

Habakkuk

1:1 The pronouncement which Habakkuk the prophet saw.¹

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."² **1:3** Why are You making me to see iniquity, and making me look at trouble? For sure destruction and violence are in front of me. Strife exists, and contention rises up.³ **1:4** Therefore, the Torah grows numb, and justice never extends out, because the wicked surround the righteous. As a result, justice goes out really perverted."⁴

1:5 "Look among the nations. Observe, and be astonished. Wonder, because I am performing a work in your days. You would not believe if someone described it."⁵ **1:6** Behold, I am raising up the Chaldeans [Babylonians], the fierce and reckless nation, who are going all over the earth to possess dwelling places which do not belong to them.⁶ **1:7** They are terrible and to be feared. Their justice and their majesty originate from themselves.⁷ **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.⁸ **1:9** All of them come for violent destruction. The movement of their faces is forward, and they gather captives like the sand.⁹ **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."¹⁰

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]."¹¹

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."¹² **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?¹³ **1:14** You made man like the fishes of the sea, like creeping things without a ruler over them."¹⁴

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.¹⁵ **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.¹⁶ **1:17** Will they, therefore, empty their net and continually slay nations whom they will not pity?¹⁷

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.¹⁸

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."¹⁹ **2:3** For 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."²⁰

2:4 "Behold the proud one! His soul is not right within him. But as for one who is justified by his belief, he will live!"²¹ **2:5** Furthermore, wine deals treacherously with the proud man,

and he does not stay home. It 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."²²

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.'²³ **2:7** Will not those who are charging you interest suddenly rise up, and will not those whom you are causing to tremble awaken? And you will be booty for them.²⁴ **2:8** Because you plundered many nations, all the remainder of the peoples will plunder you—because of human bloodshed and violence done to the land, the city, and all those who dwell in it."²⁵

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

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

2:15 "Woe to him who makes his friend drink, who mixes in his poison and makes him drunk in order to look upon his nakedness.³² **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,³³ **2:17** because the violent wrongdoings of Lebanon will cover you, and the destruction of beasts will cause them to be dismayed—because of human bloodshed and the violence done to the land, the city, and all those who dwell in it."³⁴

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 to make dumb idols?³⁵ **2:19** Woe to the one who says to the tree, 'Wake up,' to the silent stone, 'Arise.' It is teaching. Behold, it is overlaid with gold and silver, and there is no spirit in it."³⁶

2:20 Indeed, Yahweh is in His holy temple. Silence in His presence all the earth!³⁷

3:1 The prayer of Habakkuk the prophet with a song.³⁸

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."³⁹

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

3:4 His brightness is like sunlight, His power from His hand is His, and there is the hiding of His power.⁴¹

3:5 Pestilence [His message] goes before Him, and a plague goes out at His feet.⁴²

3:6 He stood and shook the earth. He looked and caused the nations to jump, and the sturdy mountains were shattered. The everlasting hills bent over. His ways are everlasting.⁴³

3:7 I saw the tents of Cushan under distress. The tent curtains of the land of Midian trembled.⁴⁴

3:8 Is Yahweh angry with the rivers, whether Your anger is with the rivers, or Your wrath with the sea, because You mount and ride on Your horses, Your chariots of salvation?⁴⁵

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

3:10 The mountains see you. They tremble. The downpour of water passes through. The deep utters its voice. It lifts high its hands.⁴⁷

3:11 The sun is in its place. The moon stands in its lofty place. Your arrows go towards the light. Your spear is lightning towards the brightness.⁴⁸

3:12 With wrath You march solemnly through the earth. In anger You trample the nations.⁴⁹

3:13 You go forth for the salvation of Your people, for the the salvation of your anointed one[s]. You kill the head of the house of the wicked, to lay him open from his legs to his neck.⁵⁰

3:14 You pierce with his spears the head of his warriors. They storm in to scatter us. Their exultation is like those who devour the poor in a secret place.⁵¹

3:15 You trample on the sea with your horses, causing the foaming of many waters.⁵²

3:16 I listened, and my innermost parts trembled. At the sound my lips quivered. Decay enters my bones, and from beneath me I tremble, because I must wait until the day of distress, until the people rise up, until they invade us.⁵³

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,⁵⁴

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

3:19 Yahweh my Lord is my strength, and He has established my feet as hinds' feet. He makes me walk on my high places.⁵⁶

To the music director on my stringed instruments.⁵⁷

¹ הַמְּשָׁא אֲשֶׁר הָיָה חִבְקֻק 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.

EBC – Habakkuk’s prophecy is set against a background of the decline and fall of the Judean kingdom (c. 626–586 B.C.). Although nothing is known of the prophet himself apart from the book bearing his name—the book is not dated in the usual manner (cf. Amos 1:1; Zeph 1:1; et al.)—the general background of Habakkuk is clear from the internal data. Verses 5-11 represent a period before 605, the year the Babylonians (the Chaldeans [kashim], 1:6) rose to power (cf. v.5: “you would not believe, even if you were told”), and probably prior to the 612 destruction of Nineveh. By contrast it is sometimes argued that 1:12-17 and 2:6-20 must reflect a period after 612 B.C. (so Ellison et al.), when the power and rapacity of the Babylonians had become common knowledge to the prophet. Various solutions have been proposed, but the best seems to be found in taking the sections of the dialogue as representative of Habakkuk’s spiritual struggles over a long period of time, possibly beginning as early as 626 and continuing as late as 590 or after. During this period Judah enjoyed its last bit of prosperity under Josiah (died 609 B.C.); Assyria’s wound was revealed as fatal with the ultimate fall of Nineveh in 612 and the short-lived Babylonian Empire established its dominance over Palestine, with Jerusalem a casualty and its people taken into exile in 586 B.C. Conditions during the life of the prophet would have progressed from excellent—with considerable material prosperity and even promise of spiritual revival—to the height of desperation as the net was drawn closer and closer around the hapless capital. There is no direct evidence from the book that Habakkuk lived past the destruction of Jerusalem, though some find such evidence in 3:16-19.

Josiah – (ruled 640-609 B.C.); Jehoahaz (609); Jehoiakim (609-598); Jehoiachin (598-597); Zedekiah (597-586).
² עַד-אֲנִי יְהוָה שִׁנְעֵתִי וְלֹא תִשְׁמַע אֲזַעֵק אֱלֹהֵי הַמָּס וְלֹא תוֹשִׁיעַ – Habakkuk is the only prophetic book from Isaiah through Malachi that begins with the prophet expressing himself to God instead of God’s speaking to him and through him to other people. In this way, Habakkuk begins like a psalm. It also ends in like manner in chapter 3 with Habakkuk’s prayer to God and song about God. Here, he speaks and expresses 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 complaints and pleas for Him to do so.

