Are Behemoth and Leviathan Two of a Kind?

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One of the more perplexing problems of the Yahweh speeches in the book of Job is the precise identities of Behemoth and Leviathan. Interpretations have ranged from literal to mythological and just about everywhere in between and they have almost exclusively been understood as the same type of creature. This is sensible enough, as they appear consecutively in the same context. It is also, however, a context that shifts focus throughout, which allows for the possibility of a different reading. This paper will briefly survey a variety of views posed over the years, examine in more depth the two primary approaches currently taken, and suggest an alternative approach that seeks to do justice to the most natural reading of each animal in the text while remaining true to the literary and cultural contexts.

Miscellaneous Views on Behemoth and Leviathan

Kings of the Nations. As discussed in more detail below, Leviathan is mentioned elsewhere, including Isaiah 27.1. Medieval Rabbis interpreted the Leviathan of Isaiah 27 to be a figure for the kings of the nations.[1] Although this is a minority position, it is still upheld on occasion. E.J. Young says that Isaiah is using "descriptive figures of speech to refer to certain nations which are enemies of the Lord" and compares it to moderns speaking of an enemy nation "as a monster, or of some hostile ruler as a demon."[2] But Ortlund suggests that understanding Leviathan to be representative of the human enemies of God's people does not fit the context of Isaiah 27 and that it should be understood as a supernatural opponent of God's people.[3] There may, however, be room for overlap. In Daniel 10.13 a spiritual being described as the Prince of

[1] Eric Ortlund, "The Identity of Leviathan and the Meaning of the Book of Job," *Trinity Journal* 34, no. 1 (2013): 20.

[2] Edward J. Young, *The Book of Isaiah,* v 2 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1969), 234.

[3] Ortlund, "The Identity of Leviathan," 20.

Persia withstands an angel. In Matthew 4.8, Satan claims control over all the kingdoms of the world. In Revelation 13 and 17, the Roman Empire is depicted as the kingdom of Satan himself.

Though the interpretive method is strikingly different, a similar conclusion is reached by Wolfers. He refers to two other intensive uses of "behemoth," and in particular draws from Isaiah's reference to Judah as the Behemoth of the South (30.6)[4] as well as connecting Nahar (i.e., River) to Isaiah 8 and Ugaritic mythology.[5] He concludes, "*Behemoth* is … Judah, while *Leviathan* is apparently to be identified with the Assyrian king, which places him on the same level of reality as *Behemoth* in his character as Judah. *Nahar* is juxtaposed against *Jordan*, the river of Israel, which in this verse must stand for the king of Judah and all his glory!"[6]

The primary deficiency with these views is that they offer little insight into the Leviathan of Job and less into Behemoth. In the context of Isaiah, the reader can at least conceptually connect the dots between mythological language and the rulers of pagan nations, but there are little-to-no contextual clues in Job 40–41 that Yahweh is telling Job that he controls the nations or the evil spiritual forces that stand behind the nations.

Satan. The chief evil force that stands against Yahweh is Satan and he plays a key role in the Job story. Because of these connections, Behemoth and Leviathan have been identified with Satan. Gregory I identified them as Satan and the Antichrist, pointing to the created nature of these creatures (Job 40.10, 14), that no power on earth can compare to Leviathan's (41.24), and that Leviathan is "king over all the sons of pride" (41.25).[7] Thomas Aquinas also makes this identification. Much of his interpretation follows Gregory's, though he adds that the mention of

[4] David Wolfers, *Deep Things out of Darkness: The Book of Job* (Kampen, Netherlands: Pharos, 1995), 166–167.

[5] Ibid., 174.

[6] Ibid., 175. Wolfers sees Job as "an allegorical figure representing the people of Judah and their King Hezekiah in the time of the Assyrian conquests" (15). He also sees Job as "the Uncle Sam of the Jewish State" (100), the "prototypical Jew" (197), Behemoth (167, 175, 177, 184), and the ostrich (221).

