

## 12 Prophets - Habakkuk Part 3

*"Prophets distilled the 613 mitzvot into a list of primary commandments....."*

*Chavakuk came and established the mitzvot on a single one:*

*A righteous person shall live by his faith" (Chavakuk 2:4)*

*I will take my stand at my watchpost and station myself on the tower and look out to see what he will say to me, and what I will answer concerning my complaint.*

(Habakkuk 2:1)

The beginning of chapter 2 as the conversation continues between the prophet and HaShem is interesting as it indicates that the prophet appears to be preparing for further admonishment. The verse contains the following: expectation and outcome.

### Expectation

This is our responsibility; how we consider our requests before the Creator and before others. It requires patience, courage, and understanding that is beyond our own interests. In the case of the prophet, his contention with the Creator on the face of it seems reasonable. We subject ourselves to the same manner of thinking as we look at the scriptures and seek to determine what the Holy One may do, but we also need to ask if there is bias in the outcome that we want to see because of the limit of our understanding.

The prophet is ready to wait for both the outcome and the response to his complaint in the face of all that he sees around him considering at the same time what his response will be to the answer he will receive.

What he is not doing, which is a lesson that we must all learn, is to somehow involve himself in things to bring about an outcome he wishes to see. This would be a mistake, and in the light of the following verses, would be the opposite to "faith".

### Outcome

The outcome of our requests can come in two forms:

1. We get what we ask for whether it be for the best or not in order to teach us something.
2. We get the outcome of the Holy One because we are willing to submit to His authority even if it means harm to us in the immediate future.

In the case of the first example, this begs the question of the nature of our prayer and its bias. We can pray for things that are so rooted in our own needs and expectations, that we are far from the mind and heart of the Creator.

He may still give us what we pray for because of our determination in prayer, or we can intervene as far as we can to skew the outcome, but still attribute this to the Creator. The problem with this approach is that it amounts to "taking His name in vain" because at the heart of the issue is our own ego and how we actually wish to be at the centre of the outcome. This is subtle, but it is the subtleties that will trap us in believing things that are contrary to the Father's nature.

*"Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. On that day many will say to me, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?' And then will I declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness.'*

Matthew 7:21-23

In the case of the second example, this may require us to stand and be patient to experience the outcome of prayer. This is closest to what the prophet is doing. Or are we willing walk toward something in the knowledge that anything else would be avoidance and disobedience.

And going a little farther he fell on his face and prayed, saying, *"My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as you will."*

Matthew 26:39

## HaShem's response to Habakkuk

*And the LORD answered me: "Write the vision; make it plain on tablets, so he may run who reads it. For still the vision awaits its appointed time; it hastens to the end—it will not lie. If it seems slow, wait for it; it will surely come; it will not delay.*

Habakkuk 2:2-3

The response that we see from HaShem must in the first instance be perceived for its time.

The Sages often speak of how prophecy has come to an end. We need to consider this statement carefully before we consider it erroneous. Present day believers may dispute this statement vehemently because of their experience in the modern church. Internet channels and prophecy websites are filled with modern-day prophets and their pronouncements. We are not going to debate this here.

In the context of the passage and the time of Habakkuk, the vision that is being spoken of here is treated as being in the context of the Babylonians. The words are to be an encouragement to the prophet and to the people who are going into exile. As we spoke of in our previous study, in the apocryphal account of Daniel, the story of Bel and the Dragon, which is similar to the account of Daniel in the den of lions, includes an episode where Habakkuk is taken to Daniel to sustain him during his ordeal. The essence behind that account is the same as what HaShem is instructing Habakkuk to do; to write down the vision as an encouragement to those in exile.

