviathan*) and several declarations, looking very determined to achieve the full effect of God's Speeches in the significance of the whole section of Job 38:1 – 42:6 and, consequently, of the entire the book of Job. With the present study, we hope to get closest as possible to the engagement of the biblical author and get an inside understanding of the development of the wisdom thinking debated through all the book.

Therefore, in proceeding in the analysis of the composition of the section Job 38:1 – 42:6, we look at a second moment (40:6 – 41:26) composed by two sequences: 40,6-24 centred on the figure of *behemoth* and 40:25 – 41:26 centred on the figure of *leviathan*.

In the recent past years, several studies have been done about these sections of the Book of Job and presented to the academic world². I recognize their effort to grasp the full meaning of these speeches and I completely agree with them, when they admit their enigmatic character³. It is in this context of searching, that I place and I recognize the contribution of *Biblical Rhetorical Analysis* of Job 38:1 – 42:6. Its attentiveness and persistence to bring us into the text and its composition, aid us to face the continuous challenges featured by this specific text; expression of a specific wisdom thinking and writing. In fact, more than to present us answers and descriptions, the biblical author challenges us to enter the process of a continuous searching of meaning of metaphors and parallels, and through it to reach what he understands by the wisdom process of faith specifically developed in the Book of Job.

In the present study, we are going to focus our attention on Job 40:6-24, that we consider as a sequence composed of two passages. The first passage (40:6-14) opens with a direct challenge to Job, if he has a power to submit the wicked with an arm glorious and mighty as the one of God and the second passage

² See D.A. CARSON, "Mystery and Faith in Job 38:1-42:16", in R.B. ZUK, ed., *Sitting with Job. Selected Studies on the Book of Job*, Eugene, OR 1992, 373-380; M. CHENEY, *Dust, Wind and Agony. Character, Speech and Genre in Job*, Stockholm 1994, 169-174; N.F. SCHMIDT – P.J. NEL, "The Rhetoric of the Theophany of Job", *OTE* 16/1 (2003), 79-95; J.G. JANZEN, *At the Scent of Water, The Ground of Hope in the Book of Job*, Grand Rapids, MI 2009, 95-111; J.L. CRENSHAW, *Reading Job. A Literary and Theological Commentary*, Macon, GO 2011, 147-159.

³ See N.C. HABEL, "The design of Yahweh's Speeches", in R.B. ZUK, ed., *Sitting with Job. Selected Studies on the Book of Job*, Eugene, OR 1992, 411-420; D. TIMMER, "God's Speeches, Job's Responses, and the Problem of Coherence in the Book of Job: Sapiencial Pedagogy Revisited", *CBQ* 71 (2009) 286-305; K.M. O'CONNOR, "Wild, Raging Creativity: The Scene in the Whirlwind (Job 38-41)", in B.A. STRAWN – N.R. BOWEN, ed., *A God so Near*, Winona Lake, IN 2003, 171-179; K.J. DELL, *Job. Where Shall Wisdom Be Found?* Sheffield 2013.

(40:15-24) introduces the figure of the *behemoth*, which the description accentuates a suggestive difference of God's power that Job needs to consider.

I will question YOU and YOU will let me know!	40:6-14
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Behold! the <i>behemoth</i> , that I MADE as YOU are!	40:15-24
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II. FIRST PASSAGE (JOB 40:6-14): "I WILL QUESTION YOU AND YOU WILL LET ME KNOW!"

COMPOSITION

The first passage is composed of three parts: 6; 7-13; 14. The first and the third part are composed of a single piece with a single segment (6; 14). The second part (7-14) is composed of three pieces (7-8; 9-10, 11-13). The third part is also composed of a single piece with a single segment (14).

The second part (Job 40:7-14)

In the first piece (7-8) the expression *ēzor-nā k^egeber ḥālāṣèkā* (*Gird up like a geber, your loins*) indicates that the dialogue continue its atmosphere of a contest. The first member (7) repeats the two verbs *'eš'ol^ekā* (*I will ask you*) *w^ehōdī'ēnī* (*and you will let me know*) used in 38:2-3, underlining that this dispute holds its features of understanding and knowledge, since the beginning. Nevertheless, the second member (8) introduces an originality, clarifying the direction of this dispute. The parallelism between the two words *mišpāṭī* (*my judgement*) and *tišdāq* (*be just*), define that now the focus of God's questions and words is a concrete dispute about two ways of understanding justice. These two ways of judgement and justice are placed in confrontation (*pervert my judgement / for you to be just*), creating a moment of great tension in the speeches (8). The two verbs *pr* (to pervert) and *rš* (to condemn), both in the *hiphil*, stress this tension as a distortion of Job's position in the confrontation.⁴

The second piece (9-10) establishes a parallelism centred in the use of the preposition *kā* (*como*), both in the first segment (8). Through it God challenges

⁴ According several authors, the use of the expression *mišpāṭī* (*my judgement*) is here employed by God as a direct counter to Job's concern (Job 27:2 [see HABEL, "The design of Yahweh's Speeches", in R.B. ZUK, ed., *Sitting with Job. Selected Studies on the Book of Job*, Eugene, OR 1992, 411-420]).

