

## Habakkuk

**1:1** The pronouncement which Habakkuk the prophet saw.<sup>1</sup>

**1:2** How long will I cry for help, Yahweh, and You will not hear? I cry out to You, “Violence!” Yet, You do not save.<sup>2</sup> **1:3** Why are You causing me to see iniquity, and causing me to look at trouble? Even destruction and violence are before me. Strife exists, and contention has arisen.<sup>3</sup> **1:4** Therefore the Torah grows numb, and justice never goes out, because the wicked surround the righteous. Therefore justice goes out really twisted.<sup>4</sup>

**1:5** Look among the nations. Look, and be astonished. Wonder, because I am doing a work in your days. You would not believe if someone described it.<sup>5</sup> **1:6** Behold, I am raising up the Chaldeans, the bitter and rash nation, who are going all over the earth to possess dwelling places which do not belong to them.<sup>6</sup> **1:7** They are terrible and to be feared. Their justice and their majesty go out from them.<sup>7</sup> **1:8** Their horses are swifter than leopards and quicker than wolves of the evening, and their horseman gallop. Their horsemen come from afar. They fly like an eagle hastening to devour.<sup>8</sup> **1:9** All of them come for violent destruction. The movement of their faces is forward, and they gather captives like the sand.<sup>9</sup> **1:10** They make fun of the kings, and the rulers are a joke to them. They mock every fortress, and they heap up dirt. Then, they capture it.<sup>10</sup>

**1:11** Then, they will pass through like the wind, and they will pass through and be guilty, these ones whose strength is their god [LXX – Then the Spirit will change His mind, will pass through, and will make atonement. The very strength belongs to my God].<sup>11</sup>

**1:12** Are You not from the beginning, Yahweh Elohim, my Holy One? We will not die. Yahweh, You have appointed them for judgment, and You, Rock, have established them to reprove.<sup>12</sup> **1:13** Your eyes are too pure to see evil, and You are not able to look at wickedness. Why do You look at those who act treacherously? Why are You deaf when the wicked swallow up those more righteous than them?<sup>13</sup>

**1:14** You made man like the fishes of the sea, like creeping things without a ruler over them.<sup>14</sup> **1:15** They cause all of them to go up with a hook. They drag them with their net, and they gather them with their fishing net. Therefore they rejoice and are glad.<sup>15</sup> **1:16** As a result, they sacrifice to their net, and they burn incense to their fishing net, because by it their share of booty is great, and their food is plentiful.<sup>16</sup> **1:17** Will they, therefore, empty their net and continually slay nations whom they will not pity?<sup>17</sup>

**2:1** I will stand on my watch, and I will station myself on a fortress. And I will really watch to see what He will speak in regard to me and what I will reply on the basis of my complaint.<sup>18</sup>

**2:2** And Yahweh answered me and said, “Write the vision and make it plain on the tablets in order that the one who reads it may run.<sup>19</sup> **2:3** Because the vision is yet for the appointed time, and it moves towards the finish line, and it will not lie. Though it delays, wait for it, for it will certainly come. It will not delay.”<sup>20</sup>

**2:4** “Behold the proud one, his soul is not right within him. But as for the righteous one, he will live by his belief.<sup>21</sup> **2:5** Furthermore, wine betrays the trust of the proud man, and he does not stay home. He causes his soul to enlarge like Sheol, and he is like death.

He is never satisfied, so that he gathers to himself all the nations and he collects to himself all the peoples."<sup>22</sup>

**2:6** "Will not all these lift up a proverb against him, and satire and riddles against him? And they will say, 'Woe to him who increases what is not his. Until when? And who makes himself heavy with loans.'<sup>23</sup> **2:7** Will not those who are charging you interest suddenly rise up, and will not those who are causing you to tremble awaken? And you will be booty for them.<sup>24</sup> **2:8** Because you plundered great nations, all the remainder of the peoples will plunder you—because of human bloodshed and violence done to the land, to the city, and all those who dwell in it."<sup>25</sup>

**2:9** "Woe to the one who gains by violence unjust, evil gain for his house to set his nest on the height to be delivered from the hand of evil.<sup>26</sup> **2:10** You have counseled shame for your house by cutting off many peoples, and your soul is sinning.<sup>27</sup> **2:11** Therefore, the stone from the wall will cry out, and the rafter from the tree will answer it."<sup>28</sup>

**2:12** "Woe to the one who builds a city with bloodshed and establishes a city with unrighteousness.<sup>29</sup> **2:13** Is it not indeed from Yahweh of the armies that peoples toil for enough fire, and peoples are weary with emptiness?<sup>30</sup> **2:14** For the land/earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of Yahweh, as waters cover the sea."<sup>31</sup>

**2:15** "Woe to him who makes his friend drink, who attaches his poison and makes him drunk in order to look upon his nakedness.<sup>32</sup> **2:16** You are satisfied with shame rather than honor. Drink, you, also and show your uncircumcised state. The cup of the right hand of Yahweh will surround you, and disgrace will come upon your honor,<sup>33</sup> **2:17** because the violent wrongdoings of Lebanon will cover you, and the destruction of beasts will cause them to be dismayed, as a result of human bloodshed and the violent wrongdoings of the land, the city, and all those who dwell in it."<sup>34</sup>

**2:18** "What profit is an idol when its maker has carved it—a molten image, a teacher of falsehood—because the maker trusts his handiwork on it to make dumb idols?<sup>35</sup> **2:19** Woe to the one who says to the tree, 'Wake up,' to the silent stone, 'Arise.' He is teaching. Behold, it is overlaid with gold and silver, and there is no spirit in it."<sup>36</sup>

**2:20** But Yahweh is in His holy temple. Silence all the earth in His presence!<sup>37</sup>

**3:1** The prayer of Habakkuk the prophet with a song.<sup>38</sup>

**3:2** "Yahweh, I have heard Your report, and I am afraid. Yahweh, revive your work in the midst of the years. In the midst of years make it known. In wrath remember to be compassionate."<sup>39</sup>

