The word leviathan only occurs six times in the Old Testament; yet what the leviathan is, how the mystical creature influences nations, and why New Testament Christians should not quickly dismiss these few scriptures are all questions of great importance. Job 40:34 declares that “He is a king over the children of pride.” What are the implications of that statement?

Within the last few chapters of the book of Job, God speaks and demands answers from the man of God. The questions are framed in such a manner as to reveal the inadequate knowledge of the patriarch. “Where were you when I laid the foundations of the earth?” God asked Job to answer that question if he were a man of such great understanding. Chapters 38-40 are laden with one impossible to answer question after another.

Chapter 41 continues with the same purposeful interrogation as God points out Job’s inadequacy to hunt and kill or even tame a monstrous sea serpent called leviathan. The animal is described as having scales so large, thick, and closely overlaid that no sword or harpoon could penetrate. Fire proceeded from his mouth and smoke from his nostrils. As he moved through the waters, he made the seas to boil. God asked Job, “If no one is so fierce that they dare to stir him up, who is able to stand before me?” If God’s created thing could cause man to fear, how much more should man reverence and fear the Creator?

Seeing God’s omnipotence as it was revealed through His creation brought Job to repentance. God used the sea creature as an illustration to reveal to Job the error of his ways and the sovereignty and wisdom of his God. The point was made and the man replied, “I abhor myself and repent in dust and ashes.” (42:6)

Like Job, who had to learn a lesson about humility through his focus upon and knowledge of the great water animal, every student of the scriptures also has much to learn by studying the power of leviathan. For God concluded His long dissertation on the nature of the beast by highlighting that the creature was the king over all the children of pride.

God could have been stating that the beast rules over the strongest, mightiest warriors. Try as they may to conquer the fierce creature, he prevails. He rules. He is king over their prideful skills. But, the possibility is also there that God’s words could have had an even deeper meaning or a double reference. God could have been declaring that, when you find pride in men, you can know who their king is. God might have been pointing beyond the beast to the spirit world.

Leviathan, although he was a real animal, also became a metaphor for a spirit being. Just as other animals, such as the lion or the eagle, are biblical representatives in God’s symbolic vocabulary, leviathan became a word to reference a spirit who works as the king of pride.
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A Demonic Principality
By Dr. Patti Amsden

Leviathan, which is addressed in Job 41:34 as the king of pride, is a demonic principality that was identified as an oppressor of Israel in several biblical passages. Psalm 74 finds the psalmist crying out to the Lord for deliverance from the insolent and wicked acts of an adversarial nation. Israel was under a time of chastisement from the Lord, and the writer is asking how long they would be cast off and under God’s anger. “Remember your congregation” is the plea. Within the first several verses, the writer states that the enemy nation had destroyed the sanctuary, set up their own idolatrous emblems in God’s temple, and burned up all the synagogues of the Lord throughout the land.

The intercession goes forth for the Lord to unveil His right hand, which is metaphoric language for showing His might or power because, as the psalmist declares, God is King and works His salvation in the earth. God had brought about victory for Israel in days gone by, and the cry is for the Lord to again champion over the adversary of His people. Next, a previous victory is referenced. “You did divide the sea by your strength; you broke the heads of the dragons in the waters. You broke the heads of leviathan in pieces and gave him to be meat to the people inhabiting the wilderness.” (Ps. 74:13-14)

The reference to the past victory is a reference to the Red Sea crossing, which occurred when the Israelites were departing Egyptian captivity. Under Moses, the Lord had worked earth-altering and heaven-reordering miracles. Not only had the sovereignty of Pharaoh and his governmental organization been overcome, but the power of the satanic structures that influenced the Egyptian culture had been defeated. The climactic show of the Lord’s “right hand” occurred as the waters of the Sea opened to provide safe passage for His covenant people but closed upon the Pharaoh’s armies creating a mass grave for the enemy.

