

Habakkuk 1:1-4

This book is very similar to a psalm of lament found in Psalm 10:1-13, Psalm 13:1-4; Psalm 22:1-21; Psalm 74:1-11; Psalm 80; Psalm 88. In fact, this book ends with the noting of a psalm that is to be memorized and sung. Many believers (if not all believers) struggle at some level with the issues Habakkuk is facing.

Two times Habakkuk addresses the Lord concerning the conflict between evil and justice. And, the Lord responds with an explanation to lead Habakkuk to a greater understanding of how and when this conflict will be resolved. But, it will not be resolved in Habakkuk's lifetime.

Written about 606 BC. This would be about 20 years before Jerusalem falls in 586 BC.

- First captivity was 605 BC, or within a year.
- Second captivity was 597 BC, or ten years later.
- Total destruction was 586 BC, or twenty years later.

Josiah had been killed in 609 BC and two of his sons had followed him on the throne:

1. Jehozhaz (Shallum) in 609, but he was quickly taken to Egypt in exile after only 3 months on the throne
2. Jehoiakim - originally his name was Eliakim but his name was changed by Neco when Neco placed him on the throne in 609 when Neco returned from the battle in Haran 3 months later.
 - a. Jehoiakim was a vassal king for Egypt and paid heavy tribute to Egypt.
 - b. Jehoiakim heavily taxed the people (middle class) of Jerusalem as in 2 Kings 23:35 – “Jehoiakim gave the silver and the gold to Pharaoh, but he taxed the land to give the money according to the command of Pharaoh. He exacted the silver and the gold of the people of the land, from everyone according to his assessment, to give it to Pharaoh Neco.”
 - c. In 605 after Nebuchadnezzar defeated Neco at Carchemish Nebuchadnezzar made Jehoiakim his vassal king as in 2 Kings 24:1 – “In his days, Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came up, and Jehoiakim became his servant for three years. Then he turned and rebelled against him.”

Habakkuk 1:1 – “The oracle that Habakkuk the prophet saw.”

5030 [e]	2265 [e]	2372 [e]	834 [e]	4853 [e]
han·nā·bî.	ḥă·baq·qūq	ḥā·zāh,	'ă·šer	ham·maś·śā
הַנְּבִיאַ:	חֲבַקּוּק	חָזָה	אֲשֶׁר	הַמַּסָּא 1
the prophet	Habakkuk	saw	which	the burden
Art N-ms	N-proper-ms	V-Qal-Perf-3ms	Pro-r	Art N-ms

1. “The oracle” or “the burden” – *hammassa* /ham-mas-saw/ is from the Hebrew *massa* meaning: “a load, burden, lifting, bearing, tribute”. Figuratively *massa* could refer to “an utterance”, “a

prophecy”. These utterances or prophecies were usually announcements of doom and often included music/singing.

2. “saw” – *chazah* /chaw-zaw/ meaning “see” and “behold”. It means to “see with the eye” and to “look on intensely”. It is used to refer to a prophet or seer in an ecstatic state which involved seeing a vision:
 - a. Isaiah 1:1 – “The vision concerning Judah and Jerusalem that Isaiah son of Amoz saw...”
 - b. Ezekiel 12:27-28 – “Son of man, behold, they of the house of Israel say, ‘The vision that he sees is for many days from now, and he prophesies of times far off.’ Therefore say to them, Thus says the Lord God: None of my words will be delayed any longer, but the word that I speak will be performed, declares the Lord God.”
 - c. Ezekiel 13:16 – “Thus will I spend my wrath upon the wall and upon those who have smeared it with whitewash, and I will say to you, The wall is no more, nor those who smeared it, the prophets of Israel who prophesied concerning Jerusalem and saw visions of peace for her, when there was no peace, declares the Lord God.”
 - d. Numbers 24:4, 16 – (Balaam) - ““The oracle of Balaam the son of Beor, the oracle of the man whose eye is opened, the oracle of him who hears the words of God, who sees the vision of the Almighty, falling down with his eyes uncovered: (2X)

1:2 – “O LORD, how long shall I cry for help, and you will not hear? Or cry to you “Violence!” and you will not save?

