

Habakkuk

¹ This is the message that Habakkuk saw in vision.

² Lord, how long do I have to cry out for help and you don't listen? I cry out, "Violence!" but you don't save us from it.

³ Why do you force me to see this wickedness and suffering? Why do you just observe such destruction and violence? Arguments and fighting happen right in front of me!

⁴ As a result the law is paralyzed, and justice never wins. The wicked crowd out those who do right so that the course of justice is perverted.

⁵ Look around at the nations, watch and be surprised and amazed.* Something is going to happen in your time that you wouldn't believe even if you were told.

⁶ Watch! I am raising up the Babylonians,† a cruel and brutal people who will march across the world to seize other lands.

⁷ They are fearsome and terrifying, and so proud of themselves that they set their own rules.‡

⁸ Their horses are faster than leopards and fiercer than hungry wolves. Their cavalry

* **1:5** This is the beginning of the Lord's response. † **1:6** Literally, "Chaldeans." ‡ **1:7** In other words, they do whatever they like.

charges, racing in from far away.[§] Like eagles, they swoop down to eat their prey.

⁹ Here they come, all intent on violence. Their armies advance in frontal assault as rapidly as the desert wind, capturing so many prisoners they are like sand.

¹⁰ They mock kings and scoff at rulers. They laugh in scorn at fortresses—they pile up earth ramps and capture them.

¹¹ Then they sweep on by like the wind and are gone. They are guilty because their own strength is their god.

¹² Haven't you existed from eternity past? You are Lord my God, my Holy One, you do not die. Lord, you appointed them to execute judgment; God our Rock, you sent them to punish us.

¹³ Your eyes are too pure to look upon evil; you cannot stand the sight of wrong. So why do you put up with untrustworthy people? Why are you silent when the wicked destroy those who do less evil than they do?

¹⁴ You make people become like fish in the sea, or like crawling insects, that have no ruler.

¹⁵ They* drag everyone up with hooks, they pull them out with nets, catching them in drag-nets. Then they happily celebrate.

¹⁶ They worship their nets as if they were gods, making sacrifices and burning incense to them,

§ 1:8 The Masoretic Text has “their horsemen, yes their horsemen.” The Habakkuk peshar (commentary) from Qumran is the basis for the reading here. * 1:15 The Babylonians.

because by their nets they live in luxury, eating rich food.

¹⁷ Will they keep on unsheathing their swords[†] forever, killing nations without mercy?

2

¹ I will climb my watchtower; I will take my place on the city wall. I will keep watch and see what he will say to me, how he will answer my grievances.

² Then the Lord told me, Write down the vision, inscribe it on tablets, so it can be easily read.*

³ For the vision is for a future time, it is about the end and it does not lie. If it seems slow in being fulfilled, wait for it, for it will definitely come—it will not be delayed!

⁴ Look at those who are proud![†] They do not live right. But those who live right do so through their trust in God.

⁵ In addition wealth provides no security.[‡] Those who are arrogant never have any peace; their greedy mouths are as wide open as the grave,[§] and like death they are never satisfied. They gather nations like possessions, swallowing up many peoples.

[†] **1:17** “Unsheathing their swords”: Habbakuk pesher (commentary) from Qumran reading. ^{*} **2:2** Literally, “so he who runs can read it.” [†] **2:4** Again this applies to the main subject of the vision, the Babylonian people. [‡] **2:5** “Wealth provides no security”: following one understanding of the Habbakuk pesher (commentary) from Qumran. The Masoretic Text has “wine is deceptive.” [§] **2:5** Literally, “Sheol,” the place of the dead.

⁶ Won't all these peoples taunt them? They will ridicule them, saying, "What disaster is coming to you who pile up things that don't belong to you! You make yourselves rich by forcing debtors to pay! How long can you go on doing this?"

⁷ Won't your debtors suddenly act? Won't they wake up to the situation and make you tremble? You will be plunder for them!

⁸ Because you have plundered many nations, those who are left will plunder you—for the human blood you have shed and the destruction you brought on lands and cities, and those who lived there.

⁹ What disaster is coming to you who build houses through dishonest gain! You think you can place your "nest" so high it will be safe from disaster.