Egypt, Pharaoh, the armies: these terms are synonymous for the dragons or leviathan. Although there may have been some literal sea creatures that were destroyed in the Red Sea event, the condition of water animals is not the focus of the psalmist’s discourse. The dragon devastated in the Sea was the oppressor named Egypt. Just as God had prevailed against that nation of Egypt, the psalmist in Psalm 74 pleads for God to once again defeat another nation, another adversary, another dragon-leviathan.

The biblical image of a serpent or a dragon had its beginning in the garden when the serpent spoke to Eve and twisted the truth. From that garden event and throughout the pages of scripture, the snake is the metaphor for the devil and the enemy. In Genesis 3:15, God spoke that there would come forth two seed lines, meaning God’s people and the devil’s people who would be in conflict. These opposing seed lines would develop into nations and cultures contesting for control of the earth and manifesting the progenitor of their lineage – either the serpent or the Lord. Egypt represented one seed line; Israel represented the other. The discourse in the garden also stated the outcome of the two seed line contest. The head of the serpent would be crushed. The Red Sea event broke the head of the serpent, the dragon, or the leviathan, thus fulfilling, at least in part, the proclamation made by God in the garden.
Psalm 74 shows that leviathan is not only a reference to Egypt but is also a reference to another nation – the one who had destroyed the temple and the synagogues. Leviathan is a term representing the dragon or serpent-like seed lines and those cultural systems that develop in nations.

Controlling the Commerce of a Nation
by Dr. Patti Amsden

Leviathan is a demonic principality that seeks to enslave people and steal a nation's destiny. Scripture records such treatment of Israel by Egypt where we find a biblical example of two nations in conflict and two cultures in disparity because of two worship systems in contrast. Psalm 74:1-17 clearly states that God destroyed Israel's captors, Egypt, in the Red Sea and distinctly references Egypt by the title leviathan.

Advancing our understanding of leviathan, we read Psalm 104:26: “There (on the seas) go the ships; there is leviathan, whom thou hast formed to play therein” (ASV). This psalm describes God’s providential plan and provision for His whole creation and its creatures. In context of that theme, the passage speaks of the literal animal leviathan, whose habitation is in the waters (Job 41), and declares that he is one of the many creatures that is satisfied by the food God supplies. Although the focus of the passage is upon the natural animal, the context also provides us with insight to the principality of which the animal is a symbolic metaphor.

Leviathan resides where the ships sail. Sailing ships carry cargo, which might be passengers or product. Sailing ships represent trade, economic exchange, inter-city or international commerce. Seas provide trade routes, and Leviathan’s habitation is found in those lanes of commercial traffic.

Reflecting back to the Garden of Eden, we remember that Adam and Eve were assigned the task of taking dominion over the earth and the work of discovering and releasing the potential latent within the creation. Because of the magnitude of the job, the first couple could never have managed the task alone. By God’s designed, more humans continued to be born and to participate in the task of earthly dominion. Diversification and specialization are not just by-products of modern civilization; they have been facets of labor in every age. People work together. People trade what they have for what they don't have. The marketplace develops, and the products exchanged are the result of dominion labors. Economics is the engine of dominion.

Again reflecting back to the Garden of Eden, we remember that the serpent, who could be described as the first manifestation of leviathan, sought to enlist the allegiance of Adam and Eve and the use their dominion labors to build his counter-kingdom. Not only did this leviathan inject himself into the resource production of the first couple and seek to use their labors for his own benefit, he has continued to entice and influence the production and exchange of assets among people in every generation and in all nations. He seeks to be the god of this world’s systems, including the management of the earth’s resources.

Egypt was a center of commerce because of the Nile River. Egypt trafficked merchandise upon the water and traded with other nations. Egypt, as a nation, stood in marked contrast to the ways of God. Her religion was pagan; her government was tyrannical; and her economic system prospered on the labor of slaves. She enslaved the people of God and rejected
the God of her slaves. Leviathan was at work building a Nile River based economic system that could sustain and support a religion and government that contested with the Most High God. The garden event was repeated, only more people than the first couple were enticed by twisted words; the dominion labors of the whole nation of Egypt were enlisted to build the fallen system of the devil. Money and wealth supported the dominion or reign of Egypt’s rulers. Egypt was a land of wealth, a land of Leviathan, a land that opposed the Kingdom of God.