A major theme of this book is God’s apparent unwillingness to hear the prayers for salvation of the righteous like Habakkuk, but then the necessity of the righteous to wait for God to answer when He sees fit—ultimately at the end of the present age when Jesus returns and establishes his kingdom over the whole earth, centered in Jerusalem and Israel. This is when the salvation of believing Jews and Gentiles will become clear, leading to the eternal earth afterwards.

וְהַמָּס = violence occurs 6x in Habakkuk – 1:2,3,9; 2:8,17(2x). Thus, God’s unwillingness to hear complaints and pleas for help and salvation from His people of genuine belief is only apparent. God always hears these prayers, but He calls for His people to be willing to wait for His response when He determines that it is the right time.

Cf. [Proverbs 15:29](#) The LORD is far from the wicked, but He hears the prayer of the righteous.

Cf. [Psalm 145:18](#) The LORD is near to all who call upon Him, to all who call upon Him in truth. [19](#) He will fulfill the desire of those who fear Him; He will also hear their cry and will save them.

Cf. [1 John 5:14](#) This is the confidence which we have before Him, that, if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. [15](#) And if we know that He hears us in whatever we ask, we know that we have the requests which we have asked from Him.

³ לָמָּה תְּרַאֲנִי אֵינֶן וְעַמָּל תִּבְיֹט וְשֹׁר וְחַמָּס לְגַגְדִּי וְיְהִי רֵיב וּמְדוֹן 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, that the weak are being violently oppressed by the unrighteous strong. And He knows that God both is the author of all reality and the only One who therefore can stop the social injustice and 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).

⁴ עַל-כֵּן הִפּוּג תוֹרָה וְלֹא-יִצְא לְעֵצָה מִשְׁפָּט כִּי רָשָׁע מִכְתִּיר אֶת-הַצְּדִיק עַל-כֵּן יִצְא מִשְׁפָּט מִעֲקָל – It is not that there is something wrong with the Torah and MC. The problem is with the people of Judah. They 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. The result is that the justice in their society is certainly not biblical. Instead, it is a perversion of justice. People know the right thing to do because it is clear in the Torah, but they are unwilling to obey God—probably even while they bring their offerings to the temple and perform their religious duties. But God is not interested in religion. He is interested in the heart and how people treat others as a reflection of God’s love for them and their love for God.

⁵ רָאוּ בְגוֹזֵם וְהַבְּיָטוּ וְהַתְּמָהוּ תְּמָהוּ כִּי־פֶעַל פֶּעַל בְּיַמֵּיכֶם לֹא תֵאֱמָנוּ כִּי יִסְפָּר – In vs. 5-11, rather than answering Habakkuk with the hope of relief from the situation in Judah, 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. Basically, God verifies that Habakkuk is correct in his assessment of Judah and predicts judgment and destruction. Violence within the nation of Israel will beget violence against the nation of Israel as promised by God in Deuteronomy 28. But in 2:6-19 God will declare the same for Babylon because of their rebellion against God.

The imperative verbs at the beginning of this verse are plural. God is calling for all the people of Judah to look at what He is going to do. But 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. They are too stubborn, too blind, and too unbelieving to accept the truth that God is expressing to them through Habakkuk. 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.

Denial is the human condition. The clear evidence of disaster can exist all around us, and we will refuse to believe it. And we will refuse to believe God and his statements of judgment. In other words, truth is not something we are naturally attracted to. It takes the Spirit of God to motivate us to embrace it.

⁶ כִּי־הִנְנִי מְקִיִּם אֶת־הַפְּשָׁדִים הַגּוֹי הַמֵּנֵר וְהַנִּמְהָר הַחַוְלֵה לְמִרְתַּב־אֲרִיז לְרֶשֶׁת מִשְׁפָּנוֹת 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.

⁷ אֲנִים וְנוֹרָא הוּא מִמֵּנוּ מִשְׁפָּטוֹ וְשִׂאתוֹ יֵצֵא – Others who are attacked by the Babylonians can only fear them. The last half of this verse describes their spiritual condition. They are proud and arrogant with no acknowledgment of God and His right to be worshiped. Instead, all sense of rightness and what is great and good for the Babylonians comes from within them and not from God. They have deified themselves and recognize no other god—except probably their pagan gods which are no gods at all, thus leading them psychologically to render themselves as 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. While they are God’s instrument of justice towards the Kingdom of Judah, they are opposed to the one true God and His moral requirements for all human beings.

⁸ וְקָלוּ מִנְמָרִים סוֹסָיו וְחָדָו מִזֶּבֶר וְפָשׁוּ פָרָשָׁיו וּפָרָשָׁיו מִרְחוֹק וְבָאוּ יָעֹפוּ כְּנֶשֶׁר תֵּשׁ לְאֹכֹל – The Babylonians’ transportation of war is the best—swift horses. The soldiers mounted on horseback swoop down on their enemies like eagles and devour, i.e., conquer, them likewise.

Cf. Deuteronomy 28:49 “The LORD will bring a nation against you from afar, from the end of the earth, as the eagle swoops down, a nation whose language you shall not understand, 50 a nation of fierce countenance who will have no respect for the old, nor show favor to the young.”

⁹ כְּלוֹה לְחַמְס וְבָאוּ מִגִּבְעוֹת פְּנִיהֶם קָדִימָה וַיֵּאָסְפוּ כְּחוֹל שָׁבִי – The LXX is a bit different – συντέλεια εἰς ἀσειβεις ἤξει ἀνθεστηκότας προσώποις αὐτῶν ἐξ ἐναντίας καὶ συνάξει ὡς ἄμμον αἰχμαλωσίαν – Completion towards ungodliness exists for those who oppose their faces, and they gather captives like sand—numberless people slated for deportation.

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. This will be true of the Jews of Judah too. They will all be made to leave their homes and deported to Babylon.

¹⁰ וְהוּא בְּמַלְכִים יִתְקַלֵּם וְדוֹנִים מִשְׁחָק לָו הוּא לְכָל־מְבַצֵּר יִשְׁחָק וַיִּצְבֹּר עֶפְר 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.

¹¹ אִזּוּ תִלְךָ רִוַח וַיַּעֲבֹר וַאֲשַׁם זֶה כְּהוֹ לֹא־לוֹ – The LXX is τότε μεταβαλεῖ τὸ πνεῦμα καὶ διελύσεται καὶ ἐξιλάσεται 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 as explained in chapter 2.

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. In spite of the Jews’ disobedience of God, God will fulfill His promise to make of them the greatest nation in all human history.

