
חִבְקוּק • HABAKKUK

INTRODUCTION

In the present *Book of Habakkuk*, at least three distinct literary forms can be recognised. The section 1:2–2:5 is constructed as a dialogue between the prophet and God; the next section, 2:6–20, consisting of five woes against a wicked nation, is cast in classical prophetic style; and Ch. 3 is a lengthy poem, similar in structure to the Psalms and its final form obviously meant for liturgical use.

The author is confronting honestly the profoundly disturbing problem of why a just God is ‘silent when the wicked swallow those more upright than they are’ (1:13). To this perennial question, the prophet receives an answer that is eternally valid: God is still sovereign and, in God’s own way and at the proper time, will deal with the wicked, but ‘the upright will live by their faith’ (2:4).

AUTHORSHIP AND DATES

The three distinct ‘sections’ of the book (vide supra) may not originally have been a unit and various historical allusions discernible in them point to different periods of composition. Nevertheless, they are connected by the common theme of justification of the ways of God and now appear as the work of a Hebrew prophet who lived during the height of Babylonian power, most likely in the decade 608–598 BCE. Although a certain Habakkuk appears in the apocryphal story of Bel and the Dragon, nothing is known about the life of the Old Testament prophet, not even his father’s name. His thought, however, is laid bare by the searching questions he asks.

Ch. 3 is entirely missing from *Qumran MS 1QpHab* and many believe it was written by a different author than the other 2 chapters.

חִבְקוּק פֶּרֶק א

א ¹ הַמֶּשָׁא אֲשֶׁר חִזָּה חִבְקוּק הַנָּבִיא:

ב עַד־אֵנָּה יְהוָה שׁוֹעֵתִי

וְלֹא תִשְׁמַע

אֶזְעַק אֶלֶיךָ חֶמֶס

וְלֹא תוֹשִׁיעַ:

ג לָמָּה תִּרְאֵנִי אֲוֹן וְעָמַל תִּבְטֹי

וְשָׂד וְחֶמֶס לִנְגִּדִי

וַיְהִי רִיב וּמִדּוֹן יֵשָׂא:

ד עַל־כֵּן תִּפְּוֹג תּוֹרָה

וְלֹא־יֵצֵא לְנֹצַח מִשְׁפָּט

כִּי רָשָׁע מִכְתִּיר

אֶת־הַצְּדִיק עַל־כֵּן יֵצֵא מִשְׁפָּט מִעֶקֶל:

ה רְאוּ בְּגוֹיִם וְהִבִּיטוּ

וְהִתְמַהוּ תִמְהוּ

כִּי־פֶעַל פֶּעַל בִּימִיכָם

לֹא תֹאמִינוּ כִּי יִסְפָּר:

HABAKKUK 1

¹ The charge that the prophet Habakkuk received in a vision:

² How long, Yahweh, am I to cry for help

while you will not listen;

to cry, "Violence" in your ear

while you will not save?

³ Why do you show me iniquity and behold mischief?

Plundering and violence confront me;

contention and discord flourish.

⁴ Thus, the law loses its grip

and justice never emerges,

since the wicked outwits the upright

and so justice comes out perverted.

⁵ Cast your eyes over the nations; look,

and be amazed, astounded.

For, I am doing something in your own days

that you will not believe if you are told of it.

HABAKKUK 1

¹ The literal translation of 'charge' (מֶשָׂא), here following the NJB (the NRSV has 'oracle'), is 'burden' (cf. Is 13:1 *et cetera*, and Jr 23:33–40).

² Speaking in the name of his people (cf. Is 59:9–14, Jr 10:23–25, 14:2–9, 19–22), the prophet complains to Yahweh about the miseries they suffer.

³ For the 1st line, here following JPS, the NJB has, "Why do you make me see wrongdoing, why do you countenance oppression?"

⁴ Translated literally, 'loses its grip' reads 'is numb'; the NRSV has 'the law is slack'.

⁵ In the 2nd line, the text combines the Hitpael and Qal imperative forms of the verb תִּמְהָא ("be amazed"); a literal translation might read, "Shock yourselves and be shocked!" The repetition of sounds draws attention to the statement; the imperatives here have the force of an emphatic assertion. The 3rd line follows the LXX (διδότω ἔργον ἐγὼ ἐργάζομαι ἐν ταῖς ἡμέραις ὑμῶν); the MT could be translated, "a deed is being done."