Leviathan, which is introduced in the scriptures as a fierce water serpent, takes on a personification of a system of trade that is built upon stolen labors and corrupt practices that benefit the people who practice power economics.

Leviathan and Power Economics
By Dr. Patti Amsden

Power economics is practiced by people who exercise earthly dominion through the use of force, the implementation of manipulative tactics, or the application of fraudulent practices to gain the advantage over another person or system. The man who employs power economics seeks personal promotion at the expense of others. The goal is to come out on top, to climb the ladder of success, to accumulate riches and honor. Self-interest is the god of power economics and all participants worship at the altar of pride. Power hungry people devour resources and other people.

In contrast to power economics, there is ethical economics, which is practiced by people who exercise earthly dominion through the use of personal responsibility, moral integrity, and brotherly love. The person who labors with the skills, talents, and resources that he possesses to advance his station in life while likewise caring to guard the personal choices and position of his fellowman is working out of a paradigm of ethical economics. Ethical economics is dominion without domination. It is gaining advancement without taking advantage.

Jesus admonished his followers to serve each other and to love each other as they exercised dominion. “Ye know that the princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion over them, and they that are great exercise authority upon them. But it shall not be so among you: but whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister; and whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant” (Mt. 20:25-27). Power economics or power dominion is presented as diametrically opposed to Christ’s dominion and His Kingdom.

Within the pages of scripture, these two systems of economics, two systems of ethics, or two systems of dominion are set in contrast one to another. The fountain head of this divergence of operation can be discovered by again looking at the garden and the serpent’s original temptation. This garden-serpent, which we have discovered to be our inaugural introduction to Leviathan, presented Eve with a plan for dominion. She could use the product of the earth (the fruit of the tree) to advance her station in life. She could climb the ladder of success by casting off the restraint of ethics. She could attain a higher position from which to exercise dominion; she could become like god.

Eve must not have recognized that the serpent was not at all interested in her well-being. He was not guarding her future nor protecting her mission. He was not operating out of selfless love for her but rather operating out of selfish love and self-interest. He wanted the position of
lordship, and he was seeking to attain that status at the expense of the first couple. And – attain it he did. He climbed the ladder to become the god of the system. And – rather than the first couple attaining a higher position – they were made slaves to the leviathan serpent who first practiced power economics.

The methodology employed by the serpent in the garden has been utilized over and over again in Gentile nations that yield to the sinful promptings of the god of this world. Egypt was one such nation and, as has been previously discussed, was described as leviathan (Ps. 74:1-17; Is. 51:9-10). Egypt was a land of pyramids, and the physical design of those pyramids denoted to the nation’s philosophy. Although the pyramids were built as elaborate tombs for the Pharaohs, they testified to the exorbitant wealth, sovereign power, and god-like status that the leaders of the nation had attained through the exercise of power economics and power dominion. The land of pyramidal practices enslaved the Israelites and prospered through the labor of their servitude. Leviathan-influenced Pharaoh did not guard the liberty or well-being of the seed of Abraham. Brotherly love was not exercised; serving one another was not demonstrated. Rather, selfish ambitions prevailed over concern for others and pride-filled motives drove the system. Like the first couple in the garden, Israel in Egypt became slaves to leviathan.

Egypt was only one of the nations that practiced leviathan-driven economics. Every non-covenant nation or Gentile nation, whether they were in bible days or are in modern days, has been influenced by the spirit of leviathan. The principality of leviathan seeks to control the product of the earth and the producers of that product (people) to guarantee that he remains on the top of pyramid. The leviathan serpent wants power, wealth, and position from which to rule over people and maintain his lordship. Leviathan, the author of power economics, cheats in the trade.

Cheating in the Trade
By Dr. Patti Amsden

The Principality that is known as leviathan seeks to control dominion by working through people, who were granted authority by God to exercise dominion in the earth, and through controlling the fruit of dominion, which is the economy. Leviathan’s efforts to control people and to control wealth assist him in his attempted usurpation over God and God’s kingdom. For this goal to be accomplished, the leviathan-serpent does not speak the truth. John 8:44-45 states, “You (the people to whom Jesus was speaking) are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father you will do. . . . he is a liar and the father of it.”