Job to compare himself with him, namely the power of his arm ($z^{\text{e}}rô^{\text{a}}$) and voice ($qôl$). The second segment (10) forms a concentric structure, employing two suggestive parallelisms between the adjectives $gā'ôn$ - $wāgōba^h$ / *glory - majesty* (*grandeur – dignity / glory - majesty*) and with the two verbs $ādēh-nā'$ / *tilbāš* (*Adorn yourself / cloth yourself*). The special use of these adjectives and verbs to describe God's power is striking: the challenge of God to Job should be taken as a way of uncover the arrogance of Job's previous words.

+ ⁷ ʿēzor-nā'	k ^e geber	ḥālāšekā
+ ʿeš'olkā	w ^e ḥōdī'ēnī	
+ ⁸ ha'ap	tāpēr	mišpāfī
+ taršī'ēnī	l ^e ma'an	tišdāq

:: ⁹ w ^e im-z ^e rōa'	kā'ēl	lāk
:: ūb ^e qôl	kāmōhū	tar'ēm
:: ¹⁰ ʿādeh nā'	<i>gā'ôn</i>	<i>wāgōbah</i>
:: w ^e ḥōd	<i>w^eḥādār</i>	<i>tilbāš</i>

- ¹¹ ḥāpēš	ʿebrôt	'appekā
.. ūr^e'eh	kol-gē'eh	w ^e ḥašpīlēhū
.. ¹² r^e'eh	kol-gē'eh	haknī'ēhū
- wahādōk	r ^e šā'im	tahtām
- ¹³ ṭomnēm	be'āpār	yāḥad
- p ^e nēhem	ḥābōš	baṭṭāmūn

In the third piece 11-13, the first two segments (11-12) exhibit an identical wording except for the synonymous verbs *ḥašpīlēhū* (*abase*) and *haknī'ēhū* (*humble*), both in the imperative form of the *hiphil*. Both segments continue the God's challenge, now focused on Job's ability to dominate the wicked, testing his capacity to be equal to God in his power. This aspect is reinforced by the use of the *hiphil* imperative form of the verb *pws* (*burst forth*), usually used as an allusion of God's power (cf. Job 37:11) and by the expression *'ebrôt 'appekā* (*the fury of your anger*) also strongly associated with God, namely to refer his day of judgement on the wicked (cf. Job 20:28; 21:30); a day well recognized by Job as the day when the wicked are usually spared. The author places and repeats the expression *kol-gē'eh* (*all-proud*), in the interior of a chiasmic structure, leaving the clear mention to the «wicked» (*r^ešā'im*) (12). The two segments (11-12) are clearly focused on Job's capacity to exhibit the same capacities of God by unleashing his wrath, abasing the proud and crushing the wicked. The last segment (13) puts the accent on Job's capacity to complete the

punitive process and deliver the wicked as captives to the underworld.⁵ This literary strategy seems to suggest an interesting association between the proud and the wicked, whom Job is defied to judge together, as an act of retributive justice, as God will do in the day of his judgement.

+ ⁷ Gird up + I will ask you	like a <i>geber</i> , and you will let me know.	your loins.
+ ⁸ Will you + <i>condemn me</i>	<i>pervert</i> in order	MY JUDGMENT, YOU MIGHT BE JUST?

:: ⁹ And <i>an arm</i> :: and with <i>a voice</i>	like God like his	for you (have you), can you thunder?

:: ¹⁰ Adorn yourself :: cloth yourself	with <i>grandeur</i> with <i>glory</i>	and <i>dignity</i> , and <i>majesty</i>

- ¹¹ Let burst forth .. look upon	the fury ALL-PROUD	of your anger, and abase it.

.. ¹² Look upon - cast down	ALL-PROUD <i>the wicked</i>	and humble it, where they stand.

- ¹³ Hide them - their faces	<i>in the dust</i> bind	together, in the hidden place!