**"So he may run who reads it"** is an instruction to those who may be losing momentum in their difficulty.

**"for still the vision awaits its appointed time; it hastens to the end – it will not lie"** – from the plain text, this is telling us that more is to unfold. Expectation and impatience are not to walk hand in hand as they can cause many to lose faith in the Creator and His purposes. As part of the McDonald's generation when instant everything is the modern way of thinking, what is becoming clear in our present age is that watching and waiting have greater benefit in some cases. Even in the Daniel account, HaShem could have released Daniel in an instant, or struck down Darius and his advisors. There are any number of possibilities that we might believe should have taken place. What is clear is that by not releasing Daniel immediately, greater good was done both at that time and in the restoration of the Land after the Babylonian exile. The belief that firstly, the nation of Israel was untouchable because it was the chosen people in the chosen land was going to dispelled, not because those things were no longer true, but because they were truer than the people believed. Secondly, their unbelief had brought them to this point, and they now had to experience a reset so that they could see not just what they had lost, but also the wider plan and heart of the Father regarding their role in the world and for the whole of mankind. The vision has far broader implications.

**"If it seems slow, wait for it; it will surely come; it will not delay"** – looming difficulties are no excuse for us to lose faith in truth. This is not just a principle that we find in our present scripture but is the main theme of the book of Hebrews, where believers were returning to the Judaism of the Temple in order to escape persecution. Again, to reiterate the point, scripture is there to show us the whole picture as it unfolds and to trust in its unfolding. Nothing happens too soon or too late but all according to HaShem's will.

## Analysis of the word "end" "קץ"

The definition that we see here can be taken as meaning the end of a specific period or the end of everything. In the context of the passage, it is definitely pointing to the end of the reign of the Chaldeans, the end of the Babylonian exile. If the passage had spoken of the "the end" as we understand it today, then there would have been little hope for Habakkuk and those in exile. However, where we see it in other contexts gives us a clue regarding its future implications and their outcome.

Daniel 8:17, 8:19, 9:26, 11:27, 11:35, 11:40, 12:4, 12:6, 12:9

Isaiah 7:14-16, 9:7

In the context of the Habakkuk passage, we also see that it speaks to an appointed time. The question for us is whether that appointed time has passed or is still to come. The answer is probably YES!

*"Look at the proud: he is inwardly not upright; but the righteous will attain life through trusting faithfulness.*

Habakkuk 2:4

We now come to the key verse in Habakkuk that is used by commentators and the writers of the Apostolic writings. In its context, it is juxtaposed with the proud and their approach to events.

This verse is so relevant to us today as we are bombarded by the opinions of so many, both in the believing community (including this study) and in the media (social and mainstream). At the heart of what we are hearing and seeing are commentaries that are framed within the physical world as we know it. This is in areas of practical sciences (chemistry, physics, biology etc.) and social sciences (psychology, sociology, economics, anthropology, and politics). What they all have in common is that they are all bonded to the human systems that we reside within. What is clear from the book of Habakkuk is that what we see with our eyes and assume with our intellect is not what the "world" can fathom by its own means. There is a blindness that comes from knowledge which puffs up. This is not solely applicable to the secular world, but as we see in the scriptures, also in the religious world. At the heart of this is the following: ***"We all have knowledge." Yes, that is so, but "knowledge" puffs a person up with pride; whereas love builds up."*** 1Cor 8:1

*Iben Ezra observes. So R. Moses Kimchi interprets the passage,*

*"he whose soul is not right in him places himself in a fortress or tower, to set himself on high there from the enemy, and does not return to God, nor seek deliverance of him; but the righteous has no need to place himself on high in a fortress, for he shall live by his faith."<sup>1</sup>*

This is not denying that we are to be intelligent and to study and to excel in any of these areas, but above all we are not to make GOD in our own image as this is what brings about the arrogance that declares our dominance over others and assumes that we know the mind of GOD because of our understanding of His word.

Righteousness in itself is not the goal, righteousness is a gateway to life that is obtained through trusting faithfulness, which is established in relationship with Messiah Yeshua.