**3:3** God comes from Teman, and the Holy One from Mt. Paran. His excellence covers the heavens, and His praise fills the earth.<sup>40</sup>

**3:4** His brightness is like light, His power from His hand is His, and there is the hiding of His power.<sup>41</sup>

**3:5** His message goes before Him, and a plague goes out at His feet.<sup>42</sup>

**3:6** He stood and shook the earth. He looked and removed the nations, and the sturdy mountains were shattered. The everlasting hills bent over. His ways are everlasting.<sup>43</sup>

**3:7** I saw the tents of Cushan under distress. The tent curtains of the land of Midian trembled.<sup>44</sup>

**3:8** Was Yahweh angry with the rivers, whether Your anger was with the rivers, or Your wrath with the sea, because You mount and ride on Your horses, Your chariots of salvation?<sup>45</sup>

**3:9** Your bow is stretched bare. The rods of your speech are oaths. You split the earth with rivers.<sup>46</sup>

**3:10** The mountains saw you. They trembled. The downpour of water passed through. The deep uttered its voice. It lifted high its hands.<sup>47</sup>

**3:11** The sun was in its place. The moon stood in its lofty place. Your arrows went towards the light. Your spear was lightening towards the brightness.<sup>48</sup>

**3:12** With wrath You marched solemnly through the earth. In anger You trampled the nations.<sup>49</sup>

**3:13** You go forth for the salvation of Your people, for the the salvation of your anointed ones. You kill the head of the house of the wicked, to lay him open from his legs to his neck.<sup>50</sup>

**3:14** You have pierced with his spears the head of his warriors. They stormed in in order to scatter us. Their exultation was like those who devour the poor in a secret place.<sup>51</sup>

**3:15** You trample on the sea with your horses, causing the foaming of many waters.<sup>52</sup>

**3:16** I listened, and my insides trembled. At the sound my lips quivered. Decay enters my bones, and from beneath me I tremble. Yet, I will stay settled until the day of distress, until the people's rising up. They will attack us.<sup>53</sup>

**3:17** Though the fig tree does not blossom, and there is no produce on the vines, the work of the olive fails to achieve, and the fields produce no food, the flock is cut off from the sheepfold, and there are no cattle in the stalls,<sup>54</sup>

**3:18** as for me, I will exult in Yahweh. I will rejoice in the God of my salvation.<sup>55</sup>

**3:19** Yahweh my Lord is my strength, and He has established my feet as those of does. He causes me to walk on my high places.<sup>56</sup>

To the music director on my stringed instruments.<sup>57</sup>

<sup>1</sup> המִשָּׁא אֲשֶׁר תִּזְהַח חִבְקוּק הַנְּבִיא – Internal evidence indicates that Habakkuk was a prophet to the southern Kingdom of Judah just before it fell to the Babylonians between 600 and 586 B.C., but he may have started writing about his own spiritual struggles as early as 626 B.C.

<sup>2</sup> עַד-אַנְהָ יְהוָה שְׁוֹעֲתִי וְלֹא הִשְׁמַע אֲזַעֲקָ אֱלֹהֵי הַמָּס וְלֹא הוֹשִׁיעַ – Habakkuk is expressing to God his anguish over the social situation in the southern Kingdom of Judah. Violence rules the day, and God is not changing it in spite of Habakkuk’s pleas for Him to do so.

<sup>3</sup> לָמָּה תִרְאֵנִי אֲנִי וְעַמְּךָ תִבְיֹט וְשֹׁד וְחָמָס לְנוֹדֵי וְיָהִי רֵיב וּמְדוּן יִשְׂא – The last part of the verse in the LXX is a little different. LXX – ἐξ ἐναντίας μου γέγονεν κρίσις, καὶ ὁ κριτὴς λαμβάνει = judgment has come about against me, and the judge receives.

Habakkuk cannot stand what he sees in his society, and He knows that God both is the author of all reality and the only One who therefore can stop the social immorality. So ultimately it is God who is causing Habakkuk to see what he sees, because God has not changed the situation.

There is a lot of looking, watching, and seeing in this book, thus indicating that Habakkuk and God are on the same page in terms of what they see. However, Habakkuk would prefer that God act differently towards what they see, even though he knows that God will eventually fulfill His promises to His chosen people, the Jews, and forge them into the greatest nation on earth as well as bring about the blessing of eternal life to all those who believe Him for it (cf. Genesis 12:1-3; Habakkuk 2:4)

<sup>4</sup> עַל-כֵּן תִּפְגַּע תוֹרָה וְלֹא-יִצְא לְנֹצָח מִשְׁפָּט כִּי רָשָׁע מִכְתִּיר אֶת-הַצְדִּיק עַל-כֵּן יִצְא מִשְׁפָּט מִעֲקָל – Probably Habakkuk means that the people are numb to God’s instructions in the Torah and the Mosaic Covenant which spells out how they are to treat one another within the nation of Israel, so that the justice in their society is certainly not biblical. Instead, it is a perversion of justice.

<sup>5</sup> רָאוּ בְגוֹיִם וְהִבִּיטוּ וְהִתְמַהוּ וְהִתְמַהוּ כִּי-פָעַל פֶּעַל בְּיַמֵּיכֶם לֹא תֵאֱמָנוּ כִּי יִסְפָּר – In vs. 5-11, God describes the coming invasion by the Babylonians and the fierceness of their attacks which will be unstoppable and devastating to the Kingdom of Judah. He claims that if the people had all the details of what was about to happen, no one would believe that He was going to do what He is doing—probably because they cannot imagine that God would bring such destruction and suffering on His chosen people. Unfortunately, though, according to Deuteronomy 28, they deserve His harsh judgment and have been warned. Therefore, they have no excuse not to have repented long ago in order to avoid His judgment.

