EDIFIED EDITION

Habakkuk

A modern rendering of the Holy Scriptures

3	56	Old	35
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Numbered notes follow each chapter.

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Chapter 1

Habakkuk 1 is the prophet's complaint and the LORD's answer. Habakkuk asks how long he must cry for help against violence without being heard, while injustice, strife and conflict surround him, the law is paralysed and the wicked hem in the righteous. The LORD tells him to look among the nations and be amazed, for He is doing a work in his days that he would not believe: He is raising up the Chaldeans, a fierce and impetuous nation, swifter than leopards, who sweep across the earth, scoff at kings and laugh at every fortress, and make their own strength their god. Habakkuk answers that the LORD is from everlasting, holy, and too pure to look on evil; why then does He tolerate the treacherous and stay silent while the wicked swallow up those more righteous than themselves, hauling people in like fish with a net and offering sacrifices to their net?

1 The oracle that Habakkuk the prophet saw.[1]

2 How long, LORD, must I call for help, and You do not listen? I cry out to You, "Violence!" and You do not save.

3 Why do You make me look at wrongdoing? Why do You put up with trouble? Destruction and violence are before me; there is strife, and quarrels break out.

4 So the law is numbed and justice never goes out. The wicked surround the righteous, and so justice comes out twisted.[2]

5 Look among the nations and watch, and be utterly astonished! For I am doing a work in your days, a work you would never believe, even if someone told you.[3]

6 For I am raising up the Chaldeans, that bitter and hasty nation, who march across the breadth of the earth to seize dwelling places that are not their own.[4]

7 They are dreaded and feared; they make their own justice and their own greatness.

8 Their horses are swifter than leopards and fiercer than wolves at dusk. Their horsemen gallop headlong; their horsemen come from far away. They fly like an eagle swooping to devour.

9 They all come bent on violence; their faces press forward like the east wind, and they gather captives like sand.

10 They mock kings and make fun of rulers. They laugh at every fortress; they heap up earth and

capture it.[5]

11 Then they sweep past like the wind and go on,
guilty men, whose own strength is their god.

12 Are You not from everlasting, LORD my God, my
Holy One? We will not die. You, LORD, have
appointed them to execute judgement; You, my
Rock, have established them to punish.[6]

13 Your eyes are too pure to look on evil, and You
cannot look on wrongdoing. Why then do You look
on the treacherous? Why are You silent while the
wicked swallow up those more righteous than
they?

14 You have made people like the fish of the sea,
like creeping things that have no ruler.

15 He hauls them all up with a hook; he drags them
away in his net and gathers them in his dragnet.
So he rejoices and is glad.

16 That is why he sacrifices to his net and burns
incense to his dragnet, for by them he lives in
luxury and enjoys the richest food.

17 Is he then to keep emptying his net and
slaughtering nations without pity?

1 Habakkuk prophesied as Babylon rose to power, probably about 610–600 BC, shortly before the Chaldeans invaded Judah (2 Kings 24:1).

2 ‘Law’ is torah, God’s instruction; it has lost its grip.

3 Paul quotes this verse in Acts 13:41 from the Greek, which has ‘you scoffers’ for ‘among the nations’ and adds ‘and perish’.

4 The Chaldeans were the ruling people of the new Babylonian empire.

5 They build earth ramps against the walls, the usual method of siege.

6 ‘We will not die’ is one of the corrections of the scribes; the original reading was probably ‘You will not die’.

Chapter 2

> *Habakkuk 2 begins with the prophet standing at his watch post to see what the LORD will say. The LORD tells him to write the vision plainly on tablets so that a herald may run with it, for it awaits its appointed time and will surely come; though it lingers, wait for it. The proud are not upright, but the righteous will live by faithfulness. The arrogant man who is never satisfied, gathering nations like Sheol, will be the subject of five woes: on the one who piles up stolen goods, on the one who builds his house by unjust gain, on the one who builds a city with bloodshed, on the one who makes his neighbour drunk to gaze on his nakedness, and on the one who says to wood, “Wake up!” For the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the LORD’s glory as the waters fill the sea, and the LORD is in His holy temple: let all the earth hush before Him.*

1 I will stand at my watch post and station myself
on the rampart. I will keep watch to see what He
will say to me, and what I am to answer when I am
rebuked.

2 Then the LORD answered me: “Write down the
vision; make it plain on tablets, so that a herald
may run with it.[1]

3 For the vision still awaits its appointed time; it
hurries towards the end and will not prove false.
Though it lingers, wait for it; for it will surely
come, and it will not delay.

4 See, the proud one, his soul is not upright within
him; but the righteous one shall live by his
faithfulness.[2]

5 Moreover, wine is treacherous; the arrogant man
does not stay at rest. He opens his throat as wide
as Sheol, and like death he is never satisfied. He
gathers all the nations to himself and collects all
the peoples as his own.[3]

6 Will not all of them take up a taunt against him,
with mocking riddles about him, and say, ‘Woe to
him who piles up what is not his own, and loads
himself with pledges! How long can this go on?’[4]

7 Will not your creditors suddenly arise, and those
who make you tremble wake up? Then you will
become plunder for them.

8 Because you have plundered many nations, all
the rest of the peoples will plunder you, because
of human blood shed and violence done to the
land, to cities and all who live in them.