כִּי־הִנְנִי מְקִים אֶת־הַכַּשְׂדִּים הַגִּזִּי הַמָּר וְהַנִּמְהָר הַהוֹלֵךְ לְמֶרְחֵב־אָרֶץ לְרֶשֶׁת מִשְׁכָּנֹת לֹא־לוֹ: אִים וְנוֹרָא הוּא מִמֶּנּוּ מִשְׁפָּטוֹ וּשְׂאוֹתוֹ יֵצֵא: וְקָלוּ מִנִּמְרִים סוּסָיו וְחֲדָיו מִזֵּאבֵי עֶרֶב וּפִשּׁוֹ פִרְשָׁיו וּפִרְשָׁיו מֵרְחוֹק יָבֵאוּ יַעֲפוּ כְנֶשֶׁר חֵשׁ לֶאֱכֹל: כֹּלֵה לַחֲמֶס יָבֹוא מִגִּמַּת פְּנִיָּהֶם קְדִימָה וַיֵּאֱסֹף בַּחוּל שָׁבִי: וְהוּא בַּמְּלָכִים יִתְקַלֵּס וְרוֹזְנִים מִשְׁחָק לוֹ הוּא לְכָל־מִבְצָר יִשְׁחָק וַיַּצְבֵּר עָפָר וַיִּלְכְּדֵה:	ו ז ח ט י	6 For look, I am stirring up the Chaldaeans, that fierce and fiery nation who march miles across country to seize the homes of others. 7 They are dreadful and awesome, a law and authority to themselves. 8 Their horses are swifter than leopards, fiercer than wolves at night; their horsemen gallop on, their horsemen advance from afar, swooping like an eagle anxious to feed. 9 They are all bent on violence, their faces scorching like an east wind; they scoop up prisoners like sand. 10 They scoff at kings and they despise princes. They make light of all fortresses: they heap up earth and take them.
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⁶ 'Fierce' follows the NJB & NRSV; NETB has 'ruthless', NEB has 'savage' and others have 'grim'. The WEBBE has 'behold' in place of 'look'.

⁷ The Chaldaeans acknowledge no human or divine power as master; they attribute their victories to their own valour (see v. 11).

⁸ In place of 'at night', here following the MT (עֶרֶב) and NJB, the NRSV has 'at dusk' and some (as NETB) amend to 'in the desert' (עֲרֵבָה).

⁹ The text of the 2nd line, here following the NJB is uncertain (the NRSV has 'with faces pressing forward'); 'like an east wind' follows 1Q^pHab (the commentary on Habakkuk); the MT has 'to the east'.

¹⁰ The last line refers to the ramps or earthworks used in sieges.

יא אז חלף רוח ויעבר ואשם
 זו כחו לאלהו:
 יב הלוא אתה מקדם
 יהוה אלהי קדשי לא נמות
 יהוה למשפט שמתו
 וצור להוכיח יסדתו:
 יג טהור עינים מראות רע
 והביט אל-עמל לא תוכל
 למה תביט
 בוגדים תחריש
 בבלע רשע צדיק ממנו:
 יד ותעשה אדם כדגי הים
 כרמש לא-משל בו:
 טו כלה בחכה העלה
 יגרוו בחרמו
 ויאספהו במכמרתו
 על-כן ישמח ויגיל:

- 11 Then, the wind changes and is gone ...
 Guilty is he who makes his strength his god.
- 12 Surely, you are from ancient times,
 Yahweh, my holy God, who never dies!
 Yahweh, you have appointed him to execute judgement;
 O Rock, you have set him firm to punish.
- 13 Your eyes are too pure to rest on evil;
 you cannot look on at oppression.
 Why do you look on at those who play the traitor,
 why say nothing while the wicked swallows
 someone more upright than himself?
- 14 Why treat people like fish of the sea,
 like gliding creatures who have no leader?
- 15 They haul them all up on their hook,
 they catch them in their net,
 they sweep them up in their dragnet
 and then make merry and rejoice.