<sup>6</sup> כִּי-הִנְנִי מְקִיִּם אֶת-הַכַּשְׂדִּים הַגּוֹי הַמָּר וְהַנִּמְהָר הַהוֹלֵךְ לְמִדְבַּר-אֲרָץ לְרֵשֶׁת מִשְׁכָּנֹת לֹא-לוֹ – God’s instrument of discipline towards the Israelites of Judah will be the Babylonians, whose plans of expanding their kingdom are without concern for the fact that other people own the lands which they are capturing. This is because they are bitter and rash, lacking any compassion or thoughtfulness towards others.

<sup>7</sup> אֲלֵם וְנִדְרָא הוּא מִמָּנוּ מִשְׁפָּטוֹ וְשִׂאתוֹ יִצְא – Others who are attacked by the Babylonians can only fear them. All sense of rightness and what is great and good for the Babylonians comes from them and not from God. This is to say that they define for themselves what is good and proper in order to achieve the greatness which they have planned.

<sup>8</sup> וְקָלוּ מִנְּמָרִים סוּסָיו וְחֲדָו מִזֹּאבֵי עָרָב וּפָשׁוּ פִרְשָׁיו וּפָרְשָׁיו מִרְתוּק יִבְאוּ יַעֲפוּ כְנָשָׁר תֵּשׁ לְאֶקוּל – The Babylonians’ transportation of war is the best—swift horses. The soldiers mounted on horseback swoop down on their enemies like eagles and devour them likewise.

<sup>9</sup> כִּלְהֵל לְחָמָס יִבְאוּ מִנְּמַת פְּנִיָּהֶם קְדֵימָה וַיֵּאָסְפוּ כְּחֹל שָׁבִי – The LXX is a bit different – συντέλεια εἰς ἀσεβείας ἦξει ἀνθεστηκότας προσώποις αὐτῶν ἐξ ἐναντίας καὶ συναΐξει ὡς ἄμμον αἰχμαλωσίαν – Completion towards ungodliness exists for those who oppose their faces, and they gather captives like sand.

These cavalry are set on destroying people. They never retreat but move only forward in their battle plans. The same horsemen collect captives like someone scooping up sand in his hand or a shovel—effortlessly and the quantity is vast.

<sup>10</sup> וְהוּא בְּמִלְכִים יִתְקַלֵּם וְרוֹגִים מִשְׁתַּק לֹו הוּא לְכָל-מִבְצָר יִשְׁחָק וַיִּצְבֵּר עָפָר וַיִּלְכְּדָהּ – Resistance by kings and their kingdoms is a joke to the Babylonian cavalry. This is how much more powerful they are than their enemies. If a city tries to find protection behind its walls, the Babylonian army simply takes rubble/dust/dirt and heaps it up against the walls. Next thing everyone knows, they have captured and destroyed the city.

<sup>11</sup> אֲנִי חִלַּף רֵיחַ וַיַּעֲבֹר וְאֲשֶׁם זֶה כְּחוֹ לְאֵלָהּ – The LXX is τότε μεταβαλεῖ τὸ πνεῦμα καὶ διελύσεται καὶ ἐξυλάσεται αὐτὴ ἢ ἰσχύς τῷ θεῷ μου = “Then the Spirit will change His mind, will pass through, and will make atonement. The very strength belongs to my God.”

In line with the Hebrew, this ends the previous paragraph about the Babylonian army. They pass swiftly through a city and move on to the next in order to capture it. But they rely on their own strength instead of God's, thus making them guilty of evil before Him, and they will be held accountable.

In line with the LXX, with the future tenses this begins the next paragraph about God, who will remain faithful to His promises to the Israelites to make of them a great nation (cf. Genesis 12:1-13) He will cause His Spirit (His activity towards His chosen people Israel) eventually to change and be present with them resulting in atonement and forgiveness for their disobedience. This is the very strength which God possesses and employs.

<sup>12</sup> הֲלוֹא אַתָּה מְלַמֵּד יְהוָה אֶלְתֵּי קִדְשִׁי לֹא נִמְוֹת יְהוָה לְמִשְׁפָּט שְׂמֹתוֹ וְצִוֶּר לְהוֹכִיחַ וְסִדְקוּ – The very last part of the verse in the LXX is a little different – καὶ ἐπλασέν με τοῦ ἐλέγγειν παιδείαν αὐτοῦ – and he formed me to reprove his instruction. Possibly meaning that God has made Habakkuk to make explicit what His instructions are for the people of Israel/Judah.

God's eternal nature is the basis for Habakkuk's confidence that the entire nation of Israel will not be destroyed—most likely because God is the one person who always can and will remain faithful to His eternal promises, one of which is to make of Abraham's physical descendants a great nation (Genesis 12:1-3).

Habakkuk therefore comes to the conclusion that God is using the fierce and violent Babylonians to accomplish the curses of Deuteronomy 28 and the Mosaic Covenant on His chosen people, as well as to reprove them for their disobedience in hopes that they will repent and obey Him properly.

<sup>13</sup> טְהוֹר עֵינַיִם מְרֵאוֹת רָע וְהַבַּיִט אֶל־עַמּוֹל לֹא תוֹכַל לָמְוָה תְּבַיֵּט בּוֹגְדִים תַּחֲרִישׁ בְּבַלְע רָשָׁע צְדִיק מִמֶּנּוּ – God is the morally perfect God. So Habakkuk wonders how it is that He can observe the wicked Babylonians devour His people. Maybe the Jews have been disobedient, but from an outward perspective they are not as evil as the Babylonians. So it seems incongruous for Habakkuk that God is allowing this manner and intensity of judgment to come upon His people.

<sup>14</sup> וַתַּעֲשֶׂה אֲדָם כְּדָגֵי הַיָּם כְּרֶמֶשׂ לֹא־מוֹשֵׁל בּוֹ – Habakkuk complains that God has made human beings like the fish of the sea, i.e., simply to be caught and devoured by other fish and not protected by an adequate ruler. The other comparison of the crowds of societies is with bugs and crawling creatures who go to and fro without any true leadership. Therefore, they cannot organize to protect themselves or even flee together from their enemies who are well led. As a result, they are simply gobbled up by them.

