

Introduction<sup>and</sup> Commentary  
to the  
Third Chapter  
of  
Habakkuk.  
by  
Alexander Henry Geisner



# Table of Contents.

## Part I

|     |                            |           |
|-----|----------------------------|-----------|
| I   | Character of the Book..... | Pages 1-7 |
| II  | Name of the Prophet.....   | " 8-17    |
| III | His Life and Times.....    | " 17-48   |

## Part II

### The Third Chapter.

|     |                                   |             |
|-----|-----------------------------------|-------------|
| I.  | Its Position in the Book.....     | Pages 49-55 |
| II  | Similarity to other Passages..... |             |
|     | in the Old Testament.....         | " 56-58     |
| III | Contents of the Chapter.....      | " 59-65     |
| IV  | English Version.....              | " 66-70     |
| V   | General Commentary.....           | " 71-107    |

b.

## Chief Literature Consulted.

- I. Wolff, Dr. Abraham A. - "Der Prophet Habakuk". (1822)
- II. Hitzig, F. - "Die 12 Kleinen Propheten". (1838)
- III. Delitzsch, F. - "De Habacuci Prophetæ Vita  
atque Aetate". (1842)
- IV. " - "Der Prophet Habacuc ausgelegt". (1843)
- V. Ewald, H. - "Propheten des Alten Bundes".
- VI. Umbreit, F. W. C. - "Commentar".
- VII. Keil, C. F. - "Commentary on Hab." (Engl. Transl.)
- VIII. Gumpach, J. Von - "Der Prophet Habakuk". (1860).
- IX. Schneider, Gustavus. - "De Carmine Habacuci  
Commentatio". (1881).
- X Strong, C. - "The Prayer of Habacuc. (In  
vol. XXI of Meth. Quarterly Review).

## Introduction.

The book of Habakkuk, the eighth of the minor prophets, the object of our study, distinguishes itself from the rest by several characteristics, which give it a marked individuality. It consists of three short, but correspondingly interesting chapters, written in that most lofty and beautiful style so peculiar to the school of Isaiah. From the very start of the narration of the vision, the fact is made evident that we have before us no ordinary soothsayer or seer, who needs must designate himself **נביא**, since the

title is not conceded by an uncon-  
 vinced people. Clearly the שפע שופע מאת השם  
 "the divine efflux" had emanated to  
 and influenced him so much that  
 inspired words poured forth as the  
 hot overflow of lava from the fiery  
 heart of the volcano. The pure and lofty  
 key-note, struck by the masterhand  
 designating the high scale of his song,  
 never yields to a more dissonant or  
 debased tone. The same elevated note  
 is maintained throughout. In  
 language, varied and rich as it is ex-  
 plicit, the skillful word-painter draws  
 before us, on the canvas of the imagi-

3.  
nation, pictures which equal, if not surpass any descriptive work left to us in the Old Testament records.

As the plastic clay in the hands of the potter, he draws to himself all facts of former history, all knowledge of phenomena of nature, all that is most terrible and awe-inspiring and, with his nervous fingers, molds the mass into a song, which, now mounting into the heights of ecstatic joy, now plunging into the depths of sorrowful chant, now threatening and pleading in turn, - carries all before it.

Bleek says of him: "An Erhabenheit des

Schilderung wird er wohl von keinem der alttestamentlichen Schriftsteller, weder der poetischen, noch der prophetischen, übertroffen." Eichhorn can not lavish upon him sufficient praise. After describing Habakkuk's powers of poesy<sup>and</sup> imagery in the most glowing terms, he says: "Alle Eigenschaften eines grossen Dichters waren in ihm vereint: eine Einbildungskraft voll lebendiger Schöpfung, ein Urtheil voll Richtigkeit, das den Dichtungen seiner glühenden Phantasie, Correctheit u. den feinsten Umriss gab, u. uneingeschränkte Gewalt über die Sprache".

The most beautiful<sup>and</sup> artistically

constructed of the three chapters is the last, the so-called תפלה, upon which I intend to give a short exposition and commentary. The unity of the book has been called into doubt by some, as Rosenmüller (Scholia in V.T.) and Friedrich; yet such an assumption seems wholly gratuitous, since their natural and easy inter-connection is easily demonstrated. An intelligent exegesis and deduction as to the date of the prophecy is made possible only by regarding the present book as the original form and the proper consecutive order of the speeches following

closely, one upon the other. A late writer, J. Von Gumpach ("Der Prophet Habakuk", 1861), has set forth, at great length, arguments in favor of regarding what seem to him, many interpolations and later additions or changes in the text, at the same time attacking with great virulence, even the modern critics of his own school, such as Keil and Ewald, who, perhaps, do not seem to him to go far enough in the work of the mutilation of the book. The version before us being the Massoretic, with which he takes the liberty to disagree, suffice it to say that his scheme has

received no acceptance at the hands of modern commentators of repute.

The two assumptions, which, in the following treatise are taken for granted, are:

I. The book of Habakkuk forms one complete and consecutive whole;

II. There is such a thing as prophecy, i.e., a foreshadowing of future events by master-minds, such as Habakkuk's undoubtedly was.

## Name of the Prophet

Many proper names occur in the Sacred Writings, whose meaning was wrapt up in the greatest obscurity, there being nothing, neither in the Hebrew language itself, nor in the hitherto known kindred languages, by means of which any plausible explanation can be arrived at. Not least among these has been the name of our prophet Stabbakuk, for the interpretation of which the commentators have been put to such various shifts as we shall mention further on. But a new<sup>and</sup> most important factor in the advanced study of the Hebrew language

has appeared in the comparatively recent science of Assyrian research.

Young as this investigation is, a wealth of hidden meanings has already been revealed, so that, with much pleasure and satisfaction, we contemplate the prospects of further valuable discovery, which the indefatigable efforts of scholars in this most promising field give hope for. Happily, also, a later find among the vast pile of inscriptions has brought to light a tablet of singular import and containing a word having direct bearing upon the object of our quest. In Frederick Delitzsch's

little book, "The Hebrew Language in the Light of Assyrian Research" (1883), is mentioned a small Babylonian tablet on which are inscribed about seventy names of plants, which the Babylonian king Marduk-bal-iddina (Merodach Baladan of Isai. XXXIX - 1) ordered to be planted in his garden. With such well-known names as "pik-kutu" (פִּקְקוּטָא) II Kings IV - 39), 'yartanu" (יָרְטָנָא frequent), "kû-kânitu" (evidently Jonah's קִיָּין), we find also the highly interesting botanical name of "hambakûku", the undoubted Assyrian equivalent of our prophet's nomen, the more correct Hebrew form of which would hence

be **הַבִּקִּיק**, thus justifying the Septuagint transliteration of Ἀμβρούκ, corrupted into Ἀμβρούμ. As to what exactly this plant may be has not yet been discovered, but examples of names of plants used as Old Testament proper names are common and familiar.

Commentators who have attempted to derive and explain this name had no inkling, of course, of the meaning happened upon in the light of this relatively modern study, nor did any make surmises as to possible interpretations, except such for which basis is given in the composition of the word

itself. Nor did any regard the more accurate equivalent of the Septuagint as otherwise than a departure from and a corruption of the Hebrew version, considered in the original form. [Similar accurate transliterations may be seen, in the Septuagint, and corresponding corrupt forms in the Bible, as "Senacherib," called **סַנְחֶרִיב** (II Kings XVIII-13). The Assyrian original is "Sina-ahi-iriba" = Senacherib.] Nearly all, therefore, agree in constructing it as a reduplicated form from the root **חָבַק** "to embrace," - **συμπηγνύειν** - which is also found in Koh. IV, 5, meaning "to fold (the hands)", otherwise "to

encircle with the arms", "press to the heart". The elder Delitsch thus describes the evolution of the name from this root. By means of the reduplication of the verb, we obtain **חַנּוּקָה** (like **חַנּוּכָה** from **חָנַךְ**), expressing thereby "embrace in lasting peculiar love". The **ח** of the reduplication is suppressed, obviously to attain ease and smoothness in the pronouncing of a name often on the tongue, although such omission is paralleled in less common words. To compensate, the final vowel becomes lengthened and we have the form as prefixed to the book. As concerns the application and value

of the meaning obtained by this derivation, many ingenious hypotheses have been advanced. Delitsch rather opines that the formation in: points to an abstract meaning, such as "love's embrace", having no necessary connection with the prophet's destiny or career. Luther, on the other hand, makes the utmost use of the scope given by this definition, saying: "Habacuc hat einen rechten Namen zu seinem Amt, denn Habacuc heis(s)t auf Deutsch 'ein Herzer', oder der sich mit einem andern herzet und in die Arme nimmt." A. Wolff calls him "an embracer of God" and answers the question

of Rosenmüller, viz., "How could his parents foresee his future life so as to give him a name appropriate to his calling? - by citing examples of such anticipation as Genesis X, 25. The *Sohar* gives a characteristic explanation of the name. In its remarks on Exodus IV 16, it calls Habbakuk the son of the Shunamite woman (II Kings IV 34) And the double ק refers to the two embraces he received, one from his mother, the other from Elisha.