When the serpent spoke to Eve in the garden, he did not tell her the truth. Without good information, wisdom is difficult to find. Eve originally had accurate knowledge because God had spoken to her. However, the serpent sought to twist the information and obscure the truth. The release of misinformation and distortion of reality was a deliberate attempt on the part of the serpent to invoke a decision that best suited his agenda. He could have spoken truth because he knew who God really was and he knew who Eve was created to be, but truth would have evoked worship for God and a right ethic based upon God’s commands. That outcome would not have advanced his scheme. He needed to change the outcome of the garden transaction. So, he cheated; he introduced fraud; he scammed Adam and Eve.
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The theme of introducing fraud into a transaction is found often in scripture and is explicitly forbidden in Commandment 7 (no stealing) and Commandment 8 (no false witness in an attempt to change the reward). One passage that sheds an abundance of light upon the methods of leviathan and cheating in the trade is found Ezekiel 28:1-17. The chapter begins with the prophet addressing the King of Tyre and bringing a rebuke because the heart of the king had been exalted in pride to such a degree that the king had declared, “I am God.” This self-evaluation had developed because the throne of his domain was in Tyre, which was a sea port or a hub of commerce. (Remember that leviathan traffics on the waterways or in the marketplace – Article entitled “Controlling the Commerce of a Nation”). The king had concluded that his trading ability or his wisdom to traffic had increased his riches. He had become so rich and powerful that pride had overtaken his heart. Therefore, the prophet announced that he would “die the deaths of them that are slain in the midst of the seas,” which is the fate of leviathan – Ps. 74:13-14.

Having announced judgment on the leviathan-king, Ezekiel begins another prophecy. Starting in verse 12, the prophet addresses the spirit that was prompting the trading tactics of Tyre’s king. Ezekiel describes the spirit as full of wisdom, perfect in beauty, without flaw in the way he was created. His being possessed tabrets (percussion instruments) and pipes (wind instruments). He was a sound and music creator by nature of how his being was designed. Next, Ezekiel calls him “the anointed cherub that covers” (v.14). Theologians from almost every camp agree that the spirit addressed in the passage is the devil before his fall and in his role as leading angelic beings in the worship of God. Lucifer, the pre-fall name of the devil, covered the throne. Isaiah 6:1-4 helps to give clearer understanding of this role of covering. The passage reveals two angelic seraphim posted above God’s throne and positioned to face one another with the throne between them. The image communicated is revisited in the way God instructed Moses to construct the Ark of the Covenant and the Mercy Seat (Ex. 25:20; 37:9). The Ark was God’s earthly throne and the place where God’s manifest glory was released. The throne in heaven and in Moses’ tabernacle both are seen surrounded by covering angels. God’s presence impacts the angels and causes them to cry, “Holy, holy, holy.” They release a testimony of who they have seen God to be. They announce a witness as to his matchless nature. They worship and discharge that worship to be heard by others.

Lucifer’s role was to cover the throne, receive the revelation of God’s glory, and then to dispense that revelation by his testimony. He was to have led an angelic symphony of praise. His being was created to be an instrument of worship and his role was to lead heaven’s worship. One could say that he sat in a position of trading – trading the revealed glory to other created beings for an increase in worship that would be returned to God. He received glory and released glory to others. He did not traffic in material gold and riches as did the King of Tyre, but he trafficked in spiritual riches – the glory and honor of God. Ezekiel 28:16-18 confirms this idea. “By the multitude of the merchandise . . . you have sinned.” “You have defiled the sanctuaries by the multitude of your iniquity, by the iniquity of your traffic.” The word merchandise and the word traffic are the same Hebrew word rekulla that was used to describe the sin of Tyre’s King. Lucifer’s iniquity was in the way he trafficked.
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In his role as heaven’s worship leader, Lucifer introduced fraud in his trade. He cheated in dispensing the glory. He twisted the truth about who God was, about the plans of God, about the perfection of the Creator. He did not return the worship to God but sought to hold back some honor and glory (stolen increase) for himself. He sparked a rebellion because his heart was lifted in pride. He sought to be like God (Is. 14:12-17; Rev. 12:3-4).