The first part (Job 40:6)

+ ⁶ <i>wayya'an</i> + min s ^e 'ārāh	-yhwh wayyō'mar	'et-'iyyôb

+ ⁶ Then <i>answered</i> + from	Yhwh the tempest	Job he said:

The first part forms an introduction (6) that identifies God as the subject of the speech, in close dialogue with Job. The wording establishes a perfect parallel with Job 38,1. The repetition of the word s^e'ārāh (*tempest*) suggests the atmosphere of revelation that the speech keeps until the end.

⁵ The two words *be'āpār* (*in the dust*) and *be'āpār* (*in the hidden place*) are euphemisms for the realm of death (cf. Job 3:16; 17:16; 20:26). To achieve his propose, the author brings out Job's earlier wish that he might be hidden in *Sheol* until the anger of God passed over (Job 14:13).

The third part (40:14)

= ¹⁴ w^egam-
= kî-tôšia‘

’ăni
l^ekā

’ôdekkā
y^emînekā

=¹⁴ Then also,
= for salvation

I will pay you
(is) for you

homage,
at your right hand.

The third part (14) synthetize the assumptions placed by God’s challenge to Job (40:9-14): if Job has the capacity to govern the world, sustaining retributive justice and executing immediate judgement on the wicked, then God will admit that Job is equal to him and will pay him homage as a God. The use of the *hifil* imperfect form of the verb yš‘ (*save*) can be taken as deliver from evil, death or disaster, or as to be successful over his adversaries⁶. If Job can rule with an arm like God (40:9), God will concede that Job’s right hand (y^emînekā) can match his own and will praise Job in his eventual ability to save himself.

THE ENSEMBLE OF THE PASSAGE

⁶ Then *answered* Yhwh Job, from the tempest *he said*:

⁷ Gird up like a *geber*, your loins.

I will ask you and you will let me know.

⁸ Will you pervert my judgment,

condemn me, in order you might be just?

⁹ Do you have an arm like God,

and with a voice like his can you thunder?

¹⁰ Adorn yourself with grandeur and dignity, with glory and majesty cloth yourself.

¹¹ Let burst forth the fury of your anger, look upon all-proud and abase it.

¹² Look upon all-proud and humble it, cast down the wicked where they stand.

¹³ Hide them in the dust together ; bind their faces in the hidden place!

¹⁴ Then also, I will pay you homage, for salvation (is) for you at your right hand.

The passage (40:6-14) is centred on a direct dialogue between God and Job. The pieces 7-8 and 11-13 place a remarkable link between the ability of Job to answer God’s challenges (7-8) and Job’s capacity to prevail over the wicked (11-13). Well placed at the centre, the second piece (9-10) suggests that Job’s ability and capacity would make Job like God in power and in majesty.

⁶ See in this context two significant biblical texts: Jg 7:2; 1Sm 25:33.

II. SECOND PASSAGE (JOB 40:15-24): "BEHOLD THE BEHEMOTH THAT I MADE AS YOU ARE"

COMPOSITION

The second passage (Job 40:15-24) is composed of three parts (15; 16-23; 24), all focused in the image of *b^ehēmôt* (*behemoth*). God keeps being the subject of the speech and Job the direct receptor of his words, challenged now to look and observe the enigmatic figure of the *behemoth*.

The second part (Job 40:16-23)

The second part (40:16-23) is composed of three pieces: 16-18; 19-20; 21-23. The first piece (16-18) is built in three segments. The first segment (16) adds to the statement of *behemoth* as a creature equal to Job, the incredible strength (*kōhō*) and power (*w^eōnō*) of his body. The second and the third segment (17-18) continue the description of *behemoth's* physical characteristics, directing now the attention of Job on the strength of his capacities: to erect (*yaḥpōš*) his tail as cedar or to knot together (*y^esōrāgū*) the sinews of his thighs.

- ¹⁶ hinneh-nā'	kōhō	b^emotnāyw	
- w ^e ōnō	bišrîrê	biḥnô	
- ¹⁷ yaḥpōš	z^enābô	k ^e mô-'ārez	
- gîdê (paḥādô)	[paḥādāyw]	y ^e sōrāgū	
- ¹⁸ 'āšāmāyw	'āpîqê	n ^e hûšâ	
- g^erāmāyw	kimṭîl	barzel	

¹⁹ hû'	rē'sîṭ	darkê-'ēl	
hā'ōsô	yaggēš	ḥarbô	
²⁰ kî-bûl	hārîm	yîs'û-lô	
w ^e kol-ḥayyat	haššādeh	y ^e śahāqû-šām	