¹² הִלֹּא אַתָּה מִנְקָרָם יִהְיֶה אֵלֶיךָ קֹדֶשׁ לֹא נְמוּת יִהְיֶה לְמִשְׁפָּט שְׂמֹתוֹ וְצִוֵּר לְהוֹכִיחַ יִסְדָּתוֹ – The very last part of the verse in the LXX is a little different – καὶ ἐπλασέν με τοῦ ἐλέγχειν 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). God is their "Rock," faithful to them in spite of their repeated and deep disobedience to the Mosaic Covenant. Therefore, they can count on Him to reprove them but not destroy them. God constantly trains His people but with his faithful love ensures they will persevere in their faith and achieve their goal of eternal life and mercy (cf. Hebrews 12).

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.

¹³ טְהוֹר עֵינַיִם מִרְאוֹת רָע וְהַבַּיִשׁ אֶל-עַמֶּל לֹא תוֹכֵל לָמָּה תְבִיט בְּזָגִים תַּחֲרִישׁ בְּבַלְע רָשָׁע צְדִיק מִמֶּנִּי – God has made Habakkuk look on the evil of his own people the Jews. Now God Himself is looking on the evil of the Babylonians who are an instrument of God's justice against the evil Jews.

But 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. Therefore, he asks these rhetorical questions, but he knows the answers. God's covenant with the nation of Israel obligates Him to reprove them for their disobedience, even if it means using an evil and unbelieving group of people to exercise His reproof. This will be just like what God does with the Beast of Revelation, and then He will destroy him and his people who have mistreated the Jews.

¹⁴ וַתַּעֲשֶׂה אֲדָם כַּדָּגִים הַיָּם כְּרִמְשׁ לֹא-מִשְׁלַל בּוֹ – Habakkuk complains that God has made most 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. He describes these hapless people, including the Jews', being caught in the net of the Babylonians in vs. 15-17. The other comparison of the crowds of societies is with bugs and crawling creatures who go to and fro without any true and godly 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. This has been true of most societies and people down through human history.

While Habakkuk may have in mind all the various peoples whom Babylonians will conquer, he probably is thinking specifically of the Kingdom of Judah, that they are without a good ruler who will lead them in obedience to God who would then protect them from all their enemies.

¹⁵ כִּלְהוּ בַחֲכָה הַעֲלָה יַגְרֵהוּ בְחַרְמוֹ וַיֹּאכְלֵהוּ בְמַכְמֹרְתוֹ עַל-כֵּן יִשְׂמַח וַיִּגְיֵל – The "they" here are the Babylonians.

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.

This is the nature of man, to aggrandize himself at the expense of other people, as many people as possible, and increase his power without considering how much suffering he is causing. All he cares about is gaining more power, influence, and money. Obviously, the opposite of this is to care for people and their spiritual, emotional, and physical needs as much as is possible with the person's means.

¹⁶ עַל-כֵּן יִזְבַּח לְחַרְמוֹ וַיִּקְטֹר לְמַכְמֹרְתוֹ כִּי בַהֲמוֹה שָׂמְנוּ חֲלָקוֹ וּמֵאֲקָלוֹ בָּרָאָה – While the Babylonians were polytheists and worshiped the gods of nature and of the created realm, Habakkuk is revealing that these gods are none other than themselves projected onto the rest of the creation. In other words, human beings worship either the one, true God or themselves. Because even if they think they are worshiping gods outside of themselves through their religious sacrifices (even burnt offerings where they share a meal with their gods), they believe that it is by their strength and actions that they keep the gods happy and caring for them. If one's god or gods are not truly transcendent and uncreated, then they are simply forces within the creation, even oneself. Self-worship or worship of God are the only real options.

Therefore, the Babylonians' "net" is their own strength and ingenuity in waging war against others in order to add their lands to their kingdom. They increase their "food," i.e., their prosperous lifestyle, by taking the conquered peoples and using them as slaves. As stated above, despite the fact that they claim to worship the pagan gods of nature, they actually are worshiping themselves, because ultimately they believe that it is they with their own strength and proper worship of the gods who have pleased the gods and thereby achieved such military success in conquering other lands.

¹⁷ תַּעֲלֵ כֵּן יִרְיַק חֲרָמוֹ וְהִמְנִיד לְהַרְגֵי אֲדָם לֹא יִחְמוֹל – Thus, Habakkuk asks the simple question as to what the Babylonians will do in the future. How far are they going to go in their military conquests? 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, because the greed of man is insatiable when it comes to power, control, and money.

¹⁸ עַל-מִשְׁמֹרְתֵי אֲעִמְדָה וְאֶתִּיצְבָּה עַל-מִצְדוֹ וְאַצְפֵּה לְרֵאוֹת מַה-יִּדְבַּר-בִּי וְנָתַה אֲשׁוּב 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.

He has said enough about the suffering God is bringing on His people through the irreverent and evil Babylonians and how it just seems wrong to him, when he knows that ultimately it is not. So now, Habakkuk is going to stand watch on

the walls of his city (Mizpah, Jerusalem?) and wait for 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. Will God simply add to what Habakkuk already knows about what He is going to do. Or will God rebuke him for questioning His wisdom and the way He is telling His story? Both are possible.

Habakkuk is also waiting to see what he will have to say in response to God's response to his complaint. Chapter 3 provides his response, which is one of complete faith and trust in God. This we would expect from a bona fide prophet of God. Implied in what Habakkuk says is God's and his exhortation to emulate him.

EBC – We do not know Habakkuk's home, but Mizpah represents a typical fortified city of this preexilic period. Yadin describes it as having had a solid wall 600 yards long, 4 yards thick on average, and perhaps 12 yards high, thus posing a considerable obstacle to both battering rams and attackers scaling it (cf. 1:10). It was built of stone with salients and recesses, being buttressed at its weak points with a total of ten towers; and it would have been crowned by a balcony with a crenelated parapet. The gate was also guarded by two towers, being carefully designed and fortified in keeping with its strategic function (Yadin, *Art of Warfare*, pp. 18-23, 323-24, 378-79, 391, 398; cf. 1 Kings 15:22; 2 Chronicles 26:15).

¹⁹ וַיִּעֲנֵנִי יְהוָה וַיֹּאמֶר כְּתוּב חֲזוֹן וּבְאֵר עַל-הַלְחָוֹת לְמַעַן יְרוּיַן קוֹרְאָהּ בּוֹ – The LXX uses ὁ ἀναγινώσκων = the one who reads for קוֹרְאָהּ. 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 and clear. 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. Or the running could refer to the one who reads, the herald, who runs from place to place and announces God's message by making it known to his readers, even the Jews in the southern Kingdom of Judah. But if this whole section of 2:2-20 is about Babylon and its king, then the first option makes more sense.