[7] Susan E. Schreiner, *Where Shall Wisdom Be Found? Calvin's Exegesis of Job from Medieval and Modern Perspectives* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), 51–52.

angels fearing at Leviathan being taken away (41.16) refers to Satan's fall from heaven, being "amazed at divine majesty, were purified by separation from [Satan's] company."[8]

The identification of Behemoth and Leviathan with Satan, while perhaps not obvious to every reader, has more to commend than a connection to kings. There are contextual connections within Job and, as Gregory and Aquinas illustrate, several verses in Job 40–41 can be understood as referring to Satan. The main weakness of this view is that it does not exhaustively explain the descriptions. Although it does not answer all the questions of Behemoth and Leviathan, it is, perhaps, a sound application of the principle of Leviathan, as will be discussed further below.

Dinosaurs and Dragons. A minority view held by some is that the descriptions are intended to be understood in a strictly literal sense. Laughlin, for example, laments that scholars are not "more open-minded to take God's word for what it plainly says."[9] Whitcomb includes dinosaurs in his table of the creation week, cross-referencing Job 40.15–23,[10] and Laughlin goes so far as to identify Behemoth as one of the sauropods, perhaps the diplodocid or brachiosaurid;[11] he identifies Leviathan as "a fire-breathing sea monster, probably a reptile."[12] Maarten Paul suggests the possibility that a so-called "prehistoric" animal is referred to.[13]

Although such notions appear fanciful, they should not be dismissed off-hand merely because of how they fall on a modern ear.[14] There are, however, two good reasons to suppose a literal reading to be incorrect. First, the book of Job is filled with poetic and figurative language,

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[8] Qtd. in Ibid., 85.

[9] David J. Laughlin, "The Identifications of Behemoth and Leviathan" (master's thesis, Wheaton College Graduate School, 1999), 57.

[10] John C. Whitcomb, *The Early Earth*, rev. ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1986), 38.

[11] Laughlin, "Identifications," 51.

[12] Ibid., 87.

[13] Maarten J. Paul, "Leviathan," *New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology & Exegesis* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1997), 780.

[14] Cf. Longman's dismissal of this as "preposterous," a response likely colored by his own presuppositions. Note his reference to adherents of this view as "so-called young earth creationists"—itself a loaded term—and later statement that dinosaurs would have long been extinct before the advent of humans. Tremper Longman III, *Job* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2012), 441, 444.

a point which even the literalist must concede.[15] In the immediate context, the Yahweh speeches themselves are filled with figurative language. No one imagines that there are literal doors that hold back the sea (38.8), that there are literal gates of death (38.17), that there is a literal storehouse where Yahweh keeps all snow before it falls (38.22), or that Yahweh has water bottles in the sky (38.37). The literalist would also acknowledge the use of figurative language and hyperbole within the description of Leviathan himself.[16] The figurative language in Job at large, and the Yahweh speeches in particular, argues against this viewpoint.

The second reason to eschew the literal reading is the cultural context of Job and the Old Testament. As discussed in more detail below, Leviathan (לויתן) seems to be an allusion to the sea monster called Lotan (לתן) in the Ugaritic myths,[17] other Old Testament passages seem to use Leviathan in a mythological sense, and Job makes reference to yet additional mythological creatures. Ortlund suggests several other Hebrew words that could be used in place of לויתן that would not carry such a mythological connotation and asks why, given the range of options, the author would choose such a loaded word.[18]

The Figurative Approach

A more common view of Behemoth and Leviathan sees them as poetic, figurative descriptions of actual animals: "The descriptions are of course literary and not necessarily realistic, perhaps not entirely accurate."[19] Anderson provides four reasons. First, though longer, the speeches are not essentially different from Yahweh's discussion of other animals (ch 39).

[15] E.g., Some literalists seek to find scientific truths hidden in Biblical texts, such as Job's statement of that the earth is hung on nothing (26.7). The difficulty with such a position is that it is contradicted by Yahweh's affirmation that the earth has a foundation and cornerstone (38.6). Both cannot be literal.

[16] Laughlin does not address these matters specifically in his thesis, but he would not *literally* interpret "his back is made of rows of shields" (41.15), "terror dances before him" (41.22), or "his heart is hard as a stone" (41.24).

[17] Marvin H. Pope, *Job* (New York: Doubleday, 1965), 276.

[18] Ortlund, "The Identity of Leviathan," 23. Cf. Pope, *Job*, 278.

[19] David J.A. Clines, *Job 38–42* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2006), 1185.

