

12 Prophets - Habakkuk Part 8

“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)

“in wrath remember mercy” (ibid 3:2)

RESTORE, O LORD,
The honour of Your name,
In works of sovereign power
Come shake the earth again;
That men may see
And come with reverent fear
To the living God,
Whose kingdom shall outlast the years.

Restore, O Lord,
In all the earth Your fame,
And in our time revive
The church that bears Your name.

***And in Your anger,
Lord, remember mercy,***

O living God,
Whose mercy shall outlast the years.

Bend us, O Lord,
Where we are hard and cold,
In Your refiner's fire
Come purify the gold.
Though suffering comes
And evil crouches near,
Still our living God
Is reigning, He is reigning here.

Restore, O Lord,
The honour of Your name,
In works of sovereign power
Come shake the earth again;
That men may see
And come with reverent fear
To the living God,
Whose kingdom shall outlast the years.

© Graham Kendrick 1981

As we conclude our study in Habakkuk we look at the third chapter as a whole, once again. We spoke last week about the “erroneous utterances” that featured in the prophet’s previous appeals and how this paralleled with Psalm 7. This week we will note how this reading in Habakkuk features as the Haftorah reading for the second day of Shavuot. In the Torah reading it corresponds with parsha Nasso, the “census” of the Children of Israel. The word census is slightly misleading here because it is more than just a counting of people. In the Hebrew it means “lifting up the head”. Shavuot has been preceded by 49 days of counting the omer between Pesach and Shavuot. Shavuot is the spring equivalence of the Yovel, the 50th day, but is it also the commemoration of the giving of the Torah at Sinai. In the Apostolic writings it is the day of commemoration in Acts 2 where the beginning of the seed of Torah begins to flow out to the nations being led by the Ruach HaKodesh. It is the essence of freedom coming to the whole earth through Torah.

In order to understand the context of Habakkuk and its association to Shavuot, we need to see that the events of the first Shavuot are mirrored the Apostolic writings, not just in the context of the day of Shavuot but also in the few days preceding it.

So when they had come together, they asked him, "Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?" He said to them, "It is not for you to know times or seasons that the Father has fixed by his own authority. But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth." And when he had said these things, as they were looking on, he was lifted up, and a cloud took him out of their sight. And while they were gazing into heaven as he went, behold, two men stood by them in white robes, and said, "Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into heaven? This Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven."

[Acts 1:6-11](#)

The language of Acts 1 and the circumstances around them fits perfectly with the words of the prophet Habakkuk concerning the restoration of the kingdom of Israel.

A prayer of Habakkuk the prophet, according to Shigionoth. O LORD, I have heard the report of you, and your work, O LORD, do I fear. In the midst of the years revive it; in the midst of the years make it known; in wrath remember mercy.

[Habakkuk 3:1-2](#)

The restoration point that the prophet is referring to is some time on the future; his prayer is that in the time when the Children of Israel are not in the land that the Holy One will remember them and treat them with mercy not for their sake but for the sake of the covenant that the Holy One made with Abraham and ratified through the giving of the Torah, when the Holy One came down in the clouds among the people.

In Acts 1 we see the reverse taking place, Messiah Yeshua being taken up into the clouds but the messengers telling the Shliachim that this is the way that He will return, just as the Holy One Himself also came at Sinai. Their task now is taking the knowledge of the Living Torah out to the nations instructing and guiding them as they go, encouraging them in the instruction of Torah.

Returning to the words of the prophet, we see him begin to relate the account of the giving of the Torah at Sinai not just as a reminder of the past relationship but also looking to the time, as he is reminded of the sustaining nature of the Holy One, how, even though the time immediately before seems to be a time of hopelessness, all hope remains because of the faithfulness of the Holy One.

*God came from Teman, and the Holy One from Mount Paran. Selah.
His splendor covered the heavens, and the earth was full of his praise.*

Habakkuk 3:3

Teman is of the sons of Esau, Eliphaz, Teman (Gen 36:11) but is also the word for “south”. So we can interpret the verse as “GOD came from the land of Esau (Mount Seir)” or “GOD came from the south”.