¹⁰ Your evil schemes have brought shame upon your families, by destroying many nations you have forfeited your own lives.

¹¹ Even the stones in the wall cry out in condemnation, and the wooden rafters join in too.

¹² What disaster is coming to you who build cities with bloodshed, who found cities built on wickedness!

¹³ Hasn't the Lord Almighty decided that all the hard work of such nations is going to be burned up—that they wear themselves out for nothing?

¹⁴ For the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the Lord's glory as the waters fill the sea.

¹⁵ What disaster is coming to you who make your neighbors drunk! You force your cup of

anger* on them and make them drink so you may see them naked.

¹⁶ In turn you will be filled with shame instead of glory. Drink and expose your nakedness!† The cup the Lord holds in his right hand will be passed round to you and your glory will turn to shame.

¹⁷ As you destroyed the forests of Lebanon you will also be destroyed; you hunted the animals there, and now they will hunt‡ you. For you shed human blood and you destroyed lands and cities, along with those who lived there.

¹⁸ What use is a wooden idol carved by human hands, or a metal image that teaches lies? What is the point of their makers trusting in their own handiwork, creating idols that can't speak?

¹⁹ What disaster is coming to you who say to something made of wood, "Wake up!" or to lifeless stone, "Get up!" Can it teach you anything? Look at it! It's covered with gold and silver, but there is no life inside it.

²⁰ But the Lord is in his holy Temple; let all the earth be silent in his presence.

3

¹ This is a prayer sung by the prophet Habakkuk. On Shigionoht.*

* **2:15** Or "poison." † **2:16** "Expose your nakedness": or "stagger": Habbakuk pesher (commentary) from Qumran reading.

‡ **2:17** Literally, "terrify." * **3:1** "On Shigionoht": the meaning is unknown. It may be a musical instrument.

² I have heard what is said about you, Lord. I stand in awe of your work. Lord, revive it in our times; make it known in our times. In your anger, please remember your mercy.

³ God came from Teman; the Holy One from Mount Paran.[†] Selah.[‡] His glory covered the heavens; the earth was full of his praise.

⁴ His brightness is like lightning; rays flash from his hand from where his power is hidden.

⁵ Plague goes before him, disease§ follows at his feet.

⁶ Where he stands, the earth shakes. When he looks the nations tremble. The ancient mountains shatter; the age-old hills collapse, but his ways are eternal.

⁷ I saw the tents of Cushan suffering, the tent curtains of the land of Midian tremble.*

⁸ Did you burn with rage against the rivers, Lord? Were you angry with the rivers? Were you furious with the sea when you rode your horses and chariots of salvation?

⁹ You took out your bow; you filled your quiver with arrows. Selah. You split the earth open with rivers.

¹⁰ Mountains saw you and shook. Water poured down and swept by. The deep called out, lifting high its waves.[†]

[†] **3:3** Teman is in the land of Edom, while Mount Paran is in the Sinai Peninsula. [‡] **3:3** "Selah": an unknown term often also used in Psalms. [§] **3:5** Or "bolts of fire." * **3:7** By this Habakkuk probably means the people that lived in these tents. [†] **3:10** Literally, "hands."

11 The sun and moon stood still in the sky as your sparkling arrows flew and your spears flashed bright.

12 Indignant, you marched across the earth, trampling the nations in your anger.

13 You came out to save your people, to save your chosen people. You crushed the head of the house of the wicked, stripping him from thick to neck.‡

14 With his own arrows you pierced the heads of his warriors, those who came like a whirlwind to scatter me, gloating like those who secretly abuse the poor.

15 You trod upon the sea with your horses, churning up the mighty waters.

16 I shook inside when I heard this; my lips quivered at the sound; my bones turned to jelly; I trembled where I stood. I wait quietly for the day of trouble that will come upon those who attacked us.

17 Even though there are no blossoms on the fig trees and there are no grapes on the vines; even though the olive crop fails and the fields produce no harvest; even though there are no animals in the pen and no cattle in the stalls;

18 still I will be happy in the Lord, joyful in the God of my salvation.

19 The Lord God is my strength. He makes me able to walk in the highest mountains, as sure-footed as a deer.

‡ 3:13 This verse has been interpreted in many ways.

(To the music director: with my stringed instruments.)

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