- 11 For the 1st line, here following the NJB, the NSRV has "Then they sweep by like the wind" & NETB has "they sweep like the wind and pass on," assuming a further description of the Babylonian hordes. Another option is to understand רוח as 'spirit' rather than 'wind' and take the form ואשם with what precedes (as suggested by the scribal punctuation). Re-pointing as 'was astonished', one could then translate, "The spirit passed on and departed, and I was astonished;" in this case, the line would describe the cessation of the divine revelation that began in v. 5.
- 12 'Who never dies' is a conjectural translation; the MT has 'we shall not die', the result of a scribal correction.
- 13 God's 'eyes' here signify what he looks at with approval; they are 'pure' in that he refuses to tolerate any wrongdoing in his presence.
- 14 The word רמש usually refers to animals that creep but here the referent may be to marine animals that glide through the water.
- 15 Two different types of fishing nets are referred to here: the חרם, or 'throw net', and the מכמרת, or 'dragnet'.

טז עַל־כֵּן יִזְבַּח לְחַרְמוֹ
 וַיִּקְטֹר לְמַכְמֶרְתּוֹ
 כִּי בַהֲמָה שָׁמֵן חִלְקוּ
 וּמֵאֲכָלוֹ בִּרְאָה:
 זי הָעֵל בֵּן יִרִיק חֶרְמוֹ
 וְתִמִּיד לַהֲרֹג גּוֹיִם לֹא יַחְמוֹל: {ס}

¹⁶ Thus, they offer a sacrifice to their net,
 and burn incense to their dragnet,
 for by these they get a rich living
 and live off the fat of the land.

¹⁷ Are they to go on emptying their net unceasingly,
 slaughtering the nations without pity?

¹⁶ The fishing implements ('net' and 'dragnet', see #15) represent Babylonian military might; the prophet depicts the Babylonians as arrogantly worshiping their own power ('sacrifice', 'burn incense', see also v. 11^b).

¹⁷ 'Unceasingly' follows 1Q^pHab; the MT has 'unceasingly slaughtering'.

חבקוק פרק ב

א על-משמִרְתִּי אֶעֱמְדָה
וְאֶתִּיצֵבָה עַל-מִצְוֹר
וְאֶצְפֶּה לְרֹאוֹת מִה־יַּדְּבַר-בִּי
וְמֵה אֲשִׁיב עַל-תּוֹכְחָתִי:
ב וַיַּעֲנֵנִי יְהוָה וַיֹּאמֶר
כָּתֹב חֲזֹן
וּבְאֵר עַל-לַחֹת
לְמַעַן יֵרוּץ קוֹרְא בּוֹ:
ג כִּי עוֹד חֲזֹן לְמוֹעֵד
וַיִּפַּח לֶקֶץ וְלֹא יִכָּזֵב
אֲסִי־תִמְהַמֶּה חֶפֶה-לּוֹ
כִּי־בֹא יָבֹא לֹא יֵאָחֵר:
ד הִנֵּה עֹפְלָה לֹא־יִשְׁרָה נִפְשׁוֹ בּוֹ
וְצַדִּיק בְּאַמוּנָתוֹ יִחְיֶה: {ס}

HABAKKUK 2

- 1 I shall stand at my post;
I shall station myself on my watchtower,
watching to see what he will say to me,
what answer he will make to my complaints.
- 2 Then Yahweh answered me and said,
"Write the vision down;
inscribe it on tablets
to be easily read.
- 3 For, the vision is for its appointed time,
it hastens towards its end and it will not lie;
although it may take some time, wait for it,
for it will certainly come before too long.
- 4 "You see, anyone whose heart is not upright will succumb,
but the upright will live through faithfulness."

HABAKKUK 2

- ¹ 'My watchtower' follows 1Q^pHab; the MT has 'the watchtower'. 'He will make' is a conjectural translation (וַיַּעֲשֶׂה) following the Peshitta; the MT has 'I shall make' (אֲשִׁיב).
- ² For the last line, here following the NJB, the NRSV has 'so that a runner might read it'; the literal translation is 'so that the one who reads from it might run', probably meaning 'run through it quickly with one's eyes'.
- ³ The word חֲזֹן ('vision') is the subject of the 3P verbs in this verse and the antecedent of the pronominal suffix in the phrase 'for it'.
- ⁴ The 1st line is a conjectural translation, following the NJB; the MT reads, "... his soul within him is inflated, it is not upright," and the LXX has, "if he deflects, my soul will not be pleased with him" (ἐὰν ὑποστειλήται, οὐκ εὐδοκεῖ ἡ ψυχὴ μου ἐν αὐτῷ). The maxim of the 2nd line, of universal application, sums up the content of the vision. Being faithful to God assures him. In the LXX, where 'faithfulness' is rendered 'faith' (πίστεως), Paul finds the doctrine of justification by faith.

