

The Questioning Prophecy of Havakkuk (Habakkuk) ~ Part 2

Wicked As Executioners

1 ¹² Adonai, haven't you existed forever? My God, my holy one, we will not die. Adonai, you appointed them to execute judgment. Rock, you commissioned them to correct us.

Habakkuk reasoned that since **God** is holy, He must be using **Babylon** as an instrument of His *judgment* on **Judah**.

13 Your eyes are too pure to see evil; you cannot countenance oppression. So why do you countenance traitors? Why are you silent when evil people swallow up those more righteous than they?

This is a classic statement of the puzzle of how an all-powerful **God** can allow sin to continue unchecked. **Habakkuk** cannot understand the justice of allowing wicked **Babylon** to punish a less wicked nation, such as **Judah**. (He can call **Judah more righteous** because, even though most of its people were unfaithful to **God's** covenants, some of them were faithful.) **Habakkuk** thinks that **God's** holiness should have prohibited Him from using the corrupt **Babylonians**.

14 You make people like fish in the sea, like reptiles that have no ruler.

Habakkuk's charge against **God** is that He allows mankind to act like lower creatures (*fish* and *reptiles*) with no rulers or judges, so that wickedness goes unchecked.

15 The evil haul them all up with their hooks, catch them in their fish net, or gather them in their dragnet. Then they rejoice and make merry,

Captives were sometimes taken away with *hooks* in their noses - an intentionally painful and humiliating treatment. The image is that of a fish helplessly caught in a fishing net; **Mesopotamian** rock reliefs portray prisoners in nets being hauled off to captivity.

16 offering sacrifices to their fishnet and burning incense to their dragnet; because through them they live in luxury, with plenty of food to eat. ¹⁷ Should they, therefore, keep emptying their nets? Should they keep slaughtering the nations without pity? 2 ¹ I will stand at my watch post; I will station myself on the rampart. I will look to see what [God] will say through me and what I will answer when I am reproved.

If a righteous **God** does not step in to end the **Babylonians'** wicked plan, who will? Where is **God's** justice, and how can He tolerate this? *I will stand at my watch post.* Like a lookout who awaits a coming enemy, **Habakkuk** waits in the city's watchtower for **God** to rebuke His direct challenge.

Wicked Always Punished

2 Then Adonai answered me; He said, "Write down the vision clearly on tablets, so that even a runner can read it. ³ For the vision is meant for its appointed time; it speaks of the end, and it does not lie. It may take a while, but wait for it; it will surely come, it will not delay. ⁴ Look at the proud: he is inwardly not upright; but the righteous will attain life through trusting faithfulness. ⁵ Truly, wine is treacherous; the arrogant will not live at peace but keeps expanding his desires like Sh'ol; like death, he can never be satisfied; he keeps collecting all the nations for himself, rallying to himself all the peoples.

God replied that the vision must be written down clearly, for, despite **Habakkuk's** objections, the **vision** of the **Babylonian** invasion would come true. The **arrogant Babylonians** were just as wicked as **Habakkuk** supposed. Yet verse 4b says **righteous** people, such as **Habakkuk**, must exercise **faith** in **God's** goodness despite His use of evil **Babylon**. This is similar to the answer **Job** received from **God** (Job 38–41). **God** does not have to explain Himself to humans. We must let **God** be **God** and trust in His goodness, even when His ways are difficult to understand. This verse conveys the book's central message. The **Brit Hadashah** cites it to show that the **Messianic** life, from beginning to end, is based on faith (Romans 1:17; Galatians 3:11; Hebrews 10:38).

⁶ Won't all these take up taunting Him and say about Him, in mocking riddles, 'Woe to him who amasses other people's wealth!— how long must it go on? - and to him who adds to himself the weight of goods taken in pledge! ⁷ Won't your own creditors suddenly stand, won't those who make you tremble wake up? You will become their spoil. ⁸ Because you plundered many nations, all the rest of the peoples will plunder you; because of the bloodshed and violence done to the land, the city, and all who live there.

Verse 6 begins with a taunt song, containing five woes against **Babylon**. The first **woe** is against lust for empire, or aggression. The **many nations** that **Nebuchadnezzar** had conquered would taunt him for his ill-gotten gain.

⁹ "Woe to him who seeks unjust gain for his household, putting his nest on the heights, in order to be safe from the reach of harm. ¹⁰ By scheming to destroy many peoples, you have brought shame to your house and forfeited your life. ¹¹ For the very stones will cry out from the wall, and a beam in the framework will answer them. ¹² " 'Woe to him who builds a city with blood and founds a town on injustice, ¹³ so that people toil for what will be burned up, and nations exhaust themselves to no purpose. Isn't all this from Adonai-Tzva'ot? ¹⁴ For the earth will be as full of the knowledge of Adonai's glory as water covering the sea. ¹⁵ " 'Woe to him who has his neighbor drink, adds his own poison and makes him drunk, in order to see him naked. ¹⁶ You are filled with shame, not glory. You, drink too, and stagger! The cup of Adonai's right hand will be turned against you; your shame will exceed your glory. ¹⁷ For the violence done to the L'vanon will overwhelm you, and the destruction of the wild animals will terrify you; because of the bloodshed and violence done to the land, the city and all who live there.'"¹

A second **woe** is pronounced on **Nebuchadnezzar** for his covetousness and pride. He tried to make his dynasty safe from the reach of **disaster**, but his dishonesty and cruelty would **cry out** against him. The third **woe** against the king was for his lust for magnificence and his bloodshedding tactics. The cities of **Babylon**, built by slave **labor**, would merely end up feeding the insatiable **fire**, and **the earth** would acknowledge the true **God**. This glorious time is predicted in a deservedly famous poetic comparison in verse 14. The fourth **woe** is against **Nebuchadnezzar** for taking a savage delight in corrupting other nations, for shamelessness, and for his destruction of **Yerushalayim** and **Judah**.

If you find yourself questioning God's timing in your life, as Habakkuk did, take a moment to reflect on your personal journey. Set aside a 'God's Faithfulness' night each month, where you gather with your family to share testimonies of how God has worked in your lives. Highlight instances where you felt His presence during struggles. This exercise will not only strengthen your faith but also encourage your family to recognize and share the ways God is actively working in your daily lives.

¹ Habakkuk 1:12-2:17.