He continued cheating in the trade as he interacted with Adam and Eve. Again, he did not speak the truth about who God was or about the plans of God. This leviathan-serpent cheated as he traded with the first couple. He did not seek to return honor and worship to God but, rather, to accumulate honor and worship for himself. He cheated to advance his position, to accumulate power, to become like God.

The leviathan-serpent always cheats in the trade. Leviathan creates an economic system that is a counterfeit to God’s methodology. Jesus called it mammon. Mammon is leviathan’s trading system.

The System of Mammon
By Dr. Patti Amsden

When the principality known as leviathan is at work, he seeks to take control of the trading routes, to confiscate the product of men’s labors, the liberty of individuals, and even the destiny of blood lines. He builds systems of economics for the purpose of bringing the strength and wealth of the earth under his control. He does not watch over the rights of the individual nor seek to promote the well-being of the person; but rather he lies, steals, and cheats. At the end of any trade with the leviathan, his agenda is advanced while the laborer is stripped of reward. Leviathan builds a system known as mammon.

In Matthew 6:21-25, Jesus admonished his followers that they could not serve both God and mammon. “For where your treasure is, there will you heart be also. The light of the body is the eye. If therefore your eye is single, your whole body shall be full of light. . . . No man can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will hold to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon.” In the context of this passage, mammon (which means wealth, greed, materialism or avarice) is personified and juxtaposed against God as a claimant lord or master. Both demand homage, service, and worship. When a man loves God, he cannot love mammon. If a man serves mammon, he will not serve God. Jesus called his followers to singularity of eye, heart, life, and actions.

Mammon is a system of economics. Mammon is a system of dominion. Mammon’s driving force is the principality known as leviathan. Another passage that sheds more insight upon this leviathan system is found in Mark 10:42-45 where Jesus rebuked his followers for their attempts to advance their personal position in His kingdom. Jesus referenced the systems of the Gentiles, which meant those national systems not functioning under God’s covenant and principles. He explained that those structures function by the leaders exerting lordship over the populace. Gentile rulers build their power base at the expense of those with whom they work. Christ’s kingdom was to be structured differently. The greatest in His realm would be the servants of all. His servants would build up their power base by caring for the prosperity and well-being of those with whom they would work.
Mammon, the operating system of leviathan, functions by climbing on top of one’s fellowman for the reward of gain. Mammon operates by dominating others during the outworking of one’s dominion. Leviathan’s mammon seeks to swallow up the fruit of labor and enslave the laborer for the procurement of power and position. God’s kingdom stands in contrast. Jesus was the example of the opposite spirit. He came to serve and give his life as a ransom. While he was alive, Jesus served the masses by feeding them, healing them, and teaching them principles to find success in this life and in eternity. In his death, He released mankind from the forces of sin and death. Jesus lives forever to liberate, empower, enable, and to authorize those under His lordship to find life and life abundantly (Jn. 10:10).

Leviathan’s system of mammon is based upon the love of money (I Tim.6:10) while Jesus’ system is founded upon a different kind of love – a love that lays down one’s life for a brother (Jn. 15:13). Leviathan mammon will sell one’s brother for the reward of money as Joseph’s brothers sold him (Gen.37:28). God’s kingdom requires the heart of a kinsman-redeemer that will spend personal wealth to procure a future for another. One lord sells out others for himself; the opposite Lord sells Himself for others. One ruler uses up people’s treasures to the end of their bondage; the other Ruler releases the treasures locked up in people. One is the king of pride who exalts himself; the other humbles Himself to serve and trusts that God will exalt Him. The methodologies set and practiced by these two opposing leaders are expressed through their disciples.