וְאֵךְ כִּי־הֵינּ בִגְדֹ
 גִבֹר יִהְיֶה וְלֹא יִנּוּה
 אֲשֶׁר הִרְחִיב כְּשֹׂאֹל נַפְשׁוֹ
 וְהוּא כַּמּוֹת וְלֹא יִשְׂבַּע
 וַיֵּאַסֹּף אֱלֹיו כָּל־הַגּוֹיִם
 וַיִּקְבֹּץ אֱלֹיו כָּל־הָעַמִּים:
 הֲלֹא־אֵלֶּה כָּלֶם
 עָלָיו מִשָּׁל יִשְׂאוּ
 וּמְלִיצָה חִידוֹת
 לוֹ וַיֹּאמֶר הוּא הַמַּרְבֵּה לֹא־לוֹ עַד־מָתִי
 וּמִכְבִּיד עָלָיו עֲבָטִיט:
 הֲלֹא פָתַע יִקְוּמוּ נִשְׁכִּיךְ
 וַיִּקְצוּ מִזְעֲזְעֶיךָ
 וְהָיִיתָ לְמִשְׁשׁוֹת לָמוֹ:
 כִּי־אַתָּה שָׁלוֹת גּוֹיִם רַבִּים
 יִשְׁלֹךְ כָּל־יָתֵר עַמִּים
 מִדְּמֵי אָדָם וְחַמַּס־אֶרֶץ
 קָרְיָה וְכָל־יֹשְׁבֵי בָּהּ: {פ}

- 5 Now, surely, wealth is treacherous!
 He is arrogant, forever on the move,
 with appetite as large as Sheol
 and as insatiable as Death,
 gathering in all the nations,
 and making a harvest of all peoples.
- 6 Are not the peoples all bound to satirise
 and make up cryptic riddles about him?
 As they will say:
 Disaster to anyone who amasses goods not his!
 How long will you load yourselves with goods taken in pledge!
- 7 Will not your creditors suddenly stand up,
 will not those who make you shiver wake up,
 and you will fall a prey to them?
- 8 Since you have plundered many nations,
 all the nations that remain will plunder you,
 because of the violence and bloodshed done to the lands,
 to the cities and to all who live in them.

5 'Wealth is treacherous' follows 1Q^pHab; the MT has 'wine is a traitor'. 'Sheol' is the place of the dead.

6 'Make up cryptic riddles' is a conjectural translation; the MT has 'and a cryptic riddle, a puzzle'. 'They will say' follows the LXX (ἐροῦσιν) & 1Q^pHab; the MT has 'he will say'.

7 The Babylonians are addressed directly here: they have robbed and terrorised others, but now the situation will be reversed as their creditors suddenly attack them.

8 The singular forms אֶרֶץ ('land') and קָרְיָה ('city') are collective, referring to all the lands and cities terrorised by the Babylonians.

ט
הוֹי בַּצֵּעַ בַּצֵּעַ רָע לְבֵיתוֹ
לָשׁוּם בְּמָרוֹם קִנּוֹ
לְהִנָּצַל מִכַּף־רָע:
י
יַעֲצָת בִּשְׁת לְבֵיתָךְ
קִצּוֹת־עַמִּים רַבִּים
וְחוֹטֵא נַפְשְׁךָ:
יא
כִּי־אֲבֹן מִקִּיר תִּזְעַק
וְכִפִּים מֵעֵץ יַעֲנֶנָּה: {פ}
יב
הוֹי בִּנְה עִיר בְּדָמִים
וְכוֹנֵן קִרְיָה בְּעוֹלָה:
יג
הֲלוֹא הִנֵּה מֵאֵת יְהוָה צָבָאוֹת
וַיִּגְעוּ עַמִּים בְּדִי־אֵשׁ
וְלֹא־מִים בְּדִירִיק יַעֲפוּ:
יד
כִּי תִמְלֵא הָאָרֶץ
לְדַעַת אֶת־כְּבוֹד יְהוָה
כַּמִּים יִכְסּוּ עַל־יָם: {פ}