Another option is that the reader is anyone in the future who has the opportunity to read Habakkuk's prophecy and then “run” with his life in a manner that takes it into account, i.e., particularly by exercising authentic belief in God and His plans and purposes who will bring about His predetermined goals (cf. 2:3,4). This option may make the most sense in the light of God's directing Habakkuk to write down His words, which would mean that there is a permanent record of Habakkuk's message for future generations. If this is the case, then this whole section may be more about the goal of God's fulfilling His promise to Abraham to make the Jews a “great nation” and encouraging any Jew who reads this message to believe God for this promise.

²⁰ כִּי עוֹד חֲזוֹן לְמוֹעֵד וַיִּבְרַח לִקְוֵי וְלֹא יִכְזָב אִם-יִתְמַתְמָהּ חֶפְזָהּ לֹוּ כִי-בָא יָבֵא לֹא יִאָּחֵר – 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, which could mean either that the finish line is the Babylonia invasion or that it is the end of history when God fulfills His promise to Abraham, thus making the Babylonian invasion a stepping stone towards it. The latter makes sense in the light of God's repeated assurance to Israel to remain faithful to them.

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 what the vision predicts—the Babylonian invasion? Or the end of history when God will fulfill all His promises to Israel? Or both with everything in between as God continues telling His story? Probably the last option. Even if the vision shows only the Babylonian invasion, it is from God as part of the whole story of His fulfilling all His promises.

Either way, this means that everything 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.

As the EBC suggests – Verses 2-3 thus provide a suggestive and compressed view of salvation history. Its future development is perfectly determined by God, and he allows man to glimpse this future as a basis for faith and hope (cf. Rom 8:18-25; 1 Cor 15:51-58). However man never sees the entire pattern of salvation, so that events may seem delayed and disappointing from his perspective. For this reason man must lay hold of the future that God has revealed, waiting for it with an eager faith and hope that surpass the apparent obstacles to its realization (3:17-19; cf. Rom 4:16-23; Heb 6:11-12, 18-19; 10:32-11:1; 12:1-29).

²¹ הִנֵּה עֹפְלָה לֹא-יִשְׁרָה נַפְשׁוֹ בּוֹ וַצַּדִּיק בְּאַמּוֹנֵתוֹ יִהְיֶה – 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, who represents all the Babylonians, while the individual man of belief is any Jew in the Kingdom of Judah, especially Habakkuk.

²² וְלֹא יִגְוֶה אֲשֶׁל הִרְחִיב נַפְשׁוֹ וְהוּא כְמוֹת וְלֹא יִשְׁבַּע וַיִּאָּסֵף אֱלֹהֵי כָל-הַגּוֹיִם וַיִּקְבֹּץ אֱלֹהֵי כָל-הָעַמּוּם – In addition, God says that the proud and arrogant man tends to drink too much alcohol, probably as a way to compensate for his powerlessness which he is denying. As a consequence, 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.

כָּלֵם עָלָיו מִשָּׁל יֵשָׁאוּ וּמְלִיצָה חִידוֹת לֹא יֵאמָרוּ הִיא הַמְּרֻבָּה לֹא-לֹא עַד-מִתִּי וּמִכְבִּיד עָלָיו עֲבָטִים
הָאֱלֹהִים – In vs. 6-20 we find God’s judgment on Babylon that includes four “Woes” (vs. 6,9,12,15).

This paragraph begins with God’s speaking of Babylon and its king in the third person, i.e., indirectly.

As Habakkuk goes on to describe in vs. 6-8, 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. They could be like the “they” we may speak of when we comment, “They say that such and such is true,” meaning that we are ascribing a level of expertise to some people out there in the world whom we consider to be able to speak authoritatively on a particular subject. In this case, the subject is the moral evaluation of the Babylonians. But the context supports more the first option. It will be the Medes and the Persians who lift up a proverb against the Babylonians and taunt them.

The Medes and Persians will understand reality well enough that they can express certain proverbs of judgment against the Babylonians, and they will agree that the Babylonians are going down because of their immoral behavior. Indeed, they will eventually bring about their own demise as expressed in four “Woes.” The first woe is that their very greed, 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, so heavily it is clearly foolishness. But v. 8 indicates that his creditors are the people whom he has conquered. In effect, he has plundered their property and land. In this sense, he has “increased what is not his.” And this can happen only “until when?” Until God reverses history and the people whom he has conquered eventually call in their “loan” and plunder him, such as what the Medes and Persians did around 540 B.C. The Babylonians became the Medes’ and Persians’ “booty.”

הָאֱלֹהִים פָּתַע יְקוֹמוּ נִשְׁכָּיֶךָ וַיִּקְצְאוּ מִזֶּעְזְעֶיךָ וְהָיְתָה לְמִשְׁפּוֹת לָמוֹ
– In this verse, God changes to addressing Babylon and its king in the second person, i.e., directly.

All the time that the conquered people live under the thumb of the Babylonians, they are “charging them interest” and waiting for the opportunity to turn the tables on them. The Babylonians cause them to tremble by oppressing them. But the “lender” will eventually become the “creditor,” calling in the loan and conquering them—as the Medes and the Persians did.

כִּי אַתָּה שְׁלֹתָ גּוֹיִם רַבִּים וְשָׁלוּךְ כָּל-יְהוּדָה עֲמֹם מִדְּמֵי אֲדָם וְחַמְסֵי-אֲרָץ קָרְוָה וְכָל-שׁוֹבֵי בָהּ – It will not be all the people whom the Babylonians conquered who will defeat them, but definitely some of the survivors will have the opportunity to rise up and avenge themselves on the Babylonians. This is what the Medes and Persians did. 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 by those whom they conquered for their mistreatment of those whom they conquered.

הוּא בִצְעַע בִצְעַע רַע לְבֵיתוֹ לְשׂוֹם בְּמִרוֹם קִנְזוֹ לְהַנְצִיל מִכַּף-רָע – 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 and his kingdom, in order to protect himself from other nations and their evil will result ultimately in God’s judgment. He has plundered other nations’ material wealth and taken the people captive to labor on his behalf in building his own dwelling and the rest of his kingdom.

וַיַּעֲזֹתָ בְּשֵׁת לְבֵיתֶךָ קִצּוֹת-עַמִּים רַבִּים וְחֹטְאֵי נַפְשֶׁךָ – By exalting himself, the Babylonian king is bringing shame upon himself by immorally exploiting the people whom he has conquered and by using his spoils of war to strengthen his personal residence and enlarge his kingdom 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. He has “cut off many peoples,” meaning he has killed them and taken them into captivity, but his own people will be killed and taken captive in return.

כִּי-אֲבֵן מִקִּיר תִּזְעַק וְכַפִּיס 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.

הוּא בָּנָה עִיר בְּרָמִים וְכוּנֵן קָרְוָה בְּעוֹלָה – cf. LXX for “unrighteousness” (ἀδικία). Similar to the previous “Woe,” God pronounces judgment on the Babylonian king who continues building his capital city and his empire by extrapolation by means of the immoral bloodshed he has perpetrated on other people which results in his acquiring their wealth.