In every way, the dominion operational system, which is mammon, that serves leviathan stands in marked contrast to the dominion operational system of King Jesus. While earthly power and riches are often a temporary reward of serving mammon, the scripture promises a transfer of wealth. At the crushing of leviathan’s head, his wealth is transferred.

The Transfer of Wealth
By Dr. Patti Amsden

Psalm 74:1-17 is one of the primary passages in Scripture that expounds upon leviathan. Within its context, the reader finds that God broke the heads of the water serpent in the waters of the Red Sea as He delivered the Israelites from the oppressive hand of the Egyptians. That means that redemption has the power to destroy the rulership, leadership, or headship of this demonic principality. Such a statement should resound within the heart and mind of every believer who knows that the redemption offered through Christ “spoils principalities and powers and makes a show of them openly as Christ triumphs over them in the cross” (Col. 3:15 – translation adapted by author).

Throughout these essays on leviathan, the case has been made for two kingdoms in conflict and two styles of management of those kingdoms. God manages His kingdom and empowers his stewards to establish His righteous ways in the earth. The devil manages his kingdom and uses his earthly followers as he seeks to usurp God’s lordship and establish his own earthly cosmos. Each kingdom has followers and each kingdom needs resources. The management of those resources and workers is the assignment of leviathan. When the headship of leviathan is defeated by redemption, his people or his workers are liberated. That principle
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was clearly demonstrated when the Israelites, who had been Pharaoh’s slaves, were set free from satanic tyranny and released to serve God. In current culture, the power of the gospel sets the people free to be converted and freed from serving the purposes mandated by demonic powers (Eph. 2:1-6).

What about the resources? What about the materials and the assets previously managed by leviathan? Psalm 74:14 gives that answer. “You broke the heads of Leviathan in pieces and gave him to be meat to the people inhabiting the wilderness.” The wealth of the Egyptian leviathan was transferred to God’s covenant representatives. Scriptures inform that Moses instructed the Israelites to ask for great wealth from the Egyptians before their departure (Ex. 12:35-36). Then, when the waters of the Red Sea closed upon the Pharaoh and upon “six hundred chosen chariots, and all the chariots of Egypt, and captains over every one of them” (Ex.14:7), the strength and resources of the opposing armies was “fed” to the Israelites. Metaphorically, the resources of Egypt became meat for the people. But, the transfer was more than metaphoric or symbolic. When the sea washed up the belongings of the army, the Israelites were the people standing on the shore to pick up the bounty and add it to the portion they had collected before departing Egypt.

Collecting the bounty or spoils from the defeated oppressors is a theme repeated several times in scripture. David recovered all the spoils that had been taken when the Amalekites raided Judah (I Sam. 30:18-20). Jehoshaphat collected the spoils after God set ambushments against the armies of Ammon, Moab, and Mt. Seir (II Chron.20:22-25). Psalm 37 is replete with promises that the earth and its wealth will be transferred to the righteous when the wicked are cut off.

One prominent portion of scripture that prophesies the transfer of wealth is found in Haggai 2:7-9, which reads, “And I will shake all nations, and the desire (the treasures or the wealth) of all nations shall come and I will fill this house with glory, saith the Lord of Hosts. The silver is mine and the gold is mine said the Lord of hosts. The glory of this latter house shall be greater than of the former, saith the Lord of hosts; and in this place will I give peace, saith the Lord of hosts.” The passage promises the transfer of wealth from nations to the house of the Lord. Two important aspects of this passage are particularly relevant to the discourse on leviathan. First, the nations are those systems under leviathan’s management that will be shaken. The wealth of those systems and the resources used by leviathan will be transferred, so that indicates new managers of the wealth. Secondly, it should be noted that God refers to himself as the Lord of Hosts a total of four times in this passage and two more times in verses that precede. Lord of Host means lord over earthly or heavenly armies. God is promising to defeat opposing armies, just like He did for Israel with Egypt, David with the Amalekites, Jehoshaphat with Ammon and Moab. And to the victor goes the spoils. The Lord of heaven’s armies destroys leviathan and liberates people and resources. Wealth is transferred. Leviathan’s meat is fed to the people who walk in covenant with God.