²¹ taḥat-	ṢE'ELIM	yîškāb	
b ^e sēter	qāneh	ûbiššâ	
²² y ^e sukkuhû	ṢE'ELIM	šilâlô	
y ^e subbûhû	'arbê-	nāḥal	
²³ hēn	ya'āšōq	nāhār	lô' yaḥpōz
yibṭaḥ	kî-yāgiaḥ	yardēn	'el-pîhû

The second piece (19-20) moves Job's attention to the fact that God consider *behemoth* not only as a creature, but one among the first (*rē'sîṭ*) of his ways

(*darkê-'ēl*). The verb *'śh* (to make), already used 40:15, to affirm *behemoth* a creature as Job is, now reappears to affirm the power God has as *hā'ōśô* (*his maker*) over him (19). However, despite the fact, of the incredible strength of *behemoth*, God has the power to approach (*yaggēš*) his sword and keep him under control. The second segment (20) is signed by the explicit reference to nature, first represented by the *hārîm* (the mountains) and *kol-ḥayyat* (all the living creatures), presented as able to bring tribute (*yis'û-lô*).

The third piece (21-23) begins with the preposition *taḥat* (under) indicating the defence nature can offer to the *behemoth*, now represented by the lotus, the reeds and the marsh (21). The second segment (22) opens with the verb *skk* (to cover). The parallelism this verb establishes with the verb *sbb* (to surround), now indicates the protection nature still offer to *behemoth*. The third segment (23) reintroduces *behemoth* as the subject of the verb *ḥpz* (to worry) establishing a parallelism with the verb *bṭḥ* (to be confident), that declares the self-confidence *behemoth* has in his ability and greatest strength, that fears nothing even the vigour of the running Jordan waters.

- ¹⁶ Behold, also - and <i>the power</i>	the strength of the muscles	<i>in his loins,</i> <i>in his belly!</i>
- ¹⁷ When erect - the sinews	<i>his tail</i> of <i>his thighs</i>	is like a cedar, are knotted together.
- ¹⁸ His bones - his limbs	like tubes like forged	of bronze, iron.

¹⁹ He - His maker	the first draws near	of God' ways. his sword
- ²⁰ Indeed, tribute - and all the animals	the mountains of the field	bring- to him that play there.

:: ²¹ Under :: in the secret	THE LOTUS of the reeds	he lies, and of the marsh.
:: ²² <i>Covers him</i> :: <i>surrounds him</i>	THE LOTUS the willows	with his shadow, of the brook.
+ ²³ If + <i>it is confident</i>	overflows if gushes forth	the river, <i>he does not worry;</i> Jordan up to his mouth.

The first part (15)

The first part (15) is composed of a single piece with a single segment, that begins with the demonstrative particles *hinnēh-nā'* (*behold*) which according the Hebrew morphology, when referring to the past or present, it points generally to some truth either asserted, or recognised.

¹⁵ hinneh-nā' ʾāšer- ḥāšîr	b ^e hēmôt ʾāsîṭî kabbāqār	ʿimmāk yō'kēl
¹⁵ Behold, now that On green stuff	behemoth, I made, like cattle	as you! he feeds.

This fact, brings to God's words a strength that intends to bring Job beyond a simple observation of the nature of *behemoth*. The use of the *qal* perfect, first person singular, of verb 'śh (to make) features God as the creator. The preposition 'immāk (as you) with the suffix in the second masculine singular configures *behemoth* has a creature created just as Job, in equal circumstances.

The third part (24)

– ²⁴ b ^e ʿênāyw –b ^e môqšîm	yiqqāhennû yinqob-	ʾāp
– ²⁴ At his eyes – with snares	takes him, pierces (its)	the nose.

The third part is also composed of a single piece with a segment (24), that surprises by moving the subject to God who, despite the enormous strength, can take *behemoth* easily and directly (*yiqqāhennû*). The expression *b^eʿênāyw* (at his eyes) affirms a direct confrontation, well confirmed in the second member, in God's capacity to pierce the nose of the *behemoth*.

THE TOTALITY OF THE PASSAGE

The passage (40,15-24) introduces the image of behemoth described as a creature created equally to human beings (15), suggesting a variation with its usually mythical understanding.⁷

⁷ See N. HABEL, *The Book of Job*, 557-58.

¹⁵ Behold, now behemoth, that I made, as you are, on green stuff like cattle he feeds	
¹⁶ Behold, also the strength in his loins,	and the power of the muscles in his belly!
¹⁷ When erect <i>his tail is like a cedar</i> ,	the sinews of his thighs knotted together.
¹⁸ His bones like tubes of bronze,	<i>his limbs like forged iron.</i>
¹⁹ He the first of God's ways,	his maker draws near his sword
²⁰ Indeed, the mountains bring him a tribute	and all the animals of the field that play there.
²¹ Under the lotus he lies,	in the secret of the reeds and of the marsh.
²² Covers him the lotus with his shadow,	surrounding him the willows of the brook
²³ If overflows the river, he does not worry, it is confident if Jordan gushes forth up to his mouth.	
²⁴ At his eyes he takes him,	with rings he pierces the nose.

