

THE BOOK OF HABAKKUK

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INTRODUCTION

HABAKKUK, from a *Hebrew* root meaning to “embrace,” denoting a “favorite” (namely, of God) and a “struggler” (for his country’s good). Some ancient authors represent him as belonging to the tribe of Levi; others [PSEUDO EPIPHANIUS], to that of Simeon. The inscription to Bel and the dragon in the *Septuagint* asserts the former; and ^{<4018>}Habakkuk 3:19 perhaps favors this. EUSEBIUS [*Ecclesiastical History*, 7.29] states that in his time Habakkuk’s tomb was shown at Ceila in Palestine.

The time seems to have been about 610 B.C. For the Chaldeans attacked Jerusalem in the ninth month of the fifth year of Jehoiakim, 605 B.C. (^{<4202>}Kings 24:1 ^{<4018>}2 Chronicles 36:6 ^{<4418>}Jeremiah 46:2 36:9). And Habakkuk (Habakkuk 1:5,6, etc.) speaks of the Chaldeans as about to invade Judah, but not as having actually done so. In the second chapter he proceeds to comfort his people by foretelling the humiliation of their conquerors, and that the vision will soon have its fulfillment. In the third chapter the prophet in a sublime ode celebrates the deliverances wrought by Jehovah for His people in times past, as the ground of assurance, notwithstanding all their existing calamities, that He will deliver them again. ^{<4016>}Habakkuk 3:16 shows that the invader is still coming, and not yet arrived; so that the whole refers to the invasion in Jehoiakim’s times, not those under Jehoiachin and Zedekiah. The Apocryphal appendix to Daniel states that he lived to see the Babylonian exile (588 B.C), which accords with his prophesying early in Jehoiakim’s reign, about 610 B.C.

The position of the book immediately after Nahum is appropriate; as Nahum treated of the judgments of the Lord on Assyria, for its violence against Israel, so Habakkuk, those inflicted by, and on, the Chaldeans for the same reason.

The style is poetical and sublime. The parallelisms are generally regular. Borrowed ideas occur (compare ^{<3189>}Habakkuk 3:19, with ^{<4833>}Psalm 18:33; ^{<3146>}Habakkuk 2:6, with ^{<3146>}Isaiah 14:4; ^{<3124>}Habakkuk 2:14, with ^{<3109>}Isaiah 11:9).

The ancient catalogues imply that his book is part of the canon of Scripture. In the New Testament, ^{<8117>}Romans 1:17 quotes Habakkuk 2:4 (though not naming him); compare also ^{<8011>}Galatians 3:11 ^{<3108>}Hebrews 10:38. ^{<4130>}Acts 13:40,41 quotes Habakkuk 1:5. One or two *Hebrew* words peculiar to Habakkuk occur (Habakkuk 1:9 2:6,16).

CHAPTER 1

HABAKKUK 1:1-17.

HABAKKUK'S EXPOSTULATION WITH JEHOVAH ON ACCOUNT OF THE PREVALENCE OF INJUSTICE: JEHOVAH SUMMONS ATTENTION TO HIS PURPOSE OF SENDING THE CHALDEANS AS THE AVENGERS. THE PROPHET COMPLAINS, THAT THESE ARE WORSE THAN THOSE ON WHOM VENGEANCE WAS TO BE TAKEN.

1. *burden* — the prophetic sentence.

2, 3. *violence ... Why dost thou show me iniquity?* — Similar language is used of the Chaldeans (Habakkuk 1:9,13), as here is used of the Jews: implying, that as the Jews sinned by *violence* and *injustice*, so they should be punished by *violence* and *injustice* (^{401B}Proverbs 1:31). Jehoiakim's reign was marked by injustice, treachery, and bloodshed (^{402B}Jeremiah 22:3,13-17). Therefore the Chaldeans should be sent to deal with him and his nobles according to their dealings with others (Habakkuk 1:6,10,11,17). Compare Jeremiah's expostulation with Jehovah, ^{411E}Jeremiah 12:1 20:8; and ^{489E}Job 19:7,8.

3. *cause me to behold grievance* — MAURER denies that the *Hebrew* verb is ever *active*; he translates, "(Wherefore) dost Thou behold (without doing aught to check) grievance?" The context favors *English Version*.

there are that raise up strife and contention — so CALVIN. But MAURER, not so well, translates, "There is strife, and contention raises *itself*."

4. *Therefore* — because Thou dost suffer such crimes to go unpunished.

law is slacked — is chilled. It has no authority and secures no respect.

judgment — justice.

wrong judgment proceedeth — Decisions are given contrary to right.

5. *Behold ... marvellously ... a work* — (Compare ^{2394E}Isaiah 29:14). Quoted by Paul (^{441E}Acts 13:41).

among the heathen — In ^{441E}Acts 13:41, "ye despisers," from the *Septuagint*. So the *Syriac* and *Arabic* versions; perhaps from a different

Hebrew reading. In the *English Version* reading of Habakkuk, God, in reply to the prophet's expostulation, addresses the Jews as about to be punished, "Behold ye *among the heathen* (with whom ye deserve to be classed, and by whom ye shall be punished, as despisers; the sense *implied*, which Paul *expresses*): learn from them what ye refused to learn from Me!" For "wonder marvellously," Paul, in ^{<4413>}Acts 13:41, has, "wonder *and perish*," which gives the *sense*, not the literal wording, of the *Hebrew*, "Wonder, wonder," that is, be overwhelmed in wonder. The despisers are to be given up to their own stupefaction, and so perish. The Israelite unbelievers would not credit the prophecy as to the fearfulness of the destruction to be wrought by the Chaldeans, nor afterwards the deliverance promised from that nation. So analogously, in Paul's day, the Jews would not credit the judgment coming on them by the Romans, nor the salvation proclaimed through Jesus. Thus the same Scripture applied to both.

ye will not believe, though it be told you — that is, ye will not believe *now* that I foretell it.

6. *I raise up* — not referring to God's having brought the Chaldeans from their original seats to Babylonia (see on ^{<23213>}Isaiah 23:13), for they had already been upwards of twenty years (since Nabopolassar's era) in political power there; but to His being about now to raise them up as the instruments of God's "work" of judgment on the Jews (^{<143016>}2 Chronicles 36:6). The *Hebrew* is *future*, "I will raise up."

bitter — that is, cruel (^{<25142>}Jeremiah 50:42; compare ^{<171825>}Judges 18:25, *Margin*; ^{<19178>}1 Samuel 17:8).

hasty — not *passionate*, but "impetuous."

