

# Habakkuk chapter 3

This is basically Habakkuk's prayer written like a hymn or a Psalm.

## Verse 1 and 2

A prayer (of **thanksgiving**) of Habakkuk the prophet, on Shigionoth (or **shiggaion most likely meaning a poem with intense feeling or a song delivered in the greatest excitement**). In this case, a strong cry for justice against sin.

2 O LORD, I have heard your speech (**Your revelation to me concerning the coming chastisement of the Jews, and the destruction of their oppressors**) and was afraid (**trembled at the realisation of these sad things, which both we and they were to suffer**); O LORD, revive (**keep alive, refresh, renew**) Your work (**freeing and returning the captives**) in the midst of the years! In the midst of the years (**70 years of trouble and sadness**) make it known (**make it known that You are our God, and we your people, that you still care for us**); In wrath (**great anger**) remember mercy (**let your people see Your grace and mercy towards them**).

- Habakkuk called on God to stir up ("revive") the "work" that He said He would do in judging Babylon, that is, to bring the judgement to life.
- He asked God to make it known to His people "in the midst of the years," namely, the years between Judah's judgment and Babylon's.
- While God was preparing Babylon for His "wrath," Habakkuk asked Him to "remember" Israel by extending "mercy" to her, by shortening the period of her suffering.

## Verse 3

- Habakkuk starts to recount the events that took place during the exodus. He chooses to revisit God's judgement on the enemies of His people and the miraculous deliverance of His people.

God (**Elohim, the Holy one**) came from Teman (**a large town in Edom which was another name of Esau who was the Grandfather of Teman**), the Holy One (**sovereign ruler**) from Mount Paran (**the mountain opposite Teman**). Selah (**A pause made by the musicians meaning to lift up, maybe to change the key of the song, increase the volume, maybe for contemplation or meditation or for an instrumental solo**) His glory (**kingly authority**) covered the heavens (**the sky, lightning and thunder, and fire and smoke, symbols of the power, majesty, and greatness of God**), And the earth was full of His praise.

- The prophet pictured God as rising over His people, like the rising sun appearing over "Teman," a large town in Edom, and "Mt. Paran," the mountain opposite Teman to the east of the Israelites as they left Egypt.
- They would see Him as they saw the sun rising in the east—like they saw Him on Mt Sinai when He gave them the Law. (Deuteronomy 33:2).

#### Verse 4

*His brightness (**His splendour**) was like the light (**as bright as the sun but more dazzling**); He had rays (**KJV Horns**) flashing from His hand, and there His power was hidden.*

- The "radiance" of the Holy One's glory was "like the sunlight." "Power" seemed to flash from His fingertips as "rays" (horns) of light stretch from the rising sun.
- But was a just a small display of His power. Most of His power remained concealed.

#### Verse 5

*Before Him went pestilence (**devastating disease which wiped out the Canaanites**), and fever (**KJV. burning coals**) followed at His feet (**were with Him at His beck and call waiting His command to devastate**).*

- As God moves through the earth, like the sun, His holiness burns up what is in front of Him and what He leaves behind.
- Imagine the King of kings and Lord of lords moving with escorts, pestilence in front of Him, being His armour or shield bearer and fever or plague or burning coal being behind him as His servant.

#### Verse 6

*He stood (**with Joshua and the rest**) and measured the earth (**probably divided to them their inheritance**); He looked (**with anger in His eyes**) and startled (**surprised and shocked, frightened**) (**kjv. drove asunder**) the nations (**the cursed nations**). And the everlasting mountains were scattered, the perpetual hills bowed. His ways are everlasting. (**The wisdom, goodness, justice, holiness, faithfulness, and power of God, which he shows in the ways He governs His church and people, are everlasting**).*

- Meaning that when we go through the same circumstances, then we can hope for the same effects of His power.
- So the prophet drives home his point that it is through everlasting loving-kindnesses that God embraces His church.