<sup>15</sup> כִּלְהוֹ בְּחַכְּהָה הָעֵלְיָה יִגְרְהוּ בְּחַרְמוֹ וַיֵּאֲכַלְהוּ בְּמִכְמַרְתּוֹ עַל־כֵּן יִשְׂמַח וַיִּגְדֵּל – As a result of people being so vulnerable, the Babylonians simply catch them like fish in their net. And rather than having pity on them, they rejoice over their catch. Thus, all they are interested in is gathering their prey and making their catch as large as possible, regardless of how much suffering it causes other people.

<sup>16</sup> עַל־כֵּן יִזְבְּחַת לְחַרְמוֹ וַיִּקְטֹר לְמִכְמַרְתּוֹ כִּי בְּהַמְוָה שָׂמַן חֶלְקוֹ וַיִּמְאָכְלוּ בְּרֵאָה – The Babylonians' "net" is their own strength and ingenuity in waging war against others in order to add their lands to their kingdom. Therefore, despite the fact that they claim to worship the pagan gods of nature, they actually are worshipping themselves, because ultimately they believe that it is they with their own strength who have achieved such military success in conquering other lands.

<sup>17</sup> תַּעֲלֵ כֵּן יִרְיַק חַרְמוֹ וְתִמְיֵד לְחַרְג גּוֹיִם לֹא יִחַמּוֹל – Thus, Habakkuk asks the simple question as to what the Babylonians will do in the future. Does their current military success encourage them to continue attacking and gobbling up other lands and people, having no pity or compassion on those whom they conquer? And the implied answer is, yes.

<sup>18</sup> עַל־מִשְׁמַרְתִּי אֶעֱמְדָה וְאֶתְיַצְּבָה עַל־מִצְדוֹר וַאֲצַפֶּה לְרֵאוֹת מִה־יִדְבַּר־בִּי וּמִנָּה אָשִׁיב עַל־תּוֹכַחְתִּי – Habakkuk has complained in 1:2-4 about God's making him see so much evil in Judah, in 1:12,13 about the Babylonian's perpetrating so much evil according to the vision against the Jews, and in 1:14-17 about their total lack of compassion towards all other weaker nations.

It also sounds as though he is standing watch on the walls of his city awaiting God's reply concerning his complaint of the coming Babylonian invasion (cf. EBC for description of walls of Mizpah), which itself will speak volumes from God.

<sup>19</sup> וַיַּעֲנֵנִי יְהוָה וַיֹּאמֶר כְּתוֹב קְטוֹב חֲזוֹן וּבְאֵר עַל־הַלְתוֹת לְמַעַן קְרוּא קוּרָא בּוֹ – The LXX uses ὁ ἀναγινώσκων = the one who reads for קוּרָא. God wants Habakkuk to inscribe the vision of the coming invasion of the Babylonians on a tablet (papyrus or something similar?) in order for it to be available to be read. Then, the one who does read it will have the proper information "to pursue these things" as the LXX says, referring to the Babylonian king and leader. Basically, he will have his marching orders from God for invading and destroying the southern Kingdom of Judah.

<sup>20</sup> כִּי עוֹד חֹזֵן לְמוֹעֵד וְיָפֶת לַגֵּץ וְלֹא יִכְזֵב אִם-וְתִמְתְּמָהּ חֶבֶל-לוֹ כִּי-בָא וְבָא לֹא יֵאָהֵר – God assures Habakkuk that the events of the vision will certainly occur in their proper time according to what is written on the tablets, i.e., God’s authoritative and inerrant word. As if this were a race, the events are moving towards the finish line, and they will reach it. God never lies, and His word/messages are always true. All that matters for anyone who becomes aware of these events via the tablets, like Habakkuk, is to wait patiently for the Babylonian invasion. Oh joy!

Of course, this means that everything else God has said about His eternal plans and purposes will come true also. And there truly is joy in His bringing about the eternal Kingdom of God with the Messiah as its ruler and priest.

<sup>21</sup> הִנֵּה עֹבְדֵי הָאֱלֹהִים לֹא-יִשְׁרָה נַפְשׁוֹ בּוֹ וְצַדִּיק בְּאַמּוֹנָתוֹ יִתְיַהַר – Here God capsulizes the underlying condition of all men who either eschew God’s salvation and incur God’s wrath and indignation or embrace His salvation and obtain life, even eternal life. The former kind of man is proud and arrogant, because there is something wrong within him, in his personal orientation (“soul” here and “heart” in the New Testament), such that he is inclined towards his moral depravity and ignoring God or rejecting Him outright (cf. Romans 8). The latter is a humble believer in God’s truth and promises, so that he can be called a “righteous man,” one who is inwardly inclined towards God and obedience to God, even if he does not obey Him perfectly (cf. Romans 8).

In this context, it makes sense that the individual proud man is the king of the Babylonians, while the individual man of belief is any Jew in the Kingdom of Judah, especially Habakkuk.

<sup>22</sup> לֹא יִנְוָה אִשְׁרֵי הָרְחִיב כִּשְׂאוֹל נַפְשׁוֹ וְהוּא כְמוֹת לֹא יִשְׁבַּע וְיֵאָסֵף אֵלָיו כָּל-הַגּוֹיִם וְיִקְבֹּץ אֵלָיו כָּל-הָעַמִּים – In addition, God says that the proud and arrogant man tends to drink too much alcohol, so that he becomes untrustworthy, as demonstrated by his leaving his home. Perhaps God means that he goes out and is unfaithful to his wife and family, drinking with his buddies. His “soul,” i.e., his heart in New Testament terms, increases in size so to speak with pride and arrogance by encompassing sin and death, so that eventually the Babylonian Empire collapses under the weight of the leadership’s drunkenness (cf. Daniel 5). In other words, he is committed to his own inherent moral depravity and pursues evil, especially in his drunken state (cf. Romans 8).

And this being specifically the leader and king of the Babylonians, his lack of satisfaction with what he currently has motivates him to enlarge the empire’s borders and envelope as many other peoples and their lands as possible. Basically, he is greedy for more power and prestige.