Such derivation involved a new difficulty in the derivation of the Septuagint equivalent from which it was rightly inferred that the Hebrew ought to be חֲבַקּוּק,

the Dagesh forte in the **ב** supplementing the Greek  $\mu$ . This difficulty was removed in the light of the fact that the Greek ear has a special liking for a liquid before a labial, so that **בב** (I Sam. XXII-11) is transferred into (Septuagint) Νομβᾶ, or **בבבב** (Dan. III-5) into οαμβύκη. The final  $\mu$  was a real stumbling-block. Hitzig compares it to the change of  $\beta\epsilon\epsilon\lambda\epsilon\beta\acute{o}\upsilon\lambda$  for  $\beta\epsilon\epsilon\lambda\epsilon\beta\acute{o}\upsilon\beta$ , in order that the last syllable should <sup>not</sup> begin and end with the same letter. Gesenius thinks it a corruption.

The Syriac and Arabic equivalents are the same as and doubtless taken from

the Hebrew חִבְקִיק.

## Life and Times of Habakkuk.

There is no mention of the prophet in the Bible outside of the narrow circumference of his own book, and this itself is so poverty-stricken in definite statement or allusion by which we may with certainty fix the date of the prophecy, that conjecture only remains to us. Nothing sure is known concerning him, either as to the time he flourished or any cardinal marks of the career he pursued. That he was a prophet κατ' ἐξοχήν, exclusive of any

other vocation or occupation, we know from the superscription, in which, probably written by himself, he is called pointedly and unqualifiedly **נָבִיא**, "the prophet." Presumably he devoted himself to prophecy and preaching alone and not, like Amos (q. v. VII-14), at various times and occasions only. Though no authentic account of his life exists and the commentators have been left only the scant internal evidence of his few productions upon which to construct their theories, yet there has come down to us, through tradition, rabbinical and patristic literature, a mass of not unpleasing nor uninteresting

accounts, even if manifestly worthless from a strictly critical point of view.

A careful compilation of these, from the sources themselves has been made in Delitoch's "De Habacuci Prophetæ Vita Atque Aetate", and though that author himself stigmatizes them all as "ein Unst buntscheckiger, sich selbst-widersprechenden Geschichten", a reproduction of some, which contain a semblance of truth, will not be amiss.

Therefore we present here the principal traditions relating to his parentage, birth place, teachers and ~~time of~~ birth place of burial.

## Parentage.

A noted story has come down to us, to which allusion has already been made, namely that Habakkuk was the son of the Shunamite woman, who was restored to life by the prophet Elisha. The account goes on to say that this woman was the sister of Abishag, the concubine of David, and the wife of the prophet Iddai (v. Yalkut on II Kings IV-16). This tradition is certainly not very ancient. Benseb f.d. claims it is found in the Talmud, but there is no trace of it in any passage mentioning the Shunamite (vide Berachoth 10; Nidda 70; Rashi is wholly silent).

on the matter). Abrahanel<sup>and</sup> Abendana give it as 'פִּי יִשְׁרָאֵל. Jakuto, the author of Yuchasin, <sup>and</sup> probably Abrahanel himself took it originally from the Schar. Manifestly, the story is a bad anachronism, for the prophet must then have been at least 230 years old at the earliest day to which we may ascribe his prophetic visions, i. e. in the reign of Manasseh 697-642. Nevertheless Vorstius<sup>and</sup> David Deutsch (מִלְחָמַת יִשְׂרָאֵל וְעַמּוּלָּהּ, 1837) undertakes its defence.

A second tradition is based upon the superscription of the apocryphal 'Bel and the dragon'; <sup>and</sup> found only in the Codex

Chisianus<sup>and</sup> the Syriac Hexaplar version, reading thus: 'Ἐκ προφητείας Ἀμβακούμ υἱοῦ Ἰησοῦ ἐκ τῆς φυλῆς Λεβὶ', meaning: "Of the prophecy of Habbatuk, son of Joshua (or Jesus) of the tribe of Levi." Hence some believe this book to be part of the vision of the prophet. This is the most ancient of the traditions current concerning Habbatuk, and therefore nothing can be brought to controvert that he was the son of a certain Joshua the Levite.

### Birth-place.

Although the above-mentioned tale of his Levitical birth is favored by the existence of the  under his name<sup>and</sup>

assists handily in the explanation of the  
 most difficult suffix ית'י' (Hab. III 19),  
 yet it is contradicted by another hand-  
 ed down to us from Dorotheus<sup>2</sup> & Epiphanius.  
 These men wrote small accounts of  
 the lives of the prophets<sup>2</sup> and tell us, the  
 former, that Ἀμβακὸν ἦν ἐκ φυλῆς  
 Συμέων ἐξ ἀγροῦ βῆθι τοῦ Χάρ; the  
 latter that οὗτος ἦν ἐξ ἀγροῦ βηθζοχῆρ  
 ἐκ φυλῆς Συμεών. The exact location of  
 this Beth-zachariah, it is difficult to  
 fix. If it is identified with Beth-zur,  
 that is in the tribe of Judah<sup>2</sup> and the tradi-  
 tion says, the tribe of Simeon. Beth-zur  
 is also not far from the בית זכריות

of Gittin 57a. This story is confirmed and supported by Eusebius, Hieronymus, Sozomenus and Nicephorus, who also report the sepulchre of Habbatuk to be at Ceilae in the tribe of Judah.

### His Teachers.

On this topic there are a variety of traditions. The books ירמיה, נחמיה and יחזקאל agree in naming as his teacher the prophet Nahum, who, in his speeches, foreshadows the Assyrian invasion as Habbatuk the Chaldean. This seems to be a mere conjecture based upon the order of their books in the Canon. In the יחזקאל itself is another contradict-

ory account, which declares Joel b. Bethuel, Nahum and Habbatuk to have been contemporaries and disciples of Micah (cf. Baba Bathra אורכא (תנאן) בריה דר' חנניא בר' חסדא ור' יוחנן ור' יוחנן ור' יוחנן).

A third, and for many by no means unlikely tradition makes Habbatuk the spy, חַבְבָּתִּי, whom Isaiah, in Chap. XXI, is ordered to obtain in order to announce what he should see. The spy draws a circle and, having taken his stand in it, declares his intention to remain therein until God shall answer him. Rashi, commenting on Habbatuk II.1, says this story. T'anith II and Hagigah II, in the story of Honi Hamagol who also drew a magic circle,

allude to it. The story is certainly not of a recent origin. An ingenious proof for it was adduced from the fact that  $\text{ה'ר"י}$  (Isai. XXI-8) referring to the "spy" and the word  $\text{זיזון}$  have the same numerical value.