- 9 Disaster to anyone who amasses ill-gotten gains for his house,
to fix his nest on high
and so evade the reach of misfortune!
- 10 You have conspired to bring shame on your house:
By overthrowing many peoples,
you have worked your own ruin.
- 11 For, the very stone will protest from the wall,
and the beam will respond from the framework.
- 12 Disaster to anyone who builds a town with bloodshed
and founds a city on wrongdoing!
- 13 Is it not thanks to Yahweh Sabaoth
that the peoples' toil is fuel for the fire,
and the nations' labour came to nothing?
- 14 But the earth will be full
of the knowledge of the glory of Yahweh
as the waters cover the depths of the sea.

⁹ The conqueror's fate will be that of someone who gets rich by crime: he will end with nothing. Here, the Babylonians are compared to a bird, perhaps an eagle, which builds its 'nest' in an inaccessible high place where predators cannot reach it.

¹⁰ 'By overthrowing' follows the LXX (*συνεπέρανας*) & Peshitta; the MT has 'to overthrow'.

¹¹ The 'house' mentioned in vv. 9-10 represents the Babylonian Empire, which became great through imperialism; here, the materials of this house are personified as witnesses who testify that the occupants have built the house through wealth stolen from others.

¹² Vv. 12-14 denounce rule by violence.

¹³ 'It is not' follows the LXX (*οὐ ταῦτά ἐστιν*) & Peshitta; the MT has 'behold'. This verse follows a formula prefacing a quotation (cf. 2Ch 25:26), here introducing a word of Yahweh (v. 14).

¹⁴ The words, 'depths of the', here following the NJB, are not in the MT (or NRSV).

טו הוֹי מִשְׁקָה רַעְהוּ
מִסִּפַּח חֲמָתְךָ וְאָף שִׁכָּר
לְמַעַן הַבִּיט עַל־מְעוֹרֵיהֶם:
טז שִׁבְעַת קִלּוֹן מִכְבוֹד
שָׁתָה גַם־אֶתָּה וְהֶעֱרַל
תִּסּוֹב עָלֶיךָ כּוֹס יְמִין יְהוָה
וְקִיקִלּוֹן עַל־כְּבוֹדְךָ:
יז כִּי חֲמַס לְבָנוֹן יִכְסֹף
וְשָׂד בַּהֲמוֹת יִחִיתֶן
מִדְּמֵי אָדָם וְחֲמַס־אֶרֶץ
קָרְיָה וְכָל־יֹשְׁבֵי בָּהּ:
יח מָה־הוֹעִיל פֶּסֶל כִּי פָסְלוּ יִצְרוּ
מִסִּכָּה וּמוֹרָה שֶׁקֶר
כִּי בִטָּח יִצֵּר יִצְרוּ
עָלְיוּ לַעֲשׂוֹת אֱלִילִים אֱלֹמִים: {ס}
יט הוֹי אָמַר לַעֲץ הַקִּיצָה
עוֹרִי לְאַבְן דּוֹמָם
הוּא יוֹרָה

- 15 Disaster to anyone who makes his neighbours drink,
pouring out his poison until they are drunk,
so that he can see them naked!
- 16 You are full of shame, not glory!
Your turn, now, to drink and show your foreskin.
The cup in Yahweh's right hand comes round to you,
and disgrace will overshadow your glory.
- 17 For, the violence done to the Lebanon will overwhelm you
and the massacre of animals will terrify you,
because of the bloodshed and violence done to the country,
to the city and to all who live in it.
- 18 What use is a sculptured image that a sculptor should make it
– a metal image, a lying instructor?
Why does the image-maker put his trust in it,
that he should make dumb idols?
- 19 Disaster to anyone who says to the log, "Wake up,"
to the dumb stone, "On your feet!"
This is the prophecy!