<sup>23</sup> כָּלֵם עָלָיו מִשְׁעַל יִשְׂאוֹ וּמִלִּצְחָה תִּירֹדוֹת לוֹ וַיֵּאמֶר לוֹ וַיֵּאמֶר הוּא הַמְרֻבָּה לֹא-לֹו עַד-מִתִּי וּמִכְבִּיד עָלָיו עַבְדִּיט – In vs. 6-20 we find God’s judgment on Babylon that includes four “Woes” (vs. 6,9,12,15).

It would seem best to interpret the “these” as the very people whom the Babylonian king gobbles up in his greed to expand his empire. These people are wiser in that they know that the Babylonians will eventually bring about their own demise. The very desire and effort to acquire people and land who do not belong to them is simply immoral. In addition, the Babylonian king has to borrow heavily in order to accomplish his goals, which is always a bad idea in the long run, especially if his creditors call in the loans, and he is not able to pay them.

<sup>24</sup> הִלֹּא פָתַע יְקוּמוּ נִשְׁכִּיד וְיִקְצוּ מִזַּעֲזוּעֵיךָ וְתִנִּית לְמִשְׁפֹּת לָמוֹ – In the end, the Babylonians’ creditors will turn on them and conquer them. Cf. later their defeat by the Medes and Persians.

<sup>25</sup> כִּי אֲתָה שְׁלֹוֹת גּוֹיִם רַבִּים יִשְׁלֹוֹךְ כָּל-יְיָתֵר עַמִּים מִדְּמֵי אֲדָם וְחַמְסֵ-אֲרִיץ קָרְיָה וְכָל-יִשְׁבֵי בָהּ – It will not be the people whom the Babylonians conquered who will defeat them, but other peoples. Cf. the Medes and Persians. And it will be because of the immoral and unnecessary violence done to others that the Babylonian Empire will fall. God will bring judgment on the Babylonians from other people for their mistreatment of those whom they have conquered.

<sup>26</sup> הוּא בִצְעַ בִצְעַ רַע לְבִיתוֹ לְשׁוֹם בְּמִרוֹם קִנְוֹ לְהַעֲצֵל מִכַּף-רַע – Here is the second “Woe” where God declares that the means of violence used by the Babylonian king to enhance his own personal and residential property in order to protect himself from other nations and their evil will result ultimately in God’s judgment.

<sup>27</sup> יַעֲצֵת בְּשֵׁת לְבִיתָךְ קִצּוֹת-עַמִּים רַבִּים וְחוֹטֵא נִפְשֶׁךָ – The king is bringing shame upon himself by immorally exploiting the people whom he has conquered and by using his spoils of war to enlarge his own personal property to protect himself from evil people who are just like him. His inner being is proud and arrogant so that he is sinning against God by being committed to obeying his own inherent moral depravity.

<sup>28</sup> כִּי־אֶבֶן מִקִּיר תִּזְעַק וְכָפִיס מִעֵץ יִעֲנֶנָּה – cf. LXX for “Therefore (διότι).” As a result, it will be as though the new building materials of stones and wood that the king uses to enhance his home will cry out against the king’s injustice done to the people whose wealth he violently acquired when he conquered them and is now being used to expand his building projects. Cf. Tiberius and his villas on Capri.

<sup>29</sup> הֲוֵי בְנָה עִיר בְּדָמַיִם וְכוּנֵן קַרְיָה בְּעוֹלָה – cf. LXX for “unrighteousness” (ἀδικίας). Similar to the previous “Woe,” God pronounces judgment on the Babylonian king who continues building his capital city by means of the immoral bloodshed he has perpetrated on other people which results in his acquiring their wealth.

<sup>30</sup> הֲלוֹא הִנֵּה מֵאֵת יְהוָה צָבָאוֹת וְיִיגָעוּ עַמִּים בְּדִי־אֵשׁ וְלְאֻמִּים בְּדִי־רִיק יַעֲפוּ – Difficult idioms, but LXX helps – οὐ ταῦτά ἐστιν παρὰ κυρίου παντοκράτορος; καὶ ἐξέλιπον λαοὶ ἱκανοὶ ἐν πυρί, καὶ ἔθνη πολλὰ ὀλιγοψύχησαν = Are not these things from the Lord Almighty, and sufficient peoples fail in fire, and many nations are discourage.

God brings His military judgment on unjust people, e.g., the Babylonians, and causes them to toil for the basics in life, e.g., fire. Thus, they become weary and tired in the face of His judgment, because their lives feel empty and futile. But they have brought this on themselves because of their unjust, evil, and immoral treatment of others.

<sup>31</sup> כִּי תִמְלֵא הָאָרֶץ לְדַעַת אֶת־כְּבוֹד יְהוָה כַּמַּיִם וְכֶסֶף עַל־יָם – Here God states through Habakkuk’s understanding of this “Woe” that His purposes are to fill the entire earth (not just the land of Israel) with the knowledge of His majesty, greatness, and awesomeness. All people will eventually acknowledge God and honor Him as God, even if they do so grudgingly. And this will be as thick, deep, and complete as the waters of the ocean. Where there is ocean, there is water. Where there are people, there will be knowledge of God’s greatness and awesomeness.

<sup>32</sup> הֲוֵי מִשְׁקָה רַעֲהוּ מִסַּכַּח חֲמַתְךָ וְאַף שִׁכָּר לְמַעַן הַבִּישׁ עַל־מַעֲרִיבָם – This indictment by God is against the Babylonian king’s evil inclination to use alcohol, even a poisonous amount, to get his friend so drunk that he can look at his nakedness and laugh at how he is made him appear so ludicrous.

<sup>33</sup> שִׁבְעַת קִלּוֹן מִכְּבוֹד שְׂתָה גַם־אֶתָּה וְהִעָרַל תִּסּוּב עָלֶיךָ כּוֹס יַמִּין יְהוָה וְקִיקְלֹן עַל־כְּבוֹרְךָ – God urges the king to drink as much likewise and reveal his own nakedness, which also reveals his uncircumcised state physically, which is symbolic of his uncircumcised state spiritually and morally.