EBC – The third “woe” reiterates from vv.6-11 the indictment of ruthless self-aggrandizement achieved by “bloodshed” (v.12; cf. v.8), applying it to the construction of the Babylonian capital, as it had been applied previously to Jerusalem (Mic 3:10). The judgment pronounced on such an enterprise is inevitable: a civilization built up by the destruction of other civilizations and by the conscription of their labor for its own ends will itself be destroyed (v.13; cf. Jer 22:13-14; 51:58). The divine origin of the judgments on the Babylonians becomes explicit in v.13. The mainspring of human

history is to be found, not in its events themselves, but in the revealed purposes of the Lord who directs it. The title “LORD Almighty” may be translated more literally LORD of armies (*YHWH sebaot*; cf. ASV; RSV; NIV Preface; TWOT, 2:750-51). It expresses the Lord’s sovereign rule as king and commander over every created force, but primarily over Israel. It is associated repeatedly, as here, with his militant judgment of all that opposes his rule.

³⁰ הַלֹּא הֵנּוּ מֵאֵת יְהוָה צָבָאוֹת וַיִּגְעוּ עַמִּים בְּדִרְיֹאשׁ וְלְאֻמִּים בְּדִרְיֹק וַעֲפוּ – Difficult idioms, but LXX helps – οὐ ταῦτά ἐστιν παρὰ κυρίου παντοκράτορος; καὶ ἐξέλιπον λαοὶ ἱκανοὶ ἐν πυρὶ, καὶ ἔθνη πολλὰ ὀλιγοψύχησαν = Are not these things from the Lord Almighty, and sufficient peoples fail in fire, and many nations are discouraged. 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.

³¹ כִּי תִמְלֵא הָאָרֶץ לְדַעַת אֶת־כְּבוֹד יְהוָה כַּמַּיִם יִכְסּוּ 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 and admission of God’s greatness and awesomeness. Evil people, even evil and greedy nations who conquer others simply for the purpose of expanding the extent of their own power and authority on the earth will stop God from extending His power and authority over the whole earth and making every nation submit to him. This will happen when Jesus returns and restores the Kingdom of Israel and its authority over the whole earth in the millennial kingdom.

³² הֲזֵי מִשְׁקָה רַעֲיוֹ מִסַּבֵּחַ חֲמֻתָּה וְאַחַ שְׂכָר לִמְעַן הִבִּישׁ עַל־מְעוֹרֵייהֶם – 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. This is also probably being applied to the king’s evil behavior towards those whom he has conquered, making them drink his cup of wrath that has exposed their nakedness, i.e., their vulnerability. Thus, the Babylonian king makes both his friends and his enemies drunk with his “wine.”

³³ שְׂבַעֲתָ קְלוֹן מִכְּבוֹד שְׂתָה גַם־אֶתְהָ וְהִעַרְלָ תִסּוּב עַל־יָךְ בּוֹס יִמְנִן וְהוֹה וְקִיקְלָוִן עַל־כְּבוֹרֵךְ – God urges the king to drink as much likewise and reveal his own nakedness and vulnerability, which also reveals his uncircumcised state physically, which is symbolic of his uncircumcised state spiritually and morally. The king is an ordinary, mortal human being who thinks he is God, but God will reveal otherwise to him in His own time. 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.

Cf. [Psalm 75:8](#) For a cup is in the hand of the LORD, and the wine foams; It is well mixed, and He pours out of this; Surely all the wicked of the earth must drain and drink down its dregs.

Cf. [Revelation 16:19](#) The great city was split into three parts, and the cities of the nations fell. Babylon the great was remembered before God, to give her the cup of the wine of His fierce wrath.

³⁴ כִּי תִמְסַ לְבַנּוֹן וְכִסְףְךָ וְשֵׁד בְּהַמּוֹת וְחַיִּתָּן מִדְּמֵי אֲדָם וְחַמְסֵ־אֲרֶץ קָרְיָה וְכָל־יְשֻׁבֵי בָהּ – The LXX is helpful in translating this verse, διότι ἀσεβεία τοῦ Λιβάνου καλύψει σε, καὶ ἀλαϊπωρία θηρίων πτοήσει 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, along with his causing the nation of Israel to drink his cup of wrath until they are drunk with destruction will come back to haunt him when God reveals his pride and arrogance in the same manner with the Medes and the Persians.

³⁵ מִהֲהוֹעִיל לְפָסֶל כִּי פִסְלוֹ יִצְרֹ מִסַּבְּחָ וּמִזֹּרָה שִׁקָּר כִּי בִטָּח יִצְרֹ עַל־יָו וְיִצְרֹ לַעֲשׂוֹת אֱלֹהִים אֲלֵמִים – 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.

³⁶ הַיּוֹי אֲמַר לְעֵין הַקְּיָצָה שׁוּרֵי לְאֵבֶן דּוֹמָם הוּא יוֹדֵה הַנְּהַה־הוּא תְּבוּשׁ זָהָב וְכֶסֶף וְכָל־רוּחַ אֵין בְּקַרְבּוֹ – 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 it 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 or life (“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.

Therefore, what a waste of time getting anything in the material universe, including ourselves and our own minds that think they are devising wise and valuable ideas when they are producing only foolishness, to substitute for God who is the only one who can provide truth, life, sustenance, and safety.

³⁷ וַיְהִי־הָיָה בְּהִיבֹל קִדְשׁוֹ תָּס מִפְּנֵי כָּל־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 (or in heaven, i.e., in His transcendence outside the created reality), so that He is there (especially in His transcendence) for the protection, safety, and sustenance of 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?

³⁸ עַל שְׁנֵינֹתָּי מֵעַל שְׁנֵינֹתָּי – The LXX uses μετὰ ὀδῆς for שְׁנֵינֹתָּי. 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. This is a prayer and a song for justice from God.

³⁹ יְהוָה שָׁמַעְתִּי שְׁמוֹעַךְ נְרָאתִי יְהוָה פָּעַלְךָ בְּקֶרֶב שָׁנִים תִּיְהוֶה בְּקֶרֶב שָׁנִים תוֹדִיעַ בְּרָגְזוֹ 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. He may even die or at least be taken into captivity and made to endure as a slave of the Babylonians, and he does not relish any of these possibilities.

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; Exodus 28-30). So he asks God to work His covenantal work of causing life in His people again, referring to His Abrahamic and Mosaic promises of causing authentic belief in Israel/Judah.