2555 [e]	413 [e]	2199 [e]	8085 [e]	3808 [e]	7768 [e]	3068 [e]	575 [e]	5704 [e]
ḥā·mās	’ê·le·kā	’ez·’aq	tīš·mā’;	we·lō	šiw·wa’·tī	Yah·weh	’ā·nāh	’ad-
וְחַמָּס	אֵלֶיךָ	אֲעֲצֹק !	תִּשְׁמָע	וְלֹא	שׁוֹעֲתִי	יְהוָה	אָנָּה	עַד 2
Violence	to You	Even cry out	You will hear	and not	shall I cry	Yahweh	long	How
N-ms	Prep 2ms	V-Qal-Imperf-1cs	V-Qal-Imperf-2ms	Conj-w Adv-NegPrt	V-Piel-Perf-1cs	N-proper-ms	Adv	Prep

3467 [e]	3808 [e]
tō·wō·šī·a’.	we·lō
! תוֹשִׁיעַ	וְלֹא
You will save	and not
V-Hifil-Imperf-2ms	Conj-w Adv-NegPrt

1. Habakkuk sees and experiences daily the fact that he is living in a culture with:
 - a. Social injustice
 - b. Internal corruption in the priesthood, business and government
 - c. Incompetent kings, false prophets and priest serving themselves
2. “Violence” – *hamas* – meaning “violence”, “wrong”.
 - a. Strong’s Concordance describe the word *hamas* as “cruelty, damage, false, injustice, oppressor, unrighteous, violence against”
 - b. This is a flagrant violation of moral law which manifests in social injustice and oppression. It is the character of the generation, but harshest manifestation is the oppression of the middle class by the elite class which drives the middle class into poverty while heaping up power and material possessions for the elite.
3. Habakkuk is truly upset with the Lord allowing Jerusalem’s society to get this far out of control.

- a. Habakkuk is on the verge of anger and is asking God why he allows these wrongs to continue.
 - b. Habakkuk himself believes the God he serves would have already intervened with justice, punishment and restoration
 - c. Habakkuk has faith in the Lord and is crying out for help and wondering why the Lord is not acting in line with his character.
 - d. But, the conditions Habakkuk is forced to live in lead him to say, this is not right, but I will live out my life in faith not seeing the deliverance I hope for. Habakkuk 2:4:
“Behold, his soul is puffed up; it is not upright within him, but the righteous shall live by his faith.”
4. “How long” is a typical cry for help in a lamentation.
 5. “call for help” – *siwwa* –
 6. “listen” – *sama* – refers to an active response to what is heard
 7. “violence” – *hamas* – is the problem
 8. “You will save” – *towosia* from the word *yasa* meaning “to deliver” – is the answer to the problem

1:3 – “Why do you make me see iniquity, and why do you idly look at wrong? Destruction and violence are before me; strife and contention arise.

5048 [e]	2555 [e]	7701 [e]	5027 [e]	5999 [e]	205 [e]	7200 [e]	4100 [e]
le·neḡ·dî;	wə·hā·mās	wə·šōḏ	tab·bīt,	wə·‘ā·māl	‘ā·wen	tar·‘ē·nî	lām·māh
לְנַגְדִי	וְחָמָס	וְשׂוֹד	תְּבִיט ?	וְעַמָּל	אָוֶן	תִּרְאֵנִי	לְמָה 3
[are] before me	and violence	for plundering	cause [me] to see	and trouble	iniquity	do You show me	why
Prep-l 1cs	Conj-w N-ms	Conj-w N-ms	V-Hifil-Imperf-2ms	Conj-w N-ms	N-ms	V-Hifil-Imperf-2ms 1cs	Interrog
			5375 [e]	4066 [e]	7379 [e]		1961 [e]
			yiś·šā.	ū·mā·dō·wn	rīb		way·hî
			יִשָּׂא:	וּמַדּוֹן	רִיב		וַיְהִי
			arises	and contention	strife		and there is
			V-Qal-Imperf-3ms	Conj-w N-ms	N-ms	Conj-w V-Qal-ConseclImperf-3ms	

1. “Why” – Habakkuk cannot understand the Lord’s lack of response. Habakkuk is struggling with his understanding of the God in whom he clearly has faith.
2. Three word pairs describe the society:
 - a. Iniquity and wrong – perverted justice and social oppression
 - b. Destruction and violence – unjust oppression of the weaker members of a community
 - c. Strife and contention – anger and dissension with conflicting positions and uncompromising wills
3. “iniquity” – *aven* – trouble, sorrow, wickedness. From a root word that indicates vain attempt and fruitless effort
4. “wrong” – *amal* – trouble, labor, toil. This comes from wearing effort and wearisome toil.
5. “destruction” – *shod* – violence, havoc, devastation, ruin. This word is social sin and the ruin of a nation in the prophets.
6. “violence – *hamas* – violence, wrong. This is cruelty, injustice, oppression, unrighteousness. And, manifest in social oppression.