### Verse 7

*I saw (**with his mind and understanding**) the tents of Cushan in affliction (**fear and pain**); the curtains (**of the tents**) of the land of Midian trembled.*

- Habakkuk saw the semi-nomadic Ethiopians and Midianites, who lived on both sides of Mt. Sinai, "trembling" with fear because they witnessed some of God's power. They probably saw Him parting the red sea and were really frightened.

### Verse 8

*O LORD, were You displeased with the rivers, Was Your anger against the rivers, Was Your wrath against the sea, That You rode on Your horses, Your chariots of salvation?*

- Habakkuk now changed from describing the manifestation of God's power, and the people's reaction to it, to a description of God's acts on the earth.
- The prophet remembers the miraculous dividing of the Red Sea and Jordan, when God divided them to make a passage for his people.
- With rhetorical questions, Habakkuk was stating that God was not angry with the (Nile and Jordan) "rivers" and the (Red) "sea" when He parted them. It was merely a sign of favour to His people Israel.
- He was demonstrating His power, through the "salvation" of His people, as a Divine Warrior riding His chariot.
- "From start to finish, Israel's God is shown to be the victor over all individuals and nations and the champion of those who follow Him.

### Verse 9

*Your bow was made quite ready (**kjv quite naked**) (**the case was taken off, ready to be used without further delay**); Oaths were sworn over Your arrows (**oaths and promises made to our fathers to drive out the Canaanites**). Selah you divided the earth with rivers. (**Our God made rivers in the desert for them**).  
(Psalm 78:15-16)*

- He pulled His powerful "bow" out, and prepared to use it. He called for many arrows ("rods of chastisement") to shoot at His enemies.
- "God had collected and prepared weapons and pledged on them an oath for the destruction of his enemies.
- "In the ancient Near East, warriors would sometimes empower their weapons with a magical formula. The Lord is depicted here as doing the same.

## Verse 10

*The mountains (or maybe the kings) saw You and trembled (in some ancient languages kings were represented with drawings of mountains); The overflowing of the water passed by. The deep uttered its voice (with dreadful roaring, like a mighty voice), and lifted its hands on high (testified its obedience to the command of God).*

- Habakkuk personified "the mountains" and described them as shaking when they saw the Lord.
- Torrential rainstorms that resulted in flooding "swept by" Him. The sea lifted up its waves like hands in response to His command.

## Verse 11

*The sun and moon stood still in their habitation;  
At the light of Your arrows they went, At the shining of Your glittering spear  
(God's agents of judgment).*

Joshua 10:12-

Then Joshua spoke to the LORD in the day when the LORD delivered up the Amorites before the children of Israel, and he said in the sight of Israel: "Sun, stand still over Gibeon; And Moon, in the Valley of Aijalon."

13 So the sun stood still, And the moon stopped, Till the people had revenge Upon their enemies. Is this not written in the Book of Jasher? So the sun stood still in the midst of heaven, and did not hasten to go down for about a whole day.

## Verse 12

*You marched through the land in indignation (righteous anger because of the injustice of their sins); You trampled (broke to pieces, smashed) the nations (heathen nations) in anger.*

- The Lord had "marched throughout the earth" like a giant subduing Israel's enemies. He had "trampled" hostile "nations."
- Verses 12 through 15 show God's power as seen by the enemy.

### Verse 13

*You went forth for the salvation of Your people, For salvation with Your Anointed.*

- He had gone forth as a Warrior to save His "people" and to deliver His "Anointed" one. This may refer to Moses in his battles with Israel's enemies, or it may refer to a coming anointed one: Cyrus (Isaiah 45:1), or Messiah (Psalm 2:2; Daniel 9:26).

*You struck the head from the house of the wicked, by laying bare from foundation to neck. Selah.*

- This was either in reference to the king of the Canaanites in the past or to the king of the Chaldeans which would happen in the future.
- The Lord had also destroyed the leaders ("struck the head") of many evil nations that opposed the Israelites, beginning with Pharaoh.
- He had disabled their nations as thoroughly as if someone had torn a building off its foundation.
- "Selah." (***pause, meditate on that***) In the future, God would do this to the Chaldean dynasty.

### Verse 14

*You thrust through with his own arrows the head of his villages.*

- The Lord used His enemies, the Canaanites, own weapons to kill their leaders ("the head") in outrage and personal vengeance (Judges 5:26).