### His Time.

The greatest diversion manifests itself in the opinions of rabbinical and church authorities concerning the date of Habbakuk's prophecies. We will discuss the subject fully, later on. Let it suffice for the present to quote these theories without comment or criticism. The oldest historical work,  $\text{ספר היצירה}$ , which, nevertheless, is no older

than the 8<sup>th</sup> century, says that Habbakuk prophesied under Manasseh, - and this is accepted by Hardnius, Witseus<sup>us</sup> and Buddens<sup>us</sup> of the earlier writers. On the other hand, Paschale, Syncellus, Cedrenus<sup>us</sup> and Clemens Alex- andrinus<sup>us</sup> differ only as to the time of the commencement of his prophecy, but agree to the assertion that he was active under Zedekiah and still living when Daniel was cast into the lions' den. Augustine confesses himself wholly ignorant of the date of Habbakuk's activity; remarking that he is not mentioned in the chronological tables of either Eusebius or Hieronymus. Lastly, there is a tradition given in Dor-

them, and Epiphaneus that, at the time of  
 the destruction of Jerusalem, Habbatuk  
 was a fugitive to the town of Ostracine  
 (B. Bathra 20, Bera 39 וְהָיָה חַבְבָּתוּק נִסְתָּר) and became  
 a wanderer in Arabia. After Jerusalem  
 was destroyed and the Chaldeans had  
 withdrawn, he returned to his native  
 land, became a farmer and ministered to  
 the reapers. As concerning the probability  
 of the truth of this legend, we know it to  
 be a fact that there were, at that time,  
 many fugitives to Arabia and Habbatuk  
 might have been one of them.

However, there being no decisive proof,  
 either one way or the other, for any of

these stories, we remain where we were at the outset and are thrown upon the last resource, the book itself, for allusions by means of which the prophet's time may be fixed with some approximation to certainty. Upon this, the investigation must center. The noted Biblical scholar Delitzsch exhausted all his ingenuity of research and exegesis in efforts to find and support a plausible thesis regarding this point so much discussed and theorized upon. As most of the arguments before or since have been summed up in his admirable treatise, it will be best to insert his reasoning

and conclusion here, afterwards giving whatever else may have been added by later writers, with my ultimate inference from the whole: -

### Delitzsch's Argument.

This is based upon no supposition whatsoever, such as vaticinium ante eventum, or the possibility of man to foresee the future. On the contrary it is founded solely on the construction<sup>and</sup> interpretation of the text successfully carried out by careful comparison with similar words, phrases<sup>and</sup> sentences occurring elsewhere in the Bible. The argument may conveniently be divided into several heads:

a.) In Chap. I-5, Habbatuk says that the punishment he foretells will happen yet "in your days" כִּי יָמֶיךָ, i. e., in the lifetime of the generation he is addressing. This allows a date no earlier than the reign of Josiah (circa 642). The word כִּי יָמֶיךָ denotes a various lapse of time. In Jeremiah XVI 9, it includes at the most a period of twenty years. In Ezek. XII 25, as the historical fulfillment of the prophecy shows, not more than a space of six years is meant. Hence, according to this last and least inclusion, reckoning from the battle of Carkemish (605), we must locate Habbatuk as prophesying under Jehoyakim. But

there is a reason for placing him at an earlier date. This  $\text{ז'י"א כ"ב}$ , therefore, circumscribes our investigation to the space 642-611.

b.) The second decisive fact for the ascertaining of the time of Stabbatur lies in the relation of Stabbatur II - 20,  $\text{וְהָיָה כְּהֵיכָל}$

and Zephaniah I-7,  $\text{וְהָיָה כְּהֵיכָל הָאֱלֹהִים מְעוֹנָה בְּיָמֵינוּ כִּי-הָאֱלֹהִים בְּיָמֵינוּ$

$\text{הָאֱלֹהִים בְּיָמֵינוּ כִּי-הָאֱלֹהִים בְּיָמֵינוּ}$

These two sentences have connection, for

1.) The  $\text{סוֹעִי}$  of each are alike as also the motive for their delivery. A great catastrophe is being foretold.

2.) The same thought has been expressed in so many different ways, that it is wholly improbable that both prophets hit upon exactly the same

words. Now arises the question: which one of these originated, which one imitated the expression? Certainly Zephaniah took it from Habakkuk, for - 1.) The passages from Zephaniah which are undoubted borrowings from older prophets are numberless. He helps himself freely from the works of Joel, Amos, Micah <sup>1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup></sup> and Isaiah. (Cf. Zef. I-13 with Amos V-11; Zef. I-14+15 with Joel I-2; Zef. I-18 with Isai. I-23, XXVIII-22, IX-18; Zef. III-19 with (Amos or) Micah IV-6+7; Zef. I-3 with Hosea IV-3; Zef. II-15 with Isai. LVII-8+10 - etc.). In this respect he may be compared to Jeremiah. On the other hand, Habakkuk makes com-

paratively no use of previous writings (only II-13 from Isai. XI-9). 2.) If this thesis be strictly applied, Zef. I-7 may be shown to be a collation from Habakkuk II-20 (לֹא־יִהְיֶה אֵל עֲלֵינוּ), Joel I-15 (אֵלֵינוּ יִהְיֶה אֵל), possibly Isai. XXXIV-16 (אֵלֵינוּ יִהְיֶה אֵל) and Isai. XIII-2 (אֵלֵינוּ יִהְיֶה אֵל). Not only this may be conceded, but it may even be made clear that many other passages of Zephaniah are, in a similar manner, selections from various prophets. (Cf. Zef. I-14 with Joel II-12 and Amos II-14; Zef. II-7 with Isai. XVI-6 and Amos I-13. In fact the whole Zef. I-13-16 is such mere quotation.) As the rest of Zef. I-7 (excluding the portion under study)

is borrowed, *pari passu*, the chances are that the words 'לִי אֵלֹהִים' are also thus obtained. 3.) The passage in Habbatuk is more complete, that in Jer. briefer and more obscure. This is characteristic of the latter, who, in all probability, wished to recall to the minds of the people, by short and abrupt allusion, what his predecessors had said at greater length. 4.) The verse finds a second imitator in Zechariah II. 17: וְלֹא יִיָּדָעוּ אֵלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וְלֹא יִיָּדָעוּ אֵלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל, and this plainly in both hemistiches. If then the original of Habbatuk had such power that it is re-echoed in this late voice, is it not more than

probable, nay almost certain that  
 Zephaniah took it from him? The  
 answer can only be affirmative.  
 This being agreed to, it remains but  
 to determine the time of Zephaniah, al-  
 most contemporaneous with which Hab-  
 bakkuk must have flourished. Accord-  
 ing to the superscription of his book,  
 he prophesied under Josiah. But  
 1) Zephaniah prophesies at a time when  
 the Jehovah-culte was again restored.  
 This was after the 12<sup>th</sup> year of Josiah.  
 2) He speaks, in Chap. I. 8, of the sons of  
 the King as such, who had already, by  
 their wicked actions, shown themselves

worthy of punishment; hence they must have had arrived at a certain maturity, say, Jozakim 12<sup>th</sup> & Joahas 10 years old, i.e., the 18<sup>th</sup> year of Josiah. Lastly, considering that Zephaniah among the minor prophets opens the Jeremiah, whereas Habakkuk closes the Isaiah school, we will not err in placing the former after, the latter before the 18<sup>th</sup> year of Josiah. This determines our "terminus ad quem".

Now to fix the "terminus a quo", we are aided by the fact that Habakkuk wrote a song for the temple service (v. Chap. III: חֲבַקְקִי בְּיָמֵי יְהוֹשִׁיָּהוּ), which evidently implies the restoration of the old liturgy, which

occurred in the 12<sup>th</sup> year of Josiah.

2.) Those of Jeremiah's prophecies which were given probably in the 13<sup>th</sup> year of Josiah, have a close similitude with those of HabbaKuk, the subject matter being the same, namely an invasion of some fearful northern horder; also a number of expressions having a close resemblance to those of HabbaKuk (Cf. Jer. V-15 with Hab. I-6; Jer. IV-13 & V-6, with Hab. I-8). Therefore two things are certain: that HabbaKuk did not deliver his speeches before the 12<sup>th</sup> year of Josiah and that he flourished no later than the 13<sup>th</sup> year of this King, for at that time arose

Jeremiah, who, as we see, makes use of the material which our prophet had left him. Hence our conclusion is that HabbaKuk prophesied in or about the 12<sup>th</sup> year of Josiah.