15 The cynicism of the conqueror is like that of someone who encourages others to get drunk, to degrade them; their shame will soon be his.
16 For הֶעֱרַל ('show your foreskin'), 1Q^pHab has הרעל ('stumble'); this is read by the LXX (διασαλεύθητι) & NRSV ("Drink, you yourself, and stagger").
17 Lebanon is despoiled (cf. Is 37:24) – its cedars felled by Nebuchadnezzar for building purposes (cf. Is 14:8); this may also symbolise Israel (cf. Is 33:9, Jr 21:14, 22:6, 7, 20–23).
18 Vv. 18–20 denounce the conqueror's idolatry.
19 The NJB transposes vv. 18 & 19. The 3rd line (parenthesised in the NJB) is probably a gloss inspired by v. 18^b.

הִנֵּה־הוא תְּפוּשׁ זָהָב וְכֶסֶף
וְכָל־רוּחַ אֵין בְּקִרְבּוֹ:
וַיְהִי בְּהִיכַל קֹדֶשׁוֹ כ
הֵס מִפְּנֵיו כָּל־הָאָרֶץ: {ס}

Look, he is encased in gold and silver

– but not a breath of life inside it!

²⁰ But Yahweh is in his holy Temple:
let the whole earth be silent before him.

²⁰ The 'Temple' refers both to that in Jerusalem but primarily the heavenly palace from which Yahweh will shortly emerge (cf. 3:3ff).

חבקוק פרק ג

תְּפִלָּה לַחֲבִיקוֹק הַנָּבִיא עַל שְׁגִינוֹת:

יְהוָה שָׁמַעְתִּי שְׁמֶעְךָ יִרְאֵתִי ב

יְהוָה פָּעַלְךָ בְּקֶרֶב שָׁנִים חַיִּיהוּ

בְּקֶרֶב שָׁנִים תוֹדִיעַ

בְּרָגֶז רַחֵם תִּזְכּוֹר:

אֱלֹהִים מִתִּימָן יָבוֹא ג

וְקָדוֹשׁ מִהַר־פָּאָרָן

סֵלָה

כֶּסֶה שָׁמַיִם הוֹדוֹ

וַתִּהְלֶתָּ מִלְּאָה הָאָרֶץ:

וְנִגְהָ כְּאוֹר תִּהְיֶה ד

קֶרְנֵי־מִיָּדוֹ לֹ

וְשֵׁם חֲבִיּוֹן עֲזָה:

לִפְנֵי יְלֹךְ דָּבָר ה

HABAKKUK 3

¹ A prayer of the prophet Habakkuk, according to the Shigionoth:

² Yahweh, I have heard of your renown;
your work, Yahweh, inspires me with dread.

Make it live again in our time,
make it known in our time; in wrath, remember mercy.

³ Eloah comes from Teman,
and the Holy One from Mount Paran.

Selah

His majesty covers the heavens
and his glory fills the earth.

⁴ His brightness is like the lightning;
rays flash from his hands,
where his power lies hidden.

⁵ Pestilence goes before him

HABAKKUK 3

This entire chapter is absent from 1Q^{Pr}Hab, a "Commentary on Habakkuk."

¹ In place of 'according to the Shigionoth' (following the MT & NRSV), the NJB has 'tone as for dirges'.

² The literal translation of 'your renown' is 'what you made heard' and that of 'in our time' is 'in the midst of years'. For this verse, the LXX reads, "Between two animals you will make yourself known; when the years draw near, you will be recognised; when the time comes, you will appear" (ἐν μέσῳ δύο ζώων γυναικῶν, ἐν τῷ ἐγγίξει τὰ ἔτη ἐπιγυναικῶν, ἐν τῷ παρῆναι τὸν καιρὸν ἀναδεικνύσθαι, ἐν τῷ παραχθῆναι τὴν ψυχὴν μου ἐν ὀργῇ ἐλέους μνησθήσθαι), a text that, in conjunction with Is 1:3 gave rise to the tradition of the two animals by the crib at Bethlehem.

³ 'Eloah' (אֱלֹהִים) is an ancient name for God.

⁴ 'His brightness' follows the LXX (φέγγος αὐτοῦ), Peshitta & NJB; the MT & NRSV have 'the brightness'. In place of 'lightning', here following NETB (and the context), the NJB has 'day' and the NRSV has 'sun'; the Hebrew word means simply 'light'.