7. “strife” – *rib* – strife, dispute. This refers to contention, controversy with an adversary or conflict in a controversy or legal suit.
8. “contention” – *madon* – strife, contention. This is brawling, contention, quarrel

1:4 – “So the law is paralyzed, and justice never goes forth. For the wicked surround the righteous; so justice goes forth perverted.”

7563 [e]	3588 [e]	4941 [e]	5331 [e]	3318 [e]	3808 [e]	8451 [e]	6313 [e]	3651 [e]	5921 [e]
rā·šā'	kî	miš·pāṭ;	lā·ne·ṣaḥ	yê·šê	wə·lō-	tō·w·rāh,	tā·pūg	kên	'al-
רָשָׁע	כִּי	מִשְׁפָּט	לֹנְצָה	יָצָא	וְלֹא-	תּוֹרָה	תְּפֹוג	כֵּן	עַל-
the wicked	for	justice	Never	goes forth	and never	the law	is powerless	thus	Upon
Adj-ms	Conj	N-ms	Prep-I N-ms	V-Qal-Imperf-3ms	Conj-w Adv-NegPrt	N-fs	V-Qal-Imperf-3fs	Adv	Prep

6127 [e]	4941 [e]	3318 [e]	3651 [e]	5921 [e]	6662 [e]	853 [e]	3803 [e]
mə·'uq·qāl.	miš·pāṭ	yê·šê	kên	'al-	haṣ·ṣad·dīq,	'eṭ-	maḵ·tîr
מַעֲקָל:	מִשְׁפָּט	יָצָא	כֵּן	עַל-	הַצְדִּיק	אֶת-	מַכְתִּיר
perverse	judgment	proceeds	thus	upon	the righteous	-	surround
V-Pual-Prtcpl-ms	N-ms	V-Qal-Imperf-3ms	Adv	Prep	Art Adj-ms	DirObjM	V-Hifil-Prtcpl-ms

1. Amos spoke in similar fashion against the corrupt leadership and the elite (politicians and big business) who oppressed the middle class into poverty while they themselves lived in luxury during the final days of the northern kingdom:
 - a. Amos 2:6-12 – “
 - b. Amos 4:1 – “
 - c. Amos 8:4-6 – “
2. Habakkuk is in a lawless society.
3. Law and order are intended to curb violence, injustice and chaos.
4. The three word pairs of 1:3 leave Jerusalem in a social condition that there is no law and no justice:
 - a. “law is paralyzed” –
 - i. This “law” is more than the Law of Moses, but civil law. Although in Jerusalem’s case the Law of Moses was the civil law, so both could be true at the same time.
 - ii. This is lawlessness (remember the coming Man of Lawlessness 2 Th. 2:3 – “Let no one deceive you in any way. For that day will not come, unless the rebellion comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction,”
 - iii. “paralyzed” is *tapug*. The word *pug* means “to grow numb”
 1. Strong’s Concordance says:

“cease, be feeble, faint, be slacked. *Pug* is a primitive root meaning to be sluggish -- cease, be feeble, faint, be slacked.
 2. It could be translated: “God’s law is numbed”
 - b. “justice never goes forth” –
 - i. Justice is the legal process and the function of government
 - ii. Since there is lawlessness it is obvious that justice never manifests
 - iii. Justice is perverted instead of being carried out

1:5 – “Look among the nations, and see; wonder and be astounded. For I am doing a work in your days that you would not believe if told.”

6467 [e]	3588 [e]	8539 [e]	8539 [e]	5027 [e]	1471 [e]	7200 [e]
ṗō·'al	kî-	tə·mā·hū;	wə·hit·tam·mə·hū	wə·hab·bî·ṭū,	ḅag·gō·w·yim	re·'ū
פֶּעַל	כִּי	תַמְהוּ	וְהִתְמַהוּ	וְהִבְטוּ	בְּגוֹיִם	רְאוּ
[I will] work	for	utterly	and Be astounded	and watch	among the nations	Look
N-ms	Conj	V-Qal-Imp-mp	Conj-w V-Hitpael-Imp-mp	Conj-w V-Hifil-Imp-mp	Prep-b, Art N-mp	V-Qal-Imp-mp

5608 [e]	3588 [e]	539 [e]	3808 [e]	3117 [e]	6466 [e]
yə·sup·pār.	kî	ta·'ā·mî·nū	lō	bî·mê·ḵem,	pō·'êl
יְסַפֵּר:	כִּי	תִאֱמִינוּ	לֹא	בְּיָמֵיכֶם	פֶּעַל
it were told [you]	though	[Which] you would believe	not	in your days	a work
V-Pual-Imperf-3ms	Conj	V-Hifil-Imperf-2mp	Adv-NegPrt	Prep-b N-mpc 2mp	V-Qal-Prtcpl-ms