At the centre of the passage (16-23), the biblical author describes *behemoth* in his extraordinary physical strength and power (16-17), suggesting an interesting connection with the affirmation of *behemoth's* ability to relate with nature (21-23). However, a balance defines this special creature: he is the first of God's ways and at the same time is the creature to whom nature pays tribute (19-20). This balance does not injure God as Creator. God keeps being the only one who can deal directly with him and submit him (24).

THE SEQUENCE

⁶ Then Yhwh answered Job,	from the tempest he said:
⁷ Gird like a geber , your loins.	I will ask you, and you will let me know!
⁸ Do you want to pervert my judgment,	condemn, in order you might be just?
⁹ Do you have an arm like God,	and with a voice like his, can you thunder?
¹⁰ Adorn yourself with grandeur and dignity,	with glory and majesty cloth yourself.
¹¹ Let burst forth the fury of your anger,	look upon all proud and abase it.
¹² Look upon all-proud and humble it,	cast down the wicked where they stand.
¹³ Hide them in the dust together,	their faces bind in the hidden place!
¹⁴ Then, also I will pay you homage,	for your right hand can save you.
¹⁵ Behold, now Behemoth , that I made, as you are, on green stuff like cattle he feeds	
¹⁶ Behold, also the strength in his loins,	and the power of the muscles in his belly!
¹⁷ When erect his tail is like a cedar,	the sinews of his thighs knotted together.
¹⁸ His bones like tubes of bronze,	his limbs like forged iron.
¹⁹ He the first of God' ways,	his maker draws near his sword
²⁰ Indeed, a tribute the mountains bring him	and all the animals of the field that play there.
²¹ Under the lotus he lies,	in the secret of the reeds and of the marsh.
²² Covers him the lotus with his shadow,	surrounding him the willows of the brook
²³ If overflows the river, he does not worry,	it is confident if Jordan gushes forth up to his mouth.
²⁴ At his eyes he takes him,	with rings he pierces the nose.

The sequence 40:6-24 opens with the same indication as 38,1 that it is God who is speaking and revealing himself in a clear challenge to Job to gird himself

like a *geber* (6): we should take this Hebrew word as a challenge to Job to be able to act as a man that has the same power to govern earth with an arm as glorious and mighty as God. The text continues with a formal order to Job to recognize the distortion of his position as a perversion of God's judgement (7-8). In this context of dispute, Job is called to exhibit the same capacities of God by bursting forth his wrath, abasing the proud and crushing the wicked. The author identifies a clear difference between Job and God. God does not simply ask Job about the strength of his arm or voice but if they can be equal to his (9). God goes further defying Job's power to adorn or cloth himself, in grandeur and dignity, glory and majesty as God does (10). The paradox of this defy in the clear implied incapability Job has, *defies Job in his implied incapability to humble it or cast down the wicked, domineering and punishing them* (11-13). The passage (40:7-14) ends with a rhetoric admission that if Job can prove to have the same strength, dignity and power of God, he will be the first to pay him homage and consider the justice of his judgement.

The sequence continues with a new passage (40:15-24) now centred in the figure of *behemoth*. Despite the parallelism the author establishes between this figure and Job, both as creatures made by God, Job is not called on to do anything except look, listen and learn (15). The entire description of *behemoth's* strength and power, namely the expressions "is like a cedar" and "like forged iron", suggests a parallel with the strength of God's arm and voice (16-18). However, he is still a creature, "the first of God's ways", dominated by God (19). *behemoth* is not a figure for Job to command like others animals. *Behemoth* can be strong and submit the nature (20), however, he still is a creature made by God (19-20). Despite, he can face all the powers (21-23), God still has power over him (24).

The sequence, in each passage, manifests a remarkable link between Job as a *geber* and *behemoth*. Despite both being creatures made by God, Job is incapable to be strong as a *behemoth* or as a *geber*, to be strong as God. Rather *behemoth* and Job have the same common origin and both live under God's rule. The explicit reference to God's power over the *behemoth*, at the end of the passage (24), recalls the challenge of Job to match the "arm of God" (9). However, the challenge is not repeated: God controls *behemoth* by the nose. God who subjugates *behemoth* can control Job's questioning and anger, coming out from his nose and mouth.