7. *their judgment and ... dignity ... proceed of themselves* — that is, they recognize no *judge* save themselves, and they get for themselves and keep their own "dignity" without needing others' help. It will be vain for the Jews to complain of their tyrannical *judgments*; for whatever the Chaldeans decree they will do according to their own will, they will not brook anyone attempting to interfere.

8. *swifter than the leopards* — OPIAN [*Cynegeticks*, 3.76], says of the leopard, "It runs most swiftly straight on: you would fancy it was flying through the air."

more fierce — rather, "more keen"; literally, "sharp."

evening wolves — wolves famished with fasting all day and so most keen in attacking the fold under covert of the approaching night (^{<21116>}Jeremiah 5:6)

Zephaniah 3:3; compare ^{<0427>}Genesis 49:27). Hence “twilight” is termed in *Arabic* and *Persian* “the wolf’s tail”; and in French, *entre chien et loup*.

spread themselves — proudly; as in ^{<2611>}Jeremiah 50:11, and Malachi 4:2, it implies *strength* and *vigor*. So also the *Arabic* cognate word [MAURER].

their horsemen ... come from far — and yet are not wearied by the long journey.

9. all for violence — The sole object of all is not to establish just rights, but to get all they can by violence.

their faces shall sup up as the east wind — that is, they shall, as it were, *swallow up* all before them; so the horse in ^{<8324>}Job 39:24 is said to “*swallow* the ground with fierceness and rage.” MAURER takes it from an *Arabic* root, “the *desire* of their faces,” that is, the eager desire expressed by their faces. HENDERSON, with SYMMACHUS and *Syriac*, translates, “the aspect.”

as the east wind — the simoon, which spreads devastation wherever it passes (^{<2708>}Isaiah 27:8). GESENIUS translates, “(is) forwards.” The rendering proposed, *eastward*, as if it referred to the Chaldeans’ return home *eastward* from Judea, laden with spoils, is improbable. Their “gathering the sand” accords with the simoon being meant, as it carries with it whirlwinds of sand collected in the desert.

10. scoff at ... kings — as unable to resist them.

they shall heap dust, and take it — “they shall heap” earth mounds outside, and so “take every stronghold” (compare ^{<1115>}2 Samuel 20:15 ^{<1242>}2 Kings 19:32) [GROTIUS].

11. Then — when elated by his successes.

shall his mind change — He shall lose whatever of reason or moderation ever was in him, with pride.

he shall pass over — all bounds and restraints: his pride preparing the sure way for his destruction (^{<2168>}Proverbs 16:18). The language is very similar to that describing Nebuchadnezzar’s “change” from man’s heart (understanding) to that of a beast, because of pride (see on ^{<2016>}Daniel 4:16; ^{<2031>}Daniel 4:30,31; ^{<2033>}Daniel 4:33,34). An undesigned coincidence between the two sacred books written independently.

imputing this his power unto his god — (^{<2114>}Daniel 5:4). Sacrilegious arrogance, in ascribing to his idol Bel the glory that belongs to God [CALVIN]. GROTIUS explains, “(saying that) his power is his own as one who is a god to himself” (compare ^{<3016>}Habakkuk 1:16, and ^{<2116>}Daniel 3:1-

30). So MAURER, “He shall offend as one to whom his power is his god” (^{<3126>}Job 12:6; see on ^{<3116>}Micah 2:1).

12. In opposition to the impious deifying of the Chaldeans power as their god (MAURER, or, as the *English Version*, their attributing of their successes to their idols), the prophet, in an impassioned address to Jehovah, vindicates His being “from everlasting,” as contrasted with the Chaldean so-called “god.”

my God, mine Holy One — Habakkuk speaks in the name of his people. God was “the Holy One of *Israel*,” against whom the Chaldean was setting up himself (^{<2372>}Isaiah 37:23).

we shall not die — Thou, as being *our* God, wilt not permit the Chaldeans utterly to destroy us. This reading is one of the eighteen called by the Hebrews “the appointment of the scribes”; the Rabbis think that Ezra and his colleagues corrected the old reading, “*Thou shalt* not die.”

thou hast ordained them for judgment — that is, to execute Thy judgments.

for correction — to chastise transgressors (^{<2305>}Isaiah 10:5-7). But not that they may deify their own power (^{<3111>}Habakkuk 1:11, for their power is from Thee, and but for a time); nor that they may destroy utterly Thy people. The *Hebrew* for “mighty God” is *Rock* (^{<4534>}Deuteronomy 32:4). However the world is shaken, or man’s faith wavers, God remains unshaken as the Rock of Ages (^{<2304>}Isaiah 26:4, *Margin*).

13. *purser ... than to behold evil* — without being displeased at it.

canst not look on iniquity — unjust injuries done to Thy people. The prophet checks himself from being carried too far in his expostulatory complaint, by putting before himself honorable sentiments of God.

them that deal treacherously — the Chaldeans, once allies of the Jews, but now their violent oppressors. Compare “treacherous dealers,” (^{<2201>}Isaiah 21:2 24:16). Instead of speaking evil against God, he goes to God Himself for the remedy for his perplexity (^{<4731>}Psalms 73:11-17).

devoureth the man that is more righteous — The Chaldean oppresses the Jew, who with all his faults, is better than his oppressor (compare ^{<2461>}Ezekiel 16:51,52).

14. *And* — that is, *And so*, by suffering oppressors to go unpunished, “Thou makest men as the fishes ... that have no ruler”; that is, no defender. All may fish in the sea with impunity; so the Chaldeans with impunity

afflict Thy people, as these have no longer the God of the theocracy, their King, to defend them. Thou reducest men to such a state of anarchy, by wrong going unpunished, as if there were no God. He compares the world to the *sea*; men to *fishes*; Nebuchadnezzar to a *fisherman* (^{<3015>}Habakkuk 1:15-17).

15. *they take up all of them* — all kinds of fishes, that is, *men*, as captives, and all other prey that comes in their way.

with the angle — that is, the hook. Some they take up as with the hook, one by one; others in shoals, as in a “net” and “drag” or enclosing net.

therefore — because of their successes.

they rejoice — They glory in their crimes because attended with success (compare ^{<3011>}Habakkuk 1:11).