Speaking of cups, God will make His strength and military judgment like a cup of wine in which the Babylonian king sits and is surrounded. Thus, God will cause him to experience the disgrace and shame of being conquered by others. As a result, all the honor which he had enjoyed before will be turned into disgrace. And this becomes a reality when the Medes and Persians conquer Babylon around 540 B.C.

<sup>34</sup> כִּי חֲמֹס לְבָנוֹן יִכְסֹף וְשָׂר בְּחַמּוֹת יַחִיתָן מִדָּמֵי אֲדָם וְחַמְסֵי־אֲרָץ קַרְיָה וְכָל־יֹשְׁבֵי בָּהּ – The LXX is helpful in translating this verse, διότι ἀσεβεία τοῦ Λιβάνου καλύψει σε, καὶ ταλαιπωρία θηρίων ποθήσει σε διὰ αἵματα ἀνθρώπων καὶ ἀσεβείας γῆς καὶ πόλεως καὶ πάντων τῶν κατοικούντων αὐτήν = Therefore, the ungodliness of Lebanon will cover you, and the misery of wild animals will terrify you through the bloodshed of men, even the ungodliness of the land, the city, and all those who dwell in it.

God will bring judgment on the Babylonians for their violence towards “Lebanon,” which in 1 Kings 9:19, Isaiah 33:9; 35:2, Ezekiel 17:3, etc. is used to refer to Israel. In other words, the violent and immoral actions towards Israel and even the animals on their land will come back to haunt the Babylonians when God brings judgment and destruction on them.

Therefore, this indictment combines the Babylonian king’s penchant towards drunkenness and disgracing his friends by getting them drunk with his invasion and destruction of Israel in a manner that reveals his pride and arrogance.

<sup>35</sup> מָה־הוֹעִיל פִּסְלֵי כִּי פָסְלוּ יִצְרוּ מִסַּכָּה וּמִזֹּרָה שִׁקָּר כִּי בָטַח יִצְרָו עָלָיו לַעֲשׂוֹת אֱלֹהִים אֲלֹהִים – God’s final words against the king of the Babylonians pertain to his theology. The king is a pagan and worships idols which are useless to help him. First, a human being makes the idol, which in the ANE represented the forces of nature within the creation. What can a human being make that truly provides safety, protection, and sustenance for other human beings, especially eternally? Obviously, nothing. Therefore, the king may think that his god instructs him in life, but all the god can say is what the king imagines in his own mind, which by definition is filled with errors and lies because he is not a follower of the one true God, Yahweh. Consequently, the king’s god is a dumb god, speechless and completely worthless for aiding him in life. If he really wants to be well instructed in life, he must listen to Yahweh, the God of the Jews, through His Torah. But this requires a heart changed by the Spirit of God to become committed to God’s truth.

<sup>36</sup> – הָיוּ אֹמְרֵי לְעַיֵן הַקְּרִיָּצָה שְׂוֵרֵי לְאֵבֶן דּוֹמָם הוּא יוֹרָה הַנְּהַה-הוּא תְּפֹשׁ זָהָב וְנָכְסֶף וְכָל-רוּחַ אֵין בְּקִרְבּוֹ – God pronounces judgment and condemnation on anyone, the king of Babylon included, who thinks that he can get his pagan god to speak. Indeed, the idol is teaching him, but he is teaching him nothing, just as God said in the previous verse.

Instead the king's god is a chunk of wood or melted metal that is overlaid with other metals, all of which are created elements whose very existence is dependent on the transcendent Creator, so that there is no personhood (“spirit”) in the idol. There is just inert material made by God. What a waste of time and energy trying to get a man-made object to bring a person real life, safety, protection, and sustenance—especially eternally.

<sup>37</sup> – וַיְהִינָה בְּהִיכַל קִדְשׁוֹ הִם מִפְּנֵי כָל-הָאָרֶץ – In contrast to the inert, powerless, and worthless pagan idol, Habakkuk says that the Jewish God, Yahweh, the one true God, is alive and well and dwelling in His Holy temple in Jerusalem, so that there is the protection, safety, and sustenance for His people, the descendants of Abraham. Out of reverence for God, Habakkuk calls for silence from everyone in His presence. The silence from the people speaks volumes of their worship of God. What is better than simply standing in awe before God and contemplating one's smallness and utter dependence on Him?

<sup>38</sup> – תְּפִלָּה לְחַבְקוּק הַנְּבִיא עַל שְׂגִינֹת – The LXX uses μετὰ ὀδῆς for שְׂגִינֹת. Chapter 3 is comprised of two elements, a prayer by Habakkuk and a song by him. The prayer is best identified as just verse 2, while the song takes up the rest of the chapter.

<sup>39</sup> – יְהוָה שָׁמַעְתִּי שְׁמַעְךָ יְרֵאתִי יְהוָה פִּעֲלֶךָ בְּקִרְבִּי שָׁנִים חִיִּיהוּ בְּקִרְבִּי שְׁנִים תוֹדִיעַ בְּרָגִז רַחֵם תִּזְכּוֹר –

Habakkuk's prayer is very short and to the point. He first acknowledges that he has heard what God has said about the coming invasion by the Babylonians as well as His judgment of the Babylonian king. More because of the former, Habakkuk says that he is afraid. The Babylonian invasion will affect him, too, even though he is an authentic believer. He will suffer, too, and he does not relish the idea.

Habakkuk also knows that it is only God who can change the hearts of His people and forge them into the nation He wants them to be and actually has promised that they be (cf. Genesis 12:1-3). So he asks to work His work of causing life in His people again, referring to some time in the past when there was more authentic belief in Israel/Judah than there is now.

Habakkuk prays that God will make His work obvious and known among His people. However, he also knows that God is going to follow through on His threat to destroy the southern Kingdom of Judah. As a result, He prays that God will not be so judgmental that He completely lacks compassion towards His people and destroys them with no survivors.