An interesting parallel can be already made with the beginning of the first sequence (38:1-38) mentioned in the beginning of this study. The sequence (40:6) begins with the same words of the first sequence (38:3). The thematic question about governance in 40:8 is analogous to the question about the design of creation in 38:2. Despite this, the parallelism has been considered in different

ways, we can envision a strong unity in the speeches, although they may include different moments⁸.

<p>^{38:1} Then <i>Yhwh</i> answered Job (from) the tempest and <i>said</i>:</p> <p>² Who is this who <u>obscures design</u>, with <i>words</i> without-knowledge?</p> <p>³ Gird like a <i>geber</i> your loins and I will ask you, and you will let me know!</p>	<p>^{40:6} Then <i>Yhwh</i> answered Job, (from) the tempest and <i>said</i>:</p> <p>⁷ Gird like a <i>geber</i>, your loins and I will ask you, and you will let me know!</p> <p>⁸ Do you want to <u>pervert my judgment</u>, condemn me, in order you might be just?</p>
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THE BIBLICAL CONTEXT

An arm and a voice like God

Job is challenged to match the splendour and majesty of God, having an “arm” and a “voice” like God (40:9-10). In this context, the explicit mention to the “arm of God” clearly recalls the symbolism of this image of his redemptive might and just rule, well expressed in Ex 15:16:

¹⁶ “Terror and dread fell upon them;
by the might of **your arm** (*z^erô‘ākā*), they became still as a stone
until your people, o Lord, passed by,
until the people whom you acquired passed by”.

This text echoes a strong tradition also present in Ps 44:3; 79,11 and 2Cro 6:32. God’s arm has a unique power, that perform his authority, mainly his singular capability to rule and control all other powers in nature. Job has experienced that the arms of the friends had proved to be powerless to bring him understanding and justice (26:2). Now, he is challenged to prove that his own arm is stronger than theirs, or even as powerful as the arm of God.

The same challenge is applied to the “voice”. An important reference is the Ps 29. This psalm begins with a strong affirmation of God’s glory and strength

⁸ See C. NEWSOM, “The Book of Job. Introduction, Commentary, and Reflections”, *The New Interpreters’ Bible*, IV, Nashville, TN 1996, 613. According to this author, nothing in Job’s reply indicates that he has yet perceived and understood the nature of that design and its significance for his own situation. Until he does that, the encounter with God cannot find closure.

(1-2) and in the following verses it is pictured with a clear reference to the power and glory of the voice of God (3-4):

³“**The voice of the Lord (*qôl yhw*)** is over the waters;
the God of glory thunders,
the Lord, over mighty waters.

⁴**The voice of the Lord (*qôl yhw*)** is powerful;
the voice of the Lord is full of majesty”.

Job is challenged to exhibit the same godlike qualities and fill the heavens with his shining glory (10)⁹. If he can match God's power, voice and majesty... he can exercise the same control that God has over the cosmos; be as he is and prove his innocence before him as an equal.

To humble the proud

Curiously, God challenges Job *to humble the proud* in a parallelism as also to *crush the wicked*. This parallelism can be understood in the context of Is 2:12.17; 5:15; 10:33. The prophet assures to the people that God has fixed a day against all that is proud (2:12) and a day when all the haughtiness of people will be humbled, permitting that only God alone will be exalted and revealed.

However, despite a common understanding between the expressions of the prophet and the one of Job 40:12, we can see two important clarifications in the text of Job: while by crushing the wicked, Job would just demonstrate his capability to execute judgement as an act of retributive justice; by humbling the proud he will not limit himself to manifest a power like the one of God, he will support God's exaltation and revelation¹⁰.

Job and the Behemoth

Many considerations have been made about the mention to the *behemoth*¹¹. The term *b^ehēmôt* is apparently an intensive plural with the meaning of “the great

⁹ The terms “majesty”, “dignity”, “glory” and “splendour” are all connote the awe-inspiring quality of divinity: Ex 15:7; Ps 96:6; 104:1; 138:5; Is 2:10.19.21; 24:14 [C. NEWSOM, “The Book of Job”, 616].

¹⁰ See J.L. CRENSHAW, *Reading Job. A Literary and Theological Commentary*, Macon GE 2011, 153. This author defends that: “... the emphasis falls on two things: justice and pride. The first concerns Yhwh, the second involves Job and his rivals, *behemoth* and *leviathan*.”

