

Book of Habakkuk

Chapter 3:1-19

Habakkuk's Prayer (1, 2)

¹ A prayer of Habakkuk the prophet, according to Shigionoth.

Shigionoth > (Preceptaustin) Lxx (Septuagint) translates it with Greek word *ode* meaning "song" The NASB has a note says it is "a highly emotional poetic form", that it may refer to "a wild passionate song with rapid changes of rhythm" which presumably is why the Amplified version is translated as follows...

*A prayer of Habakkuk the prophet,
Set to wild, enthusiastic, and triumphal music.*

Septuagint > *A prayer of the prophet Habakkuk, with a song.*

At the very end of this chapter there is the notation > *To the chief singer on my stringed instruments*. Clearly indicating at least this segment was written as a song.

Preceptaustin > Corrie Ten Boom's well-known quote is a great subtitle for Habakkuk 3...

*If you look at the world, you'll be distressed.
If you look within, you'll be depressed.
If you look at God you'll be at rest.*

² *LORD, I have heard the report about You and I fear. O LORD, revive Your work in the midst of the years, in the midst of the years make it known; in wrath remember mercy.*

In the midst of the years make known > (Barnes) > literally, "Thou wilt make known: in wrath Thou wilt remember mercy"

The **Septuagint** is beautiful! *O Lord, I have heard thy report, and was afraid: I considered thy works, and was amazed: thou shalt be known between the two living creatures, thou shalt be acknowledged when the years draw nigh; thou shalt be manifested when the time is come; when my soul is troubled, thou wilt in wrath remember mercy.*

The Lord Comes in Splendor (3-5)

(Wiersbe)

³ **God comes from Teman, and the Holy One from Mount Paran. Selah. His splendor covers the heavens, and the earth is full of His praise.**

God comes from Teman, and the Holy One from Mount Paran > (Gaebelein) The great ode, cast in the form of a Psalm, begins with the statement that God cometh from Teman and the Holy One from Mount Paran. Moses in his prophetic blessing also begins with a similar declaration. *“The Lord came from Sinai, and rose from Seir unto them; He shined from Mount Paran, and He came with the thousands of His saints (angels); from His right hand went a fiery law for them.”* Just as He was manifested when He had redeemed them out of Egypt, and constituted them His Kingdom people at Sinai (Ex 19), so will He appear again to deliver the remnant of His people from the dominion of the world-power, and judge them as He judged Egypt. He comes from the direction of Edom, for Teman is the southern district of Idumea, while Paran is more southward. Isaiah also beheld him advancing from the same direction. *“Who is this that cometh from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah?”* (Isa 63:1-6). It is unfortunate that the Authorized Version has *“God came from Teman,”* when it is *“God cometh,”* not a past but a future event.

Selah > (Gaebelein) After this opening statement the first *Selah* is put. This means to pause and to lift up. We are to pause and meditate, and then to lift up our hearts and voices in praise and thanksgiving.

His splendor covers the heavens > (Henry Morris) The dramatic events described following the "*Selah*" pause did not take place at that time. The literal fulfillment must be at His glorious coming ... the Great Tribulation of the end-times. It seems that Habakkuk's prophetic vision, on which his psalm was based, contained a blending of both God's past miraculous deliverances of His people and also the future deliverances of which these had been a type.

⁴ **His radiance is like the sunlight; He has rays flashing from His hand, and there is the hiding of His power.**

The **Septuagint** translates this phrase as > *And his brightness shall be as light* (Remember these verses from the transfiguration? > **Matthew 17:2** > *And His face shone like the sun, and His garments became as white as the light.* **Mark 9:3** > *And His garments became radiant and exceedingly white.*)

⁵ **Before Him goes pestilence, and plague comes after Him.**

Before Him goes ... > (Wiersbe) Verse 5 takes us to Egypt, where God revealed His power and glory in the plagues and pestilences that devastated the land and took the lives of the firstborn. The ten plagues were not only punishment because of Pharaoh's hardness of heart; they also revealed the vanity of Egypt's gods.

Pestilence > (Preceptaustin) refers to any kind of plague (think "Bubonic plague"!) or pandemic (think the 1918 flu **pandemic**) (Ken ... hummmmm) results in widespread death and most uses speak of divine punishment.

The Lord Stands in Power (6, 7)

(Wiersbe)

⁶ **He stood and surveyed the earth; He looked and startled the nations. Yes, the perpetual mountains were shattered, the ancient hills collapsed. His ways are everlasting.**

Surveyed > (Preceptaustin) Some translations prefer "shook" (instead of surveyed) following the lead of the Lxx (Septuagint) which translates the Hebrew verb *madad* with (the Greek) *saleuo* which describes "the unexpected and disastrous shaking of what would be thought to be stable" (Friberg).

Septuagint > *the earth stood at his feet and trembled: he beheld, and the nations melted away: the mountains were violently burst through, the everlasting hills melted at his everlasting going forth.*

Startled > (DBL Hebrew) The Hebrew word for "startle" means to jump, to leap, to be violently agitated, to be shocked! It can describe "the shuddering motion of fear as a basal response of the body to stress"

Yes, the perpetual mountains ... > Compare these two concepts ... "perpetual mountains" vs. "everlasting ways". Who won?

⁷ **I saw the tents of Cushan under distress, the tent curtains of the land of Midian were trembling.**

Tents of Cushan under distress > **Judges 3:7-11** > ⁷ *The sons of Israel did what was evil in the sight of the LORD, and forgot the LORD their God and served the Baals and the Asheroth. ⁸ Then the anger of the LORD was kindled against Israel, so that He sold them into the hands of Cushan-rishathaim king of Mesopotamia; and the sons of Israel served Cushan-rishathaim eight years.*

⁹ When the sons of Israel cried to the LORD, the LORD raised up a deliverer for the sons of Israel to deliver them, Othniel the son of Kenaz, Caleb's younger brother. ¹⁰ The Spirit of the LORD came upon him, and he judged Israel. When he went out to war, the LORD gave Cushan-rishathaim king of Mesopotamia into his hand, so that he prevailed over Cushan-rishathaim. ¹¹ Then the land had rest forty years. And Othniel the son of Kenaz died.

Tent curtains of the land of Midian were trembling > Judges 7:12-14 > ¹² Now the Midianites and the Amalekites and all the sons of the east were lying in the valley as numerous as locusts; and their camels were without number, as numerous as the sand on the seashore. ¹³ When Gideon came, behold, a man was relating a dream to his friend. And he said, "Behold, I had a dream; a loaf of barley bread was tumbling into the camp of Midian, and it came to the tent and struck it so that it fell, and turned it upside down so that the tent lay flat." ¹⁴ His friend replied, "This is nothing less than the sword of Gideon the son of Joash, a man of Israel; God has given Midian and all the camp into his hand."

The Lord Marches in Victory (8-15)

(Wiersbe)

⁸ Did the LORD rage against the rivers, or was Your anger against the rivers, or was Your wrath against the sea, that You rode on Your horses, on Your chariots of salvation?

Did the Lord rage against ... > (Wiersbe) > "From start to finish, Israel's God is shown to be the **victor** over all individuals and nations and the **champion** of those who follow in His train."

John MacArthur > With rhetorical vividness, Habakkuk addressed the Lord directly, rehearsing His judicial actions against anything that opposes His will.

Wiersbe > Habakkuk uses dynamic poetic imagery to describe Israel's march through the wilderness as they followed the Lord to the Promised Land and then claimed their inheritance. The Red Sea opened to let Israel out of Egypt, and the Jordan opened to let Israel into Canaan. The Egyptian chariots sank into the mud and their occupants were drowned, but God's chariots were chariots of salvation.

⁹ Your bow was made bare, the rods of chastisement were sworn. Selah. You cleaved the earth with rivers.

Your bow was made bare > (Barnes) Literally, (In) "nakedness, it was laid naked;" the sheath being laid aside and cast away

You cleaved the earth with rivers > There doesn't seem to be a unified understanding of Habakkuk's message here.

¹⁰ *The mountains saw You and **quaked**; **the downpour of waters swept by**. The deep uttered forth its voice, it lifted high its hands.* ¹¹ ***Sun and moon stood in their places; they went away at the light of Your arrows, at the radiance of Your gleaming spear.***

Quaked > (Strong's) to twist or whirl (in a circular or spiral manner), i.e. (specifically) to dance, to writhe in pain (especially of parturition) or fear

The downpour of waters swept by > (Wiersbe) Verse 10 describes the victory of Deborah and Barak over Sisera (Judg. 4—5), when a sudden rainstorm turned their battlefield into a swamp and left the enemy's chariots completely useless.

Sun and moon ... > **Joshua 10:12-14** > ¹² *Then Joshua spoke to the LORD in the day when the LORD delivered up the Amorites before the sons of Israel, and he said in the sight of Israel,*

*“O sun, stand still at Gibeon,
And O moon in the valley of Aijalon.”*

¹³ *So the sun stood still, and the moon stopped,
Until the nation avenged themselves of their enemies.”*

Is it not written in the book of Jashar? And the sun stopped in the middle of the sky and did not hasten to go down for about a whole day. ¹⁴ *There was no day like that before it or after it, when the LORD listened to the voice of a man; for the LORD fought for Israel.*

¹² **In indignation **YOU marched** through the earth; in anger **YOU trampled** the nations.**

You marched ... You trampled > (Preceptaustin) This reads as a past tense event, but the Septuagint uses the **future** tense for both verbs ... this description seems to have eschatological implications, awaiting a yet future fulfillment.

Trampled > (Preceptaustin) *Trampled* refers to threshing (oxen moving around in a circular pit trampling the wheat or barley to separate the grain from the stalk) and is often used figuratively to depict military invasions and/or the execution of judgment. Threshing was often a symbol of judgment. The Septuagint uses a Greek verb which means to break in pieces or break in two and is in the future tense which indicates in His wrath, God *will break the nations in pieces*. Has this event happened? Clearly this prophecy awaits a future fulfillment when God's wrath is finally and fully poured out on the nations, those who have rejected His offer of salvation.

¹³ **YOU** went forth for the salvation of Your people, for the salvation of Your anointed.

YOU struck the head of the house of the evil to lay him open from thigh to neck. Selah.

¹⁴ **YOU** pierced with his own spears the head of his throngs. They stormed in to scatter us; their exultation was like those who devour the oppressed in secret.

¹⁵ **YOU** trampled on the sea with Your horses, on the surge of many waters.

Verses 13-15 > (Wiersbe) Expositors aren't agreed as to what historical event is described in verses 13–15 ... perhaps Habakkuk was looking ahead and describing the deliverance of God's people from the Babylonian captivity. God brought the Medes and Persians to crush Babylon and then to permit the Jews to return to their land (Ezra 1:1–4). The image of God stripping Babylon "from head to foot" (Hab. 3:13 NIV) parallels what Jeremiah prophesied in Jeremiah 50–51.

Affirming the Will of the Lord ... in Faith (16-19)

(Wiersbe)

¹⁶ I heard and my inward parts **trembled**, at the sound my lips **quivered**. Decay enters my bones, and in my place I tremble. Because I must **wait quietly** for the day of distress, for the people to arise who will invade us.

Trembled> (Strong's) to quiver (with any violent emotion, especially anger or fear)

Quivered> (Strong's) (identical with 6749 through the idea of vibration); to tinkle, i.e. rattle together (as the ears in reddening with shame, or the teeth in chattering with fear)

Wait quietly > (Strong's) to rest, i.e. settle down

Preceptaustin > The Hebrew word literally describes an absence of movement (the ark "rested" on Mt Ararat = Ge 8:4). It means to rest, to remain, to be quiet.

Wiersbe > If Habakkuk looked ahead, he saw a nation heading for destruction, and that frightened him. When he looked within, he saw himself trembling with fear, and when he looked around, he saw everything in the economy about to fall apart. But when he looked up by faith, he saw God, and all his fears vanished. To walk by faith means to focus on the greatness and glory of God. One of the marks of faith is a willingness to wait patiently for the Lord to work.

"NET" Translation of the first part of this verse > *I listened and my stomach churned; the sound made my lips quiver. My frame went limp, as if my bones were decaying, and I shook as I tried to walk.*

¹⁷ Though the fig tree should not blossom and there be no fruit on the vines, though the yield of the olive should fail and the fields produce no food, though the flock should be cut off from the fold and there be no cattle in the stalls, ¹⁸ Yet I will **exult** in the LORD, I will **rejoice** in the God of my salvation.

Wiersbe > By the time Babylon was through with the land of Judah, there wouldn't be much of value left. Buildings would be destroyed, treasures would be plundered, and farms and orchards would be devastated. The economy would fall apart and there would be little to sing about.

Exult ... rejoice > Look at this from **Strong's!!**

Exult > to jump for joy

Rejoice > to spin round (under the influence of any violent emotion), i.e. usually rejoice, or (as cringing) fear

¹⁹ The Lord GOD is my strength, and He has made my feet like hinds' feet, and makes me walk on my high places. To the chief singer on my stringed instruments.

The Lord God is my strength ... > (Wiersbe) Habakkuk teaches us to face our doubts and questions honestly, take them humbly to the Lord, wait for His Word to teach us, and then worship Him no matter how we feel or what we see. God doesn't always change the circumstances, but He can change us to meet the circumstances.