The south side of the Mishkan was guarded primarily under the tribe of Reuben, with the ensign of a man. The text is asking us to think about this for a moment. As we discussed previously, the sages speak in terms of how all the nations were offered Torah, but for various reasons rejected it, but Israel did not. However the midrash goes on to speak of how GOD held the mountain over their head to make them accept it. The objection then is that GOD only caused Israel to accept Torah through the coercion of the threat of destruction. Within this context, when we look at the account in Acts 2 where we see the Torah once again being presented to the mixed multitude, we do not see it being done with any sense of coercion, but only on condition of repentance. Now it could be argued that the coercion is implicit in the phrase that is spoken by Peter, which is emphatically understood by some by their response.

And I will show wonders in the heavens above and signs on the earth below, blood, and fire, and vapor of smoke; the sun shall be turned to darkness and the moon to blood, before the day of the Lord comes, the great and magnificent day.

(Acts 2:19-20)

Let all the house of Israel therefore know for certain that God has made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified." Now when they heard this they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, "Brothers, what shall we do?" And Peter said to them, "Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

(Acts 2:36-38)

The language of Acts 2 is specifically associated with Joel 2, but we see hints of the same in Habakkuk regarding the time when the Living Torah will be presented once again to all mankind to receive.

*His brightness was like the light; rays flashed from his hand; and there he veiled his power.
Before him went pestilence, and plague followed at his heels. He stood and measured the earth; he looked and shook the nations; then the eternal mountains were scattered; the everlasting hills sank low. His were the everlasting ways.*

(Habakkuk 3:4-6)

It is unfortunate to see that the ESV translation seems to describe these verses as if they are only in the past tense referring to past events, which is how some of the sages interpret the passage as referring to the time of Sinai, but the actual text implies an ongoing characteristic which is of the nature of the Holy One and present wherever He is. In the context of the verses this is really speaking to not just how it was in Sinai but it will be at His Coming at the time of the next appearance when He comes in all His Glory to examine the earth and its inhabitants.

The references to plague and pestilence may be attributed to the natural world of men and used in such a way to deny the sovereignty of the Holy One. We see an example of this when the magicians of Pharaoh's court seek to emulate the plagues that are coming upon Egypt. Today flood and earthquake are blamed on the environmental and technological misdemeanours of men, rather than seeing them as prompts for repentance.

When the events of Habakkuk come to pass, the true sovereignty of the Creator will be seen and established.

Once again, all will see the Living Torah in all His Glory, but even with the mountain hovering over them, they will still reject the sovereignty of HaShem.

His brightness was like the light; rays flashed from his hand; and there he veiled his power. Before him went pestilence, and plague followed at his heels. He stood and measured the earth; he looked and shook the nations; then the eternal mountains were scattered; (Reference to the mountains of Israel or authorities in the spiritual realm) the everlasting hills sank low. His were the everlasting ways.

I saw the tents of Cushan in affliction; the curtains of the land of Midian did tremble.

(Habakkuk 3:7)

Cushan here is referring specifically to the events found in Judges 3:7-11. The precursor to these events is in verses 1-6 of the chapter. Just as we are surrounded by the “nations”, we are challenged as to whether we will endure the test of their presence and not “intermarry” with their ideas but remain steadfast to the ways of HaShem. Where we find ourselves dominated by the “world”, we may for some time remain under its authority and worship its gods until we cry out in repentance and experience the deliverance.

Midian is speaking to the events of Judges 6&7. Within this text we see the ongoing battle with Amalek and their destruction, symbolic of their final reckoning as stated in Habakkuk 3.

Was your wrath against the rivers, O LORD? Was your anger against the rivers, or your indignation against the sea, when you rode on your horses, on your chariot of salvation?