9 Woe to him who gains wealth by evil for his
house, to set his nest on high and escape the
grasp of disaster!

10 You have plotted shame for your house by
cutting off many peoples; you have sinned against
your own life.

11 For the stone will cry out from the wall, and the
beam will answer it from the woodwork.

12 Woe to him who builds a town with bloodshed
and founds a city on injustice!
13 Is it not from the LORD of Armies that peoples
toil only to feed the fire, and nations weary
themselves for nothing?[5]
14 For as the waters fill the sea, so the whole earth
will be filled with knowing the LORD's glory.
15 Woe to him who gives his neighbours drink,
pouring out your wrath until they are drunk, so
that he may gaze on their nakedness!
16 You will be filled with shame instead of glory.
You drink too, and expose yourself! The cup in the
LORD's right hand will come round to you, and
disgrace will cover your glory.
17 The violence done to Lebanon will overwhelm
you, and the destruction of animals will terrify
you, because of human blood shed and violence
done to the land, to cities and all who live in
them.[6]
18 What use is an idol, when its maker has carved
it, or a cast image, a teacher of lies? For its maker
trusts in his own creation when he makes
speechless idols.
19 Woe to him who says to a block of wood, 'Wake
up!' or to a lifeless stone, 'Get up!' Can it teach?
Look, it is overlaid with gold and silver, but there
is no breath in it at all.
20 But the LORD is in His holy temple; hush before
Him, all the earth!"

1 Or 'so that the one who reads it may run'.

2 'Faithfulness' (emunah) is steadfast trust in God. Paul quotes the end of this verse in Romans 1:17 and Galatians 3:11, and Hebrews 10:37–38 quotes verses 3–4 from the Greek ('the coming one will come … My righteous one shall live by faith').

3 One of the Dead Sea Scrolls has 'wealth' (hon) for 'wine' (hayyayin).

4 Pledges taken from debtors; the plunderer is pictured as a ruthless moneylender.

5 The same words are found in Jeremiah 51:58.

6 The Babylonians stripped the cedars of Lebanon for their buildings and hunted its wildlife.

Chapter 3

Habakkuk 3 is the prophet's prayer, a psalm. He has heard of the LORD's fame and stands in awe of His deeds, asking Him to renew them in these years and in wrath to remember mercy. God comes from Teman, the Holy One from Mount Paran; His splendour covers the heavens, plague goes before Him, and when He stands the earth shakes and the ancient mountains crumble. Was His anger against the rivers and the sea when He rode His chariots of salvation? The sun and moon stand still at the flash of His arrows. He marched through the earth in fury to save His people and His anointed, crushing the head of the house of the wicked. Habakkuk trembles at what he has heard, yet he will wait quietly for the day of distress to come on the invaders. Though the fig tree does not blossom and there is no fruit on the vines, no olives and no flocks, he will rejoice in the LORD, for the Lord GOD is his strength and makes his feet like the feet of a deer.

1 A prayer of Habakkuk the prophet. On
shigionoth.[1]
2 LORD, I have heard the report of You, and I stand
in awe of Your work, LORD. In our own time bring
it to life again; in our own time make it known. In
wrath, remember mercy.
3 God came from Teman, the Holy One from the
hill country of Paran. Selah. His majesty filled the
skies, and His praise filled the earth.[2]
4 His brightness was like the sunrise; rays flashed
from His hand, where His power was hidden.
5 Pestilence marched before Him, and plague
followed at His heels.
6 He stood and shook the earth; He looked and
made the nations tremble. The age-old mountains
were shattered and the everlasting hills sank low.
His ways are eternal.
7 I saw the tents of Cushan in distress, the curtains
of the land of Midian trembling.[3]
8 Was Your anger against the rivers, LORD? Was
Your wrath against the streams, or Your fury
against the sea, when You rode on Your horses,
Your chariots of victory?
9 You uncovered Your bow and called for many
arrows. Selah. You split the earth with rivers.[4]
10 The mountains saw You and writhed; torrents of
water swept by. The deep roared and lifted its
waves on high.
11 Sun and moon stood still in their places at the
light of Your flying arrows, at the flash of Your
gleaming spear.[5]

12 In fury You strode through the earth; in anger
You trampled the nations.
13 You went out to save Your people, to save Your
anointed. You crushed the leader of the house of
the wicked and stripped him from thigh to neck.
Selah.[6]
14 With his own spears You pierced the heads of his
warriors when they stormed out to scatter us,
gloating as if about to devour the poor in secret.
15 You trampled the sea with Your horses, churning
the mighty waters.
16 I heard, and my insides churned; my lips
quivered at the sound. Decay entered my bones,
and my legs trembled beneath me. Yet I will wait
calmly for the day of distress to come upon the
people who invade us.
17 Even if the fig tree does not bud and the vines
bear no grapes, if the olive crop fails and the
fields produce no food, if the sheep are lost from
the fold and there are no cattle in the stalls,
18 yet I will exult in the LORD; I will be joyful in
the God who saves me.
19 The Lord GOD is my strength. He makes my feet
sure like those of a deer and enables me to tread
upon the heights. For the director of music: on my
stringed instruments.[7]

1 Shigionoth is probably a musical term (compare Psalm 7, title). This chapter is a psalm, with ‘Selah’ (3:3, 9, 13) and directions for the music (3:19).

2 Teman (in Edom) and Mount Paran (in Sinai) are in the south, where God appeared to Israel (Deuteronomy 33:2; Judges 5:4).

3 Cushan is probably a people related to Midian, in the region south and east of Israel.

4 The second line is very obscure in Hebrew; literally ‘oaths of rods of a word’.

5 Compare Joshua 10:12–13.

6 ‘Your anointed’ is the king of God’s people.

7 Compare Psalm 18:33 and 2 Samuel 22:34.