

Habakkuk

Date of writing

Sufficiently before the Babylonian invasion (1:6) that the fulfillment was surprising, but after Lebanon fell (2:17).

Passages considered Messianic by at least some ancient rabbis:

2:3 - 4 The vision is yet for an appointed time...the righteous shall live by faith
3:18 – 19 He will make me walk on my high hills despite the calamity of the preceding paragraphs

Passages quoted in the New Testament

Habakkuk 2:4 (Romans 1:17, Galatians 3:11, Hebrews 10:38) Paul cites a timeless truth from Habakkuk, who had in primary view the virtue of patience.

Style

The book is a collection of poems. At least some if not all are songs (3:1, 19). If the notation, “with my stringed instruments,” can be taken literally, then Habakkuk was a Temple musician, therefore a Levite.

The Plot

- Habakkuk begins by complaining that the wicked are winning in Israel (1:2 – 4).
- God responds that He has already set in motion the fix: the Babylonian army (1:5 – 11).
- Habakkuk praises God for the fix, but complains that the Babylonians are worse than Israel (1:12 – 2:1).
- God replies that Babylon will be punished for thinking that they and their gods were powerful, when in reality God had enabled them (2:2 – 20).
- Habakkuk praises God

Famous lines

2:4 The righteous shall live by faith
2:20 But the Lord is in His holy temple. Let all the earth keep silence before Him.
3:19 The Lord God is my strength; He will make my feet like deer’s feet.

Obscure references

1:10 A common method to defeat a walled city was to build an earthen ramp so that troops could march to the top of the wall.
3:3 Teman, a city in Edom, was known for its wise men. (Jeremiah 49:7, 20, Ezekiel 25:13, Amos 1:12, Obadiah 9, Job 2:11, 4:1, 15:1, 22:1, 42:7, 9). In Deuteronomy 33:2, the Lord shone on the Israelites from Mount Paran.
3:7 Cushan is a poetic form of Cush (Egypt).