¹¹ See N. HABEL, *The Book of Job*, 557-58. *Behemoth* has been associated with the red hippopotamus as a symbol of wicked to be hunted and conquered [Cf. O. KEEL, *Jahwes*

Beast”¹². This term is probably deliberately ambiguous, to prevent any identification with other known animals, already mentioned in the previous words of God. The use of the very same word in Job 12:7-8, to refer primarily to land animals, alongside of fish and birds of the earth, suggests a close association with Gn 1:26

“Then God said: Let us **make (na‘āśeh) humankind** 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 (b^ehēmāh)** of the earth...”.

This association is confirmed with God’s expression *that I made* (40:15). The use of the same Hebrew root ‘śh (to make) for both humankind (Gn 1:26) and the *behemoth* (40:15) permits to conclude that the author is not claiming simple mythological connotations, or taking *behemoth* as an eternal power, but as a creature made by God in the primordial times. In Bar 29:4 we find the same perception, when the author conceives *behemoth* as a created on the fifth day and apparently identified with the great sea monsters.

The expression *I made with you* (40:15a) suggests that the author could have had the sixth day in mind, when God made the *the wild animals (b^ehēmāh)* as well as the human beings (Gn 1:24-25):

“And God said: Let the earth bring forth living creatures of every kind: cattle and creeping things and **wild animals (b^ehēmāh)** of the earth of every kind. And it was so. God made (*wayyi‘śah*) **the wild animals (b^ehēmāh)** of the earth of every kind, and the cattle of every kind, and everything that creeps upon the ground of every kind.

INTERPRETATION

Bringing Job to another truth

The sequence opens with an identical challenge in the beginning of God’s words, that conserves the focus on the imperfection and limits of Job’s

Entgegnung an Ijob, Göttingen 1978, 125]; as a symbol of the mighty historical enemies of Israel [See E. RUPRECHT, “Das Nilpferd im Hiobbuch”, *VT* 21 (1971) 209-231]; as mythic symbols of the forces of chaos which are overcome by Baal in Canaanite tradition, by Marduk in the Babylonian *Enuma Elish*, and by Horus in Egyptian mythology [Cf. M. POPE, *Job. The Anchor Bible*, Garden City, NY 1973, 68]; as mortal creatures like Job, used as didactic images to teach Job about the ways of God [Cf. J.G. GAMMIE, *Israelite Wisdom*, Scholars Press 1978, 217-231].

¹² See C. NEWSOM, “The Book of Job”, 618. Based on former studies, this author defends that the word *behemoth* is simply a plural of majesty of the ordinary word for animal or cattle. Thus, *behemoth* is the animal *par excellence*.

knowledge (38:3 // 40:7); however, now moving the subject from God's cosmic design to his control (38:4-38 // 40:8). The explicit use of the word *mišpāṭî* (*my judgement*) seems to be a direct counter to Job's concern for judgement (27:2). God's challenge goes direct to such concern, showing that his judgement is at a higher and more cosmic level than the case of justice that Job wants to resolve. The passage (40:9-14) clarifies that God *mišpāṭî* embraces the dimension of a universal power and control. God's justice cannot be reduced to a simple administration of rigid laws of reward and retribution¹³.

Job needs to move from his personal situation and knowledge to another truth. His statement of total innocence does not concede that God could be in the right.¹⁴ Job is challenged to understand that the world has rules and truths that he does not control. They are in God's knowledge. This explains why Job must demonstrate if he can handle effective control of the world as God does, to clarify Job's limits. The world does not simply run according to the moral principles that Job had espoused. God shows to him that evil can be part of the world and God's role as a ruler is not to annihilate it, but to keep the world in balance and freedom. The power of God is not revealed in a retributive justice characterized by imbalance and rigidity, but in a primordial wisdom principle which governs his cosmic design¹⁵.

Understanding God's ways

The impressive call to Job, to behold *behemoth* and the way God controls special creatures like him (40:15-16) emerges as a big surprise in a context of debating two different ways to consider justice (40:7-8). The distinctive mention to the fact *behemoth* was made along with Job strengthens an *inquiring* association (40:15). Job is positioned as being a creature like *behemoth*, and called to recognize the way God controls this remarkable wild animal, the way God acts with him.

The fact that the author mentions explicitly *behemoth* as *God's first ways* must also be understood in this context. The sense of the term *first* as the very *first or primordial* is evident from the use of this term in other wisdom biblical texts, where wisdom appears as the first of God's ways before his works (cf. Pr 8:22)¹⁶. However, the association established with Job, assures an important

¹³ This is the task of those who first Judge ancient Israel (Jz 2,16;18), or the major responsibility of ancient Near Eastern rulers (cf. Ps 72:1-4) [See N. HABEL, *The Book of Job*, 562].