Second, fanciful imagery has been used throughout Job and in these earlier poems. Third, allowing for poetic imagery, the book of Job is realistic throughout; Yahweh is the only supernatural reality in the book ("the Satan is quite minor and the angels even further in the background"). Finally, Job 40.15 says Behemoth and Job are Yahweh's creatures.[20]

Most adherents of the figurative view understand Behemoth and Leviathan to be the hippopotamus and crocodile, respectively, a view that has had remarkable staying power since it was first introduced by Bochart in 1633.[21] Much of the descriptions given do not sound much like either the hippopotamus or the crocodile, but the solution is found in a figurative reading "rendered with hyperbolic intensity."[22] Alter adds that the description of the crocodile is "a marvelous fusion of precise observation, hyperbole, and mythological heightening of the real reptile, and thus becomes a beautifully appropriate climax to the whole poem."[23] He further suggests that the distinction the modern reader makes between zoology and mythology would not be as precise in ancient thought. Thus, "The borderlines … between fabled report, immemorial myth, and natural history would tend to blur, and the poet creatively exploits this blur in his climactic evocation of the two amphibious beasts that are at once part of the natural world and beyond it."[24] Hartley follows this line of thought closely, pointing to the realistic descriptions keeping them from becoming purely mythical, but fanciful and mythic enough to "represent both mighty terrestrial creatures and cosmic forces."[25]

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[20] Francis I. Anderson, *Job: An Introduction and Commentary* (Downers Grove: Intervarsity Press, 1976), 288–289.

[21] J.V. Kinnier Wilson, "A Return to the Problems of Behemoth and Leviathan," *Vetus Testamentum* 25 no. 1 (1975): 1, 3. Other suggested animals include the elephant and whale (Clines, *Job*, 1185).

[22] Robert Alter, *The Art of Biblical Poetry* (New York: Basic Books, 1985), 107.

[23] Ibid.

[24] Ibid. One key part of Alter's argument is that of the "fabled myth." He argues that the hippopotamus and crocodile are beyond the listener's "geographical reach and cultural ken, and he would most likely have heard of them through travelers' yarns and the fabulation of folklore," though Clines says that there is evidence of the presence of hippopotami in Palestine from the twelfth to fourth centuries BC (1185).

[25] John E. Hartley, *Job* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988), 522.

Even though the descriptions are figurative, there are similarities between the animals of Job and the real animals. Clines says Behemoth and the hippopotamus are herbivores (v 15), amphibious (vv 22–23), have remarkable strength (v 16) and solid bones (v 18), and seek shade among the reeds in swamps (vv 21–22).[26] Further, Leviathan and the crocodile have terrifying jaws and teeth (v 14), armor-like scales (vv 13, 15–17, 23), a strong neck (v 22), leaves tracks in the mud (v 30), and is at home on land or sea (vv 30–33).[27]

Details of Behemoth and Leviathan. Because this view understands the descriptions of Behemoth and Leviathan to be figurative, a brief discussion of some key phrases is in order.

1. "Behemoth." The word behemoth itself is the standard plural for cattle/beast. Its plural use here is typically understood as a plural of intensification.[28] One reason for this understanding is that although the word is feminine plural, all the verbs describing it are masculine singular.[29]

2. "Which I made as I made you" (40.15).[30] This aspect of Behemoth, stated at the outset, is key to many who take this view of Behemoth and Leviathan. As mentioned above, Anderson specifically cites this verse's explicit statement "that Behemoth and Job are equally God's creatures" as "quite conclusive."[31] Alden says that this phrase "militates against the view that 'behemoth' is a mythical creature."[32] Whybray adds, "However mighty Behemoth may be it is one of Yahweh's creatures and subject to him."[33]

3. "His tail stiff like a cedar" (40.17). This may be the largest obstacle to the hippopotamus view, as the hippo's tail does not even remotely resemble a cedar tree. Several

[26] Clines, *Job*, 1186.
[27] Ibid., 1191.
[28] Francis Brown, Samuel Rolles Driver, and Charles Augustus Briggs, *Enhanced Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon* (Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, 2000), 97.
[29] Robert Alden, *Job* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1993), 396.
[30] Scripture quotations from the English Standard Version, using English versification.
[31] Anderson, *Job*, 289. Cf. Robert Gordis, *The Book of Job: Commentary, New Translation, and Special Studies* (New York: The Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1978), 476.
[32] Alden, *Job*, 396n90.
[33] Norman Whybray, *Job* (Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998), 168.