### Criticism.

We remark, in the first place, the exceeding ingenuity and learning displayed by this noted exegete in the determination of the much-mooted question of HabbaKuk's time of prophecy. In point of fact, he outdoes himself and verges to an extreme point in his fine-spun web, becoming finally entangled in

if. Carried away by his theorizing, he arbitrarily places limits where there is no warrant for them and bases his deductions on what may, after all, be shown to be pure conjecture. His whole inference depends, as a start and pivot, upon the word  $\text{סכר'י}$  which, he strongly insists, cannot denote more or less than circa thirty years, basing this on the analogies of Joel I-2, where there is merely a comparison of  $\text{סכר'י}$  and  $\text{סכר'י אכזר'י}$ , and Ezek. XII-25 which, he himself concludes, contains but six years. Keil justly remarks that this expression is wholly relative and indefinite and not to

be determined for one prophet from another, being sometimes more, sometimes less than a life-time. Hence we are in no wise prevented by the  $\text{סו"ט}$  from placing him even earlier than Josiah, as Manasseh. This king lived only thirty-eight years before the first known Chaldean invasion. His refutation of the probability of Habakkuk's flourishing under Jejakim is most careful and laborious, founded on the resemblance of Jef. I-7 to Hab. II-20. Yet curiously an important phrase seems to have escaped his careful eye, which would have obviated some of this labor, <sup>and</sup> to which

he calls attention only passingly. In I-5, the prophet foretelling of the coming of the Chaldeans, remarks: <sup>T</sup>וְלֹא תִּימָן כִּי יִסְמְךָ, "Ye will not believe it when it is told", clearly indicating that the Chaldeans were yet an obscure, unknown nation and had not yet started on their career of conquest. This fact imperils the entire position of those who would put HabbaKuk after the battle of Carhemish (606) under Joyakim.

I cannot but believe that, had not the commentator been hampered by his forced interpretation of ספרי, he would have been inclined to locate our prophet earlier.

er than Josiah, for then the structure built upon the imitation of Jef I-7 to Hab. II-20 would necessarily have been much more solid, since 1) it would have become wholly needless to prove the priority of Habakkuk, because this would be manifest; 2) the imitation itself would sound more natural and pardonable, since a certain period of time would have elapsed (at least fifteen years) between the delivering of it by the author himself and Jephaniah's repetition. The latter might hence be looked upon, as all his other imitations are, merely as a reminder and a catch-word to recall

to the people what his great predecessor had said; 3) on Delitzsch's theory, the transition from the Isaiah to the Jeremiah school of prophecy would be sudden and abrupt, three representatives of the schools existing even as contemporaries. If Habakkuk were just under Manasseh, the transition would have lasted nearly two decades and could easily be paralleled historically. Particularly these last two reasons are, for me, sufficient negative warrant in considering him as preceding Josiah. It is hardly possible, not to say wholly improbable, that there should be such a sudden sinking.

in the character of prophecy. And the degree of the prophets in so short a time. Nor would it be likely that one who stands on so high a plane, as Jeremiah would borrow from a living contemporary. And one whose chief work (chap. III) seems to have been pretty generally disseminated among the people. Therefore I would prefer to put him in the last years of Manasseh. Evidence of great value for such determination is found in II Kings XXI-10: וַיִּדְבֹּר יְהוָה בְּפִי עֲבָדָיו הַנְּבִיאִים לֵאמֹר, "And the Lord spoke through his servants, the prophets". What prophets could there have been under Manasseh who prophesied

of the coming calamity? Probably Hab-  
bakkuk was one of them and we might at-  
tach some weight to the opening sentence  
of Yalkut Shimeoni to Habbakkuk:

הבכין (תנכ"א) ביום יצאן לארץ בבל ולא היה מקום להם  
לומר "Habbakkuk prophesied  
in the days of Manasseh, but because  
Manasseh was not a righteous man, his  
name was not affixed to the prophecy".

There is but one apparent objection  
to this thesis, always excepting of course  
those who deny the fact of prophecy and  
hence place Habbakkuk under Jazakim  
or later. The point of Delitzsch being  
considered disposed of, there is yet left

his plea that the third chapter could not have been written in a time when the temple-culte was not observed. Manasseh, nevertheless, removed the idols<sup>and</sup> idol-worship prevalent at his time, to make way for the old, pure Jehovah worship. After his Assyrian imprisonment, he inaugurated this reform, which is historically related in II Chron. XXXIII. 15+16.

Hence, this sole difficulty falling away, we may regard it, if not established, yet exceedingly probable, that Habbatuk prophesied in the last years of Manasseh.

Minor proof, which Delitzsch adduces for his theory, such as our prophet's position

in the books of minor prophets in the Canon, the characteristics of the Isaiah school so conspicuous in his work, the description of the times pointing to a (truer) reaction of the truer and better instincts of the people, the increasing influence of the Torah and the combating of idolatry preparatory to its abolishment. And finally the testimony of the historical books that the invasion of the Chaldeans, in the time of Jozakim, had been foretold by the prophets, is in no wise invalidated, but, on the contrary, becomes more plausible, by placing Habakkuk under Manasseh.

## Part II.

## The Third Chapter.

## Its Position in the Book.

Regarding the 3<sup>rd</sup> chapter as apart from the rest of the book, we see that it forms a complete and in no respect imperfect whole. There is no direct allusion to anything preceding; no knowledge or information premised but what was part of the common stock; no special event described in particular and unmistakable language; in short the sentiments of the psalm, being general in character and expression, would strike the superficial observer as being applicable to almost any time or people. Therefore, not unreasonably, has it been urged

that this 3<sup>rd</sup> chapter has no connection with the previous portions of the book, was probably composed at a much later period, perhaps even post ex eventu, and hence must be explained and commented as a unit in itself. On the other hand, aside from the fact that we have no right, on pure deduction from contents, to apply such thesis by means of which the whole Bible might be dismembered, there stands in the way of such proposal the opening words of the second verse:

שָׁמַעְתִּי אֶת־קוֹלִי, "I have heard thy message."

What can this שָׁמַעְתִּי refer to? On the theory mentioned, it is attempted to attribute

to it a sort of general meaning, pointing to all the past great announcements and prophecies made by God to the people, as Herder's (*Geist d. Hebr. Poesie*) says: "Die Gerichte die der Prophet hört, sind Sagen von den Wunderbegebenheiten alter Zeit." Yet, can we imagine that a man, speaking of wonderful acts wrought by the hand of God, in by-gone ages, and which, since then, have become a matter of general history, well known to every child, would apply to them such a word as *mir*? Hardly, and hence no other than a special reference can be understood of it. Such special reference

can be directed to nothing else than the "message" given in the first chapter, i.e., the coming of the Chaldeans. That the prophet did not think it necessary to define further his  $\text{גל}$  must point out to us that his vision was in all probability already well-known among the people and therefore needed only this slight hint to give them an insight into the purpose of the following verses.

As regards the nature of the connection between Chapters II and III, although I willingly admit that the sequence is natural and easy, yet I would not make it so intimate as Schneider attempts. He regards Chap. II-4 as the text which the prophet

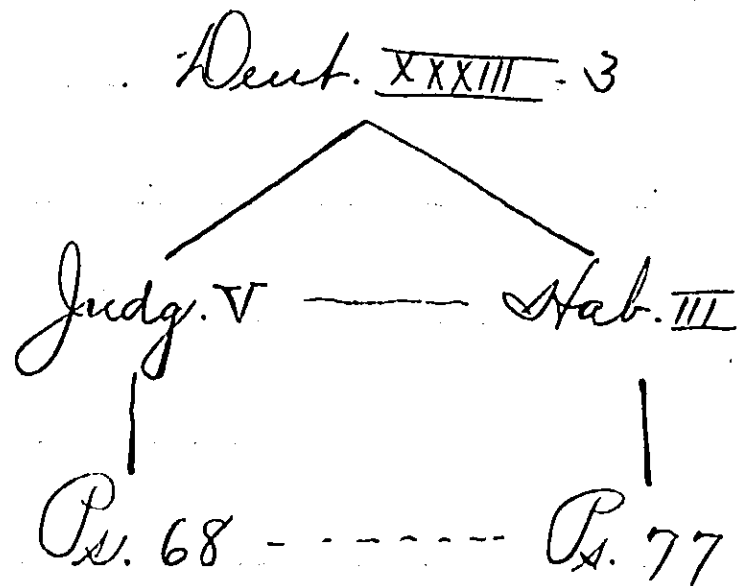
used in the construction of all of the book that follows. Thus II-4a, the first hemistich, gives the theme for II-5 to 20, whereas II-4b, the second hemistich, is the germ from which chapter III develops. It is certainly undeniable that the verse contains the gist of Chap. II, but, after careful study, I can see neither reference nor analogy of any kind to it in the third chapter. The prophet, in the latter, advises a staunch faith in God, whose power will overthrow the invader. There is no further delineation of either the righteous or the wicked man, but a powerful description of the overwhelming might of the