(Habakkuk 3:8)

The sages look at these verses and generally speak in terms of the rivers of Egypt and how they were also complicit in the destruction of the infants. The rivers are also symbolic in their appearance within these verses as they look to represent the nations. The word for river is *nehar* and indicates not just water flow but the @flow@ of peoples also.

It shall come to pass in the latter days that the mountain of the house of the LORD shall be established as the highest of the mountains, and shall be lifted up above the hills; and all the nations shall flow to it,

(Isaiah 2:2)

The anger spoken against the rivers is speaking against the nations who have also been complicit in the destruction of Israel and their children. The first part of this verse is contrasted with the second.

The second part of the verse gives us a clue to the timeline being not only retrospective to the present time of Habakkuk but also the time of Yeshua as messiah – it is looking to a future that is beyond our time now.

The chariot of salvation is referring to the vehicle by which salvation is conveyed.

As we consider this in the nature of Yeshua we see as a gift to the nations that rather than receiving the gift that brings them into the fold of Israel, that they have been aggressive to the original flock. The nature of their punishment is akin to the same punishment that was received at the time of the flood.

You stripped the sheath from your bow, calling for many arrows. Selah. You split the earth with rivers. The mountains saw you and writhed; the raging waters swept on; the deep gave forth its voice; it lifted its hands on high.

(Habakkuk 3:9-10)

The passage speaks to the removal of the covering of the covenant made after Noah’s flood. The bow is the same word that is spoken of the bow in Genesis 9:13. The removal of the sheath speaks of the nakedness of the words that will bring judgment and condemnation against those who defy the Holy One and His Messiah who is the “chariot/vehicle” of salvation. The restraint that has been evident for so long will be removed.

The verse continues with the flood language and the willingness of the deep waters to give praise to the Creator and in its praise of HaShem lifts up its hands in praise. That praise is a willingness to be obedient to the Creators bidding and glorify the name of the Holy One

The sun and moon stood still in their place at the light of your arrows as they sped, at the flash of your glittering spear. You marched through the earth in fury; you threshed the nations in anger. You went out for the salvation of your people, for the salvation of your anointed. You crushed the head of the house of the wicked, laying him bare from thigh to neck. Selah.

Habakkuk 3:11-13

This next section alludes to the events of Joshua 10, which in themselves speak to the time that Habakkuk is describing in the Acharit Yamim – the last days. Again we see the language of vindication and the fulfillment of the covenant to protect those who are of the Nation of Messiah, both from Israel and the Nations.

The events that Habakkuk is seeing is the actions of the Babylonian armies upon the Assyrians and how their own words are now coming back to chastise them.

You pierced with his own arrows the heads of his warriors, who came like a whirlwind to scatter me, rejoicing as if to devour the poor in secret. You trampled the sea with your horses, the surging of mighty waters. I hear, and my body trembles; my lips quiver at the sound; rottenness enters into my bones; my legs tremble beneath me. Yet I will quietly wait for the day of trouble to come upon people who invade us.

Habakkuk 3:14-16

We are reminded that Sennacherib boasted to Hezekiah how the Mighty One of Israel would not be able to save them and that he would destroy as he had destroyed the nations that preceded his invasion of Judah. The rod that the Holy One uses upon the Assyrians is the Babylonian Kingdom. We could speculate that from the events we see in the Apocalyptic writings and the Gospels, when Yeshua speaks of kingdom rising against kingdom, that the same types of things will happen again, perhaps even as we see the present conflict taking place. Even with the knowledge of this forthcoming event and the dread that it brings, Habakkuk is now able to confidently wait for the events to come to pass and in so doing also give praise to Adonai.

Though the fig tree should not blossom, nor fruit be on the vines, the produce of the olive fail and the fields yield no food, the flock be cut off from the fold and there be no herd in the stalls, yet I will rejoice in the LORD; I will take joy in the God of my salvation. GOD, the Lord, is my strength; he makes my feet like the deer's; he makes me tread on my high places. To the choirmaster: with stringed instruments.

Habakkuk 3:17-19