¹⁴ See C. NEWSOM, "The Book of Job", 616. This author clearly defends that Job uses *mišpāṭî* not only to claim his right (Job 9:15; Job 27:2), but also as a language of governance and of judging. See also S.H. Scholnick, "The Meaning of Mishpat in the Book of Job", *JBL* 101 (1983) 522 who points an interesting connexion with Job's paradigm of understanding.

¹⁵ See. A. BRENNER, "God's Answer to Job", *VT* 31 (1981) 133.

¹⁶ This aspect is very well explained in N. HEBEL, "The Symbolism of Wisdom in Proverbs 1-8", *Int* (1972) 154-156 and B. VAWTER, "Prov: 8:22 Wisdom and Creation", *JBL* 99 (1980) 205-

distinction between wisdom as a *first governing principle* and *behemoth* as the *first of the created ways of God*. Wisdom is the first eternal principle, *behemoth* just the first created design.

Job is challenged to consider a world that began with the chaos God created, personified here, as in other mythic traditions, by a wild animal (*behemoth*), that God overcame and controlled¹⁷. As *behemoth*, Job is under God's control and design. As God still overcoming *behemoth* despite his amazing strength (40:24), Job should consider that he has no arm like God's arm or voice (40:9-10), that God has an equal power to control and submit Job, who was *made alongside with him*. The power God shows to control *behemoth's* nose and mouth (40:23-24) entails God's power to control Job's disruptive indignation and outbursts. He will control him as he does with *behemoth*.

Job should move from his knowledge and his experience to God's ways as creator and as ruler, that keeps his designs inside a wisdom of complete balance and freedom, inscrutable to human understanding. Job has fundamentally misconstrued the nature of the world and of God's role in it¹⁸. In this context, to learn God's ways of being and of controlling the chaos acquires great relevance, mainly if we remember God's first words to Job, as words of indictment that Job have obscured God's design (38:2).

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ABSTRACT

This presentation focusses its attention in the composition of Job 40:6-24, that we consider as a sequence composed of two passages. The first passage (40:6-14) opens with a direct challenge to Job, if he has a power to govern the earth with an arm glorious and mighty as the one of God and the second passage (40:15-24) introduces the figure of the *behemoth*, which description accentuates a suggestive difference that Job needs to consider. The first passage (40:9-14) clarifies that God's justice embraces dimensions of a universal power and control. Cannot be reduced to simple administrations of rigid laws of reward and retribution. It is this justice that calls Job to move from his personal situation and knowledge to another truth. In the second passage (40:15-24), the power God should control *behemoth*, despite his amazing strength, entails God's power to control Job's disruptive indignation and outbursts. He will control him as he does with *behemoth*. Job should move from his knowledge and his experience to God's ways as creator, that keeps his designs inside a Wisdom of perfect balance and freedom, inscrutable to human understanding.

216. We can also find a strong support of this comprehension inside the Book of Job: 8:8; 15:7; 20:4; 28:24-27; 38:4.21.

¹⁷ See N. HABEL, *The Book of Job*, 566.

¹⁸ C. NEWSOM, "The Book of Job", 616.

Keywords: knowledge, justice, right, judgement, way.

RIASSUNTO

Questa presentazione concentra la sua attenzione nella composizione di Jb 40:6-24, che consideriamo una sequenza composta di due passi. Il primo passo (40:6-14) si apre con una sfida diretta a Giobbe, questionando il suo potere di governare la terra con un braccio glorioso e potente come quello di Dio. Il secondo passo (40:15-24) introduce la figura del *behemoth*, che la descrizione accentua una suggestiva differenza che Giobbe deve prendere in considerazione. Il primo passo (40: 9-14) chiarisce che la giustizia di Dio abbraccia dimensione di potere e di controllo universale. La giustizia di Dio non può essere ridotta a un semplice amministrazioni di leggi rigide di ricompensa e punizione. Giobbe deve passare dalla sua situazione personale alla conoscenza di un'altra verità. Nel secondo passo (40:15-24), il potere che Dio ha su *behemoth*, nonostante la sua forza straordinaria, comporta lo stesso potere di Dio di controllare l'indignazione di Giobbe e esplosioni dirompenti. Egli controllerà lui la fa come *behemoth*. Giobbe deve muoversi dalla sua conoscenza ed esperienza per conoscere le vie di Dio il Creatore, che mantiene i suoi disegni all'interno di una Sapienza di un perfetto l'equilibrio e libertà, imperscrutabile alla comprensione umana.

Parole chiave: conoscenza, giustizia, diritto, prova, camino.