Eternal. In my humble opinion, the sole link (outside of the פסוק), by means of which the sequence of Chaps. II and III is maintained, is, beyond doubt, the concluding <sup>verse</sup> of the former serving also as introductory to the latter, viz, וְהָיָה כִּי יִשְׁמַע יְהוָה בְּקוֹלִי וְיִשְׁמַע יְהוָה בְּקוֹלִי : וְיִשְׁמַע יְהוָה בְּקוֹלִי Looking upon the book as one, single speech (or perhaps only Chaps. II+III), what more natural than to imagine Habakuk, after having ended the delivery of the 'dialogue with God' (i.e. Chap. II), to demand, in these words, the deepest silence that could be accorded him, while he chanted the prayer of consolation, which should soothe the fears raised by his announcement, saying

that, though the calamity would surely come, yet not the less certain was their redemption from it. The beautiful song was immediately taken up <sup>and</sup> treasured by the people, its repetition in the temple-service was demanded and its popularity became equal to that of any portion of the psalmody. Hence Habakkuk cast it into the liturgic mold in which we have it.

### Similarity to Other Passages in Old Testmt.

The first unmistakable similarity is Chap. III-3 to Deut. XXXIII-2. As to which is the older there can be no doubt. Further, we must consider: Judg. V, Psalms 68<sup>th</sup> & 77. Schneider puts them in the following order of derivation:



Delitsch, after a most thorough discussion of the subject, reverses

this order as concerns Ps. 77<sup>th</sup> and Hab. III, considering the former the original. (v. Delitsch p. 121 l. 4.). After investigation of the argument, I have come to the same conclusion. The psalm is more specific and uses more special terms in its retrospect of the crossing of the Red Sea, whereas the prophet's words might, for all the specific allusion contained in them, with equal facility be applied to Jonah's adventure on the sea. Curiously enough, the same course of reasoning has led Delitsch and Schneider to diametrically opposite conclusions. From the fact

that the Psalm speaks with a view to a past and the third chapter of Habakuk with a view to a future event, the former concludes that the psalm, the latter that the prophet's song is the original.

### Contents of the Chapter.

Various attempts have been made, on the one hand, <sup>to prove</sup> that this composition is susceptible to meter, on the other, to bring some order into the seeming chaos of the poet's imagery. The former has proven so futile that it is not worth mentioning except as an example of oft misdirected ingenuity, which might have been used to better advantage. The latter has had some result, which we propose now briefly to examine.

All agree in dividing the chapter into two essential parts, the first consisting of verses 3 to 16, the second from verse 16 to

the end. The main difficulty lies in the understanding of the first part, the second referring clearly to the Chaldaean invasion <sup>and</sup> its prediction.

There are three different theories published in explanation of verses 3 to 16. They may be termed: the 1<sup>st</sup>, the historical, the 2<sup>nd</sup>, the prophetic, and the 3<sup>rd</sup> the combination of these two. Ewald may be taken as the representative of the 1<sup>st</sup>, considering this part of the chapter as descriptive of the theophany at the Red Sea. Delitzsch supports the 2<sup>nd</sup> and sees in it the foretelling of the future liberation from the Chaldeans, whose downfall is described in the light of past

events. The third theory is upheld by Schneider, who considers the prophet as commencing a contemplation of the miracle of the Red Sea in verse 3, but works himself up to such a pitch that, in verses 13<sup>th</sup> & 14, he thinks the redemption from the Chaldeans already accomplished; hence the Preterites in these verses. Verse 15 looks back to verse 8<sup>th</sup> & thus completes the 1<sup>st</sup> part.

After careful examination, I have come to the conclusion that, as far as my understanding of the chapter goes, an effort to apply anything like system or order to the content is as vain as any attempt to shack-  
le the free poetry of the verse, by any laws.

of meter. The mind of the prophet roams hither<sup>ed</sup> & thither in the garden of the imagination, culling only the choicest flowers. From the standpoint of the rhetorician, there is a woeful mixing of figures. But, to my mind, the song must be looked upon, not by parts or verses, but as one whole. Read thus, its even dazzling beauty becomes apparent. Therefore, he who attempts a division into topics, has undertaken a most arduous task. Only the 2<sup>nd</sup> verse contains something, which may properly be called "prayer", so that commentators have been put to it to explain the inscription "ἱκν". Michaelis went so far as to read, instead,

"וְעַתָּה". Verses 3 to 7 treat, in the most general terms, of the glory<sup>and</sup> powers of God. Certainly if the prophet had referred to the theophany at the Red Sea, he would not have spoken of "pestilence," "burning fever," or "shattering of the mountains." Verse 7 contains the only direct allusion in the chapter (vide "Commentary"). This<sup>and</sup> 8 may be considered as referring to the Egyptians; also doubtfully 9<sup>and</sup> 10, since figures in them are badly mixed. Verses 11 to 15, again, make use of most general expressions<sup>and</sup> images<sup>and</sup> there is no foundation whatsoever for giving them any special application. Verse 15 reverts, as Schneider says,

to 8 and there may be some truth in Gompach's conjecture that it properly belongs between 7<sup>th</sup> and 8. In verse 16 there is a resumption of the main subject started in 2, namely, the vision related in the previous chapters; and in graphic language is set forth the prophet's terror on account of the calamity to come (v. 17). Finally he gives way to hope and confidence in God, who has so often saved Israel (verses 18<sup>th</sup> and 19).

I confess, now, my utter inability to see by what laws of exegesis, any one could bring order into this chaos. The chapter may be divided into almost as many heads as it has verses. In conclusion, I can only say

that there is here an excellent field for some ingenious worker, who starting on the hypothesis (on which Gumpach labored, but with little success) that the proper succession of verses has been forgotten, might thence bring some logical sequence into the result, connecting what belongs together and separating many clauses which now stand adjacent, though having no relation whatsoever to one another.

## English Version.

1. A hymn of Habbakuk, the prophet, on Shigionoth:

2. Oh! Lord, I have heard thy message, I was terrified; Oh, Lord. Thy work in the midst of years manifest, in the midst of years make it known that in anger thou rememberest mercy.

3. God comes from Therman<sup>and</sup> the Holy One from Mount Paran. Selah! His majesty covers the heavens<sup>and</sup> His praise fills the earth.

4. And there is a brightness as of the sun; rays (go out) from His hand but (then even) is there a veiling of His brilliancy.

5. Before Him goes pestilence<sup>and</sup> burning

fever follows in His footsteps.

6. He stands <sup>and</sup> the earth reels, He looks  
and nations tremble. Shattered are the ever-  
lasting mountains, the perpetual hills bow  
down; eternal paths to Him (are they).

7. I see the tents of Cushan in terror, the  
curtains of the land of Midian tremble.

8. Was against the rivers the Lord <sup>and</sup> enkindled?  
Was against the rivers Thine anger, or against  
the sea Thy wrath, when Thou didst ride upon  
Thy horses, Thy chariots of victory?

9. Completely bared is Thy bow; like spears  
(bound) in sheaths is Thy word (of punishment).  
Selah! Rivers thou splittest, (as well as) the land.

10. The mountains saw Thee <sup>and</sup> quaked

Torrents of water overwhelmed. The deep gave forth its voice, it lifted its hands on high.