<sup>40</sup> – אֵלֹהִים מִתִּימָן יָבֹא וְקִדְוֹשׁ מִהַר-פָּאָרָן סָלָה כִּפְסָה שְׁמֵימִם הוֹדִו וַתְּהַלְלוּ מִלְּאֵה הָאָרֶץ – Teman is in Edom, the land of the descendants of Esau, south and east of the Dead Sea. Paran and Mt. Paran are located south of Kadesh-barnea and between it and Mt. Sinai. Cf. Deuteronomy 33:2-4, “The Lord came from Sinai, and dawned on them from Seir; He shone forth from Mount Paran, And He came from the midst of ten thousand holy ones; At His right hand there was flashing lightning for them. Indeed, He loves the people; all Your holy ones are in Your hand, and they followed in Your steps; *everyone* receives of Your words. Moses charged us with a law, a possession for the assembly of Jacob.”

Thus, similar to Moses' blessing to the Israelites in Deuteronomy 33, Habakkuk sings a song of blessing to them, too. God appears to them from even their enemies' territory of Edom, and near Mt. Paran in the Sinai Desert, He has given them the Torah of the Mosaic Covenant for them to guard.

God's greatness is everywhere so that those who are truly inclined praise and adore Him for His majesty.

<sup>41</sup> – וְנִגְהַל כְּאֹזֶר תְּהִלָּה בְּרַגְמִים מִיְדוֹ לֹ וְשֵׁם הַבְּנוֹן עֲזָה – As in Deuteronomy 33:2-4, Habakkuk speaks of God's glory as a brightness of light, with power in His strong hand with which He can accomplish all His eternal purposes. Yet, His power in its fullness is hidden, unless He were to wish to reveal it completely.

<sup>42</sup> – לְפָנָיו יִגְדֹף הַיָּם וְיִצְאָ רֶשֶׁף לְרִגְלָיו – The LXX = πρὸ προσώπου αὐτοῦ πορεύσεται λόγος καὶ ἐξελεύσεται, ἐν πεδίλοις οἱ πόδες αὐτοῦ. God's message of truth always precedes His actions within the history of Israel, and as in Egypt in the book of Exodus, He brings judgment (“plagues”) where He considers it to be deserving on people who rebel against Him.

<sup>43</sup> – עָמַד | וַיִּמְרַד אֶרֶץ רָאֵה וַיִּתֵּר גּוֹלִים וַתִּפְּצַעַל הַרְרֵי-עַד שָׁחוּ גְבְעוֹת עוֹלָם חֲלִיכוֹת עוֹלָם לֹ – The LXX is helpful for translating this verse properly – ἔστη, καὶ ἐσαλεύθη ἡ γῆ ἐπέβλεψεν, καὶ διετάκη ἔθνη διεθρήβη τὰ ὄρη βίᾳ ἐτάκῃσαν βουνοὶ αἰώνιοι. = He stood, and the earth was shaken, and the nations melted away; the mountains were broken in pieces with violence; the eternal hills dissolved.

As in other situations such as Mt. Sinai and the destruction of the Egyptians, God has used and will use His power to bring judgment and destruction on those peoples and nations who deserve it. There can be no

doubt about this. Even the most stable elements of the earth, its mountains and hills are broken and made pliable by God's strong actions. And no nation can stand before Him and His destroying them if they deserve it. His shaking the earth is a simple thing for the Creator of the entire universe.

<sup>44</sup> תחת אֲנִי רֵאִי אֶהְלִי כוֹשֵׁן יִדְגְּלוּן יִרְעוּת אֶרֶץ מִדְּוָן – The LXX has an extra line at the beginning that is enigmatic – πορείας αἰωνίας αὐτοῦ ἀντι κόπων εἶδον = I saw his evil ages instead of his troubles. Also, the LXX translates Cushan as Ethiopia.

Habakkuk watches the Ethiopians in Africa and the Midianites near Moab tremble at God's display of His power and judgment.

<sup>45</sup> הַבְּנֵהרִים תִּהְיֶה אִם בְּנֵהרִים אֲפֹךְ אִם-בְּיָם עֲבַרְתָּךְ כִּי תִרְכַּב עַל-סוּסֶיךָ מִרְכַּבְתִּיךָ יִשׁוּעָה – Is this possibly a reference to the events of the Red Sea and in Israel's past history. God parted (got angry) with the Red Sea so that the Israelites could walk across on dry land, and then He closed it up when Pharaoh's army with its chariots charged after them, hoping to end their salvation from their slavery in Egypt. But God rode His own horses and chariots so to speak and brought escape and salvation to the Israelites.

<sup>46</sup> עֲרִיבָה תַעֲוֹר קִשְׁתְּךָ שְׂבָעוֹת מִטּוֹת אֲמַר סֶלָה נְהַרְוֹת תִּבְכַּע אֶרֶץ – The LXX is helpful here, ἐντεινὼν ἐντεινείς τὸ τόξον σου ἐπὶ τὰ σακῆπτρα, λέγει κύριος = Your bow is stretched tight on the basis of the staffs, says the Lord.

God's offensive weapons of military strength are always ready to defend His chosen people. His leading rod as a shepherd is His word of promises and oaths by which He has guaranteed that He will accomplish all His eternal purposes on behalf of His people. If He needs to split the earth to defend and rescue His people as He split the Red Sea, then He will.

<sup>47</sup> רֵאִיךָ יְהִי לִי הָרִים וְרַם מַיִם עֲבַר נִתַּן תְּהוֹם קוֹלֹךָ רוֹם יִדְרֶהוּ נַשָּׂא – The LXX interprets the mountains as λαοί = peoples.

The stable elements of the earth, the mountains, have seen God's power and tremble as a result. The life-giving and life-taking element of water has passed through the mountains and into the deep, thus illiciting a response from the deep to the extent that it lifts its hands in praise of God.