16. *sacrifice unto their net* — that is, their arms, power, and military skill, wherewith they gained their victories; instead of to God. Compare ^{<3011>}Habakkuk 1:11, MAURER’S interpretation. They idolize themselves for their own cleverness and might (^{<0817>}Deuteronomy 8:17 ^{<2303>}Isaiah 10:13 37:24,25).

by them — by their net and dragnet.

their portion — image from a banquet: the prey which they have gotten.

17. *Shall they ... empty their net?* — Shall they be allowed without interruption to enjoy the fruits of their violence?

therefore — seeing that they attribute all their successes to themselves, and not to Thee. The answer to the prophet’s question, he by inspiration gives himself in the second chapter.

CHAPTER 2

HABAKKUK 2:1-20.

THE PROPHET, WAITING EARNESTLY FOR AN ANSWER TO HIS COMPLAINTS (FIRST CHAPTER), RECEIVES A REVELATION, WHICH IS TO BE FULFILLED, NOT IMMEDIATELY, YET IN DUE TIME, AND IS THEREFORE TO BE WAITED FOR IN FAITH: THE CHALDEANS SHALL BE PUNISHED FOR THEIR CRUEL RAPACITY, NOR CAN THEIR FALSE GODS AVERT THE JUDGMENT OF JEHOVAH, THE ONLY TRUE GOD.

1. *stand upon ... watch* — that is, watch-post. The prophets often compare themselves, awaiting the revelations of Jehovah with earnest patience, to watchmen on an eminence watching with intent eye all that comes within their view (^{<3208>}Isaiah 21:8,11 ^{<3167>}Jeremiah 6:17 ^{<3187>}Ezekiel 3:17 33:2,3; compare ^{<3488>}Psalms 5:3 85:8). The “watch-post” is the withdrawal of the whole soul from earthly, and fixing it on heavenly, things. The accumulation of synonyms, “stand open ... watch ... set me upon ... tower ... watch to see” implies persevering fixity of attention.

what he will say unto me — in answer to my complaints (^{<3013>}Habakkuk 1:13). Literally, “in me,” God speaking, not to the prophet’s outward ear, but *inwardly*. When we have prayed to God, we must observe what answers God gives by His word, His Spirit, and His providences.

what I shall answer when I am reproved — what answer I am to make to the *reproof* which I anticipate from God on account of the liberty of my expostulation with Him. MAURER translates, “What I am to answer in respect to my complaint against Jehovah” (^{<3012>}Habakkuk 1:12-17).

2. *Write the vision* — which I am about to reveal to thee.

make it plain — (^{<4578>}Deuteronomy 27:8). In large legible characters.

upon tables — boxwood tables covered with wax, on which national affairs were engraved with an iron pen, and then hung up in public, at the prophets own houses, or at the temple, that those who passed might read them. Compare ^{<4163>}Luke 1:63, “writing table,” that is, tablet.

that he may run that readeth it — commonly explained, “so intelligible as to be easily read by any one running past”; but then it would be, *that he that runneth may read it*. The true sense is, “so legible that whoever readeth it, may run to tell all whom he can the good news of the foe’s coming doom, and Judah’s deliverance.” Compare ^{<2704>}Daniel 12:4, “many shall *run* to and fro,” namely, with the explanation of the prophecy, then unsealed; also, ^{<627>}Revelation 22:17, “let him that heareth (the good news) say (to every one within his reach), Come.” “Run” is equivalent to *announce the divine revelation* (^{<2231>}Jeremiah 23:21); as everyone who becomes informed of a divine message is bound to *run*, that is, use all despatch to make it known to others [HENDERSON]. GROTIUS, LUDOVICUS DE DIEU, and MAURER interpret it: “Run” is not literal *running*, but “that he who reads it may run through it,” that is, read it *at once without difficulty*.

3. for — assigning the cause why it ought to be *committed to writing*: *because* its fulfillment belongs to the future.

the vision is yet for an appointed time — (^{<2704>}Daniel 10:14 11:27,35). Though the time appointed by God for the fulfillment be yet future, it should be enough for your faith that God hath spoken it (^{<2127>}Lamentations 3:26).

at the end it shall speak — MAURER translates, “it *pants* for the end.” But the antithesis between, “it shall *speak*,” and “not be silent,” makes *English Version* the better rendering. So the *Hebrew* is translated in ^{<1217>}Proverbs 12:17. Literally, “breathe out words,” “break forth as a blast.”

though it tarry, wait for it — (^{<0418>}Genesis 49:18).

4. his soul which is lifted up — the Chaldean’s [MAURER]. The unbelieving Jew’s [HENDERSON].

is not upright in him — that is, is not accounted upright in God’s sight; in antithesis to “shall live.” So ^{<3018>}Hebrews 10:38, which with inspired authority applies the general sense to the particular case which Paul had in view, “If any man *draw back* (one result of being ‘lifted up’ with overweening arrogance), *my soul shall have no pleasure in him*.”

the just shall live by his faith — the *Jewish nation*, as opposed to the unbelieving Chaldean (compare Habakkuk 2:5, etc. Habakkuk 1:6, etc., ^{<3013>}Habakkuk 1:13) [MAURER]. HENDERSON’S view is that the *believing Jew* is meant, as opposed to the unbelieving Jew (compare ^{<617>}Romans 1:17 ^{<811>}Galatians 3:11). The believing Jew, though God’s promise tarry, will wait for it; the unbelieving “draws back,” as ^{<3018>}Hebrews 10:38 expresses it. The sense, in MAURER’S view, which accords better with the context

(Habakkuk 2:5, etc.). is: the Chaldean, though for a time seeming to prosper, yet being lifted up with haughty unbelief (^{301B}Habakkuk 1:11,16), is not upright; that is, has *no right* stability of soul resting on God, to ensure permanence of prosperity; hence, though for a time executing God's judgments, he at last becomes "lifted up" so as to attribute to his own power what is the work of God, and in this sense "draws back" (^{308B}Hebrews 10:38), becoming thereby a type of all backsliders who thereby incur God's displeasure; as the believing Jew is of all who *wait* for God's promises with patient *faith*, and so "live" (stand accepted) before God. The *Hebrew* accents induce BENGEL to translate, "he who is just by his faith shall live." Other manuscripts read the accents as *English Version*, which agrees better with *Hebrew* syntax.

5. *Yea also, because* — additional reason why the Jews may look for God punishing their Chaldean foe, namely, *because ... he is*

a proud man — rather, this clause continues the reason for the Jews expecting the punishment of the Chaldeans, "because he transgresseth by wine (a besetting sin of Babylon, compare ^{271B}Daniel 5:1-31, and CURTIUS [5.1]), *being* a proud man." Love of wine often begets a *proud* contempt of divine things, as in Belshazzar's case, which was the immediate cause of the fall of Babylon (^{278B}Daniel 5:2-4,30; compare ^{311B}Proverbs 20:1 30:9 31:5).

enlargeth his desire as hell — the grave, or the unseen world, which is "never full" (^{317B}Proverbs 27:20 30:16 ^{235B}Isaiah 5:14). The Chaldeans under Nebuchadnezzar were filled with an insatiable desire of conquest. Another reason for their punishment.

6. *Shall not all these* — the "nations" and "peoples" (Habakkuk 2:5) "heaped unto him" by the Chaldean.

take up a parable — a derisive song. Habakkuk follows Isaiah (^{234B}Isaiah 14:4) and Micah (^{310B}Micah 2:4) in the phraseology.

against him — when dislodged from his former eminence.

Woe — The "derisive song" here begins, and continues to the end of the chapter. It is a symmetrical whole, and consists of five stanzas, the first three consisting of three verses each, the fourth of four verses, and the last of two. Each stanza has its own subject, and all except the last begin with "Woe"; and all have a closing verse introduced with "for," "because," or "but."

how long? — *how long* destined to retain his ill-gotten gains? But for a short time, as his fall now proves [MAURER]. "Covetousness is the greatest

bane to men. For they who invade others' goods, often lose even their own" [MENANDER]. CALVIN makes "how long?" to be the cry of those groaning under the Chaldean oppression while it still lasted: How long shall such oppression be permitted to continue? But it is plainly part of the *derisive song*, after the Chaldean tyranny had passed away.

ladeth himself with thick clay — namely, gold and silver dug out of the "clay," of which they are a part. The covetous man in heaping them together is only lading himself with a clay burden, as he dares not enjoy them, and is always anxious about them. LEE and FULLER translate the *Hebrew* as a reduplicated single noun, and not two words, "an accumulation of pledges" (^{<6340>}Deuteronomy 24:10-13). The Chaldean is compared to a harsh usurer, and his ill-gotten treasures to heaps of pledges in the hands of a usurer.

7. *suddenly* — the answer to the question, "How long?" (Habakkuk 2:6).

bite — often used of *usury*; so favoring LEE's rendering (Habakkuk 2:6). As the Chaldean, like a usurer, oppressed others, so other nations shall, like usurers, *take pledges of*, that is, spoil, him.

8. *the remnant of the people* — Those remaining of the peoples spoiled by thee, though but a remnant, will suffice to inflict vengeance on thee.

the violence of the land ... city — that is, on account of *thy violent oppression of the lands and cities* of the earth [GROTIUS] (compare Habakkuk 2:5,6,12). The same phrase occurs in ^{<3127>}Habakkuk 2:17, where the "land" and "city" are Judea and Jerusalem.

9. *coveteth an evil covetousness* — that is, a covetousness so surpassingly evil as to be fatal to himself.

to his house — greedily seizing enormous wealth, not merely for himself, but for his family, to which it is destined to be fatal. The very same "evil covetousness" that was the cause of Jehoiakim's being given up to the Chaldean oppressor (^{<3223>}Jeremiah 22:13) shall be the cause of the Chaldean's own destruction.

set his nest on high — (^{<022>}Numbers 24:21 ^{<3496>}Jeremiah 49:16 ^{<3104>}Obadiah 1:4). The image is from an eagle (^{<1327>}Job 39:27). The *royal citadel* is meant. The Chaldean built high towers, like the Babel founders, to "be delivered from the power of evil" (^{<0104>}Genesis 11:4).

10. *Thou hast consulted shame ... by cutting off many* — MAURER, more literally, "Thou hast consulted shame ... to destroy many," that is, in

consulting (determining) to cut off many, thou hast consulted shame to thy house.

sinned against thy soul — that is, against thyself; thou art the guilty cause of thine own ruin (²⁰⁸⁸Proverbs 8:36 20:2). They who wrong their neighbors, do much greater wrong to their own souls.

11. *stone ... cry out* — personification. The very stones of thy palace built by rapine shall testify against thee (²⁰⁹⁴Luke 19:40).

the beam out of the timber — the crossbeam or main rafter connecting the timbers in the walls.

shall answer it — namely, the stone. The stone shall begin and the crossbeam continue the cry against thy rapine.

12. *buildeth a town with blood* — namely, Babylon rebuilt and enlarged by blood-bought spoils (compare ²⁰⁸³Daniel 4:30).

13. *is it not of the Lord of hosts* — JEHOVAH, who has at His command all the *hosts* of heaven and earth, is the righteous author of Babylon's destruction. "Shall not God have His turn, when cruel rapacious men have triumphed so long, though He seem now to be still?" [CALVIN].

people ... labor in the ... fire ... weary themselves for ... vanity — The Chaldeans labor at what is to be food for the fire, namely, their city and fortresses which shall be burnt. ²¹⁵³Jeremiah 51:58 adopts the same phraseology to express the vanity of the Chaldean's labor on Babylon, as doomed to the flames.

14. Adapted from ²¹⁰⁹Isaiah 11:9. Here the sense is, "The Jews shall be restored and the temple rebuilt, so that God's glory in saving His people, and punishing their Chaldean foe, shall be manifested throughout the world," of which the Babylonian empire formed the greatest part; a type of the ultimate full manifestation of His glory in the final salvation of Israel and His Church, and the destruction of all their foes.

waters cover the sea — namely, the bottom of the sea; the sea-bed.

15. *giveth ... neighbor drink ... putteth ... bottle to him* — literally, "skin," as the Easterns use "bottles" of skin for wine. MAURER, from a different Hebrew root, translates, "that pourest in thy wrath." *English Version* keeps up the metaphor better. It is not enough for thee to be "drunken" thyself, unless thou canst lead others into the same state. The thing meant is, that the Chaldean king, with his insatiable desires (a kind of *intoxication*), allured neighboring states into the same mad thirst for war to obtain booty, and

then at last exposed them to loss and shame (compare ^{<2517>}Isaiah 51:17 ^{<3016>}Obadiah 1:16). An appropriate image of Babylon, which at last fell during a drunken revel (^{<2788>}Daniel 5:1-31).

that thou mayest look on their nakedness! — with light, like Ham of old (^{<0022>}Genesis 9:22).

16. art filled — now that thou art fallen. “Thou art filled” indeed (though so insatiable), but it is “with shame.”

shame for glory — instead of thy former glory (^{<3047>}Hosea 4:7).

drink thou also — The cup of sorrow is now in thy turn to pass to thee (^{<2525>}Jeremiah 25:15-17 ^{<2542>}Lamentations 4:21).

thy foreskin — expressing in Hebrew feeling the most utter contempt. So of Goliath (^{<0176>}1 Samuel 17:36). It is not merely thy “nakedness,” as in ^{<3015>}Habakkuk 2:15, that shall be “uncovered,” but the foreskin, the badge of thy being an uncircumcised alien from God. The same shall be done to thee, as thou didst to others, and worse.

cup ... shall be turned unto thee — literally, “shall *turn itself*,” namely, from the nations whom thou hast made to drink it. “Thou shalt drink it *all*, so that it may be *turned* as being drained” [GROTIVS].

shameful spewing — that is, vomiting; namely, that of the king of Babylon, compelled to disgorge the spoil he had swallowed. It expresses also the ignominious state of Babylon in its calamity (^{<2527>}Jeremiah 25:27). “Be drunken, spew, and fall.” Less appropriately it is explained *of the foe* spewing in the face of the Babylonian king.

17. the violence of Lebanon — thy “violence” against “Lebanon,” that is, Jerusalem (^{<2578>}Isaiah 37:24 ^{<2523>}Jeremiah 22:23 ^{<2478>}Ezekiel 17:3,12; for Lebanon’s cedars were used in building the temple and houses of Jerusalem; and its beauty made it a fit type of the metropolis), shall fall on thine own head.

cover — that is, *completely* overwhelm.

the spoil of beasts, which made them afraid — MAURER explains, “*the spoiling* inflicted on *the beasts* of Lebanon (that is, on the people of Jerusalem, of which city ‘Lebanon’ is the type), *which made them afraid* (shall cover thee).” But it seems inappropriate to compare the elect people to “beasts.” I therefore prefer explaining, “the spoiling of beasts,” that is, such as is inflicted on beasts caught in a net, and “which makes them afraid (shall cover thee).” Thus the Babylonians are compared to wild beasts

terrified at being caught suddenly in a net. In cruel rapacity they resembled wild beasts. The ancients read, “the spoiling of wild beasts *shall make* THEE *afraid*.” Or else explain, “the spoiling of beasts (the Medes and Persians) which (*inflicted by thee*) made them afraid (shall in turn cover thyself — revert on thyself from them).” This accords better with the parallel clause, “the violence of Lebanon,” that is, inflicted by thee on Lebanon. As thou didst hunt men as wild beasts, so shalt thou be hunted thyself as a wild beast, which thou resemblest in cruelty.

because of men’s blood — shed by thee; repeated from Habakkuk 2:8. But here the “land” and “city” are used of *Judea* and *Jerusalem*: not of the *earth* and cities *generally*, as in Habakkuk 2:8.

the violence of the land, etc. — that is, inflicted *on the land* by thee.

18. The powerlessness of the idols to save Babylon from its doom is a fitting introduction to the last stanza (^{<3109>}Habakkuk 2:19), which, as the former four, begins with “Woe.”

teacher of lies — its priests and prophets uttering lying oracles, as if from it.

make dumb idols — Though men can “make” idols, they cannot *make them speak*.

19. *Awake* — Arise to my help.

it shall teach! — rather, An exclamation *of the prophet*, implying an ironical question to which a negative answer must be given. What! “It teach?” Certainly not [MAURER]. Or, “It (the idol itself) shall (that is, ought to) teach you that it is deaf, and therefore no God” [CALVIN]. Compare “they are their own witnesses” (^{<2409>}Isaiah 44:9).

Behold — The *Hebrew* is nominative, “There it is” [HENDERSON].

it is laid over with gold ... no breath ... in the midst — Outside it has some splendor, within none.

20. *But the Lord* — JEHOVAH; in striking contrast with the idols.

in his holy temple — “His place” (^{<2302>}Isaiah 26:21); heaven (^{<3108>}Psalms 11:4; Jon 2:7; ^{<3108>}Micah 1:2). The temple at Jerusalem is a type of it, and there God is to be worshipped. He does not lie hid under gold and silver, as the idols of Babylon, but reigns in heaven and fills heaven, and thence succors His people.

keep silence — in token of reverent submission and subjection to His judgments (^{<B10>}Job 40:4 ^{<B108>}Psalm 76:8 Zephaniah 1:7 ^{<B13>}Zechariah 2:13).

CHAPTER 3

HABAKKUK 3:1-19.

HABAKKUK'S PRAYER TO GOD: GOD'S GLORIOUS REVELATION OF HIMSELF AT SINAI AND AT GIBEON, A PLEDGE OF HIS INTERPOSING AGAIN IN BEHALF OF ISRAEL AGAINST BABYLON, AND ALL OTHER FOES; HENCE THE PROPHET'S CONFIDENCE AMID CALAMITIES.

This sublime ode begins with an exordium (Habakkuk 3:1,2), then follows the main subject, then the peroration (³⁸¹⁶Habakkuk 3:16-19), a summary of the practical truth, which the whole is designed to teach. (⁴⁸³²Deuteronomy 33:2-5 ⁴⁹⁷³Psalms 77:13-20 are parallel odes). This was probably designed by the Spirit to be a fit formula of prayer for the people, first in their Babylonian exile, and now in their dispersion, especially towards the close of it, just before the great Deliverer is to interpose for them. It was used in public worship, as the musical term, "Selah!" (Habakkuk 3:3,9,13), implies.

1. *prayer* — the only strictly called prayers are in Habakkuk 3:2. But all devotional addresses to God are called "prayers" (⁴⁹²³Psalms 72:20). The *Hebrew* is from a root "to apply to a judge for a favorable decision." *Prayers* in which *praises* to God for deliverance, anticipated in the sure confidence of faith, are especially calculated to enlist Jehovah on His people's side (⁴⁴⁰³2 Chronicles 20:20-22,26).

upon Shigionoth — a musical phrase, "after the manner of elegies," or mournful odes, from an *Arabic* root [LEE]; the phrase is *singular* in ⁴¹⁰⁴Psalms 7:1, title. More simply, from a *Hebrew* root to "err," "on account of *sins of ignorance*." Habakkuk thus teaches his countrymen to confess not only their more grievous sins, but also their *errors* and *negligences*, into which they were especially likely to fall when in exile away from the Holy Land [CALVIN]. So *Vulgate* and AQUILA, and SYMMACHUS. "For voluntary transgressors" [JEROME]. Probably the subject would regulate the kind of music. DELITZSCH and HENDERSON translate, "With triumphal music," from the same root "to err," implying its enthusiastic irregularity.

2. *I have heard thy speech* — Thy revelation to me concerning the coming chastisement of the Jews [CALVIN], and the destruction of their oppressors.

This is Habakkuk's reply to God's communication [GROTIUS]. MAURER translates, "the report of Thy coming," literally, "Thy report."

and was afraid — reverential fear of God's judgments (³⁸¹⁶Habakkuk 3:16).

revive thy work — Perfect the *work* of delivering *Thy* people, and do not let Thy promise lie as if it were dead, but *give it new life* by performing it [MENOCHIUS]. CALVIN explains "thy work" to be *Israel*; called "the work of My hands" (²³⁵¹Isaiah 45:11). God's elect people are peculiarly His work (²³⁸⁰Isaiah 43:1), pre-eminently illustrating His power, wisdom, and goodness. "Though we seem, as it were, dead nationally, *revive us*" (⁴⁸¹⁶Psalms 85:6). However (⁴⁵⁴⁹Psalms 64:9), where "the work of God" refers to *His judgment on their enemies*, favors the former view (⁴⁹⁰⁶Psalms 90:16,17 ²⁵⁰⁹Isaiah 51:9,10).

in the midst of the years — namely, of calamity in which we live. Now that our calamities are at their height; during our seventy years' captivity. CALVIN more fancifully explains it, in the midst of the years of Thy people, extending from Abraham to Messiah; if they be cut off before His coming, they will be cut off as it were *in the midst of their years*, before attaining their maturity. So BENDEL makes *the midst of the years* to be the middle point of the years of the world. There is a strikingly similar phrase (²⁰²⁷Daniel 9:27), *In the midst of the week*. The parallel clause, "in wrath" (that is, *in the midst of wrath*), however, shows that "in the midst of the years" means "in the years of our present exile and calamity."

make known — Made *it* (*Thy work*) known by experimental proof; show in very deed, that this is *Thy work*.

3. God — *singular* in the *Hebrew*, "Eloah," instead of "Elohim," *plural*, usually employed. The *singular* is not found in any other of the minor prophets, or Jeremiah, or Ezekiel; but it is in Isaiah, Daniel, Job, and Deuteronomy.

from Teman — the country south of Judea and near Edom, in which latter country Mount Paran was situated [HENDERSON]. "Paran" is the desert region, extending from the south of Judah to Sinai. Seir, Sinai, and Paran are adjacent to one another, and are hence associated together, in respect to God's giving of the law (⁴⁵³²Deuteronomy 33:2). Teman is so identified with Seir or *Edom*, as here to be substituted for it. Habakkuk appeals to God's glorious manifestations to His people at Sinai, as the ground for praying that God will "revive His work" (Habakkuk 3:2) now. For He is the same God now as ever.

Selah — a musical sign, put at the close of sections and strophes, always at the end of a verse, except thrice; namely, here, and Habakkuk 3:9, and ^{<1519>}Psalm 55:19 57:3, where, however, it closes the hemistich. It implies a change of the modulation. It comes from a root to “rest” or “pause” [GESENIUS]; implying a cessation of the chant, during an instrumental interlude. The solemn pause here prepares the mind for contemplating the glorious description of Jehovah’s manifestation which follows.

earth ... full of his praise — that is, of His glories which were calculated to call forth universal *praise*; the parallelism to “glory” proves this to be the sense.

4. as the light — namely, of the sun (^{<1872>}Job 37:21 ^{<1048>}Proverbs 4:18).

horns — the emblem of *power* wielded by “His hand” [LUDOVICUS DE DIEU]. “Rays” emanating from “His hand,” compared by the Arabs to the horns of the gazelle (compare “hind of the morning,” ^{<1921>}Psalm 22:1, title, *Margin*). The *Hebrew* verb for to “emit rays,” is from the root meaning “horns” (^{<1309>}Exodus 34:29,30,35) [GROTIUS]. The rays are His *lightnings* (^{<1918>}Psalm 18:8), [MAURER].

there — *in that “brightness.”* In it, notwithstanding its brilliancy, there was but the veil “(the *hiding*) of His power.” Even “light,” God’s “garment,” covers, instead of revealing fully, His surpassing glory (^{<1941>}Psalm 104:2) [HENDERSON]. Or, *on Mount Sinai* [DRUSIUS]. (Compare ^{<1247>}Exodus 24:17). The *Septuagint* and *Syriac* versions read for “there,” *He made a hiding*, etc.; He hid Himself with clouds. *English Version* is better, which CALVIN explains, there is said to be “a hiding of God’s power,” because God did not reveal it indiscriminately to all, but specially to His people (^{<1911>}Psalm 31:20). The contrast seems to me to be between the “horns” or *emanations* out of His power (“hand”), and that “power” itself. The latter was *hidden*, whereas the “horns” or *emanations* alone were manifested. If the mere scintillations were so awfully overwhelming, how much more so the hidden power itself! This was especially true of His manifestation at Sinai (^{<1911>}Psalm 18:11; compare ^{<2615>}Isaiah 45:15,17).

5. pestilence — to destroy His people’s foes (^{<1019>}1 Samuel 5:9,11). As Jehovah’s advent is glorious to His people, so it is terrible to His foes.

burning coals — ^{<1918>}Psalm 18:8 favors *English Version*. But the parallelism requires, as the *Margin* translates, “burning disease” (compare ^{<1524>}Deuteronomy 32:24 ^{<1916>}Psalm 91:6).

went ... at his feet — that is, after Him, as His attendants (^{<1040>}Judges 4:10).

6. *He stood, and measured the earth* — Jehovah, in His advance, is represented as stopping suddenly, and *measuring* the earth with His all-seeing glance, whereat there is universal consternation. MAURER, from a different root, translates, “*rocked the earth*”; which answers better to the parallel “drove asunder”; the *Hebrew* for which latter, however, may be better translated, “made to tremble.”

everlasting mountains — which have ever been remembered as retaining the same place and form from the foundation of the world.

did bow — as it were, in reverent submission.

his ways are everlasting — His marvellous ways of working for the salvation of His people mark His everlasting character: such as He was in His workings for them formerly, such shall He be now.

7. *the tents* — that is, the dwellers.

Cushan — the same as *Cush*; made “*Cush-an*” to harmonize with “*Midian*” in the parallel clause. So *Lotan* is found in the *Hebrew* of Genesis for *Lot*. BOCHART therefore considers it equivalent to Midian, or a part of Arabia. So in ^{<0420>}Numbers 12:1, Moses’ Midianite wife is called an Ethiopian (*Hebrew*, *Cushite*). MAURER thinks *the dwellers on both sides of the Arabian Gulf, or Red Sea*, are meant; for in Habakkuk 3:6 God’s *everlasting* or ancient ways of delivering His people are mentioned; and in Habakkuk 3:8, the dividing of the Red Sea for them. Compare Miriam’s song as to the *fear* of Israel’s foes far and near caused thereby (^{<0254>}Exodus 15:14-16). Hebrew expositors refer it to Chushan-rishathaim, king of Mesopotamia, or Syria, the first oppressor of Israel (^{<0008>}Judges 3:8,10), from whom Othniel delivered them. Thus the second hemistich of the verse will refer to the deliverance of Israel from Midian by Gideon (^{<0008>}Judges 6:1-7:25) to which ^{<3011>}Habakkuk 3:11 plainly refers. Whichever of these views be correct, the general reference is to God’s interpositions against Israel’s foes of old.

in affliction — rather, “*under affliction*” (regarded) as a heavy burden. Literally, “*vanity*” or “*iniquity*,” hence the *punishment* of it (compare ^{<0257>}Numbers 25:17,18).

curtains — the coverings of their tents; the shifting habitations of the nomad tribes, which resembled the modern Bedouins.

tremble — namely, at Jehovah’s terrible interposition for Israel against them.

8. *Was the Lord displeased against the rivers?* — “Was the cause of His dividing the Red Sea and Jordan His displeasure against these waters?” The answer to this is tacitly implied in “Thy chariots *of salvation*.” “Nay; it was not displeasure against the waters, but His pleasure in interposing for His people’s *salvation*” (compare ^{<3810>}Habakkuk 3:10).

thy chariots — in antithesis to Thy foe, *Pharaoh’s chariots*,” which, notwithstanding their power and numbers, were engulfed in the waters of *destruction*. God can make the most unlikely means work for His people’s salvation (^{<2147>}Exodus 14:7,9,23,25-28 15:3-8,19). Jehovah’s chariots are His angels (^{<3887>}Psalms 68:17), or the cherubim, or the ark (^{<4683>}Joshua 3:13 4:7; compare ^{<2210>}Song of Solomon 1:9).

9. *bow ... made ... naked* — that is, was drawn forth from its cover, in which bows usually were cased when not in use. Compare ^{<2216>}Isaiah 22:6, “Kir uncovered the shield.”

according to the oaths of the tribes even thy word — that is, Thy *oaths* of promise to *the tribes* of Israel (^{<1978>}Psalms 77:8 ^{<2173>}Luke 1:73,74). Habakkuk shows that God’s miraculous interpositions for His people were not limited to one time, but that God’s *oaths* to His people are sure ground for their always expecting them. The mention of the *tribes*, rather than *Abraham* or *Moses*, is in order that they may not doubt that to them belongs this grace of which Abraham was the depository [CALVIN and JEROME]. MAURER translates, “The spears were gluttled with blood, the triumphal song!” that is, no sooner did Jehovah begin the battle by baring His bow, than the spears were gluttled with blood and the triumphal song sung.

Thou didst cleave the earth with rivers — the result of the earthquake caused by God’s approach [MAURER]. GROTIUS refers it to the bringing forth water from the rock (^{<2176>}Exodus 17:6 ^{<4110>}Numbers 20:10,11 ^{<1985>}Psalms 78:15,16 105:4). But the context implies not the giving of water to His people to drink, but the fearful physical phenomena attending Jehovah’s attack on Israel’s foes.

10. *The mountains* — repetition with increased emphasis of some of the tremendous phenomena mentioned in Habakkuk 3:6.

overflowing of the water passed by — namely, of the Red Sea; and again, of the Jordan. God marked His favor to His people in all the elements, causing every obstacle, whether mountains or waters, which impeded their progress, to “pass away” [CALVIN]. MAURER, not so well, translates, “torrents (rains) of water rush down.”

lifted ... hands on high — namely, its billows *lifted on high* by the tempest. Personification. As men signify by voice or gesture of *hand* that they will do what they are commanded, so these parts of nature testified their obedience to God's will (^{<0142>}Exodus 14:22 ^{<0186>}Joshua 3:16 ^{<0171>}Psalms 77:17,18 114:4).

11. sun ... moon stood still — at Joshua's command (^{<0602>}Joshua 10:12,13). MAURER wrongly translates, "stand" (*withdrawn*, or *hidden from view*, by the clouds which covered the sky during the thunders).

light of thine arrows — hail mixed with lightnings (^{<0600>}Joshua 10:10,11).

they went — The *sun* and *moon* "went," not as always heretofore, but according to the light and direction of Jehovah's arrows, namely, His lightnings hurled in defense of His people; astonished at these they stood still [CALVIN]. MAURER translates, "At the light of Thine arrows (which) went" or flew.

12. march — implying Jehovah's majestic and irresistible progress before His people (^{<0604>}Judges 5:4 ^{<0607>}Psalms 68:7). Israel would not have dared to attack the nations, unless Jehovah had gone before.

thresh — (^{<0303>}Micah 4:13).

13. with thine anointed — with Messiah; of whom Moses, Joshua, and David, God's anointed leaders of Israel, were the types (^{<0609>}Psalms 89:19,20,38). God from the beginning delivered His people in person, or by the hand of a Mediator (^{<0351>}Isaiah 63:11). Thus Habakkuk confirms believers in the hope of their deliverance, as well because God is always the same, as also because the same anointed Mediator is ready now to fulfill God's will and interpose for Israel, as of old [CALVIN]. MAURER translates to suit the parallelism, "for salvation to Thine anointed," namely, Israel's *king* in the abstract, answering to the "people" in the former clause (compare ^{<0208>}Psalms 28:8 ^{<0209>}Lamentations 4:20). Or Israel is meant, the *anointed*, that is, consecrated people of Jehovah (^{<0155>}Psalms 105:15).

woundedst the head out of the house of the wicked — probably an allusion to ^{<0621>}Psalms 68:21. Each *head person* sprung from and belonging to *the house of Israel's wicked foes*; such as Jabin, whose city Hazor was "the head of all the kingdoms" of Canaan (^{<0110>}Joshua 11:10; compare ^{<0102>}Judges 4:2,3,13).

discovering the foundation — Thou destroyedst high and low. As "the *head of the house*" means the prince, so the "foundation" means the general *host* of the enemy.

unto the neck — image from a flood reaching *to the neck* (^{<2108>}Isaiah 8:8 30:28). So God, by His wrath overflowing on the foe, caused their princes' *necks* to be trodden under foot by Israel's leaders (^{<1618>}Joshua 10:24 11:8,12).

14. strike ... with his staves — with the “wicked” (^{<3183>}Habakkuk 3:13) foe's own sword (MAURER translates, “spears”) (^{<1022>}Judges 7:22).

head of his villages — Not only kings were overthrown by God's hand, but His vengeance passed through the foe's *villages* and dependencies. A just retribution, as the foe had made “the inhabitants of Israel's villages to cease” (^{<1003>}Judges 5:7). GROTIUS translates, “of his warriors”; GESENIUS, “the chief of his captains.”

to scatter me — *Israel*, with whom Habakkuk identifies himself (compare ^{<3112>}Habakkuk 1:12).

rejoicing ... to devour the poor secretly — “The poor” means the *Israelites*, for whom in their helpless state the foe lurks *in his lair*, like a wild beast, to pounce on and *devour* (^{<9109>}Psalms 10:9 17:12).

15. Thou didst walk through the sea with thine horses — (Habakkuk 3:8). No obstacle could prevent Thy progress when leading Thy people in safety to their inheritance, whether the Red Sea, Jordan, or the figurative waves of foes raging against Israel (^{<1917>}Psalms 65:7 77:19).

16. When I heard ... trembled — namely, at the judgments which God had declared (Habakkuk 1:1-17) were to be inflicted on Judea by the Chaldeans.

belly — The *bowels* were thought by the Hebrews to be the seat of yearning compassion (^{<2811>}Jeremiah 31:20). Or “heard” may refer to Habakkuk 3:2, “When I *heard* as to Jehovah's coming interposition for Israel against the Chaldeans being still at some distance” (Habakkuk 2:3); so also the voice” [MAURER].

at the voice — of the divine threatenings (Habakkuk 1:6). The faithful tremble at the *voice* alone of God before He inflicts punishment. Habakkuk speaks in the person of all the faithful in Israel.

trembled in myself — that is, I trembled all over [GROTIUS].

that I might rest in the day of trouble — The true and only path to *rest* is through such fear. Whoever is securely torpid and hardened towards God, will be tumultuously agitated in the day of affliction, and so will bring on himself a worse destruction; but he who in time meets God's wrath and trembles at His threats, prepares the best *rest* for himself in the day of

affliction [CALVIN]. HENDERSON translates, “Yet I shall have rest.” Habakkuk thus consoling his mind, Though trembling at the calamity coming, yet I shall have rest in God (^{<2308>}Isaiah 26:3). But that sentiment does not seem to be directly asserted till ^{<3187>}Habakkuk 3:17, as the words following at the close of this verse imply.

when he cometh up unto the people, he will invade — rather (as *English Version* is a mere truism), connected with the preceding clause, “that I might rest ... when he (the Chaldean foe) cometh up unto the people (the Jews), *that he may cut them off*” [CALVIN]. The *Hebrew* for “invade” means, *to rush upon, or to attack and cut off with congregated troops*.

17. Destroy the “vines” and “fig trees” of the carnal heart, and his mirth ceases. But those who when full enjoyed God in all, when emptied can enjoy all in God. They can sit down upon the heap of ruined creature comforts, and rejoice in Him as the “God of their salvation.” Running in the way of His commandments, we outrun our troubles. Thus Habakkuk, beginning his prayer with trembling, ends it with a song of triumph (^{<3185>}Job 13:15 ^{<3047>}Psalms 4:7 43:3,5).

labor of the olive — that is, the *fruit* expected from the olive.

fail — literally, “lie,” that is, disappoint the hope (^{<2881>}Isaiah 58:11, *Margin*).

fields — from a *Hebrew* root meaning “to be yellow”; as they look at harvest-time.

meat — food, grain.

cut off — that is, cease.

18. *yet I will rejoice* — The prophet speaks in the name of his people.

19. *hinds’ feet ... walk upon ... high places* — Habakkuk has here before his mind ^{<3183>}Psalms 18:33,34 ^{<2813>}Deuteronomy 32:13. “Hinds’ (gazelles’) feet” imply the *swiftness* with which God enables him (the prophet and his people) to escape from his enemies, and return to his native land. The “high places” are called “mine,” to imply that Israel shall be restored to *his own* land, a land of hills which are places of safety and of eminence (compare ^{<1197>}Genesis 19:17 ^{<1219>}Matthew 24:16). Probably not only the *safety*, but the *moral elevation*, of Israel above all the lands of the earth is implied (^{<3333>}Deuteronomy 33:29).

on my stringed instruments — *neginoth*. This is the prophet’s direction to the *precentor* (“chief singer”) as to how the preceding ode (Habakkuk 3:1-19) is to be performed (compare ^{<3001>}Psalms 4:1 6:1, titles). The prophet had

in mind a certain form of stringed instrument adapted to certain numbers and measures. This formula at the end of the ode, directing the kind of instrument to be used, agrees with that in the beginning of it, which directs the kind of melody (compare ²³⁸⁰Isaiah 38:20).