11. Sun and moon remain in their dwelling for light. Thy arrows suffice; for illumination, the glitter of Thy spears.

12. In rage didst Thou step the earth; in ire didst thou lash nations.

13. Thou wentest out to save Thy people, to save Thine anointed one. Thou didst shatter the roof off the house of the wicked, (at the same time) laying bare the foundation even to the neck. Selah!

14. Thou didst <sup>pierce</sup> with his own spears, the head of his leaders, who came as a whirlwind to scatter me; whose delight was as

to consume the poor in his own hiding-place.

15. Thou didst make a way for thy horses through the sea, a roaring mass of mighty waters.

16. I have heard. - Therefore my inward parts tremble, at the sound my lips quiver, a consuming fever attacks my bones, the ground swims under me; because I must patiently wait the day of distress, which approaches to the people whose troops fall upon me.

17. For the fig-tree will not blossom nor will there be produce from the vines; the fruit of the olive fails and the fields do not yield food. The flock are cut off from the fold and there is no cattle in the stalls.

18. Yet will I exult in the Lord. I will  
rejoice in the God of my salvation.

19. God, the Lord, is my strength and He  
will make my feet as of hinds and upon  
my high places will He lead me.

Lamnazeach Bin'ginothoi.

## General Commentary.

Vers 1. - The inscription *וְשִׁיר*, if translated with the customary equivalent "prayer," is evidently an incorrect designation of this composition, which is rather a song of praise and triumph. Therefore, this difficulty having been fully recognized by the old commentators, it has been variously rendered, though some cling to the original meaning. The version of Michaelis has been quoted. Hitzig translates it, "Lobgesang." Hofod says, "Oratio et Divinatio." Theiner calls it, "Feierliches Gebet" and Justi, "Hochgesang." Delitzsch properly remarks that *וְשִׁיר* is a sort of generic name for all

psalms, 'die der Gebetsstimmung entzogen sind.' Gesenius compares the use of the word here to I Sam. II. 1 (שִׁיר), where likewise the meaning is clearly "praise". Therefore I have taken the liberty to translate it by the specific name "hymn", which expresses the meaning pretty well agreed upon. The wholly subjective character of the song in which the mind of the prophet is projected far beyond the present to the future destruction of the Chaldeans is thus also taken into account.

Undoubtedly, if we knew the exact meaning of the final phrase שִׁירָא בָּרַךְ, much light would be thrown upon the word שִׁירָא.

As the case is, any translation of the former rests on pure guess. The Vulgate renders it "pro ignorantia". This is founded on the supposed derivation from  $\alpha\epsilon$  "to err, go astray"; ( $\alpha\epsilon$ )  $\alpha\epsilon\delta$  should stand as a sort of brief expression of the contents of the chapter, which is then regarded as treating of the sins of the Chaldeans. But two facts make such understanding of it impossible, 1.) the unjustifiable rendering of  $\beta$  in this version and 2.) the parallel superscription of Psalm VII  $\alpha\epsilon\delta$   $\beta\epsilon$ , to which it can in no way be applied.

A number (Hitzig, Rosenmüller) derive it from the Arabic  $\mathbf{\text{اى}} \mathbf{\text{اى}}$  "to complain" and hence

translate it "song of complaint." But the work before us is certainly not of such a kind. Gesenius (also Delitzsch) thinks it to be taken from  $\text{לָּאֵלֶּיךָ}$  "to swing to  $\text{לָּאֵלֶּיךָ}$ ," referring to the sudden changes  $\text{לָּאֵלֶּיךָ}$  continuous movement of the thought, therefore called "Jaumelgedicht." Certainly from the analogy of other psalm inscriptions such as  $\text{לָּאֵלֶּיךָ}$   $\text{לָּאֵלֶּיךָ}$ , which have reference to the melody or musical instrument to be employed, we may infer, with much probability, that our phrase has the same purpose. But, on the other hand, the meaning being so unclear, there is actually no warrant for giving it any such translation. Therefore, although

inclined to agree with the derivation given by Gesenius, yet I have preferred to leave the phrase in its original form.

Verse 2.) This verse contains the only genuine prayer in the whole chapter. It is asked in indefinite manner that God should establish the work which he had spoken of, even in his anger, have pity. The change to the sentiment in verse 3 is most abrupt, allowing us to infer that perhaps there is an omission of what might have constituted the remainder of the prayer.

To what exactly shall we refer po'el? The commentators differ. Delitzsch regards

it as looking back to Chap. I 5-11, which contain the prophecy of the Chaldaean invasion. Schneider, as we have mentioned, considers it as recalling Chap. II-4. Hitzig agrees essentially with Delitzsch. My own investigation leads me to think that  $\text{פִּי}$  is rather to be referred to the whole prophecy, i. e. not alone I 5 to 11 but also II-8, in which the downfall of the invader is foreshadowed. What has led me to this is the latter part of the verse in which  $\text{פִּי}$  would then refer to the punishment to be inflicted <sup>and</sup> the  $\text{תְּפִלָּה הַזֶּה}$ , the prayer par excellence, <sup>to</sup> the final release. The general statement leads <sup>and</sup> the two final clauses are explanatory to

it. Hence פֶּסַח is rendered 'message', i.e. the whole of it. As regards the translation of פֶּסַח in the "bad" sense of 'punishment' or 'evil deed', compare Isai. V-12, Job. XXXVI-9. The sentiment is equivalent to 'Thy will be done'. The prophet resigns himself to the inevitable and in meditation upon the promised calamity, adds only that the future liberation be made as sure.

Disregarding the Ethnach, I have taken the clause beginning with וְכִי as the direct object of וְיִשְׁמַח, similarly as פֶּסַח is the object of וְיִשְׁמַח. Usually פֶּסַח is taken with both verbs but this leaves the וְכִי וְיִשְׁמַח וְיִשְׁמַח altogether independent and in a manner breaks up the

verse into fragments. In my translation the first hemistich ends with *וְיִי*, obviating the additional difficulty of having an inelegant repetition of the same phrase in the same portion of the verse.

Verses 3-6.) These verses, as has been said, I understand as expressing the glory<sup>d</sup> and power of God in universally applicable terms. No special allusion of any time or event is made until verse 7. Doubtless the occurrences of the past history of the nation, in which God had manifested Himself in wondrous acts, are the occasion of these utterances.

Verse 3.) Theman, a district east of Idumaea is replaced in the Chaldaeic translation by כרן מן הדר "from the south," because Paran, being in the south, (forming one of the chains of mountains which also holds Sinai) would otherwise be in an opposite direction, causing Hitzig to remark that God "can not come from two different parts". But retaining the reading of "Theman" (supported by the Septuagint "Θεμαν"), the meaning is clear. Paran would then stand for the west or southwest and Theman for the East, thus asseverating that God passes through the whole land from East to West.

For the preterite translation of כרן, compare Num. XXIII. 7, I Kings XXI. 6 and many other

passages cited by Delitzsch. The principal warrant for such version here is the parallel preterite  $\text{וַיִּזְרֹק}$  of the second hemistich.

Verse 4.) The word  $\text{זֶרַח}$  in the meaning of 'sun', i. e. a particular light, occurs often.

The words  $\text{וַיִּזְרֹק} \text{ וַיִּזְרֹק}$  are connected by their accents. The dual form of  $\text{וַיִּזְרֹק}$  may be explained in several ways: 1.) Either it refers to rays proceeding out to both sides, or 2.) Rays proceeding from each hand, or perhaps 3.) Rays going forth to both sides from each hand, in which case the singular  $\text{וַיִּזְרֹק}$  might be taken to stand for the plural as in Koh. V-3. or Jer. XXXVIII -10. The word  $\text{וַיִּזְרֹק}$  itself has

many significations in Hebrew, the original  
 And common one being "horn" (hence the Sep-  
 tuagint And Vulgate translation of "cornua").  
 The sense of "rays", which most commentators  
 give it here, agrees best with the first clause  
 of the verse. Besides in later Hebrew And in  
 Arabic the word never means anything  
 else. — The last clause, Schneider refers  
 or compares to Ps. CTV-2, וְהָאֵשׁ הָיְתָה לְבָרָה, mean-  
 ing that God uses the light as his /וְהָאֵשׁ,  
 "covering" or "garment". It is hardly possible  
 to see how he could have fallen into such a  
 mistake, since Delitzsch before him lays  
 stress on the word /וְהָאֵשׁ as being not translat-  
 able<sup>by</sup> "tegumentum" but<sup>only</sup> "latibulum". I think

the passage to denote that, however bright the sun's glow<sup>and</sup> however brilliant she may seem to human eyes, yet she is but a feeble (splendor<sup>2.</sup>) of the (image) of God. Hence, even though we may see the Shechina manifested in her, it is nevertheless only a veiled illumination.