*They came out like a whirlwind to scatter me ;( With violence invading every side).*

*Their rejoicing was like feasting on the poor in secret.*

- Israel's enemies had "stormed in(to)" the Promised Land with great enthusiasm "to scatter" God's people, like those who "devour" (destroy) "oppressed" people "in secret."

### Verse 15

*You (O God) walked through the sea with Your horses, Through the heap of great waters.*

- God had parted the Red Sea, as though He rode through it as though on horses, causing it to move away and leave a dry road for His people to walk out of Egypt.
- Habakkuk ends His account of how God had delivered the children of Israel out of Egypt into Canaan in this section with reference to the Red sea.

### Verse 16

*When I heard (**what dreadful destruction God threatened against Israel**), my body trembled; My lips quivered (**trembled**) at the voice (**at the report**); Rottenness entered my bones (**strength in my bones wasted away**); And I trembled in myself (**I was also shaken**), That I might rest in the day of trouble (**remember and rely on God's mercy and providence**). When he (**the king of Babylon**) comes up to the people (**the Jews**), He will invade them with his troops (**numerous armies**).*

- Habakkuk "trembled" all over as he waited for the day of Babylon's invasion of Judah.
- He could do nothing but "wait" patiently for the Babylonians to grow stronger and for judgment to come on Israel. A terrible feeling to know that calamity is coming that he could do nothing to prevent it.
- But he could endure the prospect because he remembered that the God of Israel had consistently defended her in the past—and promised to do so in the future.
- Earlier when he heard about the powerful Babylonians, he really wanted to talk to God, but now with a better understanding of God's promises he had no more words. All he had to do was wait. God would handle the Babylonians.
- Whenever we find ourselves getting worked up within, we need to stop, pray, and wait on the Lord before we do or say something stupid."

### Verse 17 and 18

*Though the fig tree (Judah) may not blossom (give any sign of bearing fruit), Nor fruit be on the vines (the riches and provisions); Though the labour of the olive may fail, And the fields yield no food; Though the flock may be cut off from the fold, And there be no herd in the stalls-Yet I will rejoice in the LORD, I will joy in the God of my salvation.*

- Even though everything would get worse in Judah, Habakkuk determined to praise God and to "rejoice in the God" who would save him.
- Habakkuk was determined to rejoice in the Lord regardless of what does or does not happen.
- Faith means loving and serving God regardless of circumstances."
- "It is right and proper to voice appreciation of God's goodness when He gives us all that is necessary for life, health, and prosperity. But when these things are lacking, to rejoice in God for his own sake is evidence of pure faith.

### Verse 19

*The LORD God is my strength; He will make my feet like deer's feet (swift to run to my refuge in Him), And He will make me walk on my high hills (to my temple in my country). To the Chief Musician. With my stringed instruments.*

- The Sovereign God, Habakkuk's master, was the source of his "strength," even though the prophet's legs shook (v. 16). He enabled His servant to walk through the dangerous valley he faced—as swiftly as deer or gazelle's feet through the wilderness.
- The final footnote to this book gives direction to "the choir director," who used this chapter as part of Israel's formal worship. Habakkuk specified the use of "stringed instruments" to accompany the singing, undoubtedly because they set the proper mood.

## Conclusion

"Habakkuk was about to 'go under' when he started this book. Destruction, violence, strife, conflict, injustice, and wickedness were all he could see. But he cried out to God and his cry did not go unheeded. The Lord not only answered his complaint but also provided the confidence needed to lift him from the miry clay. His journey was not exactly an easy one, but it was certainly worth it."

"Habakkuk teaches us to face our doubts and questions honestly, take them humbly to the Lord, wait for His Word to teach us, and then worship Him no matter how we feel or what we see."

This book can be a great help to us if we are discouraged about our present circumstances, and or we can't see anything good coming in the future. It helps us adjust our attitude from one of pessimism, and even despair, to optimism and rejoicing. The crucial issue is whether we will listen to God and believe Him. Will we exercise faith?