

# Habakkuk 1:5-11

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

6466 [e]	6467 [e]	3588 [e]	8539 [e]	8539 [e]	5027 [e]	1471 [e]	7200 [e]
pō·'êl	pō·'al	kî-	te·mā·hū;	wə·hit·tam·mē·hū	wə·hab·bî·ṭū,	ḅag·gō·w·yim	re·'ū
פֶּעַל	פְּעַל	כִּי	תַמָּהוּ	וְהִתְמַהוּ	וְהִבִּיטוּ	בְּגוֹיִם	רְאוּ 5
a work	[I will] work	for	utterly	and Be astounded	and watch	among the nations	Look
V-Qal-PrtcpI-ms	N-ms	Conj	V-Qal-Imp-mp	Conj-w   V-Hitpael-Imp-mp	Conj-w   V-Hifil-Imp-mp	Prep-b, Art   N-mp	V-Qal-Imp-mp

  

5608 [e]	3588 [e]	539 [e]	3808 [e]	3117 [e]
yə·sup·pār.	kî	ta·'ā·mî·nū	lō	bî·mē·ḵem,
יִסְפָּר:	כִּי	תִאֱמִינּוּ	לֹא	בְיָמֵיכֶם
it were told [you]	though	[Which] you would believe	not	in your days
V-Pual-Imperf-3ms	Conj	V-Hifil-Imperf-2mp	Adv-NegPrt	Prep-b   N-mpc   2mp

1. The Lord becomes the speaker in 1:5 and answers Habakkuk’s complaint. But, it is not an answer that promises deliverance or salvation, but instead punishment of Judah at the hands of the Babylonians.
2. Plural “Look” - Habakkuk is told to “Look”, but the Hebrew form of “Look” is in the plural (see the “mp” notation that means “masculine plural” in the “V-Qal-Imp-mp”) which means the Lord is addressing all of Judea. Habakkuk is speaking for himself and the nation of Judah. Likewise, the Lord is answering Habakkuk and speaking to all of Judah through him. They are to “Look” at all the other “nations” and be “amazed” or “astounded”.
3. “Be astounded” is from the Hebrew *tamah* /*taw-mah*/ which means “to be dumbfounded” and “to be astounded”.
  - a. Habakkuk and the Judeans are going to see the Lord doing something with the nations to work his plan that is unbelievable to the Judean’s theology. They cannot imagine that God would do what he is actually doing.
  - b. The Lord is going to get more violence to combat Judah’s violence and more lawlessness to combat Judah’s lawlessness!
  - c. Four times in this verse Habakkuk is warned that God’s answer to his complaint is going to be hard to comprehend:
    - i. “Look”
    - ii. “Watch”
    - iii. “Be utterly astounded”
    - iv. “You would not believe even if I tell you”
4. The replies to Habakkuk’s complaint by saying that the Babylonians (or, Chaldeans) are being raised up to punish Judah.
  - a. In Isaiah 10 the Lord explains a similar situation with the Assyrians being raised up to punish Northern Israel:
    - i. 10:1-4 continues to identify the cultural sin of Northern Israel (similar to Habakkuk in 1:2-4)

- ii. 10:5-11 identifies the godless arrogance and the military might of Assyria (similar to Habakkuk 1:5-11)
  - iii. 10:12-19 speaks of the fate and judgment of the arrogant Assyrians (similar to Habakkuk 2; and, both Isaiah and Habakkuk speak not only to the current oppressive foreign powers of Assyria and Babylon, but into the future against the final world kingdom before Jesus' return.)
5. The Lord is sympathetic with Habakkuk and does not rebuke him.  
The Lord IS aware of the situatin and IS looking at the problem.  
In fact, the Lord is MORE aware of the evil in Judah (and, the world) than Habakkuk.  
So, because of the Lord's greater perception he is able to provide a greater resolution.  
But, the Lord's greater and ultimate resolution is beyond Habakkuk's comprehension just like the problem Habakkuk identified is larger than he can perceive.  
Thus, the Lord's answer is going to be "astonishing" to Habakkuk.
6. Habakkuk had told the Lord in 1:3 "Why do you make me see iniquity...Why do you idly look at wrong". Now the Lord tells Habakkuk to, "Look among the nations, and see."
7. Violence and Law: Habakkuk complains of "violence" and the paralyzed "law". Here the Lord is going to answer:
- a. "Violence" for "violence" as in 1:2, "cry to you 'Violence!' ", but the Lord's response in 1:9 is "They all (Babylonians) come for violence."
  - b. "Law is paralyzed and justice never goes forth" in 1:3 of Habakkuk's complaint is answered with the Lord bringing the Babylonians who legal decisions are described:
    - i. in the ESV as "their justice and dignity go forth from themselves"
    - ii. in the NIV as "they are a law to themselves and promote their own honor."

1:6 – "For behold, I am raising up the Chaldeans, that bitter and hasty nation, who march through the breadth of the earth, to seize dwellings not their own.