Verse 5.) We might regard this verse as an allusion to the ten plagues in Egypt and there is no objection to one's doing so, although 723 is in other places spoken of as a plague inflicted by God upon His enemies. (v. Ex. XXVIII - 23 and XXXVIII - 22. 723 is also translated, "birds of prey", "demons" and "flames of fire". But the ordinary sense of a

"burning heat (or fever)" applies best.

Verses 7-10.) These verses contain the only unmistakable historical allusions of the whole chapter (except v. 15). The reference is to the deliverance of Israel from the Egyptians and to the crossing of the Red Sea.

Verses 7.) נח is here only a stronger expression than the prefix נ, suggesting the laboring under a heavy burden.

נח and נח refer to the tents utilized as dwellings by these nomadic people, and stand for the inhabitants themselves.

נח is susceptible of many different locatings

And this fact has been taken advantage of by the commentators. The greater number identify it with the word  $\text{P}_{12}$ , which is the name both of the southern part of Arabia and of Egypt. In the earlier books of the Bible, the word  $\text{P}_{12}$  is used to denote an indefinite extent of land in Africa and is commonly translated 'Ethiopia'. It remains questionable to which of these two our  $\text{P}_{12}$  refers. The Hebrew commentators regard it as an allusion to 'Cushan Rishothayim' (Judges III-8-10). Ewald thinks it a corruption of  $\text{P}_j$  a small people near Midian (Gen. 25, v. 2). In accordance with the general tenor of this paragraph, I am

inclined to consider it as the African Cush, also called "Keesh" or "Kesh" in the Egyptian monumental inscriptions. And this further, because there is very little evidence to show that the name was ever applied to any part of Arabia, although the Cushites were undoubtedly settled there. Egypt<sup>and</sup> Cush are often associated together in the prophets And, indeed, from their close proximity<sup>and</sup> alliance, (Cushite soldiers came up under Shishak against Rehoboam), one may stand as a synonym for the other. Therefore |R<sub>12</sub> refers here to Egypt. As Egypt on the one side of the Red Sea, so Midian on the other is terrified at the manifesta-

tions of God's power. Midian seems to have been a large tract of country, extending north and east from Mt. Sinai. Some endeavor to make Lushan<sup>2</sup> and Midian synonymous, based on the passage Numb. XII-1, in which the wife of Moses is called זִיפּוֹרָה. But tradition tells us that this wife was not Zipporah, the Midianite, hence the foundation for such conclusion falls away.

Verse 8.) The prophet goes on to ask, gradually rising in the fervor of his imagery, whether the anger of God was kindled against the rivers, or the sea, or any of

the inanimate things of nature, when, in his miraculous dispensation to his "Chosen People," he turned the streams back in their course and divided the Red Sea; whether chastisement was directed against them, when he rode roughshod over their dried-up channels on his horses and chariots of victory. — In the Latin version the question is properly introduced by *num.*

Some make *num.* vocative, but this is apparently wrong, the verb being in the 3<sup>d</sup> person. — The two last hemistichs are figurative in ascribing to God the use of man's instruments of war.

Verse 9.) This is without doubt the most difficult verse in the chapter. The expressions made use of are so exceedingly crisp and short, there being not a single word or syllable without its pregnant meaning, that we are at a total loss to find similarly meaningful and brief equivalents in any modern language. Undoubtedly many and various thoughts were surging through the prophet's mind at the moment of the utterance of this verse, found crystallization in its condensed form. A wealth of ideas lies in its pithy, epigrammatic expressiveness. Therefore we are not surprised to hear that

upwards of a hundred different interpretations have been put forward. I shall examine the principal of these and give reasons for the choice I have made.

On the first hemistich there is almost universal agreement.  $\text{וַיִּשָּׁן}$  is the 3<sup>rd</sup> future Niphal of  $\text{וָשָׁן} = \text{וָשַׁן}$  (Isai. XXXII. 11), meaning originally "to awaken". The  $\text{וַיִּשָּׁן}$  strengthens the meaning. Some think  $\text{וַיִּשָּׁן}$  to refer to the rainbow, "the sign of the covenant", but such peaceful allusion is obviously out of place.

The greatest division of opinion obtains in the rendering of the second hemistich  $\text{וַיִּשָּׁן מִן הַבֹּרֶךְ}$ . Rosenmüller translates:

"ut tribus iurejurando promissum erat,"  
 i. e. referring to the promise of the grant of  
 the land of Canaan to the twelve tribes and  
 adds (against Schroeder and Schnurrer, who  
 render: "saturata sunt tela, canitur triumph-  
 us") that מִן בְּרִי is never found in any sig-  
 nification of "tela". The Chaldaean trans-  
 lation upholds him, whereas the Syrian  
 on the other hand agrees with Schroeder.  
 A. A. Wolff accepts Rosenmüller in the  
 meaning of מִן בְּרִי, but makes of it a  
 totally different application. His  
 whole rendering is: "Die Schwüre den  
 Stämmen das Wort". He considers the refer-  
 ence to be to the "seven Canaanite nations";

against whom the "bow is bared". He takes  $\sigma\iota\chi\alpha$  then in a double meaning of seven ( $\epsilon\beta\delta\omicron\mu\alpha\varsigma$ ) and oaths. A. W. von Justi presents to us again the wholly original idea of Schroeder in his translation:

"Blut sättigte des Gebieters Pfeile".

Peschke looks upon  $\sigma\iota\chi\alpha$  as the Part. High.

and renders: "Die Gewähr die niedersinkt die Verheissung". Hitzig brings forward

the previously unthought-of meaning: "Geschworen sind die Ruthen des Wortes";

namely "Ruthen der Züchtigung", which comes near to my translation. Meier

thinks these words to have been "a cross" for the older exegetes, and that neither

through the labors of late scholars has any satisfactory understanding of them been arrived at." He himself would rather agree with Luther in reading  $\text{פָּרָה}$  ("Thou fillest (Thy bow) with victory-crowned (arrows)), and making the whole verse dependent on the  $\text{וְ$  of verse V. clause 4. Delitzsch accepts the simple translation: "beschworen sind die Geschosse durch dein Machtwort," meaning that the direction of missiles is predestined <sup>to</sup> and pre~~de~~termined by the word of God. The more modern commentators have agreed upon either Schneider's "exsecrationes prostermentes (sunt) verba (tua)," (Umbreit, Gumpach) or upon some such mean-

ing as Henderson's "Sevens of spears" was the word", i. e. military order or command or warcry. We find then that  $\text{סִבְעָה}$  is parsed in these meanings:

1<sup>st</sup> from  $\text{שֶׁבַע}$  "seven";

2<sup>nd</sup> from  $\text{שָׂבַע}$  "to fill" or "be satisfied, in which case it stands for  $\text{סִבְעָה}$ ; and

3<sup>rd</sup> in the signification of "oaths" or "sworn".

$\text{סִבְכָּה}$  is parsed in three essential meanings,

1<sup>st</sup> the ordinary rendering of "tribes" or "nations";

2<sup>nd</sup> Part. Hiph. from  $\text{סָבַח}$  "to incline"; and

3<sup>rd</sup> as  $\text{סֶבֶל}$  in II Sam. XVIII. 14. = "spear" or "missile".

$\text{סִבְכָּה}$  is rendered in almost unlimited variations, from the simple "word" to the

Septima translation of "παρετρας" (quivers).