expositors have suggested that this verse is euphemistic for the sexual organs.[34] Alden points out that the Vulgate translates "thighs" as "testicles" in the second half of the parallelism.[35] By contrast, Clines suggests that it may be hyperbole for the strength of the tail, "which is used powerfully by the hippopotamus as a paddle to scatter its excrement by way of aggression or of advertising its territory."[36]

4. "The first of the works of God." This, again, is seen as evidence that Behemoth is a created animal. Here, "first" is not to be understood in a chronological sequence, but rather that it is the "chief or mightiest of the animals,"[37] the "crown of the animal creation."[38]

5. "His sneezings flash forth light. … Out of his mouth go flaming torches. … Out of his nostrils comes forth smoke. … His breath kindles coals, and a flame comes forth form his mouth" (41.18–21). This description of Leviathan as fire-breathing is likely the biggest obstacle to any naturalistic interpretation of these creatures. Clines admits that some see this as the strongest evidence that the creature is mythological, but points out that the same tendency to hyperbole is found in ancient descriptions of hippopotami.[39] Rowley is characteristic of the figurative interpretation, suggesting hyperbole is built on the water expelling through the crocodile's nose and mouth, when mixed with sunlight, which has the look of a stream of fire.[40]

An alternate figurative solution that neatly solves many of these problems is the overall view offered by Longman. He argues that Behemoth and Leviathan are not real creatures, but

[34] E.g., Robert Alter, *The Wisdom Books: Job, Proverbs, and Ecclesiastes* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2010), 170. Cf. Hartley, *Job,* 525; Pope, *Job*, 271–272.
[35] Alden, *Job,* 396n93.
[36] Clines, *Job*, 1187.
[37] Alden, *Job,* 397.
[38] Hartley, *Job,*525.
[39] Clines, *Job,*1195.
[40] H.H. Rowley, *The Book of Job* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1970), 262.

rather "represent the ultimate in land animals and sea creatures, respectively."[41] So, for example, the Behemoth's tail stiffening may simply be a way of saying that even his tail is muscular.

Wolfers says of the figurative view, "The proponents of hippo and crocodile have had to invoke hyperbole, ignorance, and poetic license to sustain their identifications."[42] Though Wolfers says this in derision, none of the adherents of this view would argue with his perspective. Alter admitted authorial ignorance and the possible legendary status of the animals, and most interpreters cite the sometimes-hyperbolic nature of poetic literature as possible explanations of these descriptions—and rightfully so, since the descriptions are surrounded by figurative poetry.

Whether proponents of non-figurative views are convinced by this exegetical maneuvering or not, many of the descriptive difficulties are solved fairly well by a close examination of the text. There are, however, other difficulties to consider in the figurative view.

One such difficulty to consider is the larger biblical context of the dominion of man. If mankind is truly given dominion over the animal world, it is odd that Yahweh would cite two well-known examples of animals over which man does not have dominion (e.g., 40.24–41.2). While this may simply be more hyperbole,[43] it seems that the basic point being made is that mankind cannot control either of these creatures; Yahweh alone can.

Finally, the very term "leviathan" suggests something more than the physical. As noted above and clarified below, it would have been a loaded term suggesting a mythological creature. Pope says, "If the author of the present composition wished merely to exercise his poetic abilities on the subject of the power and ferocity of the crocodile, he surpassed his goal at the start with

[41] Longman, *Job,*441.
[42] Wolfers, *Deep Things Out of Darkness,* 162.
[43] Hartley says, "In popular lore … it was considered impossible to capture [the hippopotamus]. The implication of Yahweh's questions is that Job dare not hunt, at least alone, such a powerful beast" (*Job,* 526).

the use of the term Leviathan."[44] If this term does have as strong a mythological connotation as is suggested, it would be difficult to expect the original audience to ever understand it as merely a hyperbolic natural creature. More than anything, it is this culturally known mythological creature that has led to the proliferation of the other main interpretive position.

The Mythological Approach

Most scholars see a connection between the Biblical Leviathan and the Ancient Near Eastern mythical Lotan.[45] Lotan was a seven-headed "foul-fanged" serpentine monster.[46] Notice the striking similarity between the Baal myth,

> Though thou didst slay Lotan the Primeval Serpent,
> Didst make an end of the Crooked Serpent,
> The foul-fanged with seven heads.[47]

and Isaiah 27.1,

> In that day the Lord … shall punish
> Leviathan the Primeval Serpent
> Even Leviathan the Crooked Serpent
> And he shall slay the dragon that is in the Sea.