⁵ The word translated 'Plague' (רָשָׁע) is derived from the name of the Phoenician god of lightning and can mean any calamity.

וַיֵּצֵא רֶשֶׁף לְרִגְלָיו:
עָמַד | וַיִּמְדַּד אֶרֶץ ^ו
רָאָה וַיִּתַּר גּוֹלִים
וַיִּתְפָּצְצוּ הַרְרֵי־עֹד
שָׁחוּ גְבַעוֹת עוֹלָם
הַלִּיכוֹת עוֹלָם לֹו:
תַּחַת אָנוּן רָאִיתִי אֶהֱלִי כּוֹשָׁן ^ז
יִרְגְּזוּן יְרִיעוֹת אֶרֶץ מִדְיָן:
הַבְּנֵה־רִים חָרָה יְהוָה אִם בְּנֵה־רִים אֶפְּדֶה ^ח
אִם־בָּיִם עֲבַרְתִּיךָ
כִּי תִרְכַּב עַל־סוּסֶיךָ
מִרְכַּבְתִּיךָ יִשׁוּעָה:
עֲרִיָה תַעֲזוֹר קִשְׁתְּךָ ^ט
שְׁבַעוֹת מַטּוֹת אֶמֶר
סֵלָה
נִהְרֹות תִּבְקַע־אֶרֶץ:
רָאוּךָ יַחֲלִלוּ הָרִים ^י
זֶרֶם מִיִּם עֲבַר

and Plague follows close behind.

⁶ When he stands up, he makes the earth tremble;
with his glance, he makes the nations quake
and the eternal mountains are dislodged,
the everlasting hills sink down,
his pathways from of old.

⁷ I saw the tents of Cushan in trouble,
the tent-curtains of Midian shuddering.

⁸ Are you enraged with the rivers, Yahweh,
are you angry at the sea,
that you should mount your chargers,
your rescuing chariots?

⁹ You uncover your bow
and give the string its fill of arrows.

Selah

You trench the soil with torrents.

¹⁰ The mountains see you and tremble,
great floods sweep by

⁶ The meaning of the last line is unclear: traditionally it has been translated, 'his ways are eternal'; however, in this context (see vv. 3, 7) it is more likely that the line speaks of Yahweh taking the same route as in the days of Moses and Deborah (see Dt 33:2, Jg 5:4).

⁷ 'Cushan' (כוֹשָׁן) is apparently an ancient name for 'Midian' (see the #Ex 2:15).

⁸ At the end of the 1st line, the MT, LXX & NRSV repeat 'enraged with the rivers' (a dittography); here, we follow the NJB.

⁹ The text of the 2nd line has been corrected, following an LXX MS (& NJB); the MT is unintelligible (literally, 'the oaths are arrows of the word').

¹⁰ The literal translation of 'waves' is 'hands': lifting the hands here suggests panic and is accompanied by a cry for mercy.

נִתַּן תְּהוֹם קוֹלּוֹ
 רוֹם יִדְּיָהּ נִשָּׂא:
 יֵשֶׁמֶשׁ יִרְחַ עִמָּד זָבֻלָּהּ יֵא
 לְאֹזֶר חֲצִיף יִהְלֹכוּ
 לְנִגָּה בִּרְק חֲנִיתָּהּ:
 בְּזַעַם תִּצְעַד-אֶרֶץ יֵב
 בְּאַף תִּדְּוֹשׁ גּוֹיִם:
 יֵצֵאתָ לִישַׁע עַמָּךְ יֵג
 לִישַׁע אֶת-מְשִׁיחֶךָ
 מִחֲצַת רֹאשׁ מִבֵּית רָשָׁע
 עֲרוֹת יִסּוֹד עַד-צִוְּאָר
 סֵלָה: {פ}
 נִקְבַּת בְּמַטְיוֹ רֹאשׁ פְּרוֹזוֹ יֵד
 יִסְעֲרוּ לַהֲפִיצָנִי
 עֲלִיצְתָם כְּמוֹ-לֹאכֵל עֲנִי בַּמִּסְתָּר:
 דָּרַכְתָּ בֵּים סוּסֶיךָ טו
 חָמַר מַיִם רַבִּים:

and the abyss roars aloud,
 lifting high its waves.