Habakkuk prays that God will make His work obvious and known among His people—that He will keep it going, in spite of their disobedience and His judgment on them by destroying the southern Kingdom of Judah by means of the Babylonians. Thus, even though Habakkuk knows that God is going to follow through on His threat to destroy the southern Kingdom of Judah, he prays that God will not be so judgmental that He completely lacks compassion towards His people and destroys them with no survivors. He must know that this will be the case because of God’s promise to Abraham which implies His faithfulness to them throughout all history.

⁴⁰ אֱלֹהִים מִתֵּימָן יָבֹא וְקָרוֹשׁ מִתְּהַר־פָּאָרָן סֵלָה כִּסֵּף שְׁמוֹלִים הוֹדִי וְתַהֲלֵתִי מִלְּאָה 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 and that repeats His promise to Abraham to make them the greatest nation on earth (Deuteronomy 28-30).

God’s greatness (“excellence”) is everywhere so that those who are truly inclined praise and adore Him for His majesty. Thus, this anticipates God’s rule over the entire earth when Jesus returns and establishes the millennial kingdom.

⁴¹ וְגִגְדָה כְּאֹזֶר תְּהִלָּה בְּרַגְלָיו מִיָּדוֹ לְוָשֶׁם הַבְּנוֹן עֲזָה – As in Deuteronomy 33:2-4, Habakkuk speaks of God’s glory as a brightness of light (probably lightning which flashes and displays the power of huge electrical charges or sunlight at which no one can look directly), 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.

EBC suggests that God’s hidden power refers to the storehouses where He keeps the rain, i.e., natural forces that aid human beings in their survival (cf. Deuteronomy 28:12).

cf. [Exodus 19:16](#) So it came about on the third day, when it was morning, that there were thunder and lightning flashes and a thick cloud upon the mountain and a very loud trumpet sound, so that all the people who were in the camp trembled... 18 Now Mount Sinai was all in smoke because the LORD descended upon it in fire; and its smoke ascended like the smoke of a furnace, and the whole mountain quaked violently.

⁴² לְרַגְלֵי לְרַגְלֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל יִשְׂרָאֵל יִשְׂרָאֵל – The LXX = πρὸ προσώπου αὐτοῦ πορεύεται λόγος καὶ ἐξελεύσεται, ἐν πεδίλοις οἱ πόδες αὐτοῦ. Consider first [Genesis 15:13](#) God said to Abram, “Know for certain that your descendants will be strangers in a land that is not theirs, where they will be enslaved and oppressed four hundred years. [14](#) But I will also judge (יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶנְזֵב, κρινῶ ἐγώ) the nation whom they will serve, and afterward they will come out with many possessions.” Here we find the idea that God judges and punishes those who mistreat His people Israel. Adopting an anti-Semitic attitude will only get a person or nation condemnation and destruction from God.

Then there is the Hebrew רָבָרָב which can mean pestilence as in [Exodus 5:3](#) Then they said, “The God of the Hebrews has met with us. Please, let us go a three days’ journey into the wilderness that we may sacrifice to the LORD our God, otherwise He will fall upon us with pestilence (בְּרָבָרָב) or with the sword.” But it obviously can mean word or message, too, which is how the LXX translates it in Habakkuk 3:5. Thus, God even threatens Israel with disease and death if they do not obey Him.

Also there is in regard to the Egyptians [Exodus 9:3](#) “behold, the hand of the LORD will come with a very severe pestilence (בְּרָבָרָב) on your livestock which are in the field, on the horses, on the donkeys, on the camels, on the herds, and on the flocks.” God followed through on His promise, and all the Egyptian cattle died the next day. Then there is in regard to the Jews from a list of things God will do to the Jews in they disobey the Mosaic Covenant, [Leviticus 26:25](#) ‘I will also bring upon you a sword which will execute vengeance for the covenant; and when you gather together into your cities, I will send pestilence (רָבָרָב) among you, so that you shall be delivered into enemy hands.’

The Hebrew רָבָרָב can mean plague or pestilence too as possibly in [Deuteronomy 32:24](#) ‘They will be wasted by famine, and consumed by plague and bitter destruction; and the teeth of beasts I will send upon them, with the venom of crawling things of the dust.’ God is speaking about the nation of Israel because of their disloyalty towards Him, even as He was bringing them out of slavery from Egypt.

And this from the mouth of Jeremiah regarding foreign nations [Jeremiah 28:8](#) “The prophets who were before me and before you from ancient times prophesied against many lands and against great kingdoms, of war (לְמַלְחָמָה), εἰς πόλεμον) and of calamity (וְיָלֵךְ) and of pestilence (וְיָלֵךְ).” In other words, God threatens Egypt, the Jews, and other Gentile nations with war, catastrophe, and diseases for their disobedience towards Him. There is also [Obadiah 15](#) “For the day of the LORD draws near on all the nations (עַל-כָּל-הַגּוֹיִם, ἐπὶ πάντα τὰ ἔθνη). As you have done, it will be done to you. Your dealings will return on your own head.” Cf. [Ezekiel 30](#) where God says that the day of the Lord will be “a time for the nations,” and He mentions Egypt, Ethiopian, Arabia, and others. Thus, God’s wrath and judgment will basically be worldwide. These same acts of judgment show up also in Seals 1-4 of Revelation 6 as well as in the Olivet Discourse, especially in Luke’s account. Therefore, wars, natural catastrophes, and diseases will be common occurrences as manifestations of God’s judgment on nations (probably all nations because none is like the nation of Israel during the millennial kingdom when every Jew will be a genuine believer), including the Jews, until Jesus’ return. All human beings and all nations are called by God to be repentant and moral as the Jews will be during the Millennial Kingdom. To the extent that people reject God, they subject themselves to God’s judgment as revealed through wars, natural catastrophes, and deadly diseases. With these instruments of judgment, God encourages all people to face into their sin, their mortality, and their powerlessness over their lives and this creation so as to repent and believe in Him for the sake of their eternal salvation. But obviously more people do not repent and believe, and God’s instruments of judgment keep showing up. In addition, like Habakkuk, believers experience the effects of God’s judgments in spite of their being His people. They may even die in the midst of them. This is why they must use these times to increase their knowledge and understanding of God and their faith and belief in Him so as to persevere and gain eternal life and mercy.

There is also [Ezekiel 38:18](#) “It will come about on that day, when Gog comes against the land of Israel,” declares the Lord GOD, “that My fury will mount up in My anger. [19](#) In My zeal and in My blazing wrath I declare that on that day there will surely be a great earthquake in the land of Israel.” And cf. [Revelation 16:17](#) Then the seventh angel poured out his bowl upon the air, and a loud voice came out of the temple from the throne, saying, “It is done.” [18](#) And there were flashes of lightning and sounds and peals of thunder; and there was a great earthquake, such as there had not been since man came to be upon the earth [land], so great an earthquake was it, and so mighty. [19](#) The great city was split into three parts, and the cities of the nations fell. Babylon the great was remembered before God, to give her the cup of the wine of His fierce wrath. [20](#) And every island fled away, and the mountains were not found. [21](#) And huge hailstones, about one hundred pounds each, came down from heaven upon men; and men blasphemed God because of the plague of the hail, because its plague was extremely severe.