4116 [e]	4751 [e]	1471 [e]	3778 [e]	853 [e]	6965 [e]	2005 [e]	3588 [e]
wə·han·nim·hār;	ham·mar	hag·gō·w	hak·kaś·dīm,	'eṭ-	mê·qīm	hin·nî	kî-
וְהַנְּמָהָר	הַמָּר	הַגּוֹי	הַכַּשְׁדִּים	אֶת־	מְקִימִם	הַנִּנְיִ	כִּי־ 6
and hasty	bitter	a nation	the Chaldeans	-	am raising up	indeed I	For
Conj-w, Art   V-Nifal-Prtcpl-ms	Art   Adj-ms	Art   N-ms	Art   N-proper-mp	DirObjM	V-Hifil-Prtcpl-ms	Interjection   1cs	Conj

	3808 [e]	4908 [e]	3423 [e]	776 [e]	4800 [e]	1980 [e]
	lōw.	lō-	miš·kā·nō·wṭ	lā·re·šet	'e-reṣ,	le·mer·hā·bê-
.	לוֹ	לֹא־	מִשְׁכָּנֹת	לְרִשְׁתָּ	אֶרֶץ	לְמַרְחָבֶי
	[that are] theirs	not	dwelling places	to possess	of the earth	through the breadth
	Prep   3ms	Adv-NegPrt	N-mp	Prep-l   V-Qal-Inf	N-fs	Prep-l   N-mpc
						Art   V-Qal-Prtcpl-ms
						ha·hō·w·lêḵ
						which marches

1. "am raising up the Chaldeans"
2. Descriptors:
  - a. "Bitter" – *hammar* – "bitter", "bitterness"
    - i. This society had become bitter from being under the rule and oppression of Assria.

- ii. The whole nation was formed to act irrationally and strike out at anything that challenged them. Thus, Nebuchadnezzar’s rash order to suddenly kill all the wise men.
- b. “Hasty” – *wehannimhar* - /we-han-nim-har/ - act in haste
  - i. They were impulsive.
  - ii. They would act without considering the facts. Act now, ask questions later.
- c. “who march through the breadth of the earth” –
  - i. Because of the above national character traits (Bitter and Hasty) the Babylonian army did not advance their military with thought and slow calculated advances. Instead, they would sweep irrationally into military campaign. The fact they acted irrationally and hastily made it difficult to meet their overwhelming force.
  - ii. Their aggression made them successful. Their success made them arrogant. Again, remember Nebuchadnezzar’s personality and actions.
- d. “to seize dwellings not their own” or “to possess dwelling places that are not theirs”
  - i. This is the reverse of the promise given to Israel entering the Promised Land
  - ii. The Babylonians are allowed by God to move outside of their assigned national borders to do God’s will: Bring Judgment.

1:7 – “**They are dreaded and fearsome; their justice and dignity go forth from themselves.**”

3318 [e]	7613 [e]	4941 [e]	4480 [e]	1931 [e]		3372 [e]	366 [e]	
yê·šê.	û·śə·'ê·tōw	miš·pā·ṭōw	mim·men·nū	hū;		wə·nō·w·rā	'ā·yōm	
·	וַיֵּצֵא	וּשְׂאֵתוֹ	מִשְׁפָּטוֹ	מִמֶּנּוּ	הוּא	–	וְנֹרָא	אִים 7
	proceed	and his dignity	His judgment	from himself	He [is]		and dreadful	Awesome
	V-Qal-Imperf-3ms	Conj-w   N-fsc   3ms	N-msc   3ms	Prep   3ms	Pro-3ms		Conj-w   V-Nifal-Prtcpl-ms	Adj-ms

1. Descriptors (continued):

- d. “They are dreaded (dreadful)” – *ayom* /a-yom/ - “terrible”, “dreadful”
  - i. The noun form is used to describe the terror created by the teeth of a crocodile or the presence of God
  - ii. This rapidly approaching army will be terrifying.
- e. “(They are) fearsome (awesome)” – *wenowra* /we-no-w-ra/ - “to fear”
  - i. This is terror created by trouble
- f. “justice (or, judgment)...goes forth from themselves” – *mispatow* - /mis-pa-tow/
  - i. They are autonomous.
  - ii. God will allow the Babylonians to determine and act on their own self determined justice.
- g. “dignity (or, exaltation) goes forth (or, proceed) from himself” – *useetow* - /u-se-e-tow/ - means “exaltation, dignity, swelling, uprising”
  - i. They will take all the glory and dignity for their unleashed success.
  - ii. God allows them their moment in history to fulfill his purpose, but they like beasts cannot understand they are an instrument of God.

1:8 – “**Their horses are swifter than leopards, more fierce than the evening wolves; their horsemen press proudly on.**”

**Their horsemen come from afar; they fly like an eagle swift to devour.**

6335 [e] ū·pā·šū	6153 [e] 'e·reb,	2061 [e] miz·zə·'ē·bē	2300 [e] wə·ḥad·dū	5483 [e] sū·sāw,	5246 [e] min·nə·mê·rīm	7043 [e] wə·qal·lū
וּפָשׂוּ	עָרַב	– מִזְאָבִי	וְחָדָו	סוּסָיו	מִנְמָרִים	וְקָלָו 8
and charge ahead	evening	than wolves	and more fierce	their horses	than leopards	And are swifter
Conj-w   V-Qal-ConjPerf-3cp	N-ms	Prep-m   N-mpc	Conj-w   V-Qal-ConjPerf-3cp	N-mpc   3ms	Prep-m   N-mp	Conj-w   V-Qal-ConjPerf-3cp

398 [e] le·'ē·kō·wl.	2363 [e] ḥāš	5404 [e] kə·ne·šer	5774 [e] yā·'u·pū	935 [e] yā·bō·'ū,	7350 [e] mê·rā·ḥō·wq	6571 [e] ū·pā·rā·šāw	6571 [e] pā·rā·šāw;
לֶאֱכֹל:	תָּשׁ	כְּנֶשֶׁר	יִעָפוּ	יָבֹאוּ	– מִרְחֹק	וּפָרָשָׁיו	פָּרָשָׁיו
to eat	[that] hastens	as the vulