

Habakkuk

Habakkuk Complains to the Lord

1:1 The following is the message¹ which God revealed to Habakkuk the prophet.²

1:2 How long, LORD, must I cry for help?
But you do not listen!

I call out to you, “Violence!”
But you do not intervene!³

1:3 Why do you force me to witness in-
justice?⁴

Why do you put up with wrongdoing?⁵
Destruction and violence confront⁶ me;
conflict is present and one must endure
strife.⁷

1:4 For this reason the law lacks power,⁸
and justice is never carried out.⁹

Indeed,¹⁰ the wicked intimidate¹¹ the in-
nocent.¹²

For this reason justice is perverted.¹³

The Lord Reveals Some Startling News

1:5 “Look at the nations and pay atten-
tion!¹⁴

You will be shocked and amazed!¹⁵

¹ **tn** Heb “The burden” (so KJV, ASV). The Hebrew term **מַסָּא** (*masa*’), usually translated “oracle” (NAB, NEB, NASB, NIV, NRSV) or “utterance” (BDB 672 s.v. III **מַסָּא**!), in prophetic literature is a technical term introducing a message from the Lord (see Zech 9:1; 12:1; Mal 1:1). Since it derives from a verb meaning “to carry,” its original nuance was that of a burdensome message, that is, one with ominous content.

² **tn** Heb “The message [traditionally, “burden”] which Habakkuk the prophet saw.”

³ **tn** Or “deliver.”

⁴ **tn** Heb “Why do you make me see injustice?”

⁵ **tn** Heb “Why do you look at wrongdoing?”

sn Habakkuk complains that God tolerates social *injustice* and fails to intervene on behalf of the oppressed (*put up with wrongdoing*).

⁶ **tn** Heb “are before.”

⁷ **tn** Heb “and there is conflict and strife he lifts up.” The present translation takes the verb **יָסָא** (*yisa*’), in the sense of “carry, bear,” and understands the subject to be indefinite (“one”).

⁸ **tn** Heb “the law is numb,” i.e., like a hand that has “fallen asleep” (see Ps 77:2). Cf. NAB “is benumbed”; NIV “is paralyzed.”

⁹ **tn** Heb “never goes out.”

¹⁰ **tn** Or “for.”

¹¹ **tn** Heb “surround” (so NASB, NRSV).

¹² **tn** Or “righteous” (KJV, NASB, NIV, NRSV, NLT).

¹³ **tn** Heb “comes out crooked.”

¹⁴ **tn** Or “look among the nations and observe.” The imperative forms in v. 5 are plural, indicating that the Lord’s message is for the whole nation, not just the prophet.

¹⁵ **tn** The Hebrew text combines the Hitpael and Qal imperative forms of the verb **תָּמַח** (*tamah*, “be amazed”). A literal translation might read, “Shock yourselves and be shocked!” The repetition of sounds draws attention to the statement. The imperatives here have the force of an emphatic assertion. On this use of the imperative in Hebrew, see GKC 324 §110.c and *IBHS* 572-73 §34.4c.

For I will do something in your lifetime¹⁶
that you will not believe even though you
are forewarned.¹⁷

1:6 Look, I am about to empower¹⁸ the
Babylonians,
that ruthless¹⁹ and greedy²⁰ nation.

They sweep across the surface²¹ of the
earth,
seizing dwelling places that do not be-
long to them.

1:7 They are frightening and terrifying;
they decide for themselves what is right.²²

1:8 Their horses are faster than leopards
and more alert²³ than wolves in the des-
ert.²⁴

Their horses²⁵ gallop,²⁶
their horses come a great distance;
like a vulture²⁷ they swoop down quickly
to devour their prey.²⁸

1:9 All of them intend²⁹ to do violence;

¹⁶ **tc** Heb “for a work working in your days.” Following the LXX reading, some supply a first person singular pronoun with the participle **פֹּעֵל** (*po’el*). Ellipsis of a first singular pronoun before participles is relatively rare (see GKC 360 §116.s); perhaps an original **אֲנִי** (*’anoki*; or **אָנִי**, *’aniy*) followed the initial **כִּי** (*ki*) and was omitted by homoioteleuton.

¹⁷ **tn** Heb “you will not believe when it is told.” In this context the force of **כִּי** (*ki*) may be “when,” “if,” or “even though.”

¹⁸ **tn** Heb “raise up” (so KJV, ASV).

¹⁹ **tn** Heb “bitter.” Other translation options for this word in this context include “fierce” (NASB, NRSV); “savage” (NEB); or “grim.”

²⁰ **tn** Heb “hasty, quick.” Some translate here “impetuous” (so NEB, NASB, NIV, NRSV) or “rash,” but in this context greed may very well be the idea. The Babylonians move quickly and recklessly ahead in their greedy quest to expand their empire.

²¹ **tn** Heb “the open spaces.”

²² **tn** Heb “from him his justice, even his lifting up, goes out.” In this context **שִׁפְטָה** (*she’et*) probably has the nuance “authority.” See R. D. Patterson, *Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah* (WEC), 150.

²³ **tn** Heb “sharper,” in the sense of “keener” or “more alert.” Some translate “quicker” on the basis of the parallelism with the first line (see *HALOT* 291 s.v. **רָדַד**).

²⁴ **tn** Heb “wolves of the evening,” that is, wolves that prowl at night. The present translation assumes an emendation to **עֲרָבָה** (*’aravah*, “desert”). On this phrase see also Zeph 3:3.

²⁵ **tn** Or “horsemen,” “cavalry.”

²⁶ **tn** The precise nuance of the rare verb **פָּרַשׁ** (*parash*) is unclear here. Elsewhere it is used of animals jumping or leaping (see Jer 50:11; Mal 4:2).

²⁷ **tn** Or “eagle” (so NASB, NRSV). The term can refer to either eagles or vultures, but in this context of gruesome destruction and death “vulture” is preferred.

²⁸ **tn** Heb “they fly like a vulture/an eagle quickly to devour.” The direct object “their prey” is not included in the Hebrew text but is implied, and has been supplied in the translation for clarity.

²⁹ **tn** Heb “come.”

every face is determined.¹
 They take prisoners as easily as one
 scoops up sand.²
1:10 They mock kings
 and laugh at rulers.
 They laugh at every fortified city;
 they build siege ramps³ and capture them.
1:11 They sweep by like the wind and
 pass on.⁴
 But the one who considers himself a god
 will be held guilty.⁵

Habakkuk Voices Some Concerns

1:12 LORD, you have been active from
 ancient times;⁶
 my sovereign God,⁷ you are immortal.⁸
 LORD, you have made them⁹ your instrument
 of judgment.¹⁰
 Protector,¹¹ you have appointed them as
 your instrument of punishment.¹²

¹ **tn** Heb “The totality of their faces is to the east” (or “is forward”). The precise meaning of the Hebrew term מַגְמַת (*me-gammat*) is unclear. For a discussion of options see J. J. M. Roberts, *Nahum, Habakkuk, and Zephaniah* (OTL), 93. NEB has “a sea of faces rolls on”; NIV “their hordes advance like a desert wind”; NRSV “with faces pressing forward.”

² **tn** Heb “and he gathers like sand, prisoners.”

³ **tn** Heb “they heap up dirt.” This is a reference to the piling up of earthen ramps in the process of laying siege to a fortified city.

⁴ **tn** The precise meaning of v. 11a is uncertain. The present translation assumes the first line further describes the Babylonian hordes, comparing them to a destructive wind. Another option is to understand רִיחַ (*ruakh*) as “spirit,” rather than “wind,” and take the form אֲשֵׁמָה (*v² ashem*) with what precedes (as suggested by the scribal punctuation). Repointing this form as a geminate verb from אָשַׁם (*shamam*, “be astonished”), one could then translate the line, “The spirit passed on and departed, and I was astonished.” In this case the line would describe the cessation of the divine revelation which began in v. 5. For a detailed defense of this view, see J. J. M. Roberts, *Nahum, Habakkuk, and Zephaniah* (OTL), 97-100.

⁵ **tn** Heb “and guilty is the one whose strength is his god.” This assumes that אֲשֵׁם (*ashem*) is a predicate adjective meaning “guilty” and that it relates to what follows.

⁶ **tn** Heb “Are you not from antiquity, O LORD?” The rhetorical question expects the answer, “Yes, of course.” The present translation reflects the force of the rhetorical question, rendering it as an affirmation. When used in a temporal sense the phrase מִקְדָּמָה (*miqedem*) means “from antiquity, ancient times,” often referring to earlier periods in Israel’s history. See its use in Neh 12:46; Pss 74:12; 77:11; Isa 45:21; 46:10; Mic 5:2.

⁷ **tn** Heb “My God, my holy one.” God’s “holiness” in this context is his sovereign transcendence as the righteous judge of the world (see vv. 12b-13a), thus the translation “My sovereign God.”

⁸ **tc** The MT reads, “we will not die,” but an ancient scribal tradition has “you [i.e., God] will not die.” This is preferred as a more difficult reading that can explain the rise of the other variant. Later scribes who copied the manuscripts did not want to associate the idea of death with God in any way, so they softened the statement to refer to humanity.

⁹ **tn** Heb “him,” a collective singular referring to the Babylonians. The plural pronoun “them” has been used in the translation in keeping with contemporary English style.

¹⁰ **tn** Heb “for judgment.”

¹¹ **tn** Heb “Rock” or “Cliff.” This divine epithet views God as a place where one can go to be safe from danger. The translation “Protector” conveys the force of the metaphor (cf. KJV, NEB “O mighty God”).

¹² **tn** Heb “to correct, reprove.”

1:13 You are too just¹³ to tolerate¹⁴ evil;
 you are unable to condone¹⁵ wrongdoing.
 So why do you put up with such treacherous
 people?¹⁶

Why do you say nothing when the wicked
 devour¹⁷ those more righteous than
 they are?¹⁸

1:14 You made people like fish in the sea,
 like animals in the sea¹⁹ that have no
 ruler.

1:15 The Babylonian tyrant²⁰ pulls them
 all up with a fishhook;
 he hauls them in with his throw net.²¹
 When he catches²² them in his dragnet,
 he is very happy.²³

1:16 Because of his success²⁴ he offers
 sacrifices to his throw net
 and burns incense to his dragnet;²⁵
 for because of them he has plenty of
 food,²⁶
 and more than enough to eat.²⁷

1:17 Will he then²⁸ continue to fill and
 empty his throw net?²⁹

¹³ **tn** Heb “[you] are too pure of eyes.” God’s “eyes” here signify what he looks at with approval. His “eyes” are “pure” in that he refuses to tolerate any wrongdoing in his presence.

¹⁴ **tn** Heb “to see.” Here “see” is figurative for “tolerate,” “put up with.”

¹⁵ **tn** Heb “to look at.” Cf. NEB “who canst not countenance wrongdoing”; NASB “You can not look on wickedness with favor.”

¹⁶ **tn** Heb “Why do you look at treacherous ones?” The verb בָּגַד (*bagad*, “be treacherous”) is often used of those who are disloyal or who violate agreements. See S. Erlandsson, *TDOT* 1:470-73.

¹⁷ **tn** Or “swallow up.”

¹⁸ **tn** Heb “more innocent than themselves.”

¹⁹ **tn** The Hebrew word רֶמֶשׂ (*remesh*) usually refers to animals that creep, but here the referent seems to be marine animals that glide through the water (note the parallelism in the previous line). See also Ps 104:25.

²⁰ **tn** Heb “he”; the referent (the Babylonian tyrant) has been specified in the translation for clarity (cf. NASB “The Chaldeans”; NIV “The wicked foe”; NRSV “The enemy”). Babylonian imperialism is here compared to a professional fisherman who repeatedly brings in his catch and has plenty to eat.

²¹ **tn** Apparently two different types of fishing nets are referred to here. The כְּרֵם (*kherem*, “throw net”) was used by fishermen standing on the shore (see Ezek 47:10), while the מִיְכָרֶת (*mikharet*, “dragnet”) was used by men in a boat. See R. D. Patterson, *Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah* (WEC), 165.

²² **tn** Heb “and he gathers.”

²³ **tn** Heb “Therefore he is happy and rejoices.” Here two synonyms are joined for emphasis.

²⁴ **tn** Heb “therefore.”

²⁵ **sn** The fishing implements (*throw net* and *dragnet*) represent Babylonian military might. The prophet depicts the Babylonians as arrogantly worshipping their own power (*sacrifices...burns incense*, see also v. 11b).

²⁶ **tn** Heb “for by them his portion is full [or, “fat”].”

²⁷ **tn** Heb “and his food is plentiful [or, “fat”].”

²⁸ **tn** Or “therefore.”

²⁹ **tn** Heb “Will he then empty his throw net?” The words “continue to fill and” are supplied in the translation for clarification.

Will he always¹ destroy² nations and spare none?³
2:1 I will stand at my watch post;
 I will remain stationed on the city wall.⁴
 I will keep watching, so I can see what he says to me
 and can know⁵ how I should answer
 when he counters my argument.⁶

The Lord Assures Habakkuk

2:2 The LORD responded:⁷
 “Write down this message!⁸ Record it legibly on tablets,
 so the one who announces⁹ it may read it easily.¹⁰
2:3 For the message is a witness to what is decreed;¹¹
 it gives reliable testimony about how matters will turn out.¹²
 Even if the message¹³ is not fulfilled right away, wait patiently;¹⁴
 for it will certainly come to pass – it will not arrive late.
2:4 Look, the one whose desires are not upright will faint from exhaustion,¹⁵

but the person of integrity¹⁶ will live¹⁷ because of his faithfulness.¹⁸
2:5 Indeed, wine will betray the proud, restless man!¹⁹
 His appetite²⁰ is as big as Sheol’s;²¹

1 tn Or “continually.”
2 tn Heb “kill.”
3 tn Or “without showing compassion.”
4 sn Habakkuk compares himself to a watchman *stationed on the city wall* who keeps his eyes open for approaching messengers or danger.
5 tn The word “know” is supplied in the translation for clarification.
6 tn Heb “concerning my correction [or, “reproof].”
7 tn Heb “the LORD answered and said.” The redundant expression “answered and said” has been simplified in the translation as “responded.”
8 tn Heb “[the] vision.”
9 tn Or “reads from.”
10 tn Heb “might run,” which here probably means “run [through it quickly with one’s eyes],” that is, read it easily.
11 tn Heb “For the vision is still for the appointed time.” The Hebrew word עֵד (*’ed*, “still”) is better emended to עֵד (*’ed*, “witness”) in light of the parallelism (see the note on the word “turn out” in the following line). The “appointed time” refers to the time when the divine judgment anticipated in vv. 6-20 will be realized.
12 tn Heb “and a witness to the end and it does not lie.” The Hebrew term בִּצְהָרָה (*vafekhah*) has been traditionally understood as a verb form from the root פָּחַח (*puakhk*, “puff, blow”; cf. NEB “it will come in breathless haste”; NASB “it hastens toward the goal”) but recent scholarship has demonstrated that it is actually a noun meaning “witness” (cf. NIV “it speaks of the end / and will not prove false”; NRSV “it speaks of the end, and does not lie”). See J. J. M. Roberts, *Nahum, Habakkuk, and Zephaniah* (OTL), 106. “The end” corresponds to “the appointed time” of the preceding line and refers to the time when the prophecy to follow will be fulfilled.
13 tn Heb “it”; the referent (the message) has been specified in the translation for clarity.
14 tn Heb “If it should delay, wait for it.” The Hebrew word חֶזוֹן (*khazon*, “vision, message”) is the subject of the third person verbs in v. 3 and the antecedent of the pronominal suffix in the phrase “for it.”
15 tn The meaning of this line is unclear, primarily because of the uncertainty surrounding the second word, נִפְלָה (*ap’lah*). Some read this as an otherwise unattested verb נִפְלָה (*’afal*, “swell”) from which are derived nouns meaning “mound” and “hemorrhoid.” This “swelling” is then understood in an abstract sense, “swell with pride.” This would yield a translation, “As for the proud, his desires are not right

within him” (cf. NASB “as for the proud one”; NIV “he is puffed up”; NRSV “Look at the proud!”). A multitude of other interpretations of this line, many of which involve emendations of the problematic form, may be found in the commentaries and periodical literature. The present translation assumes an emendation to a Pual form of the verb עָלַף (*’alaf*, “be faint, exhausted”). (See its use in the Pual in Isa 51:20, and in the Hitpael in Amos 8:13 and Jonah 4:8.) In the antithetical parallelism of the verse, it corresponds to לֵחַיִּים (*khayah*, “live”). The phrase לֵחַיִּים יִשְׁכַּח נַפְשׁוֹ בּוֹ (*lo yoshrakh nafsho bo*), literally, “not upright his desire within him,” is taken as a substantival clause that contrasts with צְדִיקִים (*tsadiq*, “the righteous one”) and serves as the subject of the preceding verb. Here נִפְשָׁה (*nefesh*) is understood in the sense of “desire” (see BDB 660-61 s.v. נִפְשָׁה for a list of passages where the word carries this sense).
16 tn Or “righteous.” The oppressed individuals mentioned in 1:4 are probably in view here.
17 tn Or “will be preserved.” In the immediate context this probably refers to physical preservation through both the present oppression and the coming judgment (see Hab 3:16-19).
18 tn Or “loyalty”; or “integrity.” The Hebrew word אֱמוּנָה (*’emunah*) has traditionally been translated “faith,” but the term nowhere else refers to “belief” as such. When used of human character and conduct it carries the notion of “honesty, integrity, reliability, faithfulness.” The antecedent of the suffix has been understood in different ways. It could refer to God’s faithfulness, but in this case one would expect a first person suffix (the original form of the LXX has “my faithfulness” here). Others understand the “vision” to be the antecedent. In this case the reliability of the prophecy is in view. For a statement of this view, see J. J. M. Roberts, *Nahum, Habakkuk, and Zephaniah* (OTL), 111-12. The present translation assumes that the preceding word “[the person of] integrity” is the antecedent. In this case the LORD is assuring Habakkuk that those who are truly innocent will be preserved through the coming oppression and judgment by their godly lifestyle, for God ultimately rewards this type of conduct. In contrast to these innocent people, those with impure desires (epitomized by the greedy Babylonians; see v. 5) will not be able to withstand God’s judgment (v. 4a).
19 tn Heb “Indeed wine betrays a proud man and he does not dwell.” The meaning of the last verb, “dwell,” is uncertain. Many take it as a denominative of the noun נָוָה (*navah*, “dwelling place”). In this case it would carry the idea, “he does not settle down,” and would picture the drunkard as restless (cf. NIV “never at rest”; NASB “does not stay at home”). Some relate the verb to an Arabic cognate and translate the phrase as “he will not succeed, reach his goal.”
sn The Babylonian tyrant is the *proud, restless man* described in this line as the last line of the verse, with its reference to the conquest of the nations, makes clear. Wine is probably a metaphor for imperialistic success. The more success the Babylonians experience, the more greedy they become just as a drunkard wants more and more wine to satisfy his thirst. But eventually this greed will lead to their downfall, for God will not tolerate such imperialism and will judge the Babylonians appropriately (vv. 6-20).
20 tn Heb “who opens wide like Sheol his throat.” Here נִפְשָׁה (*nefesh*) is understood in a physical sense, meaning “throat,” which in turn is figurative for the appetite. See H. W. Wolff, *Anthropology of the Old Testament*, 11-12.
21 sn Sheol is the proper name of the subterranean world which was regarded as the land of the dead. In ancient Canaanite thought Death was a powerful god whose appetite was never satisfied. In the OT Sheol/Death, though not deified, is personified as greedy and as having a voracious appetite. See Prov 30:15-16; Isa 5:14; also see L. I. J. Stadelmann, *The Hebrew Conception of the World*, 168.

like death, he is never satisfied.
He gathers¹ all the nations;
he seizes² all peoples.

The Proud Babylonians Are as Good as Dead

2:6 “But all these nations will someday taunt him³ and ridicule him with proverbial sayings:⁴ ‘The one who accumulates what does not belong to him is as good as dead⁵ (How long will this go on?)’⁶ – he who gets rich by extortion!⁷ 2:7 Your creditors will suddenly attack,⁸ those who terrify you will spring into action,⁹ and they will rob you.¹⁰ 2:8 Because you robbed many countries,¹¹ all who are left among the nations¹² will rob you. You have shed human blood and committed violent acts against lands, cities,¹³ and those who live in them. 2:9 The one who builds his house by unjust gain is as good as dead.¹⁴ He does this so he can build his nest way up high and escape the clutches of disaster.¹⁵

2:10 Your schemes will bring shame to your house. Because you destroyed many nations, you will self-destruct.¹⁶ 2:11 For the stones in the walls will cry out, and the wooden rafters will answer back.¹⁷ 2:12 The one who builds a city by bloodshed is as good as dead¹⁸ – he who starts¹⁹ a town by unjust deeds. 2:13 Be sure of this! The LORD who commands armies has decreed: The nations’ efforts will go up in smoke; their exhausting work will be for nothing.²⁰ 2:14 For recognition of the LORD’s sovereign majesty will fill the earth just as the waters fill up the sea.²¹ 2:15 “You who force your neighbor to drink wine²² are as good as dead²³ – you who make others intoxicated by forcing them to drink from the bowl of your furious anger,²⁴ so you can look at their genitals.²⁵ 2:16 But you will become drunk²⁶ with shame, not majesty.²⁷

¹ tn Heb “he gathers for himself.”

² tn Heb “he collects for himself.”

³ tn Heb “Will not these, all of them, take up a taunt against him...?” The rhetorical question assumes the response, “Yes, they will.” The present translation brings out the rhetorical force of the question by rendering it as an affirmation.

⁴ tn Heb “and a mocking song, riddles, against him? And one will say.”

⁵ tn Heb “Woe [to] the one who increases [what is] not his.” The Hebrew term *hoy* (“woe,” “ah”) was used in funeral laments and carries the connotation of death.

⁶ tn This question is interjected parenthetically, perhaps to express rhetorically the pain and despair felt by the Babylonians’ victims.

⁷ tn Heb “and the one who makes himself heavy [i.e., wealthy] [by] debts.” Though only appearing in the first line, the term *hoy* is to be understood as elliptical in the second line.

⁸ tn Heb “Will not your creditors suddenly rise up?” The rhetorical question assumes the response, “Yes, they will.” The present translation brings out the rhetorical force of the question by rendering it as an affirmation.

sn Your creditors will suddenly attack. The Babylonians are addressed directly here. They have robbed and terrorized others, but now the situation will be reversed as their creditors suddenly attack them.

⁹ tn Heb “[Will not] the ones who make you tremble awake?”

¹⁰ tn Heb “and you will become their plunder.”

¹¹ tn Or “nations.”

¹² tn Or “peoples.”

¹³ tn Heb “because of the shed blood of humankind and violence against land, city.” The singular forms *eret*, “land”) and *qiryah*, “city”) are collective, referring to all the lands and cities terrorized by the Babylonians.

¹⁴ tn Heb “Woe [to] the one who profits unjustly by evil unjust gain for his house.” On the term *hoy* see the note on the word “dead” in v. 6.

¹⁵ tn Heb “to place his nest in the heights in order to escape from the hand of disaster.”

sn Here the Babylonians are compared to a bird, perhaps an eagle, that builds its nest in an inaccessible high place where predators cannot reach it.

¹⁶ tn Heb “you planned shame for your house, cutting off many nations, and sinning [against] your life.”

¹⁷ sn The house mentioned in vv. 9-10 represents the Babylonian empire, which became great through imperialism. Here the materials of this “house” (the stones in the walls, the wooden rafters) are personified as witnesses who testify that the occupants have built the house through wealth stolen from others.

¹⁸ tn On the term *hoy* see the note on the word “dead” in v. 6.

¹⁹ tn Or “establishes”; or “founds.”

²⁰ tn Heb “Is it not, look, from the LORD of hosts that the nations work hard for fire, and the peoples are exhausted for nothing?”

²¹ tn Heb “for the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD, just as the waters cover over the sea.”

²² tn No direct object is present after “drink” in the Hebrew text. “Wine” is implied, however, and has been supplied in the translation for clarity.

²³ tn On the term *hoy* see the note on the word “dead” in v. 6.

²⁴ tc Heb “pouring out your anger and also making drunk”; or “pouring out your anger and [by] rage making drunk.” The present translation assumes that the final *khet* (ת) in *misapeakh*, “pouring”) is dittographic and that the form should actually be read *missaf*, “from a bowl”).

sn Forcing them to drink from the bowl of your furious anger. The Babylonian’s harsh treatment of others is compared to intoxicating wine which the Babylonians force the nations to drink so they can humiliate them. Cf. the imagery in Rev 14:10.

²⁵ tn Heb “their nakedness,” a euphemism.

sn Metaphor and reality are probably blended here. This may refer to the practice of publicly humiliating prisoners of war by stripping them naked. See J. J. M. Roberts, *Nahum, Habakkuk, and Zephaniah* (OTL), 124.

²⁶ tn Heb “are filled.” The translation assumes the verbal form is a perfect of certitude, emphasizing the certainty of Babylon’s coming judgment, which will reduce the majestic empire to shame and humiliation.

²⁷ tn Or “glory.”

Now it is your turn to drink and expose your uncircumcised foreskin!¹
 The cup of wine in the LORD's right hand² is coming to you, and disgrace will replace your majestic glory!
2:17 For you will pay in full for your violent acts against Lebanon,³ terrifying judgment will come upon you because of the way you destroyed the wild animals living there.⁴ You have shed human blood and committed violent acts against lands, cities, and those who live in them.
2:18 What good⁵ is an idol? Why would a craftsman make it?⁶ What good is a metal image that gives misleading oracles?⁷ Why would its creator place his trust in it⁸ and make⁹ such mute, worthless things?
2:19 The one who says to wood, "Wake up!" is as good as dead¹⁰ – he who says¹¹ to speechless stone, "Awake!"

¹ **tc** Heb "drink, even you, and show the foreskin." Instead of הַיָּרֵל (*he'arel*, "show the foreskin") one of the Dead Sea scrolls has הַרְעִי (*hera'el*, "stumble"). This reading also has support from several ancient versions and is followed by the NEB ("you too shall drink until you stagger") and NRSV ("Drink, you yourself, and stagger"). For a defense of the Hebrew text, see P. D. Miller, Jr., *Sin and Judgment in the Prophets*, 63-64.

² **sn** The Lord's right hand represents his military power. He will force the Babylonians to experience the same humiliating defeat they inflicted on others.

³ **tn** Heb "for the violence against Lebanon will cover you."

⁴ **tc** The Hebrew appears to read literally, "and the violence against the animals [which] he terrified." The verb form יִרְחַם (y^h*khiam*) appears to be a Hiphil imperfect third masculine singular with third feminine plural suffix (the antecedent being the animals) from רָחַם (*khata*, "be terrified"). The translation above follows the LXX and assumes a reading יִרְחַם יְהוָה (y^h*khaitekha*, "[the violence against the animals] will terrify you"; cf. NRSV "the destruction of the animals will terrify you"; NIV "and your destruction of animals will terrify you"). In this case the verb is a Hiphil imperfect third masculine singular with second masculine singular suffix (the antecedent being Babylon). This provides better symmetry with the preceding line, where Babylon's violence is the subject of the verb "cover."

sn The language may anticipate Nebuchadnezzar's utilization of trees from the Lebanon forest in building projects. Lebanon and its animals probably represent the western Palestinian states conquered by the Babylonians.

⁵ **tn** Or "of what value."

⁶ **tn** Heb "so that the one who forms it fashions it?" Here כִּי (*ki*) is taken as resultative after the rhetorical question. For other examples of this use, see R. J. Williams, *Hebrew Syntax*, 73, §450.

⁷ **tn** Heb "or a metal image, a teacher of lies." The words "What good is" in the translation are supplied from the previous parallel line. "Teacher of lies" refers to the false oracles that the so-called god would deliver through a priest. See J. J. M. Roberts, *Nahum, Habakkuk, and Zephaniah* (OTL), 126.

⁸ **tn** Heb "so that the one who forms his image trusts in it?" As earlier in the verse, כִּי (*ki*) is resultative.

⁹ **tn** Heb "to make."

¹⁰ **tn** Heb "Woe [to] the one who says." On the term הוֹי (*hoi*) see the note on the word "dead" in v. 6.

¹¹ **tn** The words "he who says" in the translation are supplied from the previous parallel line.

Can it give reliable guidance?¹²
 It is overlaid with gold and silver;
 it has no life's breath inside it.
2:20 But the LORD is in his majestic palace.¹³
 The whole earth is speechless in his presence!¹⁴

Habakkuk's Vision of the Divine Warrior

3:1 This is a prayer of Habakkuk the prophet.¹⁵
3:2 LORD, I have heard the report of what you did;¹⁶
 I am awed.¹⁷ LORD, by what you accomplished.¹⁸
 In our time¹⁹ repeat those deeds;²⁰
 in our time reveal them again.²¹
 But when you cause turmoil, remember to show us mercy!²²
3:3 God comes²³ from Teman,²⁴

¹² **tn** Though the Hebrew text has no formal interrogative marker here, the context indicates that the statement should be taken as a rhetorical question anticipating the answer, "Of course not!" (so also NIV, NRSV).

¹³ **tn** Or "holy temple." The LORD's heavenly palace, rather than the earthly temple, is probably in view here (see Ps 11:4; Mic 1:2-3). The Hebrew word קֹדֶשׁ (*qodesh*, "holy") here refers to the sovereign transcendence associated with his palace.

¹⁴ **tn** Or "Be quiet before him, all the earth!"

¹⁵ **tn** The Hebrew text adds נְלִי שִׁיְיוֹנוֹת (*al shiyonot*, "upon [or, "according to"] *shiyonot*"). The meaning of this word is uncertain. It may refer to the literary genre of the prayer or to the musical style to be employed when it is sung. The NEB leaves the term untranslated; several other modern English versions transliterate the term into English, sometimes with explanatory notes (NASB, NRSV "according to Shigionoth"; NIV "On *Shigionoth*").

¹⁶ **tn** Heb "your report," that is, "the report concerning you."

¹⁷ **tn** Heb "I fear." Some prefer to read, "I saw, LORD, what you accomplished" (cf. NEB).

¹⁸ **tn** Heb "your work."

¹⁹ **tn** Heb "in the midst of years." The meaning of the phrase, which occurs only here in the OT, is uncertain (cf. NIV "in our day"; NEB, NASB "in the midst of the years").

²⁰ **tn** Heb "revive it" (i.e., "your work").

²¹ **tn** Heb "make known." The implied object is "your deeds"; the pronoun "them," referring to "deeds" in the previous line, was employed in the translation to avoid redundancy. The suffix on the form תִּיַרְיֶהוּ (*khayeyhu*, "revive it") does double duty in the parallelism.

²² **tn** Heb "in turmoil remember [to show] compassion."

²³ **tn** In vv. 3-15 there is a mixture of eleven prefixed verbal forms (without *vav* [v] consecutive or with *vav* conjunctive), sixteen suffixed forms, and three prefixed forms with *vav* consecutive. All of the forms are best taken as indicating completed action from the speaker's standpoint (all of the prefixed forms being regarded as preterites). The forms could be translated with the past tense, but this would be misleading, for this is not a mere recital of God's deeds in Israel's past history. Habakkuk here describes, in terms reminiscent of past theophanies, his prophetic vision of a future theophany (see v. 7, "I saw"). From the prophet's visionary standpoint the theophany is "as good as done." This translation uses the English present tense throughout these verses to avoid misunderstanding. A similar strategy is followed by the NEB; in contrast note the NIV and NRSV, which consistently use past tenses throughout the section, and the NASB, which employs present tenses in vv. 3-5 and mostly past tenses in vv. 6-15.

²⁴ **sn** *Teman* was a city or region in southern Edom.

the sovereign¹ one from Mount Paran.²
*Selah.*³

His splendor covers the skies,⁴
his glory⁵ fills the earth.

3:4 He is as bright as lightning;⁶
a two-pronged lightning bolt flashes from
his hand.⁷

This is the outward display of his power.⁸

3:5 Plague goes before him;
pestilence⁹ marches right behind him.¹⁰

3:6 He takes his battle position¹¹ and
shakes¹² the earth;
with a mere look he frightens¹³ the na-
tions.

The ancient mountains disintegrate;¹⁴
the primeval hills are flattened.

He travels on the ancient roads.¹⁵

3:7 I see the tents of Cushan overwhelmed
by trouble;¹⁶

the tent curtains of the land of Midian are
shaking.¹⁷

3:8 Is the LORD mad at the rivers?

Are you angry with the rivers?

Are you enraged at the sea?¹⁸

Is this why¹⁹ you climb into your horse-
drawn chariots,²⁰

your victorious chariots?²¹

3:9 Your bow is ready for action;²²

you commission your arrows.²³ *Selah.*

You cause flash floods on the earth's sur-
face.²⁴

3:10 When the mountains see you, they
shake.

The torrential downpour sweeps
through.²⁵

The great deep²⁶ shouts out;
it lifts its hands high.²⁷

3:11 The sun and moon stand still in their
courses;²⁸

the flash of your arrows drives them
away.²⁹

the bright light of your lightning-quick
spear.³⁰

3:12 You furiously stomp on the earth,

¹ **tn** Or traditionally, "holy one." The term קדוש (*qadosh*, "holy [one]!") here refers to God's sovereignty. See v. 3b.

² **sn** The precise location of *Mount Paran* is unknown, but like Teman it was located to the southeast of Israel. Habakkuk saw God marching from the direction of Sinai.

³ **tn** *Selah*. The meaning of this musical term (which also appears in vv. 9, 13, and in the Psalms as well) is unknown.

⁴ **tn** Or "heavens."

⁵ **tn** *Heb* "praise." This could mean that the earth responds in praise as God's splendor is observed in the skies. However, the Hebrew term תְּהִלָּה (*'shillah*, "praise") can stand by metonymy for what prompts it (i.e., fame, glory, deeds).

⁶ **tn** *Heb* "[His] radiance is like light." Some see a reference to sunlight, but the Hebrew word אור (*or*) here refers to lightning, as the context indicates (see vv. 4b, 9, 11). The word also refers to lightning in Job 36:32 and 37:3, 11, 15.

⁷ **tn** *Heb* "two horns from his hand to him." Sharp, pointed lightning bolts have a "horn-like" appearance. The weapon of "double lightning" appears often in Mesopotamian representations of gods. See Elizabeth Van Buren, *Symbols of the Gods in Mesopotamian Art* (AnOr), 70-73.

⁸ **tn** *Heb* "and there [is] the covering of his strength"; or "and there is his strong covering." The meaning of this line is unclear. The point may be that the lightning bolts are merely a covering, or outward display, of God's raw power. In Job 36:32 one reads that God "covers his hands with light [or, "lightning"]."

⁹ **tn** Because of parallelism with the previous line, the meaning "pestilence" is favored for רֶשֶׁף (*reshef*) here, but usage elsewhere suggests a destructive bolt of fire may be in view. See BDB 958 s.v.

sn There are mythological echoes here, for in Canaanite literature the god Resheph aids Baal in his battles. See J. Day, "New Light on the Mythological Background of the Allusion to Resheph in Habakkuk III 5," *VT* 29 (1979): 353-55.

¹⁰ **tn** *Heb* "goes out at his feet."

¹¹ **tn** *Heb* "he stands."

¹² **tn** This verb has been traditionally understood as "measure" (from בָּיַד, *mud*), but the immediately following context (vv. 6b-7) favors the meaning "shake" from מָדַד (*mavd*; see HALOT 555 s.v.).

¹³ **tn** *Heb* "makes [the nations] jump [in fear]."

¹⁴ **tn** Or "crumbled," broke into pieces."

¹⁵ **tn** *Heb* "ancient ways [or, "doings"] are his." The meaning of this line is unclear. Traditionally it has been translated, "his ways are eternal." However, in this context (see vv. 3, 7) it is more likely that the line speaks of the LORD taking the same route as in the days of Moses and Deborah (see Deut 33:2; Judg 5:4). See J. J. M. Roberts, *Nahum, Habakkuk, and Zephaniah* (OTL), 154.

¹⁶ **tn** *Heb* "under trouble I saw the tents of Cushan."

sn *Cushan* was located in southern Transjordan.

¹⁷ **tn** R. D. Patterson takes תַּהַת אָוֶן (*takhat 'aven*) in the first line as a place name, "Tahath-Aven." (*Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah* [WEC], 237.) In this case one may translate the verse as a tricolon: "I look at Tahath-Aven. The tents of Cushan are shaking, the tent curtains of the land of Midian."

¹⁸ **sn** The following context suggests these questions should be answered, "Yes." The rivers and the sea, symbolizing here the hostile nations (v. 12), are objects of the Lord's anger (v. 10, 15).

¹⁹ **tn** *Heb* "so that." Here כִּי (*ki*) is resultative. See the note on the phrase "make it" in 2:18.

²⁰ **tn** *Heb* "you mount your horses." As the next line makes clear, the Lord is pictured here as a charioteer, not a cavalryman. Note NRSV here, "when you drove your horses, // your chariots to victory."

²¹ **tn** Or "chariots of deliverance."

²² **tn** *Heb* "[into] nakedness your bow is laid bare."

²³ **tn** *Heb* "sworn in are the arrow-shafts with a word." The passive participle of שָׁבַע (*shava'*), "swear an oath," also occurs in Ezek 21:23 ET (21:28 HT) referencing those who have sworn allegiance. Here the LORD's arrows are personified and viewed as having received a commission which they have vowed to uphold. In Jer 47:6-7 the LORD's sword is given such a charge. In the Ugaritic myths Baal's weapons are formally assigned the task of killing the sea god Yam.

²⁴ **tn** *Heb* "[with] rivers you split open the earth." A literal rendering like "You split the earth with rivers" (so NIV, NRSV) suggests geological activity to the modern reader, but in the present context of a violent thunderstorm, the idea of streams swollen to torrents by downpours better fits the imagery.

sn As the LORD comes in a thunderstorm the downpour causes streams to swell to river-like proportions and spread over the surface of the ground, causing *flash floods*.

²⁵ **tn** *Heb* "a heavy rain of waters passes by." Perhaps the flash floods produced by the downpour are in view here.

²⁶ **sn** The *great deep*, which is to be equated with the sea (vv. 8, 15), is a symbol of chaos and represents the Lord's enemies.

²⁷ **sn** Lifting the hands here suggests panic and is accompanied by a cry for mercy (see Ps 28:2; Lam 2:19). The forces of chaos cannot withstand the Lord's power revealed in the storm.

²⁸ **tn** *Heb* "in their lofty dwelling places."

²⁹ **tn** Or "at the light of your arrows they vanish."

³⁰ **tn** *Heb* "at the brightness of the lightning of your spear."

you angrily trample down the nations.
3:13 You march out to deliver your people,
 to deliver your special servant.¹
 You strike the leader of the wicked nation,²
 laying him open from the lower body to the neck.³ *Selah.*
3:14 You pierce the heads of his warriors⁴
 with a spear.⁵
 They storm forward to scatter us;⁶
 they shout with joy as if they were plundering the poor with no opposition.⁷
3:15 But you trample on the sea with your horses,
 on the surging, raging waters.⁸

Habakkuk Declares His Confidence

3:16 I listened and my stomach churned;⁹
 the sound made my lips quiver.
 My frame went limp, as if my bones were decaying,¹⁰
 and I shook as I tried to walk.¹¹

I long¹² for the day of distress
 to come upon¹³ the people who attack us.
3:17 When¹⁴ the fig tree does not bud,
 and there are no grapes on the vines;
 when the olive trees do not produce,¹⁵
 and the fields yield no crops,¹⁶
 when the sheep disappear¹⁷ from the pen,
 and there are no cattle in the stalls,
3:18 I will rejoice because of¹⁸ the LORD;
 I will be happy because of the God who delivers me!
3:19 The sovereign LORD is my source of strength.¹⁹
 He gives me the agility of a deer;²⁰
 he enables me to negotiate the rugged terrain.²¹

(This prayer is for the song leader. It is to be accompanied by stringed instruments.)²²

¹ **tn** Heb "anointed one." In light of the parallelism with "your people" in the preceding line this could refer to Israel, but elsewhere the Lord's anointed one is always an individual. The Davidic king is the more likely referent here.

² **tn** Heb "you strike the head from the house of wickedness."

³ **tn** Heb "laying bare [from] foundation to neck."

⁴ **tn** Some take "warriors" with the following line, in which case one should translate, "you pierce [his] head with a spear; his warriors storm forward to scatter us" (cf. NIV). The meaning of the Hebrew term פָּרָצוּ (*p'razo*), translated here "his warriors," is uncertain.

⁵ **tc** Heb "his shafts." Some emend to "your shafts." The translation above assumes an emendation to מַטֵּה (*matteh*, "shaft, spear"), the *vav-yod* (ו-י) sequence being a corruption of an original הו (*he*).

⁶ **tn** Heb "me," but the author speaks as a representative of God's people.

⁷ **tn** Heb "their rejoicing is like devouring the poor in secret."

⁸ **tn** Heb "the foaming of the mighty [or "many"] waters."

⁹ **tn** Heb "my insides trembled."

¹⁰ **tn** Heb "decay entered my bones."

¹¹ **tc** Heb "beneath me I shook, which...." The Hebrew term

אֲשֶׁר (*asher*) appears to be a relative pronoun, but a relative pronoun does not fit here. The translation assumes a reading אֲשֻׁרַי (*ashuray*, "my steps") as well as an emendation of the preceding verb to a third plural form.

¹² **tn** The translation assumes that אָנֹכִי (*anuakh*) is from the otherwise unattested verb נָאָךְ (*navakh*, "sigh"; see HALOT 680 s.v. II נָאָךְ; so also NEB). Most take this verb as נָוָךְ (*nuakh*, "to rest") and translate, "I wait patiently" (cf. NIV).

¹³ **tn** Heb "to come up toward."

¹⁴ **tn** Or "though."

¹⁵ **tn** Heb "the produce of the olive disappoints."

¹⁶ **tn** Heb "food."

¹⁷ **tn** Or "are cut off."

¹⁸ **tn** Or "in."

¹⁹ **tn** Or perhaps, "is my wall," that is, "my protector."

²⁰ **tn** Heb "he makes my feet like those of deer."

²¹ **tn** Heb "he makes me walk on my high places."

^{sn} Difficult times are coming, but Habakkuk is confident the LORD will sustain him. Habakkuk will be able to survive, just as the deer negotiates the difficult rugged terrain of the high places without injury.

²² **tn** Heb "For the leader, on my stringed instruments."