If the LXX is correct, then 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. If the MT means pestilence, then this is typical of the parallelism of Hebrew poetry.

⁴³ אֶרֶץ אֲרָץ רָבָרָב גְּלוֹתֵם וְנִתְפָּצְצוּ תְּרֵי עֵד שְׁהוּ גְבָעוֹת עוֹלָם הִלִּיכוֹת עוֹלָם לֹא – The LXX is helpful for translating this verse properly – ἔστη, καὶ ἐσαλεύθη ἡ γῆ ἐπέβλεψεν, καὶ διετάκη ἔθνη διεθρόβη τὰ ὄρη βία 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.

The NAS95 translates **וַיִּמְרָד** as He surveyed. And it translates **וַיִּתְרַד** as He startled.

Is Habakkuk looking back in history or forward?

As in other situations such as Mt. Sinai when God shook the mountain and destroyed the Egyptians when the Red Sea closed over them and they drowned, God has used and will use His power to bring judgment and destruction on those peoples and nations who deserve it. Because God's ways are everlasting, 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—through perhaps even earthquakes. 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, and He will bring about judgment throughout the earth when Jesus returns—and of course at the Great White Throne Judgment before He creates the new heavens and the new earth.

⁴⁴ **וַיִּתְרַד אֲנִי כוֹשָׁן יְרֻמָּוִן יְרִיעוֹת אֶרֶץ מִדְיָן** – The LXX has an extra line at the beginning that corresponds to the last line of the previous verse in the Hebrew text – *πορείας αἰωνίας αὐτοῦ ἀντὶ κόπων εἶδον* = I saw his eternal journeys instead of His troubles. Also, the LXX translates Cushan as Ethiopia. Cf. Numbers 12:1 Then Miriam and Aaron spoke against Moses because of the Cushite woman whom he had married (for he had married a Cushite woman).

Habakkuk watches the Ethiopians in Africa and the Midianites near Moab tremble at God's display of His power and judgment. In other words, Gentile nations will feel the effects of God's wrath, whether it is directed towards Israel with collateral damage in the surrounding nations or it is directed towards the Gentiles specifically.

Cf. **Judges 7:25** They captured the two leaders of Midian, Oreb and Zeeb, and they killed Oreb at the rock of Oreb, and they killed Zeeb at the wine press of Zeeb, while they pursued Midian; and they brought the heads of Oreb and Zeeb to Gideon from across the Jordan.

⁴⁵ **הֲבִגְהָרִים תִּהְיֶה אִם בְּגִהָרִים אֵפֶד אִם-בְּיָם עֲבָרְתָּד כִּי תִרְכַּב עַל-סוּסֶיךָ מִן-כַּבְתִּיךָ יִשׁוּעָה** – Is this possibly a reference to the events of the Red Sea and in Israel's past history? God got angry with (parted?) 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 with the wind that blew the waters apart and brought escape and salvation to the Israelites.

The imagery of God's powerful parting the Red Sea and rescuing the Israelites is used throughout the OT. But the verses in this paragraph could also allude the both the creation account and the flood. God controls the waters and the land to demonstrate His power that accomplishes two purpose—the destruction of His enemies and the salvation of His people.

Cf. **Deuteronomy 11:4** and what He did to Egypt's army, to its horses and its chariots, when He made the water of the Red Sea to engulf them while they were pursuing you, and the LORD completely destroyed them.

Psalm 106:9 Thus He rebuked the Red Sea and it dried up, And He led them through the deeps, as through the wilderness.

Isaiah 10:26 The LORD of hosts will arouse a scourge against him like the slaughter of Midian at the rock of Oreb; and His staff will be over the sea and He will lift it up the way He did in Egypt.

⁴⁶ **עֲרִיבָה תְעוֹר קִשְׁתְּךָ שְׁבָעוֹת מִשׁוֹת אִמָּר סֶלָה נְהָרוֹת תִּבְקַע-אֶרֶץ** – The LXX is helpful here, *ἐντεινὼν ἐντεινεις τὸ τόξον σου ἐπὶ τὰ σκῆπτρα, 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.

⁴⁷ **רְאֵיךָ יְהִילֵךְ הַרִים וְרָם מֵיָם עֲבָר נָתַן תְּהוֹם קוֹלֵךְ רֹם יִגְרִיהוּ נְשָׂא** – 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 eliciting a response from the deep to the extent that it lifts its hands in praise of God.

⁴⁸ **שָׁמַשׁ יָרַח עָמַד וּבִלָּה לְאֵזֶר הַצֵּיף יִהְיֶיכוּ לְנִגְהָ בָרַק תִּנְיָתְךָ** – 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 lightning towards the light.

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

The sun and moon in their place could refer to an eclipse, thereby signifying an interruption in God's normal order that accompanies the judgment of God that will lead up to the Day of the Lord when Jesus returns and is coherent with the following verse.

⁴⁹ **בְּנֵעַם תִּצְעַד-אֶרֶץ בְּאֵר תִּרְדֹּשׁ 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.

Cf. Deborah's and Barak's song of victory in [Judges 5:4](#) "LORD, when You went out from Seir, when You marched from the field of Edom, the earth quaked, the heavens also dripped, Even the clouds dripped water. 5 "The mountains quaked at the presence of the LORD, this Sinai, at the presence of the LORD, the God of Israel."

⁵⁰ וַיִּצְאֶה לְיִשְׁעַ עֲמֻדָּה לְיִשְׁעַ אֶת־מִשִּׁיחָהּ מִחֲנֻכָּהּ רֹאשׁ מִבַּיִת רִשְׁעַ עֲרוֹת יְסוּד עַד־צִנְאָר סֶלָה – The LXX interprets the singular "anointed" as plural "anointed ones" (τοῦ σῶσαι τοὺς χριστούς σου).

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—considering the parallelism of "people" with "anointed." The leader of any Gentile nation (cf. the Pharaoh of Egypt who died with his army in the Red Sea) 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. This will be the case of for the Beast of Revelation 19.