<sup>48</sup> שִׁמְשׁ יָרַח עֲמַד וּבִלָּה לְאֹר הַצֵּיף יִהְיֶה לְנִגַּח בְּרַק חֲנִיתְךָ – The LXX is helpful here, ἐπήρθη ὁ ἥλιος, καὶ ἡ σελήνη ἔστη ἐν τῇ τάξει αὐτῆς, εἰς φῶς βολίδες σου πορεύσονται, εἰς φέγγος ἀστραπῆς ὄπλων σου = The sun was raised, and the moon stood in his order; your spears went towards the light, your weapons of lightening towards the light.

The sun and moon abide where God desires them to be, because He is in sovereign control of the entire universe. Then God's offensive arrows and spear move into the light that they cast in order to accomplish their military and destructive purposes.

<sup>49</sup> בָּוַעַם תִּצְעַר-אֶרֶץ בְּאֵף תִּדְוֹשׁ גּוֹיִם – The LXX interprets “marched through” as “made few,” i.e., destroying people along the way.

Habakkuk portrays God as a huge human being, a warrior, who marches with all military somberness throughout the earth and tramples underfoot all those people who deserve to be destroyed because of their sin and rebellion against Him.

<sup>50</sup> וַיְצַאֲתָ לְיִשְׁעַ עֲמֹךְ לְיִשְׁעַ אֶת-מִשִּׁיחְךָ מִחֲצַת רֹאשׁ מִבְּיַת רִשְׁעַ עֲרוֹת וְסוֹד עַר-צִוְאָר סֶלָה – The LXX interprets the singular “anointed” as plural “anointed ones.”

But Habakkuk also points out that God's judgment of the Gentile nations is in order to bring about salvation for His chosen people, His anointed ones among the tribes of Israel. The leader of any Gentile nation who tries to harm God's people when He is in the midst of saving them will find himself drawn and quartered so to speak by God. This leader's destruction is inevitable at the hands of the God of Israel.

<sup>51</sup> נִקְבַּת בְּמִטְוִי רֹאשׁ פְּרִוּ [פְּרִוּוּ] יִסְעֵרוּ לְהַפִּיצְנִי עַל-צַחְתֶּם כְּמוֹ-לְאֹכַל עֲנִי בַמִּסְתָּר – Israel's enemies thought that they had the upper hand. They were exultant in the progress that they were making in attacking and destroying the Jews. But they will actually find themselves defeated by their own weapons, probably turned against them. Instead of Israel being destroyed, their enemies will meet with God's judgment and destruction.

<sup>52</sup> דְּרַכְתָּ בַיָּם סוּסֶיךָ חֲמַר מַיִם רַבִּים – Habakkuk declares that God tramples on the waters of the sea and causes them to foam, perhaps a reference to His parting the waters of the Red Sea so that they drew back and allowed the Israelites to walk through them on dry land.

<sup>53</sup> וַתִּתְרַגַּז בְּטִנִּי לְקוֹל צִלְלוֹ שְׁפָתַי יְבוֹא רַקֵּב בַּעֲצָמַי וַתַּחֲתִי אֶרְגֹּז אֲשֶׁר אָנֹחַ לַיּוֹם צָרָה לַעֲלֹזֹת לְעַם יְגוּרְנִי – Habakkuk has been listening to God's pronouncements of judgment on Judah, Babylon, and even other nations, and all this talk of judgment frightens him to no end, especially because the time frame for

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judgment Judah is uncertain, causing him simply to wait until God is good and ready to bring it about. Therefore, Habakkuk is trembling inside, and even his lips are quivering with fright. It feels to him as though his very bones are disintegrating he is so afraid.

Habakkuk knows that the Babylonian attack is forthcoming. Yet, he says that he will remain settled in his place and life in Judah until it occurs. Actually, what else can he do? He is stuck with experiencing whatever God brings down the pike and whenever He chooses to do so.

<sup>54</sup> לֹא־תִפְרֹחַ וְאֵין יְבוּל ׀ בְּנִפְנֵי־יָם כִּחַשׁ מַעֲשֵׂה־זִוְיָה וְיִשְׁדָּמוֹת לֹא־עָשָׂה אֲכָל גֹּזֵר מִמִּכְלָה לְזָאן וְאֵין בְּקֶר בְּרִפְתֵּי־יָם  
כִּי־תֵאָנֵה – Habakkuk foretells the coming agricultural and therefore social devastation which the Babylonian invasion will cause. He knows it is coming.

<sup>55</sup> וְאֵני בִּיהִנֵּה אֶעֱלֶזְהָ אֲגִידָהּ בְּאַלְהֵי יִשְׁעֵי – Regardless of the devastation that the Kingdom of Judah will experience and what he himself will experience of a broad and deep negative nature when the Babylonians come, Habakkuk declares that he will still worship God at the highest level of his being by rejoicing in Him and in His salvation, most likely referring to God’s ultimate salvation for him personally of eternal mercy and life which God promised to all authentic believers through Abraham (cf. Genesis 12:1-3). In addition, he may be thinking of God’s eventual salvation of the entire nation of Israel that will result in the millennial kingdom when all Israel finally worships God from true, biblical inwardness—a favorite topic of other prophets such as Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Malachi.

<sup>56</sup> יְהוָה אֲדַנֶּי חֵילֵי נִישָׁם רִגְלֵי קָאֲלֹזֹת וְעַל בְּמוֹתַי יִדְרֹכֵנִי – Here is Habakkuk’s final statement to the effect that God is the One who is causing him to stand so strongly in his faith and belief in God’s plans and purposes for all nations and the nation of Israel and him as an individual. Just as a female deer walks sturdily in all types of terrain, so God has caused Habakkuk to walk with faith and confidence in the tumultuous circumstances of judgment which He has described. Thus, God causes Habakkuk to be able to go wherever life takes him, even into the high and treacherous places of the mountains of life. But he will never falter in his steps, again because God is his strength and power to persevere in his faith and trust in God to complete His sovereign plans for both Israel and himself as an authentic believer.

<sup>57</sup> לְמִנְצָחַ בְּנִינֹתַי – The book ends with the indication that this song is for the music director and to be played on stringed instruments.