

Habakkuk 2:2-8, 18-20

Habakkuk 2:2 - "Write the vision, and make it plain upon tables..."

This is one connection between this haftarah and **Exodus 34:4** - "And he hewed two tables of stone like unto the first" (although Habakkuk's tablets were probably made of wood, not stone.)

The Targum is:

"write the prophecy, and explain it in the book of the law, that he may hasten to obtain wisdom, whoever he is that reads in it."

Habakkuk 2:3 - "For the vision is yet for an appointed time, but at the end it shall speak, and not lie: though it tarry, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not tarry."

"though he tarry, wait for him" - "Him" not "it"

Two words for tarry - *mâhahh* = hesitate, delay
'achar = remain or stay behind.

i.e. "but at the end He shall speak, and not lie: though He tarry (*mâhahh*), wait for Him; because He will surely come, He will not tarry (*'achar*)."

i.e. He will not miss His appointed time.

The appointed time:

Luke 16:16 - "The law and the prophets were until John: since that time the kingdom of God is preached, and every man presseth into it."

Jewish sages connected this Habakkuk passage to the coming of Messiah:

In the Talmud (T. Bab. Sanhedrin, fol. 97. 2.) -

"God does not renew his world till after seven thousand years; another says five thousand. R. Nathan says, this Scripture penetrates and descends into the abyss; i.e. fixes no particular time; "the vision is for an appointed time", &c.; not as our Rabbins, who inquire the meaning of a time, and times, and half a time; what then is meant, "but at the end it shall speak", and "not lie?" Let them burst that compute the times, who used to say when the time comes, and he cometh not, he will never come; but wait for him, as it is said, "if he tarry, wait for him": perhaps you will say, we wait, but he does not wait; this may be an instruction to you what he says, "therefore the Lord waiteth to be gracious", &c."

Maimonides agrees, saying the twelfth fundamental article of faith is the days of the Messiah; that is, to believe, and be firmly persuaded, that he will come, nor will he tarry; "if he tarry, wait for him": though, he observes, this Scripture does not fix the certain time.

Two responses to the promise of His coming:

Habakkuk 2:4 - "Behold, his soul which is lifted up is not upright in him: but the just shall live by his faith."

lifted up = puffed up. i.e. swollen with pride, like leaven.

Some manuscripts transpose two letters, to make *upplah* (puffed up) into *ullpha* (languishing or dead). Thus: "Behold the wicked, his soul in him has languished (fallen down dead)"

The Hebrew language has no word for "faith" as an active principle, though the term "believe" is derived from the same root as the present word *'emuwnah*. The word means faithfulness, trustworthiness, truth, steadfastness or firmness.

The Septuagint has this translation:

"If he shrink back, my soul has no pleasure in him; but the just shall live by my faith."

"live" here has the meaning of salvation.

Paul uses the Septuagint Greek translation.

Romans 1:16-17 - "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, "The just shall live by faith."

Galatians 3:9-11 - "So then they which be of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham. For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse: for it is written, Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them. But that no man is justified by the law in the sight of God, it is evident: for, 'The just shall live by faith.'"

Paul is familiar with the rabbinical association with Abraham:

Talmud (Shemot Rabba, sect. 23. fol. 107. 3.) on Abraham in **Genesis 15:6** -

"this is the faith by which the Israelites inherit, of which the Scripture says, 'and the just by his faith shall live.'"

Quoted again in Hebrews:

Hebrews 10:37-39 - "For, "In just a very while little, He who is coming will come and will not delay. 'But My righteous one will live by faith; and if he shrinks back, I will take no pleasure in him.' But we are not of those who shrink back and are destroyed, but of those who have faith and preserve their souls."

The Targum of the passage is, "behold, the wicked say all these things 'shall not be,' but the righteous shall remain in their truth."

And again (T. Bab. Maccot, fol. 24. 1) -

"the law, and all the precepts of it, delivered to Moses on Mount Sinai, are reduced by Habakkuk to one, namely this, 'the just by his faith shall live'"

It's both His faith within us believing in the Father's faithfulness to complete his promises.

Ephesians 2:8-9 - "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast."

The following description is of one who scoffs at Christ in His coming:

Habakkuk 2:5-6 - "Yes also, because he transgresses by wine, he is a proud man, neither keeps at home, who enlarges his desire as hell, and is as death, and cannot be satisfied, but gathers to him all nations, and heaps to him all people: Shall not all these take up a parable against him, and a taunting proverb against him, and say, Woe to him that increases that which is not his! how long? and to him that lades himself with thick clay!"

"that which is not his" - The Targum explains it; "which they had no right unto, nor property in, but were another's"

"thick clay" - Better, "him that accumulates to himself usury."

"How hard it is for them that trust in riches to enter into the kingdom of God" (**Mark 10:24**)

Habakkuk 2:7 - "Shall they not rise up suddenly that shall bite you, and awake that shall vex you, and you shall be for booties to them?"

bite = *nâshac* - "to oppress with usury," His own creditors will take him down.

Pertaining to Babylon (see **Revelation 18**), but this is the doom of all proud and unbelieving powers that oppress God's people.

Revelation 6:15-16 - "Then the kings of the earth, the nobles, the commanders, the rich, the mighty, and every slave and free man, hid in the caves and among the rocks of the mountains. 16And they said to the mountains and the rocks, 'Fall on us and hide us from the face of the One seated on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb.'"

Habakkuk 2:8 - "Because you have spoiled many nations, all the remnant of the people shall spoil you; because of men's blood, and for the violence of the land, of the city, and of all that dwell therein."

"So Satan had by violence and deceit subdued the whole earth, yet Christ made him a spoil to those whom he had spoiled, and the strong man was bound and his goods spoiled and himself trampled underfoot. Yet here as throughout the prophets, it is a "remnant" only which is saved" - *Barnes' Notes*

The Vanity of Idolatry

Habakkuk 2:18-20 - "What profiteth the graven image that the maker thereof hath graven it; the molten image, and a teacher of lies, that the maker of his work trusteth therein, to make dumb idols? Woe unto him that saith to the wood, Awake; to the dumb stone, Arise, it shall teach! Behold, it is laid over with gold and silver, and there is no breath at all in the midst of it. But the LORD is in his holy temple: let all the earth keep silence before him."

This is perfect commentary for another passage in this week's Torah readings: **Exodus 34:11-17**