***But the just shall live by faith; the "just" man is the reverse of the former; he is one that believed in the coming of Messiah, and believed in him when come; who has no overweening opinion of himself, and of his own righteousness; nor does he trust in it for his justification before God, and acceptance with him; but in the righteousness of Messiah imputed to him, from whence he is denominated a just man: and such a one "shall live", not merely a corporeal life, for righteous men die as well as others; nor an eternal life, though such shall live this life, and have it now in some sense, for this life is enjoyed not by faith, but by sight; but a spiritual life, begun in regeneration, and maintained by the Spirit and grace of God; such live a life of justification on Messiah, of sanctification from him, and of communion with him; they live cheerfully, comfortably, and delightfully, a life of peace, joy, and comfort; which is greatly the sense of the word here, as in Psa 22:26 and this is "by his faith"; his own faith, and not another's; which though for its kind is the same in all, alike precious faith, yet as to its actions is peculiar to one, and is not another's: or by the faith of God; that is, by that faith which is the gift of God, and of his operation, and has him for its object; such live by faith upon a promising God, and so live comfortably: or by the faith of Messiah, promised to come in the preceding verse Hab 2:3; by that faith, of which he is the object, author, and finisher: just men live not upon their faith, but by it on Messiah, as***

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<sup>1</sup> John Gill's Exposition of the entire bible

*crucified for them, as the bread of life, and as the Lord their righteousness; and so have joy and peace in believing.<sup>2</sup>*

### The Nature of Arrogance

*"Moreover, wine is a traitor, an arrogant man who is never at rest. His greed is as wide as Sheol; like death he has never enough. He gathers for himself all nations and collects as his own all peoples."*

#### Habakkuk 2:5

We now begin to enter into some of the pictorial language of Habakkuk as HaShem continues His response. The opening line of the verse points us back to the time in the Garden when the Serpent confronts Eve. We see the same phrase opening the speech.

Hab 2:5

|                   |          |       |            |     |
|-------------------|----------|-------|------------|-----|
| בּוֹדֵד           | הַיַּיִן | כִּי  | וְאֵף      | 2:5 |
| being-treacherous | the-wine | that  | and-indeed |     |
| H898              | H3196    | H3588 | H637       |     |

Gen 3:1

|          |         |       |          |
|----------|---------|-------|----------|
| אֱלֹהִים | אָמַר   | כִּי  | אֵף      |
| Elohim   | he-said | that  | indeed 1 |
| H430     | H559    | H3588 | H637     |

This is not an unusual phrase – it is always associated with questioning of the opposing thought. In the context of Genesis “Has GOD said”; in Habakkuk, that “wine” always a source of joy and intoxication when used in celebration does not discern the nature of the celebrant and the focus of their joy.

**Gen. 3:1**, 1 Sam. 14:30, 2 Sam. 4:11, 1 Ki. 8:27, 2 Chr. 6:18, **2 Chr. 32:15**, Neh. 9:18, Job 9:14, Job 15:16, Job 25:6, Job 35:14, Prov. 11:31, Prov. 15:11, Prov. 17:7, Prov. 19:7, 10, Prov. 21:27, Ezek. 14:21, Ezek. 15:5

The verses listed show the instances where the question is asked “How much/indeed?”

What we see in the verse in Habakkuk is the beginning of the prediction of the downfall of Babylon, not in the hands of Nebuchadnezzar, because of his repentance, but through his son, just as David was not punished directly or rewarded directly for his sins and aspirations, but through Solomon his heir.

*King Belshazzar made a great feast for a thousand of his lords and drank wine in front of the thousand. Belshazzar, when he tasted the wine, commanded that the vessels of gold and of silver that Nebuchadnezzar his father had taken out of the temple in Jerusalem be brought, that the king and his lords, his wives, and his concubines might drink from them. Then they brought in the golden vessels that had been taken out of the temple, the house of God in Jerusalem, and the king and his lords, his wives, and his concubines drank from them. They drank wine and praised the gods of gold and silver, bronze, iron, wood, and stone. Immediately the fingers of a human hand appeared and wrote on the plaster of the wall of the king's palace, opposite the lampstand. And the king saw the hand as it wrote.*

#### Daniel 5:1-5

The handwriting had been on the wall since Habakkuk’s time, it was only now that it manifested itself.

As we noted previously, arrogance begets arrogance unless there is repentance. What we observe here is that as in any empire, might is right if you are the victor, although that does not translate down to the next generation.

Next week we investigate the woes.

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<sup>2</sup> ibid