- 11 Sun and moon stay inside their lofty dwellings,
 they flee at the light of your arrows,
 at the flash of your lightning-spear.
- 12 In rage, you stride across the land;
 in anger, you trample the nations.
- 13 You marched to save your people,
 to deliver your anointed one;
 you wounded the head of the house of the wicked,
 laid bare the foundation to the rock.

Selah

- 14 With your shafts, you pierced the leader of his warriors
 who stormed out with shouts of joy to scatter us,
 as if they meant to devour some poor wretch in their lair.
- 15 With your horses, you trampled through the sea,
 churning the mighty waters!

11 The NJB omits 'lofty' before 'dwellings', here following the MT, and the NRSV has 'exalted place'.

12 The NRSV has 'trod' in place of 'stride across', here following the NJB.

13 'To deliver' follows the LXX (σῶσαι); the MT has 'the help'. The remainder of the verse is very difficult and the translation is uncertain. 'To the rock' is conjectural; the MT has 'to the neck'. Note the unusual/unexpected dagesh on the resh in רֹאשׁ.

14 The text of this verse is uncertain: 'your shafts' is conjectural; the MT has 'his shafts'. 'His warriors' follows the Vg (*bellatorum ejus*), NJB & NRSV; the LXX has 'princes' (δυναστών) and the MT has an unknown word (פְּרוֹזוֹ).

15 The literal translation of the 2nd line, here with the NRSV, is 'the foaming of the mighty (or many) waters' (the NJB has 'through the surging abyss').

- טז שִׁמְעֵתִי | וְתִרְגָּז בְּטִנִּי
לְקוֹל צִלְלוֹ שִׁפְתֵי
יְבֹא רֶקֶב בְּעַצְמִי
וְתַחְתִּי אֲרָגֵז
אֲשֶׁר אָנוּחַ לְיוֹם צָרָה
לְעֹלֹת לַעַם יְגִידָנוּ:
יז כִּי־תֵאֵנָה לֹא־תִפְרָח
וְאִין יְבוֹל בְּגִפְנִים
כַּחַשׁ מַעֲשֵׂה־זֵית
וּשְׂדֵמֹת לֹא־עֲשֶׂה אֶכֶל
גֹּזֵר מִמִּכְלֵה צֹאן
וְאִין בֶּקֶר בְּרִפְתִּים:
יח וְאֲנִי בִיהוָה אֶעֱלֹזָה
אֶגִּילָה בֵּאלֹהֵי יִשְׁעִי:
יט יְהוָה אֲדֹנָי חִילִי
וַיַּשֵּׁם רַגְלִי כְּאֵילֹת
וַעֲלֵ בַמּוֹתֵי יְדִרְכָּנִי
לְמִנְצָח בְּנִגְינֹתֵי: {ש}
- 16 When I heard, I trembled to the core,
my lips quivered at the sound;
my bones became disjointed
and my legs gave way beneath me.
Calmly, I await the day of anguish,
which is dawning on the people now attacking us.
- 17 For, the fig tree is not to blossom,
nor will the vines bear fruit,
the olive crop will disappoint
and the fields will yield no food;
the sheep will vanish from the fold;
no cattle in the stalls.
- 18 Yet, I shall rejoice in Yahweh;
I shall exult in God my Saviour.
- 19 Yahweh, the Lord, is my strength:
he will make my feet as light as a doe's
and set my steps on the heights.
- For the choirmaster; on stringed instruments.

¹⁶ 'My legs gave way' is a conjectural translation following the LXX (ὑποκάτωθεν μου ἐταράχθη); the MT has 'I give way who' (אֲרָגֵז אֲשֶׁר). The end of the verse is uncertain; others translate 'to attack a people who assails it' or 'when they attack a people to assail it'.

¹⁷ This verse is parenthesised in the NJB.

¹⁸ For this verse, here following the NJB & NRSV, NETB reads, "I will rejoice because of the LORD; I will be happy because of the God who delivers me."

¹⁹ For the last line, the LXX reads, 'for me to be overcome by his ode' (με τοῦ νικῶμαι ἐν τῇ ᾠδῇ αὐτοῦ).