Evidently, then, there being many combinations possible, judgement must be used in the choice of one, whose meaning will chime in with that of the remainder of the verse. The signification of the first hemistich points clearly to preparations for war and vengeance upon the opponents of the Israelites and, like the remainder of the paragraph, though foreshadowing what may happen in future, bases itself upon past manifestations. Hence, whether referred to the calamity of the Egyptians or the conquest of the Canaanites, the germ idea is that of "punishment". The symbols for the infliction of it are chosen

from the weapons of man, which in those days were principally the "bow" and the "spear". As concerns the use of the number "seven" in Holy Writ, I need say little. Here, in the plural (Heptads) it has the meaning of an indefinitely large number as our "myriads". Although not indebted to Ewald for this translation, I find that he sets forth the same idea, except in that he makes  $\omega\tau\tau$  a construct to  $\omega\tau\tau$  in defiance of the accent. As the weapon of punishment for man is the "spear" so that of God is His "word". Hence, I give what seems to me to be the best translation, embodying as it does a correspondence of ideas in the words  $\omega\tau\tau$ ,  $\omega\tau\tau$  and  $\omega\tau\tau$ , which

so interconnects what is seemingly separate  
that nothing can be brought against it on  
the score of inconsistency or unreconcilableness.

- (פירוש חזקוני) - These words have also been  
the occasion of great difficulty. Those who  
consider the verse an allusion to the mir-  
acle of the Red Sea, translate: "Rivers  
you split, so that the earth appears". This  
seems to me to separate too much what  
is connected together. Therefore, I have  
rendered it, "Rivers Thou splittest [and (or  
as well as)] the land, which allows both  
this same interpretation and also, what I have  
kept before me in my translation as one of  
the leading motives in the composition, a gen-

ral applicability to all such historical events in which God was pleased to show His power over the ordinarily known law of nature).

Verse 10.) In this verse we may indeed look for a direct and strong allusion to the theophany of the Red Sea. The figures are full of force, which is added to by the exceeding brevity. Each word expresses a world of thought.  $\text{הַרִּימֹת}$  - the mountains are personified. They can see the mighty God.  $\text{וַיִּרְאוּ}$  Yet even their ponderous mass twists and writhes "as a woman in travail".  $\text{וַיִּשְׁבַּח}$  - an ocean of water overflows, -  $\text{וַיִּשְׁמַע}$  - the deep thunders;

וְהַיָּם יִסָּבֵן - its waves are heaped upon each other "mountains high".

Verse 11.) In some manuscripts the ו (Vav) between לֵךְ and יָסָבֵן <sup>is supplied.</sup> The meaning is: that the moon and sun withdrew to their dwelling because of the יָם and הַיָּם. Hence those who would desire to apply the verse to the episode in Josh. 8-12, would be mistaken in so far as there the sun and moon "stood still" in order to give illumination for a longer time, here on the contrary their brightness is dimmed before the sheen of the swift-flying arrows and spears. It is customary to put in לֵךְ before יָסָבֵן, but a good translation

can be made without it.

Verse 12.) Another example of the remarkable command of language and the "multum in parvo", so characteristic of the Isaiah school.  $\text{וַיִּבֹּקֵעַ}$  and  $\text{וַיִּדְבֹּק$  are synonymous,  $\text{וַיִּבֹּקֵעַ}$  expresses God's majestic step over the earth and  $\text{וַיִּדְבֹּק}$  the trampling down of the worm, man, that crawls upon it.

Verse 13.) From the reasonable point of view,  $\text{עַמִּי}$  can have only one meaning, that is, the people Israel, synonymous with  $\text{עַמְּךָ}$  in the first clause.

There has been much useless discussion

among commentators as to whether it referred to the king reigning at this time, the kingship in the abstract, or a future messiah. The prophet uses the freedom to apply the word to his nation, being justified in the name <sup>והוא</sup> <sup>הוא</sup> once given to it.

The following description is a comparison to the overthrowing of a house. The <sup>קו</sup> is the roof, which is first torn off, representing the head <sup>והוא</sup> shelter of the house, so are the enemies' leaders destroyed <sup>והוא</sup> that which may be a shield to them rendered nugatory. Even this is not enough, but the foundation is torn up <sup>והוא</sup> the whole remaining edifice (<sup>והוא</sup> <sup>הוא</sup>) up to the

neck", denoting that since the house is now "decapitated", its height reaches only to its neck; as in the headless human body), completely laid bare. The metaphor is bold and is worthy of the writer. The historical signification may point to the Pharaoh of the Exodus, or Jabin of Hazor (Josh. XI-10), or Sissera, or even to the future predicted overthrow of the Chaldeans.

Verse 14.) Delitzsch translates 1327 "hordes" from 527 (Q<sub>2</sub>) "to spread out". But it is more generally derived from the Arabic *jā*, "statuit vel segregavit," giving the better meaning of "captains or leaders."

The *pr* here is sufficient refutation to the remark of Rosenmüller quoted above. He himself translates consistently: "baculis."

The idea is a continuation of that of clause 3 of the preceding verse. The last hemistich contains the simile to the way of robbers, who seek out even the poor in their hiding place (not "in secret") to ply upon them their nefarious business.

verse 15.) The return is made to the Egyptian deliverance and the first division of the chapter is closed. With *pr* it is necessary to supply a 2.

Verse 16.) The prophet again enters upon the effect which the message of God had wrought upon him and in the recital of which in verse 2 he had suddenly broken off to breathe his prayer and praise. He enters more intimately into the nature of the varied feelings that alternately swayed him. His lips, his bones and his limbs, his whole body gives way to the shock and his support fails him. The first clause is a repetition of hemistich one in verse 2. The especial cause of his overburdening fear is the fact that 'he must yet patiently wait for the day of delivery' from his enemies, in the interval before the arrival of which

the calamities described in verse 17 will be inflicted on the people. Also many different versions have been made of this clause: "cto. n. j. k. Ric"; Henderson translates: "Yet I shall have rest on the day of distress, when the people that shall attack us come up." This does not carry to a logical conclusion the preceding clause as the rendering of Schneider and other later writers does: "quod quiescamus usque ad diem calamitatis etc". The Ric is undoubtedly causative. n. j. k. is here "to fall upon" in the way of a troop.

Verses 17.) A vivid pen-picture of the desolation of the land by the Chaldeans.

Verse 18.) A sublime trust, notwithstanding all trouble <sup>and</sup> calamity, is spoken forth in these words, which, considering their connection, the fearful prophecy impending <sup>and</sup> the total absence of any ray of hope or deliverance from the certain approaching evil, breathe forth a spirit of confidence in <sup>and</sup> reliance upon God truly noble. They may be ranked among the most beautiful utterances of the Bible, abounding as it does in similar strains.

The 1 of 7101 is strongly adversative, as Hitzsch says, expressing: "ungeachtet jener bevorstehenden Drangsalzeit." 7101c (from 710, same as 710) may perhaps be used, pointing back

to the last clause of verse 14. 'As the enemy rejoices in its sinful course (נִשְׂמָח בְּדֹרֵשׁוֹ), I, on the contrary, rejoice in the righteous God'.

An exact counterpart of this passage is Mic. VII-7 And single phrases of it are repeated again and again in the psalmody. (Vid. Psalm V-12, XXXIII-1, IX-3, XVIII-47, XIII-6, LX-8 etc.).

Verse 19) This verse is taken from Psalm XVIII-33 & 34. One of the attributes of a good warrior, then being swiftness, Hab. takes the "hinds" as representatives in his figure. Thus also it is said of Saul & Jonathan (II Sam. I-23), "swifter than eagles were they". Compare also II Sam. II-18 And I Chron. XII-15.

וְיָרֵם refers to the high places of his native.

land. The prophet wishes to say that after the invasion has swept over the land <sup>and</sup> the prediction of the Chaldaean downfall has been fulfilled, even then Israel will be found in possession of her own high-places <sup>and</sup> lands. I cannot think that Hab. here speaks only of his own personal feelings or destiny. The psalm was for the people to be sung by the people <sup>and</sup> was entirely dedicated to them. There was the comfort contained in its <sup>inspiring</sup> ~~opening~~ words <sup>and</sup> there were to be the sentiments which now the lips of the prophet pronounced, dominated by the divine spirit. The "my" <sup>and</sup> "me" are collective.