EBC – However, this verse provides further evidence of the double perspective of the chapter: the oppression in Egypt foreshadows subsequent oppression, and the deliverance at the Red Sea embodies the promise of subsequent deliverance. The term "anointed one" lends itself more readily to later usage, both with reference to the preexilic kings and in anticipation of the eschatological Messiah (e.g., [Dan 9:25-26](#); cf. [2 Sam 7:11-16](#); [Isa 9:6-7](#); [11:1-5](#); [Jer 23:5-6](#); [Ezek 34:23-24](#); [37:22-25](#); [Mic 5:2-5](#); [Zech 6:9-14](#), [9:9-10](#)). In the present chapter, set against the background of imminent danger preceding the Exile (vv.2, 16-17; cf. 1:5-11), and also fraught with eschatological undertones of judgment and salvation, the "anointed" will therefore represent both the king in Habakkuk's own time and the Christ whose sufferings and glory the prophets predicted ([1 Peter 1:10-12](#)). In the same way, the oppressive "leader" must be identified in terms of Israel's history both before and after the Exodus, as evidenced particularly by the words like "crushed" and "leader," vocabulary consistently applied to Israel's conquests from earlier times to the eschaton ([Num 24:8](#), [17-19](#); [Deut 33:11](#); [Pss 18:38](#); [68:21](#), [23](#); [110:5-6](#); cf. [Judg 5:26](#)).

⁵¹ נִקְבְּתָהּ בַּמַּשִּׁיב רֹאשׁ פְּרִיזוּ [פְּרִיזוּ] יִסְעֶרּוּ לְחַפְּצֵינִי עַל־צַוְתָם כַּמּוֹד־לְאֵכֶל עָנִי בַּמִּסְתָּהּ – Israel's enemies, whether the Egyptians at the time of the Exodus or the Babylonians at the time of Habakkuk, thought that they had the upper hand. The Babylonians in particular 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 as Cyrus so easily defeated the Babylonians in 540 B.C.

⁵² דָּרְבַקְתָּ בַּיָּם סוֹסֵיךָ הִמְרָה מַיִם רַבִּים – Habakkuk declares that God tramples on the waters of the sea and causes them to foam, perhaps again 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.

⁵³ וַתִּרְגַּז בַּמַּיִם לְקוֹל צִלְלוֹ שִׁפְתָי יָבֹוא רִקְבָה בַּעֲצָמַי וַתְּחַתֵּי אֲרָגוֹ אֲשֶׁר אָנֹכִי לַיּוֹם צָדִיחַ לַעֲלוֹת לְעַם יְגִדְדֵנוּ | וַתִּרְגַּז בַּמַּיִם לְקוֹל צִלְלוֹ שִׁפְתָי יָבֹוא רִקְבָה בַּעֲצָמַי וַתְּחַתֵּי אֲרָגוֹ אֲשֶׁר אָנֹכִי לַיּוֹם צָדִיחַ לַעֲלוֹת לְעַם יְגִדְדֵנוּ – 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 Judah's judgment 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 invasion and attack are 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.

⁵⁴ לֹא־תִפְרָח וְאֵין וְבוֹל בַּגִּפְנִים בַּחֹשׁ מַעֲשֵׂה־זֵיזִית וּשְׂדֵמוֹת לֹא־עָשָׂה אֲכָל גִּזְרֵ מִמְּכֻלָּהּ זָאֵן וְאֵין בָּקָר בְּדִרְבָתִּים | לֹא־תִפְרָח וְאֵין וְבוֹל בַּגִּפְנִים בַּחֹשׁ מַעֲשֵׂה־זֵיזִית וּשְׂדֵמוֹת לֹא־עָשָׂה אֲכָל גִּזְרֵ מִמְּכֻלָּהּ זָאֵן וְאֵין בָּקָר בְּדִרְבָתִּים – Habakkuk foretells the coming agricultural and therefore social devastation which the Babylonian invasion will cause because of Judah's disobedience to the Mosaic Covenant. He knows it is coming as spoken by God according to His threats in Leviticus and Deuteronomy.

The five items he lists are at the heart of Judah's economy and survival—figs, vineyard grapes for wine, olives, grain fields, sheep, and cattle. These are literally their bread and butter, and if God takes them away, Habakkuk is willing to trust Him through whatever experience God brings his way.

Cf. [Leviticus 26:3](#) 'If you walk in My statutes and keep My commandments so as to carry them out, 4 then I shall give you rains in their season, so that the land will yield its produce and the trees of the field will bear their fruit. 5 'Indeed, your threshing will last for you until grape gathering, and grape gathering will last until sowing time. You will thus eat your food to the full and live securely in your land. 6 'I shall also grant peace in the land, so that you may lie down with no one making you tremble.' Cf. Deuteronomy 28:2-14.

Cf. [Leviticus 26:14](#) 'But if you do not obey Me and do not carry out all these commandments, 15 if, instead, you reject My statutes, and if your soul abhors My ordinances so as not to carry out all My commandments, and so break My covenant, 16 I, in turn, will do this to you: I will appoint over you a sudden terror, consumption and fever that will waste away the eyes and cause the soul to pine away; also, you will sow your seed uselessly, for your enemies will eat it up.' Cf. Deuteronomy 28:16ff.

⁵⁵ וְאֲנִי בִיהוָה אֶעֱלֶזְוָה אֲגִידָה בְּאֱלֹהֵי יִשְׁעֵי יְשׁוּעָתִי מוֹשׁ
LXX – ἐγὼ δὲ ἐν τῷ κυρίῳ ἀγαλλιάσομαι, χαρήσομαι ἐπὶ τῷ θεῷ τῷ
σωτήρῳ μου

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. And like Abraham, Habakkuk can know that he will participate in the millennial kingdom as a resurrected believer who will be transformed into an immortal and morally perfect being. Cf. [1 Peter 1:6](#) In this you greatly rejoice (ἐν ᾧ ἀγαλλιᾶσθε), even though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been distressed by various trials.

Cf. [1 Peter 4:13](#) but to the degree that you share the sufferings of Christ, keep on rejoicing, so that also at the revelation of His glory you may rejoice with exultation (χαρήτε ἀγαλλιῶμενοι).

⁵⁶ הִנֵּה הוֹדוּ אֱדוּנֵי חַיְלֵי יְיָשָׁם רַגְלֵי כְּאֵלֹת וְעַל בְּמוֹתַי יִדְרֹכְנִי
– 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 where God Himself walks and exercises dominion. 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.

Cf. [Psalm 18:32](#) The God who girds me with strength and makes my way blameless? [33](#) He makes my feet like hinds' feet, And sets me upon my high places. Cf. [2 Samuel 22:34](#).

Cf. [Deuteronomy 33:29](#) “Blessed are you, O Israel; who is like you, a people saved by the LORD, who is the shield of your help and the sword of your majesty! So your enemies will cringe before you, and you will tread upon their high places.”

Cf. [Exodus 15:1](#) Then Moses and the sons of Israel sang this song to the LORD, and said, “I will sing to the LORD, for He is highly exalted; the horse and its rider He has hurled into the sea. [2](#) “The LORD is my strength and song, And He has become my salvation; This is my God, and I will praise Him; my father's God, and I will extol Him.

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