

12 Prophets - Habakkuk Part 4

"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)

We begin our investigation of the "woe" verses in Habakkuk 2. These are the consequences of the actions of the Chaldeans and their arrogant lawlessness. As we begin to look at them, we start to see the repercussions of the actions of the Chaldeans.

The words that are being set out before us are coming directly from the Holy One, so there is no doubt that they will come to pass.

We therefore begin to consider these words in the following manner:

- 1) Their relevance to the events that would take place in the near future for the nations and Israel.
- 2) The pattern that they are setting down as an example to those who would witness the same "types" of events taking place in "their time" whether that be recent past, present, or future.
- 3) The events of the past teach us the outcomes of events in the present and future where the lessons of the past are not heeded.

As the kingdom of lawlessness seeks to gather around it the fruits of its plunder, whether that be gold, silver and precious jewels or the people it has enslaved, at the heart of this is the fundamental truth that lawlessness is not only about the one who appears to wield the rod for a time but is also within the DNA of the oppressed. This does not result in loyalty, but only encourages those who have experienced oppression to potentially take up arms against their oppressor and pledge allegiance to the new oppressor if it suits their ends.

It does not automatically result in goodness.

The anyone who is steeped in lawlessness will gravitate toward further oppression under a different regime unless they are willing to forsake the activities that lead them to death.

When "loyalty" comes from oppression, it is never loyalty, only lip service until a better deal comes about.

This is the tone of our next verses.

The lamentation of "woe", or "oy", in Hebrew begins to take traction in the book of Isaiah. There are five woes listed in this chapter of Habakkuk; as we will see, there is a sense in which the woes declared here are then echoed later in the book of Revelation and paralleled in the book of Isaiah.

Shall not all these take up their taunt against him, with scoffing and riddles for him, and say, "Woe to him who heaps up what is not his own— for how long? — and loads himself with pledges!" Will not your debtors suddenly arise, and those awake who will make you tremble? Then you will be spoil for them. Because you have plundered many nations, all the remnant of the peoples shall plunder you, for the blood of man and violence to the earth, to cities and all who dwell in them.

Habakkuk 2:6-8

The breakdown of these verses speaks to the uprising against the oppressor and the ridicule that will come their way. I deliberately use the plural here to emphasise the fact that over the years there have been many oppressors. As we look through history, even recent history, events like the Arab spring showed us how the madness of the mob against the perceived oppressive ruler never ends well. We have seen this throughout history, no matter what the shade of oppression. These verses are speaking to the future and need to be considered in the context of the scripture and what we know of history. But it does not only apply to governments and kings. It is applicable to all those in positions of authority at any level, even within families.

Are the verses here only speaking of economic oppression?

He who increases his wealth by charging exorbitant interest amasses it for someone who will bestow it on the poor. If a person will not listen to Torah, even his prayer is an abomination.

Proverbs 28:8-9

The principle of measure for measure is active here, but the timescale is not mentioned. What is evident is the mindset of the people who rise up against the oppressor. This might be regarded as a righteous judgement by some, but the indication from the text is that it may also be one of vengeance by those who are also lawless in their minds. This is not just the provenance of the righteous one.

"Woe to him who gets evil gain for his house, to set his nest on high, to be safe from the reach of harm! You have devised shame for your house by cutting off many peoples; you have forfeited your life. For the stone will cry out from the wall, and the beam from the woodwork respond.

Habakkuk 2:9-11



For many the fortified edifice is not always literal in the way it is built, but oftentimes we see tyrants setting themselves up in their palaces and castles not just to show off their wealth, but to show their dominance over the people they govern.

When the benevolent authority is in the seat of power, the people accept the justice, righteousness and mercy that come from the throne. C.S. Lewis captures this well in the story of Prince Caspian when after the Pevensie children have return to the world of Ward Robe, having reigned in Narnia for many years after the White Witch, they see that

the wickedness of the brigands who had found their way into the land brought oppression, fear and slavery amongst the men and the Narnians.

Within the context of Habakkuk, the Holy One is stating that those who believe that they can protect themselves from harm by creating fortresses of wealth and elitism through the exploitation of the people have lost their lives through their actions.

For what does it profit a man if he gains the whole world and loses or forfeits himself?

Luke 9:25

For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it. For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his soul? Or what shall a man give in return for his soul? For the Son of Man is going to come with his angels in the glory of his Father, and then he will repay each person according to what he has done.

Matthew 16:25-27

All creation groans waiting for the redemption to come and condemns the person who is false.

And the LORD said, "What have you done? The voice of your brother's blood is crying to me from the ground.

Genesis 4:10

And Joshua said to all the people, "Behold, this stone shall be a witness against us, for it has heard all the words of the LORD that he spoke to us. Therefore, it shall be a witness against you, lest you deal falsely with your God."

Joshua 24:27

"If my land has cried out against me and its furrows have wept together, if I have eaten its yield without payment and made its owners breathe their last, let thorns grow instead of wheat, and fowl weeds instead of barley." The words of Job are ended.

Job 31:38-40

The argument is often made that the knife is only as lethal as the hand that holds it. In its own right it can either be an instrument of life or of death but cannot operate of its own volition. Within these verses, the stones and beams bear witness to the evil that has taken place within them. They will hold men to account. Walls have ears far beyond what we may think this saying means.

*For the stone will cry out from the wall, and the **beam** from the woodwork respond.*

Hab 2:11

H3714

כָּפִיִּס

kâphîys

kaw-fece'

From an unused root meaning to *connect*; a *girder*: - beam.

Total KJV occurrences: 1

"Judge not, that you be not judged. For with the judgment, you pronounce you will be judged, and with the measure you use it will be measured to you. Why do you see the speck that is in your brother's eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye? Or how can you say to your brother, 'Let me take the speck out of your eye,' when there is the log in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother's eye. "Do not give dogs what is holy, and do not throw your pearls before pigs, lest they trample them underfoot and turn to attack you.

Matthew 7:1-6

H3768

כַּרְפָּס

karpas

kar-pas'

Of foreign origin; *byssus* or fine vegetable wool: - green.

Total KJV occurrences: 1

H3768

כַּרְפָּס

karpas

BDB Definition:

1) cotton or fine linen

Part of Speech: noun masculine

A Related Word by BDB/Strong's Number: of foreign origin

Karpas (green vegetable) represent the hyssop which was used to apply the blood on the beams of the door so that the Angel of Death would pass over the dwellers inside the house.

It is also associated with the fine linen garment, which is a symbol of freedom, that the High Priest would wear on Yom Kippur when applying the blood in the Holy.

The beam is the connector between brothers, but it also cries out regarding the protection of those within the house who have circumcised their hearts and lives in order to connect with each other and the Holy One through the blood of the Lamb, rather than being the accuser.

The beam of the house becomes the witness of the house as we see in the Exodus account and here in Habakkuk.