Another word with pagan connections is *Tannin* (found earlier in the same Baal myth and translated "dragon" in Isaiah 27.1; cf. Job 7.12; Ps 74.13; Ezek 29.3; 32.2).[48] Although the precise connection to pagan mythology is harder to make, the Old Testament's *Rahab* (Job 9.13; 26.12; Ps 89.10; Isa 51.9) is a similar sort of creature. In addition to these more obvious mythological monsters, gods of antiquity often fought against the Sea and River deities.[49]

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[44] Pope, *Job*, 278.
[45] Cf. Pope, *Job*, 276–278.
[46] D. Winton Thomas (ed.), *Documents from Old Testament Times* (New York: Harper & Row, 1958) 132.
[47] Ibid.
[48] תנין is also used in a non-mythological sense in the Old Testament (e.g., Gen 1.21).
[49] Thomas, *Documents*, 129. The Ugaritic Sea God was Yam, the same word also translated "sea." Thus, when the "sea" occurs in poetic parallelism with one of these creatures, it is likely intended to be understood in a similar context (e.g., Job 26.12; Isa 51.9; et al.).

It seems clear that the Old Testament uses the language of Ancient Near Eastern mythology. Although the skeptical critic often claims that this shows the Bible to be merely another book of fables, its use is strikingly different. Unlike the mythology, "there is no suggestion that this creature poses any kind of threat to the Sovereign Creator LORD, nor even to creation itself,"[50] which argues strongly for the author's monotheism.[51]

In addition to the language of mythology in general, notice how frequently this language is used in Job. Besides Leviathan in Job 40–41, the book includes Rahab, Tannin, and Yam, which almost certainly sets the use of Leviathan in a mythological context. Most strikingly, perhaps, is Job's earlier mention of Leviathan (3.8), where Job "calls on professional cursers … to get to work on the day of his birth"[52] to rouse Leviathan against him. Here, Leviathan seems to be more than a natural animal, instead symbolizing the forces of chaos.[53] This is significant in relation to Job 40–41, because Yahweh is again citing Leviathan and his arousing, which serves as an inclusio to the speeches of the book of Job. In this context, then, Yahweh is not merely placing Job before a fearsome crocodile.

The largest obstacle to the mythological view is Behemoth. According to Batto, "Despite frequent claims that Behemoth refers to one or another animal of the natural world, the Behemoth depicted in Job 40.15–24 … is best understood as a mythological creature possessing supernatural characteristics."[54] The problem is that Behemoth is not a mythological creature in any extant text. Although precedents for biblical Behemoth have been suggested, there are no certain extra-biblical references to Behemoth other than later Jewish and Christian literature,

[50] Andrew Prideaux, "The Yahweh Speeches in the Book of Job: Sublime Irrelevance or Right to the Point?" *The Reformed Theological Review* 69 no. 2 (2010): 82.

[51] Elmer Smick, "Another Look at the Mythological Elements in the Book of Job," *Westminster Theological Journal* 40 no. 2 (1978): 224.

[52] Longman, *Job,* 101.

[53] Henry Rowold, "Leviathan and Job in Job 41.2–3," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 105 no. 1 (1996): 106.

[54] B. F. Batto, "Behemoth," ed. Karel van der Toorn, Bob Becking, and Pieter W. van der Horst, *Dictionary of Deities and Demons in the Bible* (Leiden; Boston; Köln; Grand Rapids; Cambridge: Brill; Eerdmans, 1999), 165.

which derive from Job, as Batto admits.[55] Ortlund admits a mythological Behemoth is more difficult to prove than Leviathan, offering only Ancient Near Eastern myths that speak of a bovine monster and descriptions of Job's Behemoth that may echo descriptions of the Ugaritic god Mot.[56] It was argued above that the very use of the term Leviathan points beyond the natural realm. Similarly, the lack of a similar term for his companion beast points to it.

Gordis argues comprehensively against the mythological view. He says (1) the first Yahweh speech deals with "flesh-and-blood animals and birds" and is about "the nature of the world and man's place in it," (2) the poetic use of hyperbole, including mythological elements, fits the poetic context of the book of Job (including hyperbole in the first Yahweh speech), (3) Behemoth is not described as horrendous, as the creature found in creation myths, (4) the discussion is not about cosmic events of the past, but the appearance and habits of these creatures in the present, which suggest he is discussing actual animals that were within Job's experience or observation, and (5) the purpose of glorifying the miracle of the created order would not be served by an extended discussion of mythological creatures from a cosmic background.[57]

A Blended Option

Wilson correctly observes, "Theories concerning Behemoth and Leviathan have made them two of a kind, whether two mythological animals or two animals of natural history."[58] Given their back-to-back appearance in the same context, this is a reasonable starting point. But will the text uphold such a view?

[55] Batto, "Behemoth," 165.

[56] Ortlund, "The Identity of Leviathan," 23–24n21.

[57] Gordis, *Job*, 571. On this last point, Gordis does not deny the existence of "passing mythological reference[s]" in the Old Testament.

[58] Wilson, "Behemoth and Leviathan," 12–13. Wilson goes on to pose a theory similar to mine, but focused on "two hypothetical aspects of Job—Job the Creator-god and Job the Hero-god" (13).

Behemoth is more strongly identified with creation than Leviathan is. He is described as being created as Job (40.15) and the first of Yahweh's works (40.19). Nothing in his description sounds mythological or unreasonable for a biological creature of some kind. Further, the word itself is a perfectly natural word and it seems to be talking about a natural beast the one other time it is used in this form. In summary, "The argument for mythology is shakier for Behemoth because there is no extrabiblical evidence of the term as a mythological designation, and all the other occurrences within the Bible would seem to be as a generic term for perfectly naturalistic grass-eating beasts of the field, including an earlier use of the term in Job itself (12.7)"[59]

Leviathan, on the other hand, more clearly seems to be drawn from a mythological background. Since this background is part of the Ancient Near Eastern culture which surrounded Job, is part of the canon which contains the story of Job, and is part of the book of Job itself, it is difficult to argue that, suddenly, in chapters 40–41, Leviathan should be understood as merely a hyperbolized, poetic description of a crocodile. Further, unless an implication is carried over from Behemoth's description, Leviathan is never said to be one of Yahweh's creatures.

One rarely-posed solution is to see each of them in their most natural light: Behemoth as a natural animal, Leviathan as a mythological creature.[60] In this interpretation, Behemoth is a hyperbolized figure of the greatest of all the created order, the quintessential *behema.* He stands, then, not for any one animal specifically, but all the created order. Leviathan, on the other hand, is mythological Leviathan, and stands for the unseen forces of evil.[61] This explanation fits both the textual and cultural contexts of both beasts.

In the context of the Yahweh speeches, Yahweh moves from the created order at large to specific animals within creation to Behemoth and Leviathan. All views which see them as two of

[59] Alter, *Poetry,* 106–107.
[60] While my research has admittedly not been exhaustive, I have not found anyone who argues this view.
[61] If this is valid, it would allow for Leviathan, on some level, to stand for Satan.

a kind misses this progression in Yahweh's argument. A blended view allows Yahweh to move from cosmic creation to earthly creation to the pinnacle of earthly creation to the forces of evil at large. Thus, Behemoth serves as segue from animals to mythology.

In short, this view suggests Yahweh is arguing His control over both tangible and intangible forces. There is no power, whether natural or supernatural, which can stand against Him. Atkinson, who argues the figurative view, comes closest to this point: "Behemoth is the 'beast par excellence.' The Leviathan seems rather like a dragon with flaming breath and smoke from his nostrils. … Taken together, then, Behemoth and Leviathan could stand for the apex of natural and supernatural strength."[62]

Conclusion

Although the specific identity of Behemoth and Leviathan have been debated for years, most modern scholars fall into one of two camps: both are figurative descriptions of two natural animals or both are mythological creatures drawn from Ancient Near Eastern cosmologies. It seems, however, that the most natural reading of each animal allows for a blended view where Behemoth is a figure of the exemplary beast and Leviathan stands for the forces of evil. Although it might appear to be against the context to divide them, such a distinction suits the titles given to each animal, the descriptions of each, and the progression of Yahweh's argument.

[62] David Atkinson, *The Message of Job* (Downers Grove: Intervarsity Press, 1991), 151.

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