

# Bookmarks

- [Habakkuk 1](#)
- [Habakkuk 2](#)
- [Habakkuk 3](#)

# Habakkuk JUDGMENT UPON THE WICKED CH. 1 AND 2

## *Chastisement of Judah through the Chaldaeans Ch. 1*

The lamentation of the prophet over the dominion of wickedness and violence (vv. 2-4) is answered thus by the Lord: He will raise up the Chaldaeans, who are to execute the judgment, as a terrible, world-conquering people, but who will offend by making their might into their god (vv. 5-11); whereupon the prophet, trusting in the Lord, who has proved Himself to His people from time immemorial to be a holy and righteous God, expresses the hope that this chastisement will not lead to death, and addresses the question to God, whether with His holiness He can look calmly upon the wickedness of this people, in gathering men into their net like fishes, and continuing in the most unsparing manner to slay the nations (vv. 12-17).

### **Habakkuk 1:1**

*The burden which Habakkuk the prophet did see.*

Verse 1. Ver. 1 contains the heading not only to ch. 1 and 2, but to the whole book, of which ch. 3 forms an integral part. On the special heading in Hab 3:1, see the comm. on that verse. The prophet calls his writing a *massâ'*, or burden (see at Nah 1:1), because it announces heavy judgments upon the covenant nation and the imperial power.

### **Habakkuk 1:2-4**

*O LORD, how long shall I cry, and thou wilt not hear! even cry out unto thee of violence, and thou wilt not save!*

The prophet's lamentation. V. 2. *"How long, Jehovah, have I cried, and Thou hearest not? I cry to Thee, Violence; and Thou helpst not! V. 3. Why dost Thou let me see mischief, and Thou lookest upon distress? devastation and violence are before me: there arises strife, and contention lifts itself up. V. 4. Therefore the law is benumbed, and justice comes not forth for ever: for sinners encircle the righteous man; therefore justice goes forth perverted."* This complaint, which involves a petition for help, is not merely an expression of the prophet's personal desire for the removal of the prevailing unrighteousness; but the prophet laments, in the name of the righteous, i.e., the believers in the nation, who had to suffer under the oppression of the wicked; not, however, as Rosenmüller and Ewald, with many of the Rabbins, suppose, over the acts of wickedness and violence which the Chaldaeans performed in the land, but over the wicked conduct of the ungodly of his own nation.

For it is obvious that these verses refer to the moral depravity of Judah, from the fact that God announced His

[First](#) [Next ->](#)

purpose to raise up the Chaldaeans to punish it (vv. 5ff.). It is true that, in vv. 9 and 13, wickedness and violence are attributed to the Chaldaeans also; but all that can be inferred from this is, that "in the punishment of the Jewish people a divine *talio* prevails, which will eventually fall upon the Chaldaeans also" (Delitzsch). The calling for help ( *shiuweea`* is described, in the second clause, as crying over wickedness. *chaamaac* (OT:2555) is an accusative, denoting what he cries, as in Job 19:7 and Jer 20:8, viz., the evil that is done. Not hearing is equivalent to not helping. The question *`ad-'aanaah* indicates that the wicked conduct has continued a long time, without God having put a stop to it. This appears irreconcilable with the holiness of God. Hence the question in v. 3: Wherefore dost Thou cause me to see mischief, and lookest upon it Thyself? which points to Num 23:21, viz., to the words of Balaam, "God hath not beheld iniquity ( *'âven* ) in Jacob, neither hath He seen perverseness ( *'âmâl* ) in Israel." This word of God, in which Balaam expresses the holiness of Israel, which remains true to the idea of its divine election, is put before the Lord in the form of a question, not only to give prominence to the falling away of the people from their divine calling, and their degeneracy into the very opposite of what they ought to be, but chiefly to point to the contradiction involved in the fact, that God the Holy One does now behold the evil in Israel and leave it unpunished.

God not only lets the prophet see iniquity, but even looks at Himself. This is at variance with His holiness. *'aawen* (OT:205), nothingness, then worthlessness, wickedness (cf. Isa 1:13). *`aamaal* (OT:5999), labour, then distress which a man experiences or causes to others (cf. Isa 10:1). *hibiyT* (OT:5027), to see, not to cause to see. Ewald has revoked the opinion, that we have here a fresh *hiphil* , derived from a *hiphil*. With *wgw' shod* (OT:7701) the address is continued in the form of a simple picture. *Shood vechâmâs* are often connected (e.g., Amos 3:10; Jer 6:7; 20:8; Ezek 45:9). *Shood* is violent treatment causing desolation. *Châmâs* is malicious conduct intended to injure another. *way<sup>a</sup>hiy* (OT:1961), it comes to pass, there arises strife ( *riibh* ) in consequence of the violent and wicked conduct. *yisaa'* (OT:5375), to rise up, as in Hos 13:1; Ps 89:10. The consequences of this are relaxation of the law, etc. *`al-keen* , therefore, because God does not interpose to stop the wicked conduct. *puwg* (OT:6313), to relax, to stiffen, i.e., to lose one's vital strength, or energy.

**Toorâh** is "the revealed law in all its substance, which was meant to be the soul, the heart of political, religious, and domestic life" (Delitzsch). Right does not come forth, i.e., does not manifest itself, *lânetsach*, lit., for a permanence, i.e., for ever, as in many other passages, e.g., Ps 13:2; Isa 13:20. *laanetsach* (OT:5331) belongs to *lo'* (OT:3808), not for ever, i.e., never more. *Mishpât* is not merely a righteous verdict, however; in which case the meaning would be: There is no more any righteous verdict given, but a righteous state of things, objective right in the civil and political life. For godless men (*raashaa'* (OT:7563), without an article, is used with indefinite generality or in a collective sense) encircle the righteous man, so that the righteous cannot cause right to prevail. Therefore right comes forth perverted. The second clause, commencing with *`al-keen*, completes the first, adding a positive assertion to the negative. The right, which does still come to the light, is *m<sup>a</sup>uqaal* (OT:6127), twisted, perverted, the opposite of right. To this complaint Jehovah answers in vv. 5-11 that He will do a marvellous work, inflict a judgment corresponding in magnitude to the prevailing injustice.

## **Habakkuk 1:5**

*Behold ye among the heathen, and regard, and wonder marvellously: for I will work a work in your days, which ye will not believe, though it be told you.*

**"Look ye among the nations, and see, and be amazed, amazed! for I work a work in your days: ye would not believe it if it were told you."** The appeal to see and be amazed is addressed to the prophet and the people of Judah together. It is very evident from v. 6 that Jehovah Himself is speaking here, and points by

[<- Previous](#) [First](#) [Next ->](#)

anticipation to the terrible nature of the approaching work of His punitive righteousness, although *po`eel* (OT:6466) is written indefinitely, without any pronoun attached. Moreover, as Delitzsch and Hitzig observe, the meaning of the appeal is not, "Look round among the nations, whether any such judgment has ever occurred;" but, "Look about among the nations, for it is thence that the terrible storm will burst that is about to come upon you" (cf. Jer 25:32; 13:20). The first and ordinary view, in support of which Lam 1:12; Jer 2:10 and 18:13, are generally adduced, is precluded by the fact, (1) that it is not stated for what they are to look round, namely, whether anything of the kind has occurred here or there (Jer 2:10); (2) that the unparalleled occurrence has not been mentioned at all yet; and (3) that what they are to be astonished or terrified at is not their failure to discover an analogy, but the approaching judgment itself.

The combination of the *kal, tâmâh*, with the *hiphil* of the same verb serves to strengthen it, so as to express the highest degree of amazement (cf. Zeph 2:1; Ps 18:11, and Ewald, §313, *c*). *kiy* (OT:3588), *for*, introduces the reason not only for the amazement, but also for the summons to look round. The two clauses of the second hemistich correspond to the two clauses of the first half of the verse. They are to look round, because Jehovah is about to perform a work; they are to be amazed, or terrified, because this work is an amazing or a terrible one. The participle *po`eel* (OT:6466) denotes that which is immediately at hand, and is used absolutely, without a pronoun. According to v. 6, *'aniy* (OT:589) is the pronoun we have to supply. For it is not practicable to supply *huw'* (OT:1931), or to take the participle in the sense of the third person, since God, when speaking to the people, cannot speak of Himself in the third person, and even in that case *y<sup>a</sup>haaowh* (OT:3068) could not be omitted.

Hitzig's idea is still more untenable, namely, that *poo'al* is the subject, and that *poo`eel* is used in an intransitive sense: the work produces its effect. We must assume, as Delitzsch does, that there is a proleptical elipsis, i.e., one in which the word immediately following is omitted (as in Isa 48:11; Zech 9:17). The admissibility of this assumption is justified by the fact that there are other cases in which the participle is used and the pronoun omitted; and that not merely the pronoun of the

third person (e.g., Isa 2:11; Jer 38:23), but that of the second person also (1 Sam 2:24; 6:3, and Ps 7:10). On the expression *biymeeykem* (OT:3117) (in your days), see the Introduction, p. 388. *ta'aminyuw* (OT:539) *lo'* (OT:3808), ye would not believe it if it were told you, namely, as having occurred in another place or at another time, if ye did not see it yourselves (Delitzsch and Hitzig). Compare Acts 13:41, where the Apostle Paul threatens the despisers of the gospel with judgment in the words of our verse.

## Habakkuk 1:6-11

*For, lo, I raise up the Chaldeans, that bitter and hasty nation, which shall march through the breadth of the land, to possess the dwellingplaces that are not theirs.*

Announcement of this work. - V. 6. *"For, behold, I cause the Chaldaeans to rise up, the fierce and vehement nation, which marches along the breadths of the earth, to take possession of dwelling-places that are not its own. V. 7. It is alarming and fearful: its right and its eminence go forth from it. V. 8. And its horses are swifter than leopards, and more sudden than evening wolves: and its horsemen spring along; and its horsemen, they come from afar; they fly hither, hastening like an eagle to devour. V. 9. It comes all at once for wickedness; the endeavour of their faces is directed forwards, and it gathers prisoners together like sand. V. 10. And it, kings it scoffs at, and princes are laughter to it; it laughs at every stronghold, and heaps up sand, and takes it. V. 11. Then it passes along, a wind, and comes hither and offends: this its strength is its god."* *meeqiyim* (OT:6965) *hin<sup>a</sup>niy* (OT:2005), *ecce suscitaturus sum. hineeh* (OT:2009) before the participle always refers to the future. *heeqiyim* (OT:6965), to cause to stand up or appear, does not apply to

[<- Previous](#) [First](#) [Next ->](#)

the elevation of the Chaldaeans into a nation or a conquering people—for the picture which follows and is defined by the article *wgw' hagowyw* (OT:1471) presupposes that it already exists as a conquering people—but to its being raised up against Judah, so that it is equivalent to *'aleeykem meeqiyim* in Amos 6:14 (cf. Mic 5:4; 2 Sam 12:11, etc.). *Hakkasdiim*, the Chaldaeans, sprang, according to Gen 22:22, from *Kesed* the son of Nahor, the brother of Abraham; so that they were a Semitic race.

They dwelt from time immemorial in Babylonia or Mesopotamia, and are called a primeval people, *gooi mee'oolâm*, in Jer 5:15. Abram migrated to Canaan from *Ur* of the Chaldees, from the other side of the river (Euphrates: Gen 11:28,31, compared with Josh 24:2); and the *Kasdiim* in Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel are inhabitants of Babel or Babylonia (Isa 43:14; 47:1; 48:14,20; Jer 21:9; 32:4,24, etc.; Ezek 23:23). Babylonia is called *'erets Kasdiim* (Jer 24:5; 25:12; Ezek 12:13), or simply *Kasdiim* (Jer. 50:10; 51:24,35; Ezek. 26:29; 23:16). The modern hypothesis, that the Chaldaeans were first of all transplanted by the Assyrians from the northern border mountains of Armenia, Media, and Assyria to Babylonia, and that having settled there, they afterwards grew into a cultivated people, and as a conquering nation exerted great influence in the history of the world, simply rests upon a most precarious interpretation of an obscure passage in Isaiah (Isa 23:18), and has no higher value than the opinion of the latest Assyriologists that the Chaldaeans are a people of Tatar origin, who mingled with the Shemites of the countries bordering upon the Euphrates and Tigris (see Delitzsch on Isa 23:13).

Habakkuk describes this people as *mar*, bitter, or rough, and, when used to denote a disposition, fierce (*mar nephesh*, Judg 18:25; 2 Sam 17:8); and *nimhâr*, heedless or rash (Isa 32:4), here violent, and as moving along the breadths of the earth (*epi'* (NT:1909) *ta'* (NT:3588) *pla'tee* (NT:4113) *tee's* (NT:3588) *gee's* (NT:1093), LXX: cf. Rev 20:9), i.e., marching through the whole extent of the earth (Isa 8:8): *terram quam late patet* (Ros.). *l<sup>a</sup>* is not used here to denote the direction or the goal, but the space, as in Gen 13:17 (Hitzig, Delitzsch). To take possession of dwelling-places that are not his own (*lo'-low = lo'-low 'asher*), i.e., to take possession of foreign lands that do not belong to him. In v. 7 the fierce disposition of this people is still further

depicted, and in v. 8 the violence with which it advances. '*aayom* (OT:366), *formidabilis*, exciting terror; *nowraa'* (OT:3372), *metuendus*, creating alarm. *wgw'* *mimenuw* (OT:4480), from it, not from God (cf. Ps 17:2), does its right proceed, i.e., it determines right, and the rule of its conduct, according to its own standard; and *s<sup>a</sup>eetow* (OT:5375), its eminence (Gen 49:3; Hos 13:1), "its *do'xa* (NT:1391) (1 Cor 11:7) above all other nations" (Hitzig), making itself lord through the might of its arms.

Its horses are lighter, i.e., swifter of foot, than panthers, which spring with the greatest rapidity upon their prey (for proofs of the swiftness of the panther, see Bochart, *Hieroz.* ii. p. 104, ed. Ros.), and *chaduw* (OT:2300), lit., sharper, i.e., shooting sharply upon it. As *qâlal* represents swiftness as a light rapid movement, which hardly touches the ground, so *châda*, *oxu'n ei'nai*, describes it as a hasty precipitate dash upon a certain object (Delitzsch). The first clause of this verse has been repeated by Jeremiah (Jer 4:13), with the alteration of one letter (viz., *min<sup>a</sup>shaariym* (OT:5404) for *min<sup>a</sup>meeriym* (OT:5246)). Wolves of the evening (cf. Zeph 3:3) are wolves which go out in the evening in search of prey, after having fasted through the day, not "wolves of Arabia (*`ereb* (OT:6153) = *`araab* (OT:6152), LXX) or of the desert" (*`araabaah* (OT:6160) Kimchi).

**Pâshuu** from *puush*, after the Arabic *fâš*, *med. Ye*, to strut proudly; when used of a horse and its rider, to spring along, to gallop; or of a calf, to hop or jump (Jer. 50:11; Mal. 3:20). The connection between this and *puush* (Nah 3:18), *niphal* to disperse or scatter one's self, is questionable. Delitzsch (on Job 35:15) derives *puush* in this verse and the passage cited from Arab. *fâš*, *med. Vav*, in the sense of swimming upon the top, and apparently traces *puush* in Nah 3, as well as *pash* in Job 35:15, to Arab. *fšš* (when used of water: to overflow its dam); whilst Freytag (in the *Lexicon*) gives, as the meaning of Arab. *fšš* II, *dissolvit, dissipavit*. *Pârâshiim* are horsemen, not riding-horses. The repetition of *paaraashaayw* (OT:6571) does not warrant our erasing the words *paaraashaayw* (OT:6571) *uwpaashuw* (OT:6335) as a gloss, as Hitzig proposes. It can be explained very simply from the fact, that in the second hemistich Habakkuk passes from the general description of the Chaldaeans to a picture of their invasion of Judah. *meeraachowq* (OT:7350), from afar, i.e., from Babylonia (cf. Isa

39:3).

[<- Previous](#) [First](#) [Next ->](#)

Their coming from afar, and the comparison of the rushing along of the Chaldaean horsemen to the flight of an eagle, points to the threat in Deut 28:49, "Jehovah shall bring against thee a nation from far, from the end of the earth, as swift as the eagle flieth," which is now about to be fulfilled. Jeremiah frequently uses the same comparison when speaking of the Chaldaeans, viz., in Jer 4:13; 48:40; 49:22, and Lam 4:19 (cf. 2 Sam 1:23). The *hap* (NT:537) *leg* (NT:3004) *m<sup>a</sup>gamaah* (OT:4041) may mean a horde or crowd, after the Hebrew *gm* (OT:1571), and the Arabic *jammah*, or snorting, endeavouring, striving, after Arab. *jmm* and *jâm*, *appetivit*, in which case *gmm* would be connected with *gm'*, to swallow. But the first meaning does not suit *qaadiymaah* (OT:6921) *p<sup>a</sup>neeyhem* (OT:6440), whereas the second does. *qaadiymaah* (OT:6921), not eastwards, but according to the primary meaning of *qedem* (OT:6924), to the front, forwards.

Ewald renders it incorrectly: "the striving of their face is to storm, i.e., to mischief;" for *qâdiim*, the east wind, when used in the sense of storm, is a figurative expression for that which is vain and worthless (Hos 12:2; cf. Job 15:2), but not for mischief. For *waye'ecop* (OT:622), compare Gen 41:49 and Zech 9:3; and for *kachowl* (OT:2344), like sand of the sea, Hos 2:1. In v. 10 *w<sup>a</sup>huw'* (OT:1931) and *huw'* (OT:1931) are introduced, that the words *bam<sup>a</sup>laakiym* (OT:4428) and *l<sup>a</sup>kaal-mib<sup>a</sup>tsaar*, upon which the emphasis lies, may be placed first. It, the Chaldaean nation, scoffs at kings and princes, and every stronghold, i.e., it ridicules all the resistance that kings and princes offer to its advance, by putting forth their strength, as a perfectly fruitless attempt. *Mischâq*, the object of laughter. The words, it heaps up dust and takes it (the fortress), express the facility with which every fortress is conquered by it.

To heap up dust: denoting the casting up an embankment for attack (2 Sam 20:15, etc.). The feminine suffix attached to *yil<sup>a</sup>k<sup>a</sup>daah* (OT:3920) refers *ad sensum* to the idea of a city (*`iyr* (OT:5892)), implied in *mib<sup>a</sup>tsaar* (OT:4014), the latter being equivalent to *mib<sup>a</sup>tsaar* (OT:4014) *`iyr* (OT:5892) in 1 Sam 6:18; 2 Kings 3:19, etc. Thus will the Chaldaean continue incessantly to overthrow kings and conquer kingdoms with tempestuous rapidity, till he offends, by deifying his own power. With this gentle hint at the termination of his tyranny, the announcement of the judgment

closes in v. 11. '*aaz* (OT:227), *there*, i.e., in this appearance of his, as depicted in vv. 6-10: not "then," in which case v. 11 would affirm to what further enterprises the Chaldaeans would proceed after their rapidly and easily effected conquests. The perfects *chaalap* (OT:2498) and *waya`abowr* (OT:5674) are used prophetically, representing the future as occurring already. *chaalap* (OT:2498) and *`aabar* (OT:5674) are used synonymously: to pass along and go further, used of the wind or tempest, as in Isa 21:1; here, as in Isa 8:8, of the hostile army overflowing the land; with this difference, however, that in Isaiah it is thought of as a stream of water, whereas here it is thought of as a tempest sweeping over the land.

The subject to *châlahph* is not *ruuach*, but the Chaldaean (*huw'* (OT:1931), v. 10); and *ruuach* is used appositionally, to denote the manner in which it passes along, viz., "like a tempestuous wind" (*ruuach* as in Job 30:15; Isa 7:2). *w<sup>a</sup>aasheem* (OT:816) is not a participle, but a perfect with *Vav rel.*, expressing the consequence, "and so he offends." In what way is stated in the last clause, in which *zuw* (OT:2098) does not answer to the relative '*asher* (OT:834), in the sense of "he whose power," but is placed demonstratively before the noun *kochow* (OT:3581), like *zeh* (OT:2088) in Ex 32:1; Josh 9:12-13, and Isa 23:13 (cf. Ewald, §293, *b*), pointing back to the strength of the Chaldaean, which has been previously depicted in its intensive and extensive greatness (Delitzsch). This its power is god to it, i.e., it makes it into its god (for the thought, compare Job 12:6, and the words of the Assyrian in Isa 10:13). The ordinary explanation of the first hemistich is, on the other hand, untenable (then its courage becomes young again, or grows), since *ruwach* (OT:7307) cannot stand for *ruwchow* (OT:7307), and *`aabar* (OT:5674) without an object given in the context cannot mean to overstep, i.e., to go beyond the proper measure.

## Habakkuk 1:12

[<- Previous](#) [First](#) [Next ->](#)

**Habakkuk 1:12**

*Art thou not from everlasting, O LORD my God, mine Holy One? we shall not die. O LORD, thou hast ordained them for judgment; and, O mighty God, thou hast established them for correction.*

On this threatening announcement of the judgment by God, the prophet turns to the Lord in the name of believing Israel, and expresses the confident hope that He as the Holy One will not suffer His people to perish. V. 12. *"Art Thou not from olden time, O Jehovah, my God, my Holy One? We shall not die. Jehovah, for judgment hast Thou appointed it; and, O Rock, founded it for chastisement."* However terrible and prostrating the divine threatening may sound, the prophet draws consolation and hope from the holiness of the faithful covenant God, that Israel will not perish, but that the judgment will be only a severe chastisement.

(Note: "Therefore," says Calvin, "whoever desires to fight bravely with the ungodly, let him first settle the matter with God Himself, and, as it were, confirm and ratify that treaty which God has set before us, namely, that we are His people, and He will be a God to us in return. And because God makes a covenant with us in this manner, it is necessary that our faith should be well established, that we may go forth to the conflict with all the ungodly.")

The supplicatory question with which he soars to this hope of faith is closely connected with the divine and threatening prophecy in v. 11. The Chaldaean's god is his own strength; but Israel's God is Jehovah, the Holy One. On the interrogative form of the words ("art Thou not?"), which requires an affirmative reply, Luther has aptly observed that "he speaks to God interrogatively, asking whether He will do this and only punish; not that he has any doubt on the subject, but that he shows how faith is sustained in the midst of conflicts-namely, that it appears as weak as if it did not believe, and would sink at once, and fall into despair on account of the great calamity which crushes it. For although faith stands firm, yet it cracks, and speaks in a very different tone when in the midst of the conflict from what it does when the victory is gained." But as the question is sure to receive an affirmative reply, the prophet draws

this inference from it: "we shall not die," we Thy people shall not perish.

This hope rests upon two foundations: viz., (1) from time immemorial Jehovah is Israel's God; and (2) He is the Holy One of Israel, who cannot leave wickedness unpunished either in Israel or in the foe. This leads to the further conclusion, that Jehovah has simply appointed the Chaldaean nation to execute the judgment, to chastise Israel, and not to destroy His people. The three predicates applied to God have equal weight in the question. The God to whom the prophet prays is *Jehovah*, the absolutely constant One, who is always the same in word and work (see at Gen 2:4); He is also *Elohai, my*, i.e., Israel's, God, who from time immemorial has proved to the people whom He had chosen as His possession that He is their God; and *q<sup>a</sup>doshiy* (OT:6918), the Holy One of Israel, the absolutely Pure One, who cannot look upon evil, and therefore cannot endure that the wicked should devour the righteous (v. 13). *naamuwt* (OT:4191) *lo'* (OT:3808) is not a supplicatory wish: Let us not die therefore; but a confident assertion: "We shall not die."

(Note: According to the Masora, *naamuwt* (OT:4191) *lo'* (OT:3808) stands as *cwprym tqwn*, i.e., *correctio scribarum* for *taamuwt* (OT:4191) *lo'* (OT:3808), thou wilt not die. These *tikkune sophrim*, however, of which the Masora reckons eighteen, are not alterations of original readings proposed by the *sophrim*, but simply traditional definitions of what the sacred writers originally intended to write, though they afterwards avoided it or gave a different turn. Thus the prophet intended to write here: "Thou (God) wilt not die;" but in the consciousness that this was at variance with the divine decorum, he gave it this turn, "We shall not die." But this rabbinical conjecture rests upon the erroneous assumption that *miqedem* (OT:6924) is a predicate, and the thought of the question is this: "Thou art from of old, Thou Jehovah my God, my Holy One," according to which *taamuwt* (OT:4191) *lo'* (OT:3808) would be an exegesis of *miqedem* (OT:6924), which is evidently false. For further remarks on the *tikkune sophrim*, see Delitzsch's *Commentary on Hab.*

[<- Previous](#) [First](#) [Next ->](#)

*l.c.* , and the Appendix. p. 206ff.)

In the second half of the verse, *Yehoovâh* and *tsuur* (rock) are vocatives. *Tsuur* , as an epithet applied to God, is taken from Deut 32:4,15,18, and 37, where God is first called the Rock of Israel, as the unchangeable refuge of His people's trust.

*Lammishpât* , i.e., to accomplish the judgment: comp. Isa 10:5-6, where Asshur is called the rod of Jehovah's wrath. In the parallel clause we have *l<sup>h</sup>owkiyach* (OT:3198) instead: "to chastise," namely Israel, not the Chaldaeans, as Ewald supposes.

## **Habakkuk 1:13-17**

*Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look on iniquity: wherefore lookest thou upon them that deal treacherously, and holdest thy tongue when the wicked devoureth the man that is more righteous than he?*

The believing confidence expressed in this verse does not appear to be borne out by what is actually done by God. The prophet proceeds to lay this enigma before God in vv. 13-17, and to pray for his people to be spared during the period of the Chaldaean affliction. V. 13. *"Art Thou too pure of eye to behold evil, and canst Thou not look upon distress? Wherefore lookest Thou upon the treacherous? and art silent when the wicked devours one more righteous than he? V. 14. And Thou hast made men like fishes of the sea, like reptiles that have no ruler. V. 15. All of them hath he lifted up with the hook; he draws them into his net, and gathers them in his fishing net; he rejoices thereat, and is glad. V. 16. Therefore he sacrifices to his net, and burns incense to his landing net; for through them is his portion rich, and his food fat. V. 17. Shall he therefore empty his net, and always strangle nations without sparing?"* In v. 13, *eeynayim* (OT:5869) *T<sup>h</sup>owr* (OT:2890), with the two clauses dependent upon it, stands as a vocative, and *T<sup>h</sup>owr* (OT:2890) followed by *min* (OT:4480) as a comparative: purer of eyes than to be able to see.

This epithet is applied to God as the pure One, whose eyes cannot bear what is morally unclean, i.e., cannot look upon evil. The purity of God is not measured here by His seeing evil, but is described as exalted above it, and not coming at all into comparison with it. On the relation in which these words stand to Num 23:21, see the remarks on v. 3. In the second clause the infinitive construction passes over into the finite verb, as is frequently the case; so that *'asher* (OT:834) must be supplied in thought: who canst not look upon, i.e., canst not tolerate, the distress which the wicked man prepares for others. Wherefore then lookest Thou upon treacherous ones, namely, the Chaldaeans? They are called *bowg<sup>a</sup>diym* (OT:898), from their faithlessly deceptive and unscrupulously rapacious conduct, as in Isa 21:2; 24:16. That the seeing is a quiet observance, without interposing to punish, is evident from the parallel *tachariysh* (OT:2790): Thou art silent at the swallowing of the *mimenuw* (OT:4480) *tsadiyq* (OT:6662).

The more righteous than he (the ungodly one) is not the nation of Israel as such, which, if not perfectly righteous, was relatively more righteous than the Chaldaeans. This rabbinical view is proved to be erroneous, by the fact that in vv. 2 and 3 the prophet describes the moral depravity of Israel in the same words as those which he here applies to the conduct of the Chaldaeans. The persons intended are rather the godly portion of Israel, who have to share in the expiation of the sins of the ungodly, and suffer when they are punished (Delitzsch). This fact, that the righteous is swallowed along with the unrighteous, appears irreconcilable with the holiness of God, and suggests the inquiry, how God can possibly let this be done.

This strange fact is depicted still further in vv. 14-16 in figures taken from the life of a fisherman. The men are

[<- Previous](#) [First](#) [Next ->](#)

This strange fact is depicted still further in vv. 14-16 in figures taken from the life of a fisherman. The men are like fishes, whom the Chaldaean collects together in his net, and then pays divine honour to his net, by which he has been so enriched.

*wata`aseh* (OT:6213) is not dependent upon *laamaah* (OT:4100), but continues the address in a simple picture, in which the imperfect with *Vav convers.* represents the act as the natural consequence of the silence of God: "and so Thou makest the men like fishes," etc. The point of comparison lies in the relative clause *bow lo'-mosheel*, "which has no ruler," which is indeed formally attached to *k<sup>a</sup>remes* (OT:7431) alone, but in actual fact belongs to *hayaam* (OT:3220) *d<sup>a</sup>geey* (OT:1709) also. "No ruler," to take the defenceless under his protection, and shelter and defend them against enemies. Then will Judah be taken prisoner and swallowed up by the Chaldaeans. God has given it helplessly up to the power of its foes, and has obviously ceased to be its king.

Compare the similar lamentation in Isa 63:19: "are even like those over whom Thou hast never ruled." *remes* (OT:7431), the creeping thing, the smaller animals which exist in great multitudes, and move with great swiftness, refers here to the smaller water animals, to which the word *remes* is also applied in Ps 104:25, and the verb *râmas* in Gen 1:21 and Lev 11:46. *kuloh* (OT:3605), pointing back to the collective *'âdâm*, is the object, and is written first for the sake of emphasis. The form *hee`alaah* (OT:5927), instead of *he`elaah* (OT:5927), is analogous to the *hophal ho`alaah* in Nah 2:8 and Judg 6:28, and also to *hee`abar<sup>a</sup>taa* in Josh 7:7: to take up out of the water (see Ges. §63, Anm. 4). *y<sup>a</sup>goreehuw* (OT:1641) from *gaarar* (OT:1641), to pull, to draw together. *Chakkâh* is the hook, *cherem* the net generally, *mikhmereth* the large fishing-net (*sagee'nee* (NT:4522)), the lower part of which, when sunk, touches the bottom, whilst the upper part floats on the top of the water.

These figures are not to be interpreted with such specialty as that the net and fishing net answer to the sword and bow; but the hook, the net, and the fishing net, as the things used for catching fish, refer to all the means which the Chaldaeans employ in order to subdue and destroy the nations. Luther interprets it correctly. "These hooks, nets, and fishing nets," he says, "are nothing more than his great and powerful armies,

by which he gained dominion over all lands and people, and brought home to Babylon the goods, jewels, silver, and gold, interest and rent of all the world." He rejoices over the success of his enterprises, over this capture of men, and sacrifices and burns incense to his net, i.e., he attributes to the means which he has employed the honour due to God. There is no allusion in these words to the custom of the Scythians and Sauromatians, who are said by Herodotus (iv. 59, 60) to have offered sacrifices every year to a sabre, which was set up as a symbol of Mars. What the Chaldaean made into his god, is expressed in v. 11, namely, his own power.

"He who boasts of a thing, and is glad and joyous on account of it, but does not thank the true God, makes himself into an idol, gives himself the glory, and does not rejoice in God, but in his own strength and work" (Luther). The Chaldaean sacrifices to his net, for thereby (*baaheemaah* (OT:1992), by net and yarn) his portion (*chelqoo*) is fat, i.e., the portion of this booty which falls to him, and fat is his food (*b<sup>a</sup>ri'aah* (OT:1277) is a neuter substantive). The meaning is, that he thereby attains to wealth and prosperity. In v. 17 there is appended to this the question embracing the thought: Shall he therefore, because he rejoices over his rich booty, or offers sacrifice to his net, empty his net, sc. to throw it in afresh, and proceed continually to destroy nations in so unsparing a manner? In the last clause the figure passes over into a literal address. The place of the imperfect is now taken by a periphrastic construction with the infinitive: Shall he constantly be about to slay? On this construction, see Ges. §132, 3, Anm. 1, and Ewald, §237, c. *yach<sup>a</sup>mowl* (OT:2550) *lo'* (OT:3808) is a subordinate clause appended in an adverbial sense: unsparingly, without sparing.

## *Destruction of the Ungodly World-Power Ch. 2*

After receiving an answer to this supplicatory cry, the prophet receives a command from God: to write the oracle

[<- Previous](#) [First](#) [Next ->](#)

in plain characters, because it is indeed certain, but will not be immediately fulfilled (vv. 1-3). Then follows the word of God, that the just will live through his faith, but he that is proud and not upright will not continue (vv. 4, 5); accompanied by a fivefold woe upon the Chaldaean, who gathers all nations to himself with insatiable greediness (vv. 6-20).

## **Habakkuk 2:1-3**

*I will stand upon my watch, and set me upon the tower, and will watch to see what he will say unto me, and what I shall answer when I am reprov'd.*

Verse 1-3. V. 1-3 form the introduction to the word of God, which the prophet receives in reply to his cry of lamentation addressed to the Lord in Hab 1:12-17. V. 1. *"I will stand upon my watchtower, and station myself upon the fortress, and will watch to see what He will say in me, and what I answer to my complaint.* V. 2. *Then Jehovah answered me, and said, Write the vision, and make it plain upon the tables, that he may run who reads it.* V. 3. *For the vision is yet fore the appointed end, and strives after the end, and does not lie: if it tarry, wait for it; for it will come, it does not fail."* V. 1 contains the prophet's conversation with himself. After he has poured out his trouble at the judgment announced, in a lamentation to the Lord (Hab 1:12-17), he encourages himself-after a pause, which we have to imagine after Hab 1:17 - to wait for the answer from God. He resolves to place himself upon his observatory, and look out for the revelation which the Lord will give to his questions.

**Mishmereth** , a place of waiting or observing; *mâtsoor* , a fortress, i.e., a watch-tower or spying-tower. Standing upon the watch, and stationing himself upon the fortification, are not to be understood as something external, as Hitzig supposes, implying that the prophet went up to a steep and lofty place, or to an actual tower, that he might be far away from the noise and bustle of men, and there turn his eyes

towards heaven, and direct his collected mind towards God, to look out for a revelation. For nothing is known of any such custom as this, since the cases mentioned in Ex 33:21 and 1 Kings 19:11, as extraordinary preparations for God to reveal Himself, are of a totally different kind from this; and the fact that Balaam the soothsayer went up to the top of a bare height, to look out for a revelation from God (Num 23:3), furnishes not proof that the true prophets of Jehovah did the same, but is rather a heathenish feature, which shows that it was because Balaam did not rejoice in the possession of a firm prophetic word, that he looked out for revelations from God in significant phenomena of nature (see at Num 23:3-4).

The words of our verse are to be taken figuratively, or internally, like the appointment of the watchman in Isa 21:6. The figure is taken from the custom of ascending high places for the purpose of looking into the distance (2 Kings 9:17; 2 Sam 18:24), and simply expresses the spiritual preparation of the prophet's soul for hearing the word of God within, i.e., the collecting of his mind by quietly entering into himself, and meditating upon the word and testimonies of God. Cyril and Calvin bring out the first idea. Thus the latter observes, that "the watch-tower is the recesses of the mind, where we withdraw ourselves from the world;" and then adds by way of explanation, "The prophet, under the name of the watch-tower, implies that he extricates himself as it were from the thoughts of the flesh, because there would be no end or measure, if he wished to judge according to his own perception;" whilst others find in it nothing more than firm continuance in reliance upon the word of God.

(Note: Theodoret very appropriately compares the words of Asaph in Ps 73:16ff., "When I thought to know this, it was too painful for me, until I entered into the sanctuaries of God, and gave heed to their end;" and observes, "And there, says the prophet, will I remain as appointed, and not leave my post, but, standing upon such a rock as that upon which God placed great Moses, watch with a prophet's eyes for the solution of the things that I seek.")

[<- Previous](#) [First](#) [Next ->](#)

Tsippâh, to spy or watch, to wait for the answer from God. "This *watching* was lively and assiduous diligence on the part of the prophet, in carefully observing everything that took place *in the spirit of his mind* , and presented itself either to be seen or heard" (Burk). *y<sup>a</sup>daber-biy* , to speak in me, not merely to or with me; since the speaking of God to the prophets was an internal speaking, and not one that was perceptible from without. What I shall answer to my complaint ( *'al tookhachtii* ), namely, first of all to myself and then to the rest. *Tookhachath* , lit., correction, contradiction. Habakkuk refers to the complaint which he raised against God in Hab 1:13-17, namely, that He let the wicked go on unpunished. He will wait for an answer from God to this complaint, to quiet his own heart, which is dissatisfied with the divine administration. Thus he draws a sharp distinction between his own speaking and the speaking of the Spirit of God within him. Jehovah gives the answer in what follows, first of all

(vv. 2, 3) commanding him to write the vision ( *châzoon* , the revelation from God to be received by inward intuition) upon tables, so clearly, that men may be able to read it in running, i.e., quite easily.

*baa'eer* (OT:874) as in Deut 27:8; see at Deut 1:5. The article attached to *haluchowt* (OT:3871) does not point to the tables set up in the market-places for public notices to be written upon (Ewald), but simply means, make it clear on the tables on which thou shalt write it, referring to the noun implied in *kitob* (write), though not expressed (Delitzsch). *bow* (OT:871a ) *qowree'* (OT:6981) may be explained from *b<sup>a</sup>ceeper* (OT:5612) *qaaraa'* (OT:7121) in Jer 36:13. The question is a disputed one, whether this command is to be understood literally or merely figuratively, "simply denoting the great importance of the prophecy, and the consequent necessity for it to be made accessible to the whole nation" (Hengstenberg, *Dissertation* , vol. i. p. 460). The passages quoted in support of the literal view, i.e., of the actual writing of the prophecy which follows upon tables, viz., Isa 8:1; 30:8, and Jer 30:2, are not decisive.

In Jer 30:2 the prophet is commanded to write all the words of the Lord in a book ( *seepher* ); and so again in Isa 30:8, if *'al-luwach kaat<sup>a</sup>baah* is synonymous with *chuqaah 'al-ceeper* . But in Isa 8:1 there are only two significant words, which the

prophet is to write upon a large table after having taken witnesses. It does not follow from either of these passages, that *luchooth*, tables, say wooden tables, had been already bound together into books among the Hebrews, so that we could be warranted in identifying the writing plainly upon tables with writing in a book. We therefore prefer the figurative view, just as in the case of the command issued to Daniel, to shut up his prophecy and seal it (Dan 12:4), inasmuch as the literal interpretation of the command, especially of the last words, would require that the table should be set up or hung out in some public place, and this cannot for a moment be thought of.

The words simply express the thought, that the prophecy is to be laid to heart by all the people on account of its great importance, and that not merely in the present, but in the future also. This no doubt involved the obligation on the part of the prophet to take care, by committing it to writing, that it did not fall into oblivion. The reason for the writing is given in v. 3. The prophecy is *lamow`eed* (OT:4150), for the appointed time; i.e., it relates to the period fixed by God for its realization, which was then still (*`owd* (OT:5750)) far off. *l<sup>a</sup>* denotes direction towards a certain point either of place or time. The vision had a direction towards a point, which, when looked at from the present, was still in the future. This goal was the end (*haqeets* (OT:7093) towards which it hastened, i.e., the "last time" (*qeets* (OT:7093) *mow`eed* (OT:4150), Dan 8:19; and *qats`at*, Dan 8:17; 11:35), the Messianic times, in which the judgment would fall upon the power of the world. *laqeets* (OT:7093) *yaapeeach* (OT:6315), it pants for the end, *inhiat fini*, i.e., it strives to reach the end, to which it refers. "True prophecy is inspired, as it were, by an impulse to fulfil itself" (Hitzig). *yaapeeach* (OT:6315) is not an adjective, as in Ps 27:12, but the third pers. imperf. *hiphil* of *puuach*; and the contracted form (*yaapeeach* (OT:6315) for *yaapiyach* (OT:6315)), without a volutative meaning, is the same as we frequently meet with in the loftier style of composition. *y<sup>a</sup>kazeeb* (OT:3576) *w<sup>a</sup>lo'* (OT:3808), "and does not deceive," i.e., will assuredly take place. If it (the vision) tarry, i.e., be not fulfilled immediately, wait for it, for it will surely take place (the inf. abs. *bow'* (OT:935) to add force, and *bow'*

[<- Previous](#) [First](#) [Next ->](#)

(OT:935) applying to the fulfilment of the prophecy, as in 1 Sam 9:6 and Jer 28:9), will not fail; *'icheer* , to remain behind, not to arrive (Judg 5:28; 2 Sam 20:5).

(Note: The LXX have rendered *yaabo'* (OT:935) *bo'* (OT:935) *kiy* (OT:3588), *ho'ti* (NT:3754) *ercho'menos* (NT:2064) *hee'xei* (NT:2240), which the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews (Heb 10:37) has still further defined by adding the article, and, connecting it with *mikro'n* (NT:3397) *ho'son* (NT:3745) *ho'son* (NT:3745) of Isa 26:20 (LXX), has taken it as Messianic, and applied to the speedy coming of the Messiah to judgment; not, however, according to the exact meaning of the words, but according to the fundamental idea of the prophetic announcement. For the vision, the certain fulfilment of which is proclaimed by Habakkuk, predicts the judgment upon the power of the world, which the Messiah will bring to completion.)

## **Habakkuk 2:4,5**

*Behold, his soul which is lifted up is not upright in him: but the just shall live by his faith.*

With these verses the prophecy itself commences; namely, with a statement of the fundamental thought, that the presumptuous and proud will not continue, but the just alone will live. V. 4. *"Behold, puffed up, his soul is not straight within him: but the just, through his faith will he live. V. 5. And moreover, the wine is treacherous: a boasting man, he continues not; he who has opened his soul as wide as hell, and is like death, and is not satisfied, and gathered all nations to himself, and collected all peoples to himself."* These verses, although they contain the fundamental thought, or so to speak the heading of the following announcement of the judgment upon the Chaldaeans, are nevertheless not to be regarded as the sum and substance of what the prophet was to write upon the tables. For they do indeed give one characteristic of two classes of men, with a brief intimation of the fate of both, but they contain no formally rounded thought, which could constitute the motto of the whole; on the contrary, the description of the insatiable greediness of the Chaldaean is attached in v. 5b to the picture of the haughty sinner, that the two cannot be separated.

This picture is given in a subjective clause, which is only completed by the filling up in vv. 6ff. The sentence pronounced upon the Chaldaean in vv. 4, 5, simply forms the preparatory introduction to the real answer to the prophet's leading question. The subject is not mentioned in v. 4a, but may be inferred from the prophet's question in Hab 1:12-17. The Chaldaean is meant. His soul is puffed up. *`up<sup>a</sup>laah* (OT:6075), perf. *pual* of *`aapal* (OT:6075), of which the *hiphil* only occurs in Num 14:44, and that as synonymous with *heeziyd* in Deut 1:43. From this, as well as from the noun *`opel* (OT:6076), a hill or swelling, we get the meaning, to be swollen up, puffed up, proud; and in the *hiphil*, to act haughtily or presumptuously. The thought is explained and strengthened by *yaash<sup>a</sup>raah* (OT:3474) *lo'* (OT:3808), "his soul is not straight." *yaashar* (OT:3474), to be straight, without turning and trickery, i.e., to be upright. *bow* (OT:871a) does not belong to *nap<sup>a</sup>show* (OT:5315) (his soul in him, equivalent to his inmost soul), but to the verbs of the sentence.

The early translators and commentators have taken this hemistich differently. They divide it into protasis and apodosis, and take *`up<sup>a</sup>laah* (OT:6075) either as the predicate or as the subject. Luther also takes it in the latter sense: "He who is stiff-necked will have no rest in his soul." Burk renders it still more faithfully: *ecce quae effert se, non recta est anima ejus in eo*. In either case we must supply *'asher* (OT:834) *nepesh* (OT:5315) after *`up<sup>a</sup>laah* (OT:6075). But such an ellipsis as this, in which not only the relative word, but also the noun supporting the relative clause, would be omitted, is unparalleled and inadmissible, if only because of the tautology which

[<- Previous](#) [First](#) [Next ->](#)

would arise from supplying *nephesh*. This also applies to the hypothetical view of *`up<sup>a</sup>laah* (OT:6075) *hineeh* (OT:2009), upon which the Septuagint rendering, *ea'n* (NT:1437) *hupostei'leetai* (NT:5288) *ouk* (NT:3756) *eudokei'* (NT:2106) *psuchee'* (NT:5590) *mou* (NT:3450) *en* (NT:1722) *autoo'* (NT:846), is founded.

Even with this view *nephesh* could not be omitted as the subject of the protasis, and *bow* (OT:871a) would have no noun to which to refer. This rendering is altogether nothing more than a conjecture, *`pl* being confounded with *`lp*, and *nap<sup>a</sup>show* (OT:5315) altered into *nap<sup>a</sup>shiy* (OT:5315). Nor is it proved to be correct, by the fact that the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews (Heb 10:38) makes use of the words of our verse, according to this rendering, to support his admonition is to steadfastness. For he does not introduce the verse as a quotation to prove his words, but simply clothes his own thoughts in these words of the Bible which floated before his mind, and in so doing transposes the two hemistichs, and thereby gives the words a meaning quite in accordance with the Scriptures, which can hardly be obtained from the Alexandrian version, since we have there to take the subject to *hupostei'leetai* (NT:5288) from the preceding *ercho'menos* (NT:2064), which gives no sense, whereas by transposing the clauses a very suitable subject can be supplied from *ho* (NT:3588) *di'kaios* (NT:1342).

The following clause, *wgw' w<sup>a</sup>tsadiyq* (OT:6662), is attached adversatively, and in form is subordinate to the sentence in the first hemistich in this sense, "whilst, on the contrary, the righteous lives through his faith," notwithstanding the fact that it contains a very important thought, which intimates indirectly that pride and want of uprightness will bring destruction upon the Chaldaean. *be'emuwnaatow* (OT:530) belongs to *yich<sup>a</sup>yeh* (OT:2421), not to *tsadiyq* (OT:6662). The *tiphchah* under the word does not show that it belongs to *tsaddiyq*, but simply that it has the leading tone of the sentence, because it is placed with emphasis before the verb (Delitzsch). *'emuwnaah* (OT:530) does not denote "an honourable character, or fidelity to conviction" (Hitzig), but (from *'âman*, to be firm, to last) firmness (Ex 17:12); then, as an attribute of God, trustworthiness, unchangeable fidelity in the fulfilment of His promises (Deut 32:4; Ps 33:4; 89:34); and, as a personal attribute of man, fidelity in

word and deed (Jer 7:28; 9:2; Ps 37:3); and, in his relation to God, firm attachment to God, an undisturbed confidence in the divine promises of grace, *firma fiducia* and *fides*, so that in '*emuunâh* the primary meanings of *ne'emân* and *he'emiin* are combined.

This is also apparent from the fact that Abraham is called *ne'emân* in Neh 9:8, with reference to the fact that it is affirmed of him in Gen 15:6 that *bayhaaowh he'emiyn*, "he trusted, or believed, the Lord;" and still more indisputably from the passage before us, since it is impossible to mistake the reference in *yich<sup>a</sup>yeh* (OT:2421) *be'emuwnaatow* (OT:530) *tsadiyq* (OT:6662) to Gen 15:6, "he believed ( *he'emiin* ) in Jehovah, and He reckoned it to him *litsedâqâh*." It is also indisputably evident from the context that our passage treats of the relation between man and God, since the words themselves speak of a waiting ( *chikkâh* ) for the fulfilment of a promising oracle, which is to be preceded by a period of severe suffering. "What is more natural than that life or deliverance from destruction should be promised to that faith which adheres faithfully to God, holds fast by the word of promise, and confidently waits for its fulfilment in the midst of tribulation? It is not the sincerity, trustworthiness, or integrity of the righteous man, regarded as being virtues in themselves, which are in danger of being shaken and giving way in such times of tribulation, but, as we may see in the case of the prophet himself, his *faith*. To this, therefore, there is appended the great promise expressed in the one word *yich<sup>a</sup>yeh* (OT:2421)" (Delitzsch).

And in addition to this, '*emuunâh* is opposed to the pride of the Chaldaean, to his exaltation of himself above God; and for that very reason it cannot denote integrity in itself, but simply some quality which has for its leading feature humble submission to God, that is to say, faith, or firm reliance upon God. The Jewish expositors, therefore, have unanimously retained this meaning here, and the LXX have rendered the word quite correctly *pi'stis* (NT:4102), although by changing the suffix, and giving *ek* (NT:1537) *pi'steoo's* (NT:4102) *mou* (NT:3450) instead of *autou'* (NT:846) (or more properly *heautou'* (NT:1438): Aquila and the other Greek versions), they have missed, or rather perverted, the sense. The deep meaning of these words has been first fully brought out by the Apostle Paul (Rom 1:17; Gal 3:11: see also Heb 10:38), who omits the erroneous *mou* (NT:3450) of the LXX, and makes the declaration *ho*

(NT:3588) *di'kaios* (NT:1342) *ek* (NT:1537) *pi'steoos* (NT:4102) *zee'setai*  
(NT:2198)

[<- Previous](#) [First](#) [Next ->](#)

the basis of the New Testament doctrine of justification by faith.

Verse 5. V. 5 is closely connected with v. 4a, not only developing still further the thought which is there expressed, but applying it to the Chaldaean. *kiy* (OT:3588) '*ap*' (OT:639) does not mean "really if" (Hitzig and others), even in Job 9:14; 35:14; Ezek 15:5, or 1 Sam 21:6 (see Delitzsch on Job 35:14), but always means "still further," or "yea also, that;" and different applications are given to it, so that, when used as an emphatic assurance, it signifies "to say nothing of the fact that," or when it gives emphasis to the thing itself, "all the more because," and in negative sentences "how much less" (e.g., 1 Kings 8:27). In the present instance it adds a new and important feature to what is stated in v. 4a, "And add to this that wine is treacherous;" i.e., to those who are addicted to it, it does not bring strength and life, but leads to the way to ruin (for the thought itself, see Prov 23:31-32).

The application to the Chaldaean is evident from the context. The fact that the Babylonians were very much addicted to wine is attested by ancient writers. Curtius, for example (v. 1), says, "*Babylonii maxime in vinum et quae ebrietatem sequuntur effusi sunt;*" and it is well known from Dan 5 that Babylon was conquered while Belshazzar and the great men of his kingdom were feasting at a riotous banquet. The following words *yaahiyr* (OT:3093) *geber* (OT:1397) are not the object to *bowgeed* (OT:898), but form a fresh sentence, parallel to the preceding one: a boasting man, he continueth not. *w<sup>o</sup>lo'* (OT:3808) introduces the apodosis to *yhyr gbr*, which is written absolutely. *yaahiyr* (OT:3093) only occurs again in Prov 21:24, and is used there as a parallel to *zeed* (OT:2086): *alazoo'n* (NT:213) (LXX), swaggering, boasting. The allusion to the Chaldaean is evident from the relative clause which follows, and which Delitzsch very properly calls an individualizing exegesis to *yhyr gbr*.

But looking to what follows, this sentence forms a protasis to v. 6, being written first in an absolute form, "He, the widely opened one, etc., upon him will all take up," etc. *Hirchiibh naphshoo*, to widen his soul, i.e., his desire, parallel to *pâ'ar peh*, to open the mouth (Isa 5:14), is a figure used to denote insatiable desire. *kish<sup>o</sup>owl* (OT:7585), like Hades, which swallows up every living thing (see Prov 27:20; 30:15-16). The

comparison to death has the same meaning. *yis<sup>a</sup>ba`* (OT:7646) *w<sup>a</sup>lo'* (OT:3808) does not refer to *maawet* (OT:4194), but to the Chaldaean, who grasps to himself in an insatiable manner, as in Hab 1:6-7, and 15-17. The *imperff. consec.* express the continued gathering up of the nations, which springs out of his insatiable desire.

## **Habakkuk 2:6-20**

*Shall not all these take up a parable against him, and a taunting proverb against him, and say, Woe to him that increaseth that which is not his! how long? and to him that ladeth himself with thick clay!*

In vv. 6-20 the destruction of the Chaldaean, which has been already intimated in vv. 4, 5, is announced in the form of a song composed of threatening sentences, which utters woes in five strophes consisting of three verses each: (1) upon the rapacity and plundering of the Chaldaean (vv. 6-8); (2) upon his attempt to establish his dynasty firmly by means of force and cunning (vv. 9-11); (3) upon his wicked ways of building (vv. 12-14); (4) upon his base treatment of the subjugated nations (vv. 15-17); and (5) upon his idolatry (vv. 18-20). These five strophes are connected together, so as to form two larger divisions, by a *refrain* which closes the first and fourth, as well as by the promise explanatory of the threat in which the third and fifth strophes terminate; of which two divisions the first threatens the judgment of retribution upon the insatiableness of the Chaldaean in three woes (v. 5b), and the second in two woes the judgment of retribution upon his pride. Throughout the whole of the threatening prophecy the Chaldaean nation is embraced, as in vv. 4, 5, in the ideal person of its ruler.

[<- Previous](#) [First](#) [Next ->](#)

(Note: The unity of the threatening prophecy, which is brought out in the clearest manner in this formal arrangement, has been torn in pieces in the most violent manner by Hitzig, through his assumption that the oracle of God includes no more than vv. 4-8, and that a second part is appended to it in vv. 9-20, in which the prophet expresses his own thoughts and feelings, first of all concerning king Jehoiakim (vv. 9-14), and then concerning the Egyptians (vv. 15-20). This hypothesis, of which Maurer observes quite correctly, *Qua nulla unquam excogitata est infelicio*, rests upon nothing more than the dogmatic assumption, that there is no such thing as prophecy effected by supernatural causality, and therefore Habakkuk cannot have spoken of Nebuchadnezzar's buildings before they were finished, or at any rate in progress. The two strophes in vv. 9-14 contain nothing whatever that would not apply most perfectly to the Chaldaean, or that is not covered by what precedes and follows (compare v. 9a with 6b and 8a, and v. 10 with 5b and 8a).

"The strophe in vv. 9-11 contains the same fundamental thought as that expressed by Isaiah in Isa 14:12-14 respecting the Chaldaean, viz., the description of his pride, which manifests itself in ambitious edifices founded upon the ruins of the prosperity of strangers" (Delitzsch). The resemblance between the contents of this strophe and the woe pronounced upon Jehoiakim by Jeremiah in Jer 12:13-17 may be very simply explained from the fact that Jehoiakim, like the Chaldaean, was a tyrant who occupied himself with the erection of large state buildings and fortifications, whereas the extermination of many nations does not apply in any respect to Jehoiakim. Lastly, there is no plausible ground whatever for referring the last two strophes (vv. 15-20) to the Egyptian, for the assertion that Habakkuk could not pass over the Egyptian in silence, unless he meant to confine himself to the Chaldaean, is a pure *petitio principii*; and to any unprejudiced mind the allusion to the Chaldaean in this verse is placed beyond all possible doubt by Isa 14:8, where the devastation of Lebanon is also attributed to him, just as it is in v. 17 of our prophecy.)

Verse 6-8. Introduction of the ode and first strophe. - V. 6. *"Will not all these lift up a proverb upon him, and a song, a riddle upon him? And men will say, Woe to him who increases what is not his own! For how long? and who loadeth himself with the burden of pledges. V. 7. Will not thy biters rise up suddenly, and thy destroyers wake up, and thou wilt become booty to them? V. 8. For thou hast plundered many nations, all the rest of the nations will plunder thee, for the blood of men and wickedness on the earth, the city, and all its inhabitants."* **halow'** (OT:3808) is here, as everywhere

else, equivalent to a confident assertion. "*All these:*" this evidently points back to "all nations" and "all people." Nevertheless the nations as such, or *in pleno* , are not meant, but simply the believers among them, who expect Jehovah to inflict judgment upon the Chaldaeans, and look forward to that judgment for the revelation of the glory of God. For the ode is prophetic in its nature, and is applicable to all times and all nations.

**Mâshâl** is a sententious poem, as in Mic 2:4 and Isa 14:4, not a derisive song, for this subordinate meaning could only be derived from the context, as in Isa 14:4 for example; and there is nothing to suggest it here. So, again, *meliitsâh* neither signifies a satirical song, nor an obscure enigmatical discourse, but, as Delitzsch has shown, from the first of the two primary meanings combined in the verb *luwts* (OT:3887), *lucere* and *lascivire* , a brilliant oration, *oratio splendida* , from which *meeliyts* (OT:3887) is used to denote an interpreter, so called, not from the obscurity of the speaking, but from his making the speech clear or intelligible. *low* (OT:3807a ) *chydowt* (OT:2420) is in apposition to *m<sup>a</sup>liytsaah* (OT:4426) and *maashaal* (OT:4912), adding the more precise definition, that the sayings contain enigmas relating to him (the Chaldaean). The enigmatical feature comes out more especially in the double meaning of *`ab<sup>a</sup>TiyT* (OT:5671) in v. 6b, *nosh<sup>a</sup>keykaa* (OT:5391) in v. 7a, and *qiyqaalown* (OT:7022) in v. 16b. *w<sup>a</sup>yo'mar* (OT:559) serves, like *lee'mor* (OT:559) elsewhere, as a direct introduction to the speech.

The first woe applies to the insatiable rapacity of the Chaldaean. *lo'-low hamar<sup>a</sup>beh* , who increases what does not belong to him, i.e., who seizes upon a large amount of the possessions of others. *`ad-maatay* , for how long, sc. will he be able to do this with impunity; not "how long has he already done this" (Hitzig), for the words do not

[<- Previous](#) [First](#) [Next ->](#)

express exultation at the termination of the oppression, but are a sign appended to the woe, over the apparently interminable plunderings on the part of the Chaldaean. *uwmak<sup>a</sup>biyd* (OT:3513) is also dependent upon *hooi*, since the defined participle which stands at the head of the cry of woe is generally followed by participles undefined, as though the former regulated the whole (cf. Isa 5:20 and 10:1). At the same time, it might be taken as a simple declaration in itself, though still standing under the influence of the *hooi*; in which case *huw'* (OT:1931) would have to be supplied in thought, like *w<sup>a</sup>chowTee'* (OT:2398) in v. 10.

And even in this instance the sentence is not subordinate to the preceding one, as Luther follows Rashi in assuming ("and still only heaps much slime upon himself"); but is co-ordinate, as the parallelism of the clauses and the meaning of *`ab<sup>a</sup>TiyT* (OT:5671) require. The *hap leg `ab<sup>a</sup>TiyT* (OT:5671) is probably chosen on account of the resemblance in sound to *mak<sup>a</sup>biyd* (OT:3513), whilst it also covers an enigma or *double entendre*. Being formed from *`aabaT* (OT:5670) (to give a pledge) by the repetition of the last radical, *`ab<sup>a</sup>TiyT* (OT:5671) signifies the mass of pledges (*pignorum captorum copia*: Ges., Maurer, Delitzsch), not the load of guilt, either in a literal or a tropico-moral sense. The quantity of foreign property which the Chaldaean has accumulated is represented as a heavy mass of pledges, which he has taken from the nations like an unmerciful usurer (Deut 24:10), to point to the fact that he will be compelled to disgorge them in due time. *hik<sup>a</sup>biyd* (OT:3513), to make heavy, i.e., to lay a heavy load upon a person.

The word *`ab<sup>a</sup>TiyT* (OT:5671), however, might form two words so far as the sound is concerned: *EiyT `ab*, cloud (i.e., mass) of dirt, which will cause his ruin as soon as it is discharged. This is the sense in which the Syriac has taken the word; and Jerome does the same, observing, *considera quam eleganter multiplicatas divitias densum appellaverit lutum*, no doubt according to a Jewish tradition, since Kimchi, Rashi, and Ab. Ezra take the word as a composite one, and merely differ as to the explanation of *`ab*. Grammatically considered, this explanation is indeed untenable, since the Hebrew language has formed no appellative *nomina composita*; but the word is nevertheless enigmatical,

because, when heard from the lips, it might be taken as two words, and understood in the sense indicated.

In v. 7 the threatening *hooi* is still further developed. Will not thy biters arise? *nosh<sup>a</sup>keykaa* (OT:5391) = '*otaak<sup>a</sup> nosh<sup>a</sup>kiym* , those who bite thee. In the description here given of the enemy as savage vipers (cf. Jer 8:17) there is also an enigmatical *double entendre* , which Delitzsch has admirably interpreted thus: " *hamar<sup>a</sup>beh* (OT:7235)," he says, "pointed to *tar<sup>a</sup>biyt* (OT:8636) (interest). The latter, favoured by the idea of the Chaldaean as an unmerciful usurer, which is concentrated in *ab<sup>a</sup>TiyT* (OT:5671), points to *neshek<sup>a</sup>* (OT:5392), which is frequently connected with *tar<sup>a</sup>biyt* (OT:8636), and signifies usurious interest; and this again to the striking epithet *nosh<sup>a</sup>kiym* , which is applied to those who have to inflict the divine retribution upon the Chaldaean. The prophet selected this to suggest the thought that there would come upon the Chaldaean those who would demand back with interest ( *neshek* ) the capital of which he had unrighteously taken possession, just as he had unmercifully taken the goods of the nations from them by usury and pawn." *yiq<sup>a</sup>tsuw* (OT:6974), from *yaaqats* (OT:3364), they will awake, viz., *m<sup>a</sup>za<sup>a</sup>z<sup>a</sup>ekaa* (OT:2111), those who shake or rouse thee up. *z`z`* , *pilel* of *zuwa`* (OT:2112), *sei'oo* (NT:4579), is used in Arabic of the wind (to shake the tree); hence, as in this case, it was employed to denote shaking up or scaring away from a possession, as is often done, for example, by a creditor (Hitzig, Delitzsch). *m<sup>a</sup>shicowt* (OT:4933) is an intensive plural.

So far as this threat applies to the Chaldaeans, it was executed by the Medes and Persians, who destroyed the Chaldaean empire. But the threat has a much more extensive application. This is evident, apart from other proofs, from v. 8 itself, according to which the whole of the remnant of the nations is to inflict the retribution. *Gooyim rabbiim* , "many nations:" this is not to be taken as an antithesis to *kol-haggooyim* (all nations) in v. 5b, since "all nations" are simply many nations, as *kol* is not to be taken in its absolute sense, but simply in a relative sense, as denoting all the nations that lie within the prophet's horizon, as having entered the arena of history. Through *y<sup>a</sup>shaaluwkaa* (OT:7997), which is placed at the head of the concluding clause without a copula, the antithesis to *shalowtaa* (OT:7997) is sharply brought out, and the idea of the righteous retaliation distinctly expressed. *`amiym*

[<- Previous](#) [First](#) [Next ->](#)

*kaal-yeter* , the whole remnant of the nations, is not all the rest, with the exception of the one Chaldaean, for *yether* always denotes the remnant which is left after the deduction of a portion; nor does it mean all the rest of the nations, who are spared and not subjugated, in distinction from the plundered and subjugated nations, as Hitzig with many others imagine, and in proof of which he adduces the fact that the overthrow of the Chaldaeans was effected by nations that had not been subdued.

But, as Delitzsch has correctly observed, this view makes the prophet contradict not only himself, but the whole of the prophetic view of the world-wide dominion of Nebuchadnezzar. According to v. 5b, the Chaldaean has grasped to himself the dominion over all nations, and consequently there cannot be any nations left that he has not plundered. Moreover, the Chaldaean, or Nebuchadnezzar as the head of the Chaldaean kingdom, appears in prophecy (Jer 27:7-8), as he does in history (Dan. 2:38; 3:31; 5:19 ) throughout, as the ruler of the world in the highest sense, who has subjugated all nations and kingdoms round about, and compelled them to serve him. These nations include the Medes and Elamites (= Persians), to whom the future conquest of Babylon is attributed in Isa 13:17; 21:2; Jer 51:11,28. They are both mentioned in Jer 25:25 among the nations, to whom the prophet is to reach the cup of wrath from the hand of Jehovah; and the kingdom of Elam especially is threatened in Jer 49:34ff. with the destruction of its power, and dispersion to all four winds.

In these two prophecies, indeed, Nebuchadnezzar is not expressly mentioned by name as the executor of the judgment of wrath; but in Jer 25 this may plainly be inferred from the context, partly from the fact that, according to v. 9, Judah with its inhabitants, and all nations round about, are to be given into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar, and partly from the fact that in the list of the nations enumerated in vv. 18-26a the king of Sesach (i.e., Babel) is mentioned as he who is to drink the cup "after them" (v. 26b). The expression '*achareehem* (after them) shows very clearly that the judgment upon the nations previously mentioned, and therefore also upon the kings of Elam and Media, is to occur while the Chaldaean rule continues, i.e., is to be executed by the Chaldaeans. This may, in fact, be inferred, so far as the prophecy respecting Elam in Jer 49:34ff. is concerned, from the circumstance that Jeremiah's

prophecies with regard to foreign nations in Jer 46-51 are merely expansions of the summary announcement in Hab 25:19-26 , and is also confirmed by Ezek 32:24, inasmuch as Elam is mentioned there immediately after Asshur in the list of kings and nations that have sunk to the lower regions before Egypt. And if even this prophecy has a much wider meaning, like that concerning Elam in Jer 49:34, and the elegy over Egypt, which Ezekiel strikes up, is expanded into a threatening prophecy concerning the heathen generally (see Kliefoth, *Ezech.* p. 303), this further reference presupposes the historical fulfilment which the threatening words of prophecy have received through the judgment inflicted by the Chaldaeans upon all the nations mentioned, and has in this its real foundation and soil.

History also harmonizes with this prophetic announcement. The arguments adduced by Hävernick ( *Daniel* , p. 547ff.) to prove that Nebuchadnezzar did not extend his conquests to Elam, and neither subdued this province nor Media, are not conclusive. The fact that after the fall of Nineveh the conquerors, Nabopolassar of Babylonia, and Cyaxares the king of Media, divided the fallen Assyrian kingdom between them, the former receiving the western provinces, and the latter the eastern, does not preclude the possibility of Nebuchadnezzar, the founder of the Chaldaean empire, having made war upon the Median kingdom, and brought it into subjection. There is no historical testimony, however, to the further assertion, that Nebuchadnezzar was only concerned to extend his kingdom towards the west, that his conquests were all of them in the lands situated there, and gave him so much to do that he could not possibly think of extending his eastern frontier.

It is true that the opposite of this cannot be inferred from Strabo, xvi. 1, 18;

(Note: This passage is quoted by Hitzig ( *Ezech.* p. 251) as a proof that Elam made war upon the Babylonians, and, indeed, judging from Jer 49:34, an unsuccessful war. But Strabo speaks of a war between the Elymaeans (Elamites) and the Babylonians and Susians, which M. v. Niebuhr (p. 210) very properly assigns to the period of the alliance between Media (as possessor of Susa) and Babylon.)

[<- Previous](#) [First](#) [Next ->](#)

but it may be inferred, as M. v. Niebuhr ( *Gesch. Assurs* , pp. 211-12) has said, from the fact that according to Jer 27 and 28, at the beginning of Zedekiah's reign, and therefore not very long after Nebuchadnezzar had conquered Jerusalem in the time of Jehoiachin, and restored order in southern Syria in the most energetic manner, the kings of Edom, Moab, Ammon, Tyre, and Zidon, entered into negotiations with Zedekiah for a joint expedition against Nebuchadnezzar. M. v.

Niebuhr infers from this that troublous times set in at that period for Nebuchadnezzar, and that this sudden change in the situation of affairs was connected with the death of Cyaxares, and leads to the conjecture that Nebuchadnezzar, who had sworn fealty to Cyaxares, refused at his death to do homage to his successor; for fidelity to a father-in-law, with whose help the kingdom was founded, would assume a very different character if it was renewed to his successor. Babel was too powerful to accept any such enfeoffment as this. And even if Nebuchadnezzar was not a vassal, there could not be a more suitable opportunity for war with Media than that afforded by a change of government, since kingdoms in the East are so easily shaken by the death of a great prince. And there certainly was no lack of inducement to enter upon a war with Media. Elam, for example, from its very situation, and on account of the restlessness of its inhabitants, must have been a constant apple of discord.

This combination acquires extreme probability, partly from the fact that Jeremiah's prophecy concerning Elam, in which that nation is threatened with the destruction of its power and dispersion to all four winds, was first uttered at the commencement of Zedekiah's reign (Jer 49:34), whereas the rest of his prophecies against foreign nations date from an earlier period, and that against Babel is the only one which falls later, namely, in the fourth year of Zedekiah (Jer 51:59), which appears to point to the fact that at the commencement of Zedekiah's reign things were brewing in Elam which might lead to his ruin. And it is favoured in part by the account in the book of Judith of a war between Nabuchodonosor (Nebuchadnezzar) and Media, which terminated victoriously according to the *Rec. vulg.* in the twelfth year of his reign, since this account is hardly altogether a fictitious one. These prophetic and historical testimonies may be regarded as quite sufficient, considering the universally scanty accounts of the

Chaldaeian monarchy given by the Greeks and Romans, to warrant us in assuming without hesitation, as M. v. Niebuhr has done, that between the ninth and twentieth years of Nebuchadnezzar's reign—namely, at the commencement of Zedekiah's reign—the former had to make war not only with Elam, but with Media also, and that it is to this eastern war that we should have to attribute the commotion in Syria.

From all this we may see that there is no necessity to explain "all the remnant of the nations" as relating to the remainder of the nations that had not been subjugated, but that we may understand it as signifying the remnant of the nations plundered and subjugated by the Chaldaeians (as is done by the LXX, Theodoret, Delitzsch, and others), which is the only explanation in harmony with the usage of the language. For in Josh 23:12 *yether haggooiyim* denotes the Canaanitish nations left after the war of extermination; and in Zech 14:2 *yether hâ'âm* signifies the remnant of the nation left after the previous conquest of the city, and the carrying away of half its inhabitants. In Zeph 2:9 *yether gooi* is synonymous with *'amiy* (OT:5971) *sh<sup>a</sup>eeriyt* (OT:7611), and our *'amiym* (OT:5971) *yeter* (OT:3499) is equivalent to *hagowiyim* (OT:1471) *sh<sup>a</sup>eeriyt* (OT:7611) in Ezek 36:3-4. *'aadaam* (OT:120) *mid<sup>a</sup>meey* (OT:1818): on account of the human blood unjustly shed, and on account of the wickedness on the earth (*chamas* with the gen. obj. as in Joel 4:19 and Obad 10). *'Erets* without an article is not the holy land, but the earth generally; and so the city (*qiryâh*, which is still dependent upon *chamas*) is not Jerusalem, nor any one particular city, but, with indefinite generality, "cities." The two clauses are parallel, cities and their inhabitants corresponding to men and the earth. The Chaldaeian is depicted as one who gathers men and nations in his net (Hab 1:14-17). And so in Jer 50:23 he is called a hammer of the whole earth, in 51:7 a cup of reeling, and in 51:25 the destroyer of the whole earth.

Verse 9-11. The second woe is pronounced upon the wickedness of the Chaldaeian, in establishing for himself a permanent settlement through godless gain. V. 9. *"Woe to him who getteth a godless gain for his house, to set his nest on high, to save himself from the hand of calamity.* V. 10. *Thou hast consulted shame to thy house,*

[<- Previous](#) [First](#) [Next ->](#)

*destruction of many nations, and involvest thy soul in guilt.* V. 11. *For the stone out of the wall will cry, and the spar out of the wood will answer it.*" To the Chaldaean's thirst for robbery and plunder there is attached quite simply the base avarice through which he seeks to procure strength and durability for his house. *betsa`* (OT:1215) *baatsa`* (OT:1215), to get gain, has in itself the subordinate idea of unrighteous gain or sinful covetousness, since *baatsa`* (OT:1215) denotes cutting or breaking something off from another's property, though here it is still further strengthened by the predicate *ra`* (OT:7451), evil (gain). *beeytow* (OT:1004) (his house) is not the palace, but the royal house of the Chaldaean, his dynasty, as v. 10 clearly shows, where *bayit* (OT:1004) evidently denotes the king's family, including the king himself.

How far he makes *betsa`* (OT:1215) for his family, is more precisely defined by *wgw' laasuwm* (OT:7760). *qinow* (OT:7064), his (the Chaldaean's) nest, is neither his capital nor his palace or royal castle; but the setting up of his nest on high is a figure denoting the founding of his government, and securing it against attacks. As the eagle builds its nest on high, to protect it from harm (cf. Job 39:27), so does the Chaldaean seek to elevate and strengthen his rule by robbery and plunder, that it may never be wrested from his family again. We might here think of the buildings erected by Nebuchadnezzar for the fortification of Babylon, and also of the building of the royal palace (see Berosus in *Hos. c. Ap. i. 19*). We must not limit the figurative expression to this, however, but must rather refer it to all that the Chaldaean did to establish his rule. This is called the setting on high of his nest, to characterize it as an emanation from his pride, and the lofty thoughts of his heart.

For the figure of the nest, see Num 24:21; Obad 4; Jer 49:16. His intention in doing this is to save himself from the hand of adversity. *raa`* (OT:7451) is not masculine, the evil man; but neuter, adversity, or "the hostile fate, which, so far as its ultimate cause is God (Isa 45:7), is inevitable and irreversible" (Delitzsch). In v. 10 the result of his heaping up of evil gain is announced: he has consulted shame to his house. *yaa`ats* (OT:3289), to form a resolution. His determination to establish his house, and make it firm and lofty by evil gain, will bring shame to his house, and instead of

honour and lasting glory, only shame and ruin. *q<sup>ts</sup>owt* (OT:7098), which has been variously rendered, cannot be the plural of the noun *qaatseh* (OT:7097), "the ends of many nations," since it is impossible to attach any intelligent meaning to this. It is rather the infinitive of the verb *qaatsaah* (OT:6973), the occurrence of which Hitzig can only dispute by an arbitrary alteration of the text in four different passages, and is equivalent to *qaatsats* (OT:7112), to cut off, hew off, which occurs in the *piel* in 2 Kings 10:32 and Prov 26:6, but in the *kal* only here.

The infinitive construct does not stand for the inf. abs., or for *liq<sup>ts</sup>owt*, *exscindendo*, but is used substantively, and is governed by *yaa`ats<sup>a</sup>taa* (OT:3289), which still retains its force from the previous clause. Thou hast consulted (resolved upon) the cutting off, or destruction, of many nations. *w<sup>a</sup>chowTee'* (OT:2398), and sinnest against thy soul thereby, i.e., bringest retribution upon thyself, throwest away thine own life. On the use of the participle in the sense of the second person without *'ataah* (OT:859), see at Hab 1:5. *chaaTaa'* (OT:2398), with the accusative of the person, as in Prov 20:2 and 8:36, instead of *b<sup>a</sup>nap<sup>a</sup>show* (OT:5315) *chaaTaa'* (OT:2398). The participle is used, because the reference is to a present, which will only be completed in the future (Hitzig and Delitzsch). The reason for this verdict, and also for the *hooi* which stands at the head of this strophe, follows in v.

11.

The stone out of the wall and the spar out of the woodwork will cry, sc. because of the wickedness which thou hast practised in connected with thy buildings (Hab 1:2), or for vengeance (Gen 4:10), because they have been stolen, or obtained from stolen property. The apparently proverbial expression of the crying of stones is applied in a different way in Luke 19:40. *qiy<sup>r</sup>* (OT:7023) does not mean the wall of a room here, but, as distinguished from *`eets* (OT:6086), the outside wall, and *`eets* (OT:6086), the woodwork or beams of the buildings. The *hap leg kaapiyc* (OT:3714), lit., that which binds, from *kpc* in the Syriac and Targum, to bind, is, according to Jerome, "the beam which is placed in the middle of any building to hold the walls together, and is generally called *hima'ntoosis* by the Greeks." The explanations given by Suidas is, *de'sis xu'loon emballome'noon en toi's oikodomee'sasi*, hence rafters or beams. *ya`anenaah* (OT:6030), will answer, sc. the stone, i.e., join in its crying (cf. Isa 34:14).

[<- Previous](#) [First](#) [Next ->](#)

Verse 12-14. The third woe refers to the building of cities with the blood and property of strangers. V. 12. "*Woe to him who buildeth cities with blood, and foundeth castles with injustice.* V. 14. *For the earth will be filled with knowledge of the glory of Jehovah, as the waters cover the sea.*" The earnest endeavour of the Chaldaean to found his dynasty in permanency through evil gain, manifested itself also in the building of cities with the blood and sweat of the subjugated nations. *`iyr* (OT:5892) and *qir<sup>a</sup>yaah* (OT:7151) are synonymous, and are used in the singular with indefinite generality, like *qir<sup>a</sup>yaah* (OT:7151) in v. 8. The preposition *b*, attached to *daamiym* (OT:1818) and *`aw<sup>a</sup>laah* (OT:5766), denotes the means employed to attain the end, as in Mic 3:10 and Jer 22:13. This was murder, bloodshed, transportation, and tyranny of every kind. *Kooneen* is not a participle with the *Mem* dropped, but a perfect; the address, which was opened with a participle, being continued in the finite tense (cf. Ewald, §350, *a* ).

With v. 13 the address takes a different turn from that which it has in the preceding woes. Whereas there the woe is always more fully expanded in the central verse by an exposition of the wrong, we have here a statement that it is of Jehovah, i.e., is ordered or inflicted by Him, that the nations weary themselves for the fire. The *w* before *yi<sup>g</sup>uw* (OT:3021) introduces the declaration of what it is that comes from Jehovah. *hineeh* (OT:2009) *halow'* (OT:3808) (is it not? behold!) are connected together, as in 2 Chron 25:26, to point to what follows as something great that was floating before the mind of the prophet. *'eesh* (OT:784) *b<sup>a</sup>deey* (OT:1767), literally, for the need of the fire (compare Nah 2:13 and Isa 40:16). They labour for the fire, i.e., that the fire may devour the cities that have been built with severe exertion, which exhausts the strength of the nations. So far they weary themselves for vanity, since the buildings are one day to fall into ruins, or be destroyed.

Jeremiah (Jer 51:58) has very suitably applied these words to the destruction of Babylon. This wearying of themselves for vanity is determined by Jehovah, for (v. 14) the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of Jehovah. That this may be the case, the kingdom of the world, which is hostile to the Lord and His glory, must be destroyed. This promise therefore involves a threat directed against the

Chaldaean. His usurped glory shall be destroyed, that the glory of Jehovah of Sabaoth, i.e., of the God of the universe, may fill the whole earth. The thought in v. 14 is formed after Isa 11:9, with trifling alterations, partly substantial, partly only formal. The choice of the *niphal timaalee'* (OT:4390) instead of the *maal<sup>a</sup>aah* (OT:4390) of Isaiah refers to the actual fact, and is induced in both passages by the different turn given to the thought. In Isaiah, for example, this thought closes the description of the glory and blessedness of the Messianic kingdom in its perfected state.

The earth is then full of the knowledge of the Lord, and the peace throughout all nature which has already been promised is one fruit of that knowledge. In Habakkuk, on the other hand, this knowledge is only secured through the overthrow of the kingdom of the world, and consequently only thereby will the earth be filled with it, and that not with the knowledge of Jehovah (as in Isaiah), but with the knowledge of His glory (*yy' k<sup>a</sup>bowd* (OT:3519)), which is manifested in the judgment and overthrow of all ungodly powers (Isa 2:12-21; 6:3, compared with the primary passage, Num 14:21). *yy' k<sup>a</sup>bowd* (OT:3519) is "the *do'xa* (NT:1391) of Jehovah, which includes His right of majesty over the whole earth" (Delitzsch). *`al-yaam y<sup>a</sup>kacuw* is altered in form, but not in sense, from the *m<sup>a</sup>kaciym* (OT:3680) *layaam* (OT:3220) of Isaiah; and *y<sup>a</sup>kacuw* (OT:3680) is to be taken relatively, since *k<sup>a</sup>* is only used as a preposition before a noun or participle, and not like a conjunction before a whole sentence (comp. Ewald, §360, *a*, with §337, *c*). *laada`at* (OT:3045) is an infinitive, not a noun, with the preposition *l*; for *maalee'* (OT:4392), *yimaalee'* (OT:4390) is construed with the *accus. rei*, lit., the earth will be filled with the acknowledging. The water of the sea is a figure denoting overflowing abundance.

Verse 15-17. The fourth woe is an exclamation uttered concerning the cruelty of the Chaldaean in the treatment of the conquered nations. V. 15. *"Woe to him that giveth his neighbour to drink, mixing thy burning wrath, and also making drunk, to look at their nakedness.* V. 16. *Thou hast satisfied thyself with shame instead of with honour; then drink thou also, and show the foreskin. The cup of Jehovah's right hand will turn to thee, and the vomiting of shame upon thy glory.* V. 17. *For the wickedness at Lebanon will cover thee, and*

[<- Previous](#) [First](#) [Next ->](#)

*the dispersion of the animals which frightened them; for the blood of the men and the wickedness on the earth, upon the city and all its inhabitants.*" The description in vv. 15 and 16 is figurative, and the figure is taken from ordinary life, where one man gives another drink, so as to intoxicate him, for the purpose of indulging his own wantonness at his expense, or taking delight in his shame.

This helps to explain the *ree`eehuw* (OT:7453) *mash<sup>a</sup>qeeh* (OT:4945), who gives his neighbour to drink. The singular is used with indefinite generality, or in a collective, or speaking more correctly, a distributive sense. The next two circumstantial clauses are subordinate to *mash<sup>a</sup>qeeh* (OT:4945) *howy* (OT:1945), defining more closely the mode of the drinking. *cipeeach* does not mean to pour in, after the Arabic *sfh* ; for this, which is another form for Arab. *sfk* , answers to the Hebrew *shaapak<sup>a</sup>* (OT:8210), to pour out (compare *chamaatow shaapak<sup>a</sup>* , to pour out, or empty out His wrath: Ps 79:6; Jer 10:25), but has merely the meaning to add or associate, with the sole exception of Job 14:19, where it is apparently used to answer to the Arabic *sfh* ; consequently here, where drink is spoken of, it means to mix wrath with the wine poured out. Through the suffix *chamaat<sup>a</sup>kaa* (OT:2573) the woe is addressed directly to the Chaldaean himself-a change from the third person to the second, which would be opposed to the genius of our language.

The thought is sharpened by *shakeer* (OT:7937) *w<sup>a</sup>ap* (OT:637), "and also (in addition) making drunk" ( *shakkeer* , inf. abs.). To look upon their nakednesses: the plural *m<sup>a</sup>owreeyhem* (OT:4589) is used because *ree`eehuw* (OT:7453) has a collective meaning. The prostrate condition of the drunken man is a figurative representation of the overthrow of a conquered nation (Nah 3:11), and the uncovering of the shame a figure denoting the ignominy that has fallen upon it (Nah 3:5; Isa 47:3). This allegory, in which the conquest and subjugation of the nations are represented as making them drink of the cup of wrath, does not refer to the open violence with which the Chaldaean enslaves the nations, but points to the artifices with which he overpowers them, "the cunning with which he entices them into his alliance, to put them to shame" (Delitzsch). But he has thereby simply prepared shame for himself, which will fall back upon him (v. 16).

The perfect *saaba`taa* (OT:7646) does not apply prophetically to the certain future; but, as in the earlier strophes (vv. 8 and 10) which are formed in a similar manner, to what the Chaldaean has done, to bring upon himself the punishment mentioned in what follows. The shame with which he has satisfied himself is the shamefulness of his conduct; and *saaba`* (OT:7646), to satisfy himself, is equivalent to revelling in shame. *mikaabowd* (OT:3519), far away from honour, i.e., and not in honour. *min* (OT:4480) is the negative, as in Ps 52:5, in the sense of *w`lo'* (OT:3808), with which it alternates in Hos 6:6. For this he is now also to drink the cup of wrath, so as to fall down intoxicated, and show himself as having a foreskin, i.e., as uncircumcised (*hee`aareel* (OT:6188) from *`aar`laah* (OT:6190)). This goblet Jehovah will hand to him. *Tissoobh*, he will turn. *`al* (OT:5921) (upon thee, or to thee).

This is said, because the cup which the Chaldaean had reached to other nations was also handed over to him by Jehovah. The nations have hitherto been obliged to drink it out of the hand of the Chaldaean. Now it is his turn, and he must drink it out of the hand of Jehovah (see Jer 25:26). *w`qiyqaalown* (OT:7022), and shameful vomiting, (sc., *yih`yeh* (OT:1961)) will be over thine honour, i.e., will cover over thine honour or glory, i.e., will destroy thee. The *hap* (NT:537) *leg* (NT:3004) *qiyqaalown* (OT:7022) is formed from the *pilpal qlql* from *qll*, and softened down from *qil`qaalown*, and signifies extreme or the greatest contempt. This form of the word, however, is chosen for the sake of the play upon *qaalown* (OT:7036) *qiy'* (OT:6892), vomiting of shame, *vomitus ignominiae* (Vulg.; cf. *tso'aah* (OT:6675) *qiy'* (OT:6892) in Isa 28:8), and in order that, when the word was heard, it should call up the subordinate meaning, which suggests itself the more naturally, because excessive drinking is followed by vomiting (cf. Jer 25:26-27).

This threat is explained in v. 17, in the statement that the wickedness practised by the Chaldaean on Lebanon and its beasts will cover or fall back upon itself. Lebanon with its beasts is taken by most commentators allegorically, as a figurative representation of the holy land and its inhabitants. But although it may be pleaded, in support of this view, that Lebanon, and indeed the summit of its cedar forest, is used in Jer 22:6 as a

## symbol of the royal family

[<- Previous](#) [First](#) [Next ->](#)

of Judaea, and in Jer 22:23 as a figure denoting Jerusalem, and that in Isa 37:24, and probably also in Zech 11:1, the mountains of Lebanon, as the northern frontier of the Israelitish land, are mentioned synecdochically for the land itself, and the hewing of its cedars and cypresses may be a figurative representation of the devastation of the land and its inhabitants; these passages do not, for all that, furnish any conclusive evidence of the correctness of this view, inasmuch as in Isa 10:33-34, Lebanon with its forest is also a figure employed to denote the grand Assyrian army and its leaders, and in Isa 60:13 is a symbol of the great men of the earth generally; whilst in the verse before us, the allusion to the Israelitish land and nation is neither indicated, nor even favoured, by the context of the words.

Apart, for example, from the fact that such a thought as this, "the wickedness committed upon the holy land will cover thee, because of the wickedness committed upon the earth," not only appears lame, but would be very difficult to sustain on biblical grounds, inasmuch as the wickedness committed upon the earth and its inhabitants would be declared to be a greater crime than that committed upon the land and people of the Lord; this view does not answer to the train of thought in the whole of the ode, since the previous strophes do not contain any special allusion to the devastation of the holy land, or the subjugation and ill-treatment of the holy people, but simply to the plundering of many nations, and the gain forced out of their sweat and blood, as being the great crime of the Chaldaean (cf. vv. 8, 10, 13), for which he would be visited with retribution and destruction. Consequently we must take the words literally, as referring to the wickedness practised by the Chaldaean upon nature and the animal world, as the glorious creation of God, represented by the cedars and cypresses of Lebanon, and the animals living in the forests upon those mountains.

Not satisfied with robbing men and nations, and with oppressing and ill-treating them, the Chaldaean committed wickedness upon the cedars and cypresses also, and the wild animals of Lebanon, cutting down the wood either for military purposes or for state buildings, so that the wild animals were unsparingly exterminated. There is a parallel to this in Isa 14:8, where the cypresses and cedars of Lebanon rejoice at the fall of the Chaldaean, because they will be no more hewn down. *Shood beheemoth* ,

devastation upon (among) the animals (with the *gen. obj.* , as in Isa 22:4 and Ps 12:6). *y<sup>a</sup>chiytan* (OT:2865) is a relative clause, and the subject, *shood* , the devastation which terrified the animals. The form *y<sup>a</sup>chiytan* (OT:2865) for *y<sup>a</sup>chiteen* , from *yaacheet* , *hiphil* of *chaatat* , is anomalous, the syllable with *dagesh* being resolved into an extended one, like *hatim<sup>a</sup>kaa* for *hatim<sup>a</sup>kaa* in Isa 33:1; and the *tsere* of the final syllable is exchanged for *pathach* because of the pause, as, for example, in *hit<sup>a</sup>alam* in Ps 55:2 (see Olshausen, *Gramm.* p. 576). There is no necessity to alter it into *y<sup>a</sup>chiytekaa* (Ewald and Olshausen after the LXX, Syr., and Vulg.), and it only weakens the idea of the *talio*. The second hemistich is repeated as a refrain from v. 8b.

Verse 18-20. Fifth and last strophe. - V. 18. "*What profiteth the graven image, that the maker thereof hath carved it; the molten image and the teacher of lies, that the maker of his image trusteth in him to make dumb idols?*" V. 19. "*Woe to him that saith to the wood, Wake up; Awake, to the hard stone. Should it teach? Behold, it is encased in gold and silver, and there is nothing of breath in its inside.*" V. 20. "*But Jehovah is in His holy temple: let all the world be silent before Him.*" This concluding strophe does not commence, like the preceding ones, with *hooi* , but with the thought which prepares the way for the *woe* , and is attached to what goes before to strengthen the threat, all hope of help being cut off from the Chaldaean. Like all the rest of the heathen, the Chaldaean also trusted in the power of his gods. This confidence the prophet overthrows in v. 18: "What use is it?" equivalent to "The idol is of no use" (cf. Jer 2:11; Isa 44:9-10).

The force of this question still continues in *masseekhâh*: "Of what use is the molten image?" *Pesel* is an image carved out of wood or stone; *masseekhâh* an image cast in metal. *how<sup>i</sup>yl* (OT:3276) is the perfect, expressing a truth founded upon experience, as a fact: What profit has it ever brought? *Mooreh sheqer* (the teacher of lies) is not the priest or prophet of the idols, after the analogy of Mic 3:11 and Isa 9:14; for that would not suit the following explanatory clause, in which *aalaayw* (OT:5921) (in him) points back to *mooreh sheqer*: "that the maker of idols trusteth in him (the teacher of lies)." Consequently the *mooreh sheqer* must be the idol itself; and it is so designated in contrast with the true God, the teacher in the highest sense (cf. Job

## 36:22). The idol is a teacher

[<- Previous](#) [First](#) [Next ->](#)

of lying, inasmuch as it sustains the delusion, partly by itself and partly through its priests, that it is God, and can do what men expect from God; whereas it is nothing more than a dumb nonentity ( *'eliil 'illeem*: compare *ei'doola* (NT:1497) *a'foona* (NT:880), 1 Cor 12:2).

Therefore woe be to him who expects help from such lifeless wood or image of stone. *'eets* (OT:6086) is the block of wood shaped into an idol. *Hâqiitsâh*, awake! sc. to my help, as men pray to the living God (Ps 35:23; 44:24; 59:6; Isa 51:9). *yowreh* (OT:3138) *huw'* (OT:1931) is a question of astonishment at such a delusion. This is required by the following sentence: it is even encased in gold. *Tâphas*: generally to grasp; here to set in gold, to encase in gold plate ( *zâhâbh* is an accusative). *'eeyn* (OT:369) *kol* (OT:3605): there is not at all. *ruwach* (OT:7307), breath, the spirit of life (cf. Jer 10:14). Vv. 18 and 19 contain a concise summary of the reproaches heaped upon idolatry in Isa 44:9-20; but they are formed quite independently, without any evident allusions to that passage. In v. 20 the contrast is drawn between the dumb lifeless idols and the living God, who is enthroned in His holy temple, i.e., not the earthly temple at Jerusalem, but the heavenly temple, or the temple as the throne of the divine glory (Isa 66:1), as in Mic 1:2, whence God will appear to judge the world, and to manifest His holiness upon the earth, by the destruction of the earthly powers that rise up against Him. This thought is implied in the words, "He is in His holy temple," inasmuch as the holy temple is the palace in which He is enthroned as Lord and Ruler of the whole world, and from which He observes the conduct of men (Ps 11:4).

Therefore the whole earth, i.e., all the population of the earth, is to be still before Him, i.e., to submit silently to Him, and wait for His judgment. Compare Zeph 1:7 and Zech. 2:17, where the same command is borrowed from this passage, and referred to the expectation of judgment. *chac* is hardly an *imper. apoc.* of *haacaah* (OT:2013), but an interjection, from which the verb *hâsâh* is formed. But if the whole earth must keep silence when He appears as Judge, it is all over with the Chaldaean also, with all his glory and might.

# PRAYER FOR COMPASSION IN THE MIDST OF THE JUDGMENT CH. 3

In this chapter, which is called a prayer in the heading, the prophet expresses the feelings which the divine revelation of judgment described in ch. 1 and 2 had excited in his mind, and ought to excite in the congregation of believers, so that this supplicatory psalm may be called an echo of the two answers which the prophet had received from the Lord to his complaints in Hab 1:2-4 and 12-17 (vid., ch. 1:5-11 and 2:2-20). Deeply agitated as he was by the revelation he had received concerning the terrible judgment, which the Lord would execute first of all upon Judah, through the wild and cruel Chaldaean nation, and then upon the Chaldaean himself, because he deified his own power, the prophet prays to the Lord that He will carry out this work of His "within years," and in the revelation of His wrath still show mercy (v. 2). He then proceeds in vv. 3-15 to depict in a majestic theophany the coming of the Lord to judge the world, and bring salvation to His people and His anointed; and secondly, in vv. 16-19, to describe the fruit of faith which this divine manifestation produces, namely, first of all fear and trembling at the day of tribulation (vv. 16, 17), and afterwards joy and rejoicing in the God of salvation (vv. 18 and 19). Consequently we may regard v. 2 as the theme of the psalm, which is distributed thus between the two parts. In the first part (vv. 3-15) we have the prayer for the accomplishment of the work (v. 2a) announced by God in Hab 1:5, expressed in the form of a prophetic-lyric description of the coming of the Lord to judgment; and in the second part (vv. 16-19), the prayer in wrath to remember mercy (v. 2b), expanded still more fully in the form of a description of the feelings and state of mind excited by that prayer in the hearts of the believing church.

## Habakkuk 3:1

*A prayer of Habakkuk the prophet upon Shigionoth.*

[<- Previous](#) [First](#) [Next ->](#)

## *A prayer of Habakkuk the prophet upon Shigionoth.*

Verse 1. The song has a special heading, after the fashion of the psalms, in which the contents, the author, and the poetical character of the ode are indicated. The contents are called *tephillâh*, a prayer, like Ps 17; 86; 90; 102, and 142, not merely with reference to the fact that it commences with a prayer to God, but because that prayer announces the contents of the ode after the manner of a theme, and the whole of the ode is simply the lyrical unfolding of that prayer. In order, however, to point at the same time to the prophetic character of the prayer, that it may not be regarded as a lyrical effusion of the subjective emotions, wishes, and hopes of a member of the congregation, but may be recognised as a production of the prophets, enlightened by the Spirit of Jehovah, the name of the author is given with the predicate "the prophet;" and to this there is added *shig<sup>a</sup>yonowt* (OT:7692) *'al* (OT:5921), to indicate the poetico-subjective character, through which it is distinguished from prophecy in the narrower sense.

The expression "upon Shigionoth" cannot refer to the contents or the object of the ode; for although *shiggâyoon*, according to its etymon *shâgâh* = *shâgag*, to transgress by mistake, to sin, might have the meaning transgression in a moral sense, and consequently might be referred to the sins of transgressors, either of the Judaeans or the Chaldaeans, such an assumption is opposed both to the use of *shiggâyoon* in the heading to Ps 7, and also to the analogy between *'al shigyonooth*, and such headings to the psalms as *'al haggittiith*, *'al negiinooth*, and other words introduced with *'al*. Whilst *shiggâyoon* in Ps 7:1 indicates the style of poetry in which the psalm is composed, all the notices in the headings to the psalms that are introduced with *'al* refer either to the melody or style in which the psalms are to be sung, or to the musical accompaniment with which they are to be introduced into the worship of God. This musico-liturgical signification is to be retained here also, since it is evident from the subscription in v. 19, and the repetition of *Selah* three times (vv. 3, 9, 13), that our hymn was to be used with musical accompaniment. Now, as *shâgâh*, to err, then to reel to and fro, is applied to the giddiness both of intoxication and of love (Isa 28:7; Prov 20:1; 5:20), *shiggâyoon* signifies reeling, and in the terminology of poetry

a reeling song, i.e., a song delivered in the greatest excitement, or with a rapid change of emotion, *dithyrambus* (see Clauss on Ps 7:1; Ewald, Delitzsch, and others); hence *shig<sup>a</sup>yonowt* (OT:7692) *`al* (OT:5921), after dithyrambs, or "after the manner of a stormy, martial, and triumphal ode" (Schmieder).

### **Habakkuk 3:2**

***O LORD, I have heard thy speech, and was afraid: O LORD, revive thy work in the midst of the years, in the midst of the years make known; in wrath remember mercy.***

**"Jehovah, I have heard Thy tidings, am alarmed. Jehovah, Thy work, in the midst of the years call it to life, in the midst of the years make it known; in wrath remember mercy."** *shim<sup>a</sup>akaa* (OT:8088) is the tidings (*akoe'* (NT:189)) of God; what the prophet has heard of God, i.e., the tidings of the judgment which God is about to inflict upon Judah through the Chaldaeans, and after that upon the Chaldaeans themselves. The prophet is alarmed at this. The word *yaaree'tiy* (OT:3372) (I am alarmed) does not compel us to take what is heard as referring merely to the judgment to be inflicted upon Judah by the Chaldaeans. Even in the overthrow of the mighty Chaldaean, or of the empire of the world, the omnipotence of Jehovah is displayed in so terrible a manner, that this judgment not only inspires with joy at the destruction of the foe, but fills with alarm at the omnipotence of the Judge of the world.

The prayer which follows, "Call Thy work to life," also refers to this twofold judgment which God revealed to the prophet in ch. 1 and 2. *paa`al<sup>a</sup>kaa* (OT:6467), placed absolutely at the head for the sake of emphasis, points back

[<- Previous](#) [First](#) [Next ->](#)

to the work ( *poo'al* ) which God was about to do (Hab 1:5); but this work of God is not limited to the raising up of the Chaldaean nation, but includes the judgment which will fall upon the Chaldaean after he has offended (Hab 1:11). This assumption is not at variance even with *chayeeyhuw* (OT:2421). For the opinion that *chiyaah* (OT:2421) never means to call a non-existent thing to life, but always signifies either to give life to an inorganic object (Job 33:4), or to keep a living thing alive, or (and this most frequently) to restore a dead thing to life, and that here the word must be taken in the sense of restoring to life, because in the description which follows Habakkuk looks back to Ps 77 and the *poo'al* depicted there, viz., the deliverance out of Egyptian bondage, is not correct. *chiyaah* (OT:2421) does not merely mean to restore to life and keep alive, but also to give life and call to life.

In Job 33:4, where *t<sup>a</sup>chayeeniy* (OT:2421) is parallel to *`aasat<sup>a</sup>niy* , the reference is not to the impartation of life to an inorganic object, but to the giving of life in the sense of creating; and so also in Gen 7:3 and 19:32, *zera`* (OT:2233) *chiyaah* (OT:2421) means to call seed to life, or raise it up, i.e., to call a non-existent thing to life. Moreover, the resemblances in the theophany depicted in what follows to Ps 77 do not require the assumption that Habakkuk is praying for the renewal of the former acts of God for the redemption of His people, but may be fully explained on the ground that the saving acts of God on behalf of His people are essentially the same in all ages, and that the prophets generally were accustomed to describe the divine revelations of the future under the form of imagery drawn from the acts of God in the past. There is special emphasis in the use of *shaaniym* (OT:8141) *b<sup>a</sup>qereb* (OT:7130) twice, and the fact that in both instances it stands at the head.

It has been interpreted in very different ways; but there is an evident allusion to the divine answer in Hab 2:3, that the oracle is for an appointed time, etc. "In the midst of the years," or within years, cannot of course mean by itself "within a certain number, or a small number, of years," or "within a brief space of time" (Ges., Ros., and Maurer); nevertheless this explanation is founded upon a correct idea of the meaning. When the prophet directs his eye to the still remote object of the oracle (ch. 2), the fulfilment of which was to be delayed, but yet assuredly to come at last (Hab 2:3), the

interval between the present time and the *moo'eed* appointed by God (Hab 2:3) appears to him as a long series of years, at the end only of which the judgment is to come upon the oppressors of His people, namely the Chaldaeans. He therefore prays that the Lord will not delay too long the work which He designs to do, or cause it to come to life only at the end of the appointed interval, but will bring it to life within years, i.e., within the years, which would pass by if the fulfilment were delayed, before that *moo'eed* arrived.

Grammatically considered, *qerebh shâniim* cannot be the centre of the years of the world, the boundary-line between the Old and New Testament aeons, as Bengel supposes, who takes it at the same time, according to this explanation, as the starting-point for a chronological calculation of the whole course of the world. Moreover, it may also be justly argued, in opposition to this view and application of the words, that it cannot be presupposed that the prophets had so clear a consciousness as this, embracing all history by its calculus; and still less can be expect to find in a lyrical ode, which is the outpouring of the heart of the congregation, a revelation of what God Himself had not revealed to him according to Hab 2:3. Nevertheless the view which lies at the foundation of this application of our passage, viz., that the work of God, for the manifestation of which the prophet is praying, falls in the centre of the years of the world, has this deep truth, that it exhibits the overthrow not only of the imperial power of Chaldea, but that of the world-power generally, and the deliverance of the nation from its power, and forms the turning-point, with which the old aeon closes and the new epoch of the world commences, with the completion of which the whole of the earthly development of the universe will reach its close.

The repetition of *shaaniym* (OT:8141) *b<sup>a</sup>qereb* (OT:7130) is expressive of the earnest longing with which the congregation of the Lord looks for the tribulation to end. The object to *towdiya`* (OT:3045), which is to be taken in an optative sense, answering to the imperative in the parallel clause, may easily be supplied from the previous clause. To the prayer for the shortening of the period of suffering there is appended, without the copula *Vav*, the further prayer, in wrath to remember mercy. The wrath (*roogez*, like *râgaz* in Isa 28:21 and Prov 29:9) in which God is to remember mercy, namely for His people Israel, can only be wrath over Israel, not merely the wrath manifested

in the chastisement of Judah through the Chaldaeans, but also the wrath displayed in the overthrow of the Chaldaeans. In the former case God would show mercy by softening the cruelty of the Chaldaeans; in the

[<- Previous](#) [First](#) [Next ->](#)

latter, by accelerating their overthrow, and putting a speedy end to their tyranny. This prayer is followed in vv. 3-15 by a description of the work of God which is to be called to life, in which the prophet expresses confidence that his petition will be granted.

### **Habakkuk 3:3-15**

*God came from Teman, and the Holy One from mount Paran. Selah. His glory covered the heavens, and the earth was full of his praise.*

**Coming of the Lord to judge the nations and to redeem His people.** The description of this theophany rests throughout upon earlier lyrical descriptions of the revelations of God in the earlier times of Israel. Even the introduction (v. 3) has its roots in the song of Moses in Deut 33:2; and in the further course of the ode we meet with various echoes of different psalms (compare v. 6 with Ps 18:8; v. 8 with Ps 18:10; v. 19 with Ps 18:33-34; also v. 5 with Ps 68:25; v. 8 with Ps 68:5,34). The points of contact in vv. 10-15 with Ps. 77:17-21, are still more marked, and are of such a kind that Habakkuk evidently had the psalm in his mind, and not the writer of the psalm the hymn of the prophet, and that the prophet has reproduced in an original manner such features of the psalm as were adapted to his purpose. This is not only generally favoured by the fact that Habakkuk's prayer is composed throughout after the poetry of the Psalms, but still more decidedly by the circumstance that Habakkuk depicts a coming redemption under figures borrowed from that of the past, to which the singer of this psalm looks back from his own mournful times, comforting himself with the picture of the miraculous deliverance of his people out of Egypt (see Hengstenberg and Delitzsch on Ps 77). For it is very evident that Habakkuk does not describe the mighty acts of the Lord in the olden time, in order to assign a motive for his prayer for the deliverance of Israel out of the affliction of exile which awaits it in the future, as many of the earlier commentators supposed, but that he is predicting a future appearance of the Lord to judge the nations, from the simple fact that he places the future *yaabow'* (OT:935) (v. 3) at the head of the whole description, so as to determine all that follows; whilst it is placed beyond the reach of doubt by the

impossibility of interpreting the theophany historically, i.e., as relating to an earlier manifestation of God.

Verse 3. **"Eloah comes from Teman, and the Holy One from the mountains of Paran. Selah. His splendour covers the sky, and the earth is full of His glory. V. 4. And brightness appears like sunlight, rays are at His hand, and there His power is concealed. V. 5. Before Him goes the plague, and pestilence follows His feet."** As the Lord God once came down to His people at Sinai, when they had been redeemed out of Egypt, to establish the covenant of His grace with them, and make them into a kingdom of God, so will He appear in the time to come in the terrible glory of His omnipotence, to liberate them from the bondage of the power of the world, and dash to pieces the wicked who seek to destroy the poor. The introduction to this description is closely connected with Deut 33:2. As Moses depicts the appearance of the Lord at Sinai as a light shining from Seir and Paran, so does Habakkuk also make the Holy One appear thence in His glory; but apart from other differences, he changes the preterite *baa'* (OT:935) (Jehovah came from Sinai) into the future *yaabow'* (OT:935), He will come, or comes, to indicate at the very outset that he is about to describe not a past, but a future revelation of the glory of the Lord. This he sees in the form of a theophany, which is fulfilled before his mental eye; hence *yaabow'* (OT:935) does not describe what is future, as being absolutely so, but is something progressively unfolding itself from the present onwards, which we should express by the present tense.

The coming one is called *Eloah* (not *Jehovah*, as in Deut 33:2, and the imitation in Judg 5:4), a form of the name *Elohim* which only occurs in poetry in the earlier Hebrew writings, which we find for the first time in Deut 32:15, where it is used of God as the Creator of Israel, and which is also used here to designate God as the Lord and Governor of the whole world. *Eloah*, however, comes as the Holy One (*qâdoosh*), who cannot tolerate sin (Hab

[<- Previous](#) [First](#) [Next ->](#)

1:13), and who will judge the world and destroy the sinners (vv. 12-14). As *Eloah* and *Qâdoosh* are names of one God; so "from Teman" and "from the mountain of Paran" are expressions denoting, not two starting-points, but simply two localities of one single starting-point for His appearance, like Seir and the mountains of Paran in Deut 33:2. Instead of *Seir*, the poetical name of the mountainous country of the Edomites, *Teman*, the southern district of Edomitish land, is used *per synecdochen* for Idumaea generally, as in Obad 9 and Amos 1:12 (see p. 168).

The mountains of *Paran* are not the Et-Tih mountains, which bounded the desert of Paran towards the south, but the high mountain-land which formed the eastern half of that desert, and the northern portion of which is now called, after its present inhabitants, the mountains of the *Azazimeh* (see comm. on Num 10:12). The two localities lie opposite to one another, and are only separated by the Arabah (or deep valley of the Ghor). We are not to understand the naming of these two, however, as suggesting the idea that God was coming from the Arabah, but, according to the original passage in Deut 33:2, as indicating that the splendour of the divine appearance spread over Teman and the mountains of Paran, so that the rays were reflected from the two mountainous regions. The word *Selâh* does not form part of the subject-matter of the text, but shows that the music strikes in here when the song is used in the temple, taking up the lofty thought that God is *coming*, and carrying it out in a manner befitting the majestic appearance, in the prospect of the speedy help of the Lord. The word probably signified *elevatio*, from *sâlâh* = *sâlal*, and was intended to indicate the strengthening of the musical accompaniment, by the introduction, as is supposed, of a blast from the trumpets blown by the priests, corresponding therefore to the musical *forte*. (For further remarks, see Hävernicks *Introduction to the Old Testament*, iii. p. 120ff., and Delitzsch on Ps 3.) In v. 3b the glory of the coming of God is depicted with reference to its extent, and in v. 4 with reference to its intensive power.

The whole creation is covered with its splendour. Heaven and earth reflect the glory of the coming one. *howdow* (OT:1935), His splendour or majesty, spreads over the whole heaven, and His glory over the earth. *Tehillâh* does not mean the praise of the

earth, i.e., of its inhabitants, where (Chald., Ab. Ezr., Ros., and others); for there is no allusion to the manner in which the coming of God is received, and according to v. 6 it fills the earth with trembling; but it denotes the object of the praise or fame, the glory, *hee* (NT:3588) *do'xa* (NT:1391), like *hâdâr* in Job 40:10, or *kâbhood* in Isa 6:3; 42:8, and Num 14:21. Grammatically considered, *t'hilaatow* (OT:8416) is the accusative governed by *maal<sup>a</sup>'aah* (OT:4390), and *haa'aarets* (OT:776) is the subject.

Verse 4-5. A splendour shines or arises like the light. *tih<sup>a</sup>yeh* (OT:1961) does not point back to *t'hilaatow* (OT:8416), "splendour like the sun will His glory be" (Hitzig); but it is the predicate to *noogah* in the sense of to become, or to arise. *haa'owr* (OT:216) is the light of the sun. Like this light, or like the rising sun, when the Lord comes, there arises (spreads) a brilliant light, from which the rays emanate on its two sides. *qar<sup>a</sup>nayim* (OT:7161), according to *qaaran* (OT:7160) in Ex 34:29-30, is to be taken in the sense of rays; and this meaning has developed itself from a comparison of the first rays of the rising sun, which shoot out above the horizon, to the horns or antlers of the gazelle, which is met with in the Arabian poets. *miyaadow* (OT:3027), from His hand, i.e., since the hand is by the side, "at His side" (after the analogy of *miymiynow* (OT:3225) and *mis<sup>a</sup>mo'low* (OT:8040)), and indeed "His hand" in a general sense, as signifying the hand generally, and not one single hand, equivalent therefore to "on both sides" (Delitzsch).

As the disc of the sun is surrounded by a splendid radiance, so the coming of God is enclosed by rays on both sides. *low* (OT:3807a) refers to God. "Such a radiant splendour (*qar<sup>a</sup>nayim* (OT:7161)) surrounding God is presupposed when it is affirmed of Moses, that on coming from the presence of Jehovah his face was radiant, or emitted rays" (*qaaran* (OT:7160), Ex 34:29-30). This interpretation of the words is established beyond all doubt, not only by the *miymiynow* (OT:3225) of the original passage in Deut 33:2, but also by the expressions which follow in v. 5, viz., *l<sup>a</sup>paanaayw* (OT:6440) (before him) and *l<sup>a</sup>rag<sup>a</sup>laayw* (OT:7272) (behind him); and consequently the interpretation "rays (emanating) from His hand are to Him," with the idea that we are to think of flashes of lightning darting out of God's hand (Schnur., Ros., Hitzig, Maurer, etc.), is proved to be untenable. According to Hebrew

notions, flashes of lightning do not proceed from the hand of God (in Ps 18:9, which has

[<- Previous](#) [First](#) [Next ->](#)

been appealed to in support of this explanation, we have *mimenuw* (OT:4480)); and *qar<sup>a</sup>nayim* (OT:7161) does not occur either in Arabic or the later Hebrew in the sense of flashes of lightning, but only in the sense of the sun's rays. *`uzoh* (OT:5797) *cheb<sup>a</sup>yown* (OT:2253) *w<sup>a</sup>shaam* (OT:8033), and there-namely, in the sun-like splendour, with the rays emanating from it-is the hiding of His omnipotence, i.e., the place where His omnipotence hides itself; in actual fact, the splendour forms the covering of the Almighty God at His coming, the manifestation of the essentially invisible God. The cloudy darkness is generally represented as the covering of the glory of God (Ex 20:21; 1 Kings 8:12), not merely when His coming is depicted under the earthly substratum of a storm (Ps 18:12-13), but also when God was manifested in the pillar of cloud and fire (Ex 13:21) on the journey of the Israelites through the desert, where it was only by night that the cloud had the appearance of fire (Num 9:15-16).

Here, on the contrary, the idea of the splendour of the rising sun predominates, according to which light is the garment in which God clothes Himself (Ps 104:2, cf. 1 Tim 6:16), answering to His coming as the Holy One (v. 3). For the sun-light, in its self-illuminating splendour, is the most suitable earthly element to serve as a symbol of the spotless purity of the Holy One, in whom there is no variation of light and darkness (James 1:17; see at Ex 19:6). The alteration of *w<sup>a</sup>shaam* (OT:8033) into *w<sup>a</sup>saam* (OT:7760) (he provides or contrives the concealment of His power), which Hitzig proposes after the LXX (Aq., Symm., and Syr.), must be rejected, inasmuch as in that case the object, which he makes into the covering (cf. Ps 18:12), could not be omitted; and this thought is by no means suitable here, and has merely been brought into the text on the assumption that God appears in a storm. As the Holy One, God comes to judgment upon the unholy world (v. 5). Before Him goes *debher*, plague, and after His feet, i.e., behind Him, *resheph*, lit., burning heat, or a blaze (Song of Sol. 8:6), here the burning heat of the pestilence, fever-heat, as in Deut 32:24. Plague and pestilence, as proceeding from God, are personified and represented as satellites; the former going before Him, as it were, as a shield-bearer (1 Sam 17:7), or courier (2 Sam 15:1); the latter coming after Him as a servant (1 Sam 25:42). This verse prepares the way for the description, which commences with v. 6, of the impression

produced by the coming of God upon the world and its inhabitants.

Verse 6-7. **"He stands, and sets the earth reeling: He looks, and makes nations tremble; primeval mountains burst in pieces, the early hills sink down: His are ways of the olden time.** V. 7. *I saw the tents of Cushan under affliction: the curtains of the land of Midian tremble.*" God coming from afar has now drawn near and taken His stand, to smite the nations as a warlike hero (cf. vv. 8, 9, and 11, 12). This is affirmed in *`aamad* (OT:5975), He has stationed Himself, not "He steps forth or appears." This standing of Jehovah throws the earth and the nations into trembling. *y<sup>a</sup>modeed* cannot mean to measure here, for there is no thought of any measuring of the earth, and it cannot be shown that *mâdad* is used in the sense of measuring with the eye (Ros. and Hitzig). Moreover, the choice of the *poel*, instead of the *piel*, would still remain unexplained, and the parallelism of the clauses would be disregarded.

We must therefore follow the Chaldee, Ges., Delitzsch, and others, who take *modeed* as the *poel* of *muwd* (OT:4128) = *muwT* (OT:4191), to set in a reeling motion. It is only with this interpretation that the two parallel clauses correspond, in which *yateer* (OT:5425), the *hiphil* of *naatar* (OT:5425), to cause to shake or tremble, answers to *y<sup>a</sup>modeed*. This explanation is also required by what follows. For just as v. 7 unquestionably gives a further expansion of *gowyim* (OT:1471) *yateer* (OT:5425), so does *lowlaam* (OT:5769)... *yit<sup>a</sup>pots<sup>a</sup>tsuw* (OT:6327) contain the explanation of *'erets y<sup>a</sup>modeed*. The everlasting hills crumble (*yit<sup>a</sup>pots<sup>a</sup>tsuw* (OT:6327) from *puwts* (OT:6327)), i.e., burst and resolve themselves into dust, and the hills sink down, pass away, and vanish (compare the similar description in Nah 1:5 and Mic 1:4). *har<sup>a</sup>reey-`ad* (= *qedem* (OT:6924) *har<sup>a</sup>reey* (OT:2042), Deut 33:15) in parallelism with *`owlaam* (OT:5769) *gib<sup>a</sup>owt* (OT:1389) are the primeval mountains, as being the oldest and firmest constituents of the globe, which have existed from the beginning (*`ad* (OT:5704) *miniy* (OT:4480), Job 20:4), and were formed at the creation of the earth (Ps 90:2; Job 15:7; Prov 8:25). *low* (OT:3807a) *`owlaam* (OT:5769) *haliykowt* (OT:1979) is not to be taken relatively, and connected with what precedes, "which are the old paths," according to which the hills of God are called everlasting ways (Hitzig); because this does not yield a sense in harmony with the context.

[<- Previous](#) [First](#) [Next ->](#)

It is a substantive clause, and to be taken by itself: everlasting courses or goings are to Him, i.e., He now goes along, as He went along in the olden time. *haliykaah* (OT:1979), the going, advancing, or ways of God, analogous to the *`owlaam* (OT:5769) *derek<sup>a</sup>* (OT:1870), the course of the primitive world (Job 22:15). The prophet had Ps 68:25 floating before his mind, in which *haliikhooth 'eloohiim* denote the goings of God with His people, or the ways which God had taken from time immemorial in His guidance of them. As He once came down upon Sinai in the cloudy darkness, the thunder, lightning, and fire, to raise Israel up to be His covenant nation, so that the mountains shook (cf. Judg 5:5); so do the mountains and hills tremble and melt away at His coming now. And as He once went before His people, and the tidings of His wondrous acts at the Red Sea threw the neighbouring nations into fear and despair (Ex 15:14-16); so now, when the course of God moves from Teman to the Red Sea, the nations on both sides of it are filled with terror.

Of these, two are individualized in v. 7, viz., Cushan and Midian. By *Cushan* we are not to understand the Mesopotamian king named Cushan Rishathaim, who subjugated Israel for eight years after the death of Joshua (Judg 3:8ff.); for this neither agrees with *'aahaaleey* (OT:168), nor with the introduction of Midian in the parallel clause. The word is a lengthened form for *Such*, and the name of the African Ethiopians. The *Midianites* are mentioned along with them, as being inhabitants of the Arabian coast of the Red Sea, which was opposite to them (see at Ex 2:15). *k'* (OT:4352) *'aahaaleey* (OT:168), the tents with their inhabitants, the latter being principally intended. The same remark applies to *y<sup>a</sup>riy`owt* (OT:3407), lit., the tent-curtains of the land of Midian, i.e., of the tents pitched in the land of Midian.

Verse 8,9. To the impression produced upon the nations by the coming of the Lord to judge the world, there is now appended in vv. 8ff. a description of the execution of the judgment. V. 8. *"Was it against rivers, O Jehovah, against the rivers that Thy wrath was kindled? that Thou ridest hither upon Thy horses, Thy chariots of salvation. V. 9. Thy bow lays itself bare; rods are sworn by word. Selah. Thou splittest the earth into rivers."* The ode, taking a new turn, now passes from the description of the coming of God, to an address to God Himself. To the mental eye of

the prophet, God presents Himself as Judge of the world, in the threatening attitude of a warlike hero equipped for conflict, so that he asks Him what is the object of His wrath. The question is merely a poetical turn given to a lively composition, which expects no answer, and is simply introduced to set forth the greatness of the wrath of God, so that in substance it is an affirmation.

The wrath of God is kindled over the rivers, His fury over the sea. The first clause of the question is imperfect; Jehovah is not the subject, but a vocative, or an appeal, since *chârâh*, when predicated of God, is construed with *l<sup>a</sup>*. The subject follows in the double clause, into which the question divides itself, in *'apekaa* (OT:639) and *`eb<sup>a</sup>raatekaa* (OT:5678). Here the indefinite *bin<sup>a</sup>haariym* (OT:5104) is defined by *ban<sup>a</sup>haariym* (OT:5104). *Hannehâriim*, the rivers, are not any particular rivers, such as the arms of the Nile in Lower Egypt, or the rivers of Ethiopia, the Nile and Astaboras, the *naharee Khuush* (Isa 18:1; Zeph 3:10: see Delitzsch), but the rivers of the earth generally; and "the sea" (*hayyâm*) is not the Red Sea, but the world-sea, as in Nah 1:4 (cf. Ps 89:10; Job 38:8). It is true that this description rests upon the two facts of the miraculous dividing of the Red Sea and of the Jordan (Ex 15:18; Ps 114:3,5); but it rises far above these to a description of God as the Judge of the world, who can smite in His wrath not only the sea of the world, but all the rivers of the earth. *`eb<sup>a</sup>raah* (OT:5678) is stronger than *'ap* (OT:639), the wrath which passes over, or breaks through every barrier.

**Kii, quod**, explaining and assigning the reason for the previous question. The riding upon horses is not actual riding, but driving in chariots with horses harnessed to them, as the explanatory words "thy chariots" (*mar<sup>a</sup>k<sup>a</sup>boteykaa* (OT:4818)) clearly shows, and as *râkhabh* (to ride) always signifies when predicated of God (cf. Deut 33:26; Ps 68:34; 104:3). *Yeshuu'âh* is governed by *markebhoothekhâ*, with the freedom of construction allowed in poetry, as in 2 Sam 22:33; Ps 71:7, whereas in prose the noun is generally repeated in the construct state (vid., Gen 37:23, and Ewald, §291, *b*). *Yeshuu'âh* signifies salvation, even in this case, and not victory—a meaning which it never has, and which is all the more inapplicable here, because *yeshuu'âh* is interpreted in v. 13

[<- Previous](#) [First](#) [Next ->](#)

by *l<sup>a</sup>yeesha`* (OT:3468). By describing the chariots of God as chariots of salvation, the prophet points at the outset to the fact, that the riding of God has for its object the salvation or deliverance of His people.

Verse 9. God has already made bare the bow, to shoot His arrows at the foe. *tee`owr* (OT:5783), third pers. imperf. *niph.* of *`uwr* (OT:5782), equivalent to *`aarar* (OT:6209) (Isa 32:11), and the more usual *`aaraah* (OT:6168), to be naked. To strengthen the thought, the noun *`er<sup>a</sup>yaah* (OT:6181) is written before the verb instead of the inf. abs. (cf. Mic 1:11). The bow is made bare, not by the shooting of the arrows, but by its covering ( *gooruto's* , *corytus* ) being removed, in order to use it as a weapon. The reference is to the bow used in war, which God carries as a warrior; so that we are not to think of the rainbow, even if the chariots might be understood as signifying the clouds, as in Isa 19:1 and Ps 104:3, since the rainbow is a sign of peace and of the covenant, whereas God is represented as attacking His enemies. The next clause, *'omer* (OT:562) *maTowt* (OT:4294) *sh<sup>a</sup>bu`owt* (OT:7620), is very obscure, and has not yet been satisfactorily explained.

Of the two meanings which may be given to *mattooth* , viz., branches, rods, or staffs, and tribes of the people of Israel, the latter can hardly be thought of here, since *mattooth* would certainly have been defined by either a suffix or some determining clause, if the tribes of Israel were intended. On the other hand, the meaning staffs or sticks is very naturally suggested both by the context-viz. the allusion to the war-bow- and also by v. 14, where *mattiim* unquestionably signifies staves or lances. At the same time, the meaning spears or darts cannot be deduced from either v. 14 or 2 Sam 18:14. In both passages the meaning staves, used as lances or weapons, is quite sufficient. *Matteh* , a stick or staff with which blows were struck, might stand, as an instrument of chastisement, for the punishment or chastisement itself (cf. Isa 9:3; 10:5), and in Mic 6:9 it denotes the rod. *sh<sup>a</sup>bu`owt* (OT:7620) may be either the plural construct of *shaabuwa`* (OT:7620), the seventh, the heptad, or the plural of *sh<sup>a</sup>buw`aah* (OT:7621), an oath, or the passive participle of *shaaba`* (OT:7650), to be sworn, like *sh<sup>a</sup>bu`owt* (OT:7620) *sh<sup>a</sup>bu`eey* (OT:7650) in Ezek. 211:28 .

There is no material difference in the meaning obtained from the last two; and the view we take of the word '*omer*' (OT:562) must decide between them and the first explanation. This word, which is peculiar to poetry, denotes a discourse or a word, and in Job 22:28 the affair, or the occasion, like *daabaar* (OT:1697). Here, at any rate, it signifies the address or word of God, as in Ps 68:12; 77:9, and is either a genitive dependent upon *mattooth* or an adverbial accusative. The Masoretic pointing, according to which *mattooth* is separated from '*oomer*' by *tiphchah*, and the latter joined to *selâh* by *munach*, is connected with the evidently false rabbinical rendering of *selah* as eternity ( *in sempiternum* ), and being decidedly erroneous, cannot be taken into consideration at all. But the interpretation of *sh<sup>a</sup>bu`owt* (OT:7620) as the seventh, does not suit either of these two possible views of '*oomer*'. We therefore prefer the second meaning, chastising rods or chastisements. '*omer*' (OT:562), however, cannot be a genitive dependent upon *mattooth*; since chastisements of speech would hardly stand for chastisements which God had spoken, but, according to the analogy of *piyw* (OT:6310) *sheebeT* (OT:7626) in Isa 11:4, would point to chastisements consisting in words, and this does not agree with the present train of thought. '*Omer*' is rather an adverbial accusative, and belongs to *sh<sup>a</sup>bu`owt* (OT:7620), indicating the instrument or media employed in the swearing: sworn with the word or through the word, like *char<sup>a</sup>b<sup>a</sup>kaa* (OT:2719) in Ps 17:13 (for the use of the accusative to describe the substance or the instrumental medium of an action, see Ewald, §282, c ).

Hence *sh<sup>a</sup>bu`owt* (OT:7620) cannot be a noun, but must be a passive participle, sworn. The expression, "chastising rods (chastisements) are sworn through the word," points to the solemn oath with which God promised in Deut 32:40-42 to take vengeance upon His enemies, and avenge the blood of His servants: "For I lift up my hand to heaven, and say,  
As I live for ever, when I have sharpened my glittering sword, and my hand grasps for judgment, I will render vengeance to mine adversaries, and repay them that hate me. I will make mine arrows drunk with blood, and my sword will eat flesh; from the blood of the slain and the captives, from the hairy head of the enemy." That Habakkuk had in his mind this promise of the vengeance of God upon His enemies, which is strengthened by a solemn oath, is unmistakeably evident, if we compare

*chaniytekaa* (OT:2595) *b<sup>a</sup>raq* (OT:1300) in v. 11 with

[<- Previous](#) [First](#) [Next ->](#)

*char<sup>a</sup>biy* (OT:2719) *b<sup>a</sup>raq* (OT:1300) in Deut 32:41, and observe the allusion in *raashaa`* (OT:7563) *mibeeyt*

(OT:1004) *ro'sh* (OT:7218) and *p<sup>a</sup>raazaaw* (OT:6518) *ro'sh* (OT:7218) in vv. 13 and 14 to *'owyeeb* (OT:341) *par<sup>a</sup>owt* (OT:6546) *ro'sh* (OT:7218) in Deut 32:42.

From this promise the words of the prophet, which are so enigmatical in themselves, obtain the requisite light to render them intelligible. Gesenius ( *Thes.* p. 877) has explained the prophet's words in a similar manner, *jurejurando firmatae sunt castigationes promissae* (the threatened rods, i.e., chastisements, are sworn), even without noticing the allusion to Deut 32:40ff. upon which these words are founded. Delitzsch was the first to call attention to the allusion to Deut 32:40ff.; but in his explanation, "the darts are sworn through his word of power ( *jurejurando adstricta sunt tela verbo tuo* ), " the swearing is taken in a sense which is foreign to Deuteronomy, and therefore conceals the connection with the original passage. Of the other explanations not one can be vindicated. The rabbinical view which we find in the Vulgate, *juramenta tribubus quae locutus es* , is overthrown by the fact that *sh<sup>a</sup>bu`owt* (OT:7620) without a preposition cannot mean *per* , or *ob* , or *juxta juramenta* , as we should have to render it, and as Luther actually has rendered it in his version ("as Thou hadst sworn to the tribes").

Ewald's rendering, "sevenfold darts of the word," is precluded by the combination of ideas, "darts of the word," which is quite foreign to the context. According to our explanation, the passage does indeed form simply a parenthesis in the description of the judicial interposition of God, but it contains a very fitting thought, through which the description gains in emphasis. In the last clause of the verse the description is continued in the manner already begun, and the effect indicated, which is produced upon the world of nature by the judicial interposition of God: "Thou splittest the earth into rivers." *biqueea`* (OT:1234) is construed with a double accusative, as in Zech 14:4. This may be understood either as signifying that the earth trembles at the wrath of the Judge, and rents arise in consequence, through which rivers of water burst forth from the deep, or so that at the quaking of the earth the sea pours its waves over the

land and splits it into rivers. The following verses point to an earthquake through which the form of the earth's surface is changed.

Verse 10. "**The mountains see Thee, they writhe: a shower of waters passes along: the abyss lifts up its voice, it lifts up its hands on high.** V. 11. *Sun, moon, enter into their habitation at the light of Thine arrows which shoot by, at the shining of the lightning of Thy spear.*" The effect of the coming of God upon the mountains was already referred to in v. 6. There they crumbled into ruins, here they writhe with terror. This difference is to be explained from the fact that there (v. 6) the general effect of the omnipotence of God upon nature was intended, whereas here (vv. 10, 11) the special effect is described, which is produced upon nature by the judgment about to be executed by God upon the nations. The perfects in the description represent this effect as following immediately upon the coming of God. But in the first clause of v.10 the perfect *raa'uwkaa* (OT:7200) is followed by the imperfect *yaachiyluw* (OT:2342), because the writhing is a lasting condition.

The force of the description is heightened by the omission of the copula before the clauses and the particular objects. The two verbs of the first clause stand in the relation of cause and effect to one another: when the mountains have seen Thee, they writhe with terror. The further description is not founded upon the idea of a terrible storm; for there is no reference to thunder, nor even to lightnings, but only to the arrows (v. 11), which may be explained from the idea of God, as a warlike hero, making bare His bow. The colours and different features of the description are borrowed from the judgment of the flood. V. 10 ( *a* and *b* ) points to this divine judgment of the olden time, both the coming of the showers of water ( *geshem* as in Gen 7:12 and 8:2, and strengthened by *mayim* , analogous to *hammabbuul hâyâh mayim* in Gen 7:6; *'âbhar* as in Nah 3:19; Ps 48:5), and also the *nâthan tehoom qooloo* , the raging outburst of the abyss.

**Tehoom** is the mass of water in the abyss, not merely that of the ocean, but that of the subterranean waters also (Gen 49:25; Deut 33:13), the "great deep" ( *tehoom rabbâh* ), whose fountains were broken up at the flood (Gen 7:11); and not the ocean of heaven, as Hitzig erroneously infers from Gen 7:11; 8:2, and Prov 8:27. To this

mass of water, which is called *tehoom* from its roaring depth, the prophet attributes a voice, which it utters, to express the

[<- Previous](#) [First](#) [Next ->](#)

loud, mighty roaring of the waters as they rush forth from the bursting earth. As at the time of the flood, which was a type of the last judgment (Isa 24:18), the windows of heaven and the fountains of the deep were opened, so that the upper and lower waters, which are divided by the firmament, rushed together again, and the earth returned, as it were, to its condition before the second day of creation; so here also the rivers of the earth and rain-showers of heaven come together, so that the abyss roars up with a loud noise (Delitzsch). This roaring outburst of the mass of waters from the heart of the earth is then represented as a lifting up of the hands to heaven, with reference to the fact that the waves are thrown up. *Room* = *ruum* (Prov 25:3; 21:4) is an accusative of direction, like *mâroom* in 2 Kings 19:22. *yaadeeyhuw* (OT:3027), for *yaadaayw* (OT:3027), a full-sounding and more extended form, possibly to express by the rhythm the greatness of the prodigy, how *magna vi brachii tollunt* (Delitzsch). The lifting up of the hands is not a gesture denoting either an oath or rebellion; but it is an involuntary utterance of terror, of restlessness, of anguish, as it were, with a prayer for help (Delitzsch).

Verse 11. The chaotic condition into which the earth has been brought is heightened by the darkness in which the heaven clothes itself. Sun and moon, which give light to day and night, have put themselves, or entered, into their habitation. *z<sup>a</sup>buwl* (OT:2073) with *h* local, a dwelling-place, is, according to oriental view, the place from which the stars come out when they rise, and to which they return when they set. Nevertheless it is not actual setting that is spoken of here, but simply their obscuration, which is not the effect of heavy clouds that pour out their water in showers of rain, but is caused by the shining of the arrows of God (*l<sup>a</sup>* in *l<sup>a</sup>owr* (OT:216) and *l<sup>a</sup>nogah* (OT:5051) denoting the outward cause or occasion). It is not, however, that they "turn pale in consequence of the surpassing brilliancy of the lightnings" (Ewald), but that they "withdraw altogether, from the fear and horror which pervade all nature, and which are expressed in the mountains by trembling, in the waters by roaring, and in the sun and moon by obscuration" (Delitzsch).

The idea that this verse refers to the standing still of the sun and moon at the believing word of Joshua (Josh 10:12ff.), in which nearly all the earlier commentators

agreed, is quite untenable, inasmuch as *z<sup>a</sup>buwlaah* (OT:2073) *`aamad* (OT:5975) cannot mean to stand still in the sky. The arrows and spear ( *chaniith* ) of God are not lightnings, as in Ps 77:18-19; 18:15, etc., because this theophany is not founded upon the idea of a storm, but the darts with which God as a warrior smites down His foes, as the instruments and effects of the wrath of God. A brilliant splendour is attributed to them, because they emanate from Him whose coming, like the sunlight, pours out its rays on both sides (v. 4). *chaniyt b<sup>a</sup>raq* has the same meaning here as in Nah 3:3: the flashing, because naked and sharpened, spear. And just as we cannot understand the "bright sword" of Nah 3:3 as signifying flashes of lightning, so here we cannot take the arrows as lightnings. *y<sup>a</sup>haleekuw* (OT:1980) is to be taken relatively, "which pass alone, or shoot by."

Verse 12-15. In v. 12 there follows a description of the judgment upon the nations for the rescue of the people of God. V. 12. *"In fury Thou walkest through the earth, in wrath Thou stampest down nations. V. 13. Thou goest out to the rescue of Thy people, to the rescue of Thine anointed one; Thou dashest in pieces the head from the house of the wicked one, laying bare the foundation even to the neck. Selah. V. 14. Thou piercest with his spears the head of his hordes, which storm hither to beat me to powder, whose rejoicing is, as it were, to swallow the poor in secret. V. 15. Thou treadest upon the sea: Thy horses, upon the heap of great waters."* The Lord, at whose coming in the terrible glory of the majesty of the Judge of the world all nature trembles and appears to fall into its primary chaotic state, marches over the earth, and stamps or tramples down the nations with His feet (compare the kindred figure of the treader of the winepress in Isa 63:1-6).

Not all nations, however, but only those that are hostile to Him; for He has come forth to save His people and His anointed one. The perfects in vv. 13-15 are prophetic, describing the future in spirit as having already occurred. *yaatsaa'* (OT:3318), referring to the going out of God to fight for His people, as in Judg 5:4; 2 Sam 5:24; Isa 42:13, etc. *yeesha`* (OT:3468), rescue, salvation, is construed the second time with an accusative like an inf. constr. (see Ewald, §239, *a* ). The anointed of God is not the chosen, consecrated nation (Schnur., Ros., Hitzig, Ewald, etc.); for the nation of Israel is never called the anointed one ( *hammâshiiach* ) by virtue of its

calling to be "a kingdom of priests" ( *mamlekheth kohaniim* , Ex 19:6), neither in Ps 28:8 nor in Ps 84:10; 89:39. Even in Ps 105:15 it is not

[<- Previous](#) [First](#) [Next ->](#)

the Israelites who are called by God "my anointed" ( *meshiichai* ), but the patriarchs, as princes consecrated by God (Gen 23:6).

And so here also *m<sup>a</sup>shiychekaa* (OT:4899) is the divinely-appointed king of Israel; not, however, this or that historical king—say Josiah, Jehoiakim, or even Jehoiachin—but the Davidic king absolutely, including the Messiah, in whom the sovereignty of David is raised to an eternal duration, "just as by the Chaldaean king here and in ch. 2 we must understand the Chaldaean kings generally" (Delitzsch), wince the prophecy spreads from the judgment upon the Chaldaeans to the universal judgment upon the nations, and the Chaldaean is merely introduced as the possessor of the imperial power. The Messiah as the Son of David is distinguished from Jehovah, and as such is the object of divine help, just as in Zech 9:9, where He is called *nowshaa`* (OT:3467) in this respect, and in the royal Messianic psalms. This help God bestows upon His people and His anointed, by dashing in pieces the head from the house of the wicked one.

The *râshâ'* (wicked one) is the Chaldaean, not the nation, however, which is spoken of for the first time in v. 14, but the Chaldaean king, as chief of the imperial power which is hostile to the kingdom of God. But, as the following clause clearly shows, the house is the house in the literal sense, so that the "head," as part of the house, is the gable. A distinction is drawn between this and *yesood*, the foundation, and *tsauwaa'r* (OT:6677), the neck, i.e., the central part looking from the gable downwards. The destruction takes place both from above and below at once, so that the gable and the foundation are dashed in pieces with one blow, and that even to the neck, i.e., up to the point at which the roof or gable rests upon the walls. *`ad* (OT:5704), inclusive, embracing the part mentioned as the boundary; not exclusive, so as to leave the walls still rising up as ruins. The description is allegorical, the house representing the Chaldaean dynasty, the royal family including the king, but not "including the exalted Chaldaean kingdom in all its prosperity" (Hitzig). *`aarowt* (OT:6168), a rare form of the inf. abs., like *shaatowt* in Isa 22:13 (cf. Ewald, §240, *b*), from *`eeraah* (OT:6168), to make bare, to destroy from the very foundation, the infinitive in the sense of the gerund describing the

mode of the action.

The warlike nation meets with the same fate as the royal house (v. 14). The meaning of the first clause of the verse depends upon the explanation to be given to the word *perâzâv*. There is no foundation for the meaning leaders or judges, which has been claimed for the word *perâziim* ever since the time of Schroeder and Schnur. In Hebrew usage *perâzii* signifies the inhabitant of the plain (Deut 3:5; 1 Sam 6:18), and *perâzooth* the plains, the open flat land, as distinguished from walled cities (Ezek 38:11). *Perâzoon* has the same meaning in Judg 5:7 and 11. Consequently Delitzsch derives *perâzâv* from a segholate noun *perez* or *peerez*, in the sense of the population settled upon the open country, the villagers and peasantry, whence the more general signification of a crowd or multitude of people, and here, since the context points to warriors, the meaning hordes, or hostile companies, which agrees with the Targum, Rashi, and Kimchi, who explain the word as signifying warriors or warlike troops. *ro'sh* (OT:7218), the head of his hordes, cannot be the leader, partly because of what follows, "who come storming on," which presupposes that not the leader only, but the hordes or warriors, will be destroyed, and partly also because of the preceding verse, in which the destruction of the king is pronounced, and also because the distinction between the king and the leader of the army is at variance with the complex character of the prophetic description.

We must take *ro'sh* (OT:7218) in the literal sense, but collectively, "heads." The prophet was led to the unusual figure of the piercing of the head by the reminiscence of the piercing of Sisera's head by Jael (Judg 5:26). The suffixes in *b<sup>a</sup>maTaayw* (OT:4294) and *p<sup>a</sup>raazaaw* (OT:6518) refer back to *raashaa`* (OT:7563). *maTaayw* (OT:4294), sticks, for lance or spears, after 2 Sam 18:14. The meaning of the words is this: with the spear of the king God pierces the heads of his warlike troops; and the thought expressed is, that the hostile troops will slay one another in consequence of the confusion, as was the case in the wars described in 1 Sam 14:20 and 2 Chron 20:23-24, and as, according to prophecy, the last hostile power of the world is to meet with its ruin when it shall attack the kingdom of God (Ezek 38:21; Zech 14:13). *lhp' yic<sup>a</sup> aruw* (OT:5590) is to be taken relatively: "which storm hither (*sâ'ar*, approach with the swiftness and violence of a storm) to destroy me."

[<- Previous](#) [First](#) [Next ->](#)

The prophet includes himself along with the nation, and uses *heephiits* with reference to the figure of the dispersion or powdering of the chaff by a stormy wind (Isa 41:16; Jer 13:24; 18:17). *`aliytsutaam* (OT:5951) forms a substantive clause by itself: "their rejoicing is," for they who rejoice, as if to swallow, i.e., whose rejoicing is directed to this, to swallow the poor in secret. The enemies are compared to highway murderers, who lurk in dark corners for the defenceless traveller, and look forward with rejoicing for the moment when they may be able to murder him. *`aaniy* (OT:6041) forms the antithesis to *raashaa`* (OT:7563). Inasmuch as "the wicked" denotes the Chaldaean; "the poor" is the nation of Israel, i.e., the congregation of the righteous, who are really the people of God. To devour the poor, i.e., to take violent possession of his life and all that he has (cf. Prov 30:14, and for the fact itself, Ps 10:8-10), is, when applied to a nation, to destroy it (vid., Deut 7:16 and Jer 10:25).

In order that these enemies may be utterly destroyed, God passes through the sea. This thought in v. 15 connects the conclusion of the description of the judicial coming of God with what precedes. The drapery of the thought rests upon the fact of the destruction of Pharaoh and his horsemen in the Red Sea (Ex 14). The sea, the heap of many waters, is not a figurative expression for the army of the enemy, but is to be taken literally. This is required by *bayaam* (OT:3220) *daarak<sup>a</sup>taa* (OT:1869), since *daarak<sup>a</sup>* (OT:1869) with *b*, to tread upon a place, or enter into it (cf. Mic 5:4; Isa 59:8; Deut 11:24-25), does not suit the figurative interpretation; and it is required still more by the parallel passages, viz., Ps 77:20 (*dar<sup>a</sup>kekaa* (OT:1870) *bayaam* (OT:3220)), which floated before the prophet's mind, and Zech 10:11. Just as God went through the Red Sea in the olden time to lead Israel through, and to destroy the Egyptian army, so will He in the future go through the sea and do the same, when He goes forth to rescue His people out of the power of the Chaldaean. The prophet does not express the latter indeed, but it is implied in what he says. *cuwceykaa* (OT:5483) is an accusative, not *instrumenti*, however, but of more precise definition: thou, namely, according to thy horses; for "with thy horses," as in Ps. 83:19; 44:3 (*yaad<sup>a</sup>kaa* (OT:3027) *'ataah* (OT:859)); cf. Ewald, §281, *c*, and 293, *c*. The horses are to be taken, as in v. 8, as harnessed to the chariots; and they are mentioned here with reference to the horses and chariots of Pharaoh, which were destroyed by

Jehovah in the sea. *Choomer* , in the sense of heap, as in Ex 8:10, is not an accusative, but is still dependent upon the *b* of the parallel clause. The expression "heap of many waters" serves simply to fill up the picture, as in Ps 77:20.

### **Habakkuk 3:16-17**

*When I heard, my belly trembled; my lips quivered at the voice: rottenness entered into my bones, and I trembled in myself, that I might rest in the day of trouble: when he cometh up unto the people, he will invade them with his troops.*

Verses 16-19 form the second part of the psalm, in which the prophet describes the feelings that are produced within himself by the coming of the Lord to judge the nations, and to rescue His own people; viz., first of all, fear and trembling at the tribulation (vv. 16, 17); then exulting joy, in his confident trust in the God of salvation (vv. 18,

19). V. 16. *"I heard it, then my belly trembled, at the sound my lips yelled; rottenness forces itself into my bones, and I tremble under myself, that I am to wait quietly for the day of tribulation, when he that attacketh it approacheth the nation. V. 17. For the fig-tree will not blossom, and there is no yield on the vines; the produce of the olive-tree disappoints, and the corn-fields bear no food; the flock is away from the fold, and no ox in the stalls."* *shaama`<sup>a</sup>tiy* (OT:8085) is not connected with the theophany depicted in vv. 3-15, since this was not an audible phenomenon, but was an object of inward vision, "a spectacle which presented itself to the eye."

"I heard" corresponds to "I have heard" in v. 2, and, like the latter, refers to the report heard from God of the

[<- Previous](#) [First](#) [Next ->](#)

"I heard" corresponds to "I have heard" in v. 2, and, like the latter, refers to the report heard from God of the approaching judgment. This address goes back to its starting-point, to explain the impression which it made upon the prophet, and to develop still how he "was afraid." The alarm pervades his whole body, belly, and bones, i.e., the softer and firmer component parts of the body; lips and feet, i.e., the upper and lower organs of the body. The lips cried *leqool*, at the voice, the sound of God, which the prophet heard. *Tsâlal* is used elsewhere only of the ringing of the ears (1 Sam 3:11; 2 Kings 21:12; Jer 19:3); but here it is applied to the chattering sound produced by the lips, when they smite one another before crying out, not to the chattering of the teeth. Into the bones there penetrates *râqâbh*, rottenness, inward consumption of the bones, as an effect of alarm or pain, which paralyzes all the powers, and takes away all firmness from the body (cf. Prov 12:4; 14:30).

**Tachtai**, under me, i.e., in my lower members, knees, feet: not as in Ex 16:29; 2 Sam 2:23, on the spot where I stand (cf. Ewald, §217, *k*). *'aanuwach* (OT:5117) *'asher* (OT:834) might mean, "I who was to rest;" but it is more appropriate to take *'asher* as a relative conjunction, "that I," since the clause explains the great fear that had fallen upon him. *'asher* (OT:834) is used in a similar way viz., as a conjunction with the verb in the first person, in Ezek. 29:29. *Nuuach*, to rest, not to rest in the grave (Luther and others), nor to bear quietly or endure (Ges., Maurer), but to wait quietly or silently. For it could hardly occasion such consuming pain to a God-fearing man as that which the prophet experienced, to bear misfortune quietly, when it has already come, and cannot be averted; but it might be to wait quietly and silently, in constant anticipation. *Tsârâh*, the trouble which the Chaldaeans bring upon Judah. *la`alowl* (OT:5927) is not subordinate to *tsaaraah* (OT:6869) *l'yowm* (OT:3117), but co-ordinate with it, and is still dependent upon *'aanuwach* (OT:5117); and *y<sup>a</sup>guwdenuw* (OT:1464), as a relative clause (who oppresses it), is the subject to *la`alowl* (OT:5927): "that I am to wait quietly for him that attacketh to approach my nation."

For if *la`alowl* (OT:5927) were dependent upon *l'yowm* (OT:3117), it would be necessary to supply *yowm* (OT:3117) as the subject: "when it (the day) comes." But this is precluded by the fact that *`aalaah* (OT:5927) is not used for the approach or

breaking of day. *l<sup>a</sup>am* (OT:5971), to the people, *dativ. incomm.* , is practically equivalent to *`am* (OT:5971) *`al* (OT:5921), against the people. *`am* (OT:5971), used absolutely, as in Isa 26:11; 42:6, is the nation of Israel. *Guud* , as in Gen 49:19-20, i.e., *gâdad* , to press upon a person, to attack him, or crowd together against him (cf. Ps 94:21). In v. 17 the trouble of this day is described; and the sensation of pain, in the anticipation of the period of calamity, is thereby still further accounted for. The plantations and fields yield no produce. Folds and stalls are empty in consequence of the devastation of the land by the hostile troops and their depredations: "a prophetic picture of the devastation of the holy land by the Chaldaean war" (Delitzsch).

Fig-tree and vine are mentioned as the noblest fruit-trees of the land, as is frequently the case (see Joel 1:7; Hos 2:14; Mic 4:4). To this there is added the olive-tree, as in Mic 6:15; Deut 6:11; 8:8, etc. *Ma'aseeh zayith* is not the shoot, but the produce or fruit of the olive-tree, after the phrase *p<sup>a</sup>riy* (OT:6529) *`aasaah* (OT:6213), to bear fruit. *Kicheesh* , to disappoint, namely the expectation of produce, as in Hos 9:2. *Shedeemooth* , which only occurs in the plural, corn-fields, is construed here as in Isa 16:8, with the verb in the singular, because, so far as the sense was concerned, it had become almost equivalent to *sâdeh* , the field (see Ewald, §318, *a* ). *Gâzar* , to cut off, used here in a neuter sense: to be cut off or absent. *mik<sup>a</sup>laah* (OT:4357), contracted from *mik<sup>a</sup>laa'aah* (OT:4356): fold, pen, an enclosed place for sheep. *Repheth* , *hap leg* ., the rack, then the stable or stall.

### **Habakkuk 3:18,19**

*Yet I will rejoice in the LORD, I will joy in the God of my salvation.*

Although trembling on account of the approaching trouble, the prophet will nevertheless exult in the prospect of

[<- Previous](#) [First](#) [Next ->](#)

Although trembling on account of the approaching trouble, the prophet will nevertheless exult in the prospect of the salvation that he foresees. V. 18. *"But I, in Jehovah will I rejoice, will shout in the God of my salvation.*

V. 19. *Jehovah the Lord is my strength, and makes my feet like the hinds, and causes me to walk along upon my high places.*" The turning-point is introduced with *wa'aniy* (OT:589), as is frequently the case in the Psalms. For this exaltation out of the sufferings of this life to believing joy in God, compare Ps 5:8; 13:6; 31:15, etc. *`aalaz* (OT:5937), a softened form of *`aalats* (OT:5970), to rejoice in God (cf. Ps 5:12), i.e., so that God is the inexhaustible source and infinite sphere of the joy, because He is the God of salvation, and rises up to judgment upon the nations, to procure the salvation of His people (v. 13). *Eloohē yish'ii* (the God of my salvation), as in Ps 18:47; 25:5 (see at Mic 7:7).

The thoughts of the 19th verse are also formed from reminiscences of Ps 18: the first clause, "the Lord is my strength," from v. 33. "God, who girdeth me with strength," i.e., the Lord gives me strength to overcome all tribulation (cf. Ps 27:1 and 2 Cor 12:9). The next two clauses are from Ps 18:34, "He maketh my feet like hinds'," according to the contracted simile common in Hebrew for "hinds' feet;" and the reference is to the swiftness of foot, which was one of the qualifications of a thorough man of war (2 Sam 1:23; 1 Chron 12:8), so as to enable him to make a sudden attack upon the enemy, and pursue him vigorously. Here it is a figurative expression for the fresh and joyous strength acquired in God, which Isaiah calls rising up with eagles' wings (Isa 40:29-31). Causing to walk upon the high places of the land, was originally a figure denoting the victorious possession and government of a land.

It is so in Deut 32:13 and 33:29, from which David has taken the figure in Ps 18, though he has altered the high places of the earth into "my high places" (*bâmoothai*). They were the high places upon which the Lord had placed him, by giving him the victory over his enemies. And Habakkuk uses the figurative expression in the same sense, with the simple change of *ya`amiydeeny* (OT:5975) into *yad<sup>a</sup>rikeeny* (OT:1869) after Deut 33:29, to substitute for the bestowment of victory the maintenance of victory corresponding to the blessing of Moses. We have therefore to

understand *bâmoothai* neither as signifying the high places of the enemy, nor the high places at home, nor high places generally. The figure must be taken as a whole; and according to this, it simply denotes the ultimate triumph of the people of God over all oppression on the part of the power of the world, altogether apart from the local standing which the kingdom of God will have upon the earth, either by the side of or in antagonism to the kingdom of the world. The prophet prays and speaks throughout the entire ode in the name of the believing congregation. His pain is their pain; his joy their joy. Accordingly he closes his ode by appropriating to himself and all believers the promise which the Lord has given to His people and to David His anointed servant, to express the confident assurance that the God of salvation will keep it, and fulfil it in the approaching attack on the part of the power of the world upon the nation which has been refined by the judgment.

The last words, *bin<sup>a</sup>giynowtay* (OT:5058) *lam<sup>a</sup>natseeach* (OT:5329), do not form part of the contents of the supplicatory ode, but are a subscription answering to the heading in v. 1, and refer to the use of the ode in the worship of God, and simply differ from the headings *bin<sup>a</sup>giynowt* (OT:5058) *lam<sup>a</sup>natseeach* (OT:5329) in Ps 4; 6; 54:1-55:23; 67, and 76, through the use of the suffix in *bin<sup>a</sup>giynowtay* (OT:5058). Through the words, "*to the president* (of the temple-music, or the conductor) *in accompaniment of my stringed playing*," the prophet appoints his psalm for use in the public worship of God accompanied by his stringed playing. Hitzig's rendering is grammatically false, "to the conductor of my pieces of music;" for *b<sup>a</sup>* cannot be used as a periphrasis for the genitive, but when connected with a musical expression, only means *with* or *in the accompaniment of* (*b instrumenti* or *concomitantiae*). Moreover, *n<sup>a</sup>giynowt* (OT:5058) does not mean pieces of music, but simply a song, and the playing upon stringed instruments, or the stringed instrument itself (see at Ps 4). The first of these renderings gives no suitable sense here, so that there only remains the second, viz., "playing upon stringed instruments." But if the prophet, by using this formula, stipulates that the ode is to be used in the temple, accompanied by stringed instruments, the expression *bingiinoothai*, with *my* stringed playing, affirms that he himself will accompany it with his own playing, from which it has been justly inferred that he was qualified, according to the arrangements of the Israelitish worship, to take part in the public performance of such pieces of music as were suited for public worship, and therefore belonged to the Levites who were entrusted with the

[<- Previous](#) [First](#) [Next ->](#)

[<- Previous](#) [First](#)

conduct of the musical performance of the temple.

(from Keil & Delitzsch Commentary on the Old Testament: New Updated Edition, Electronic Database. Copyright (c) 1996 by Hendrickson Publishers, Inc.)

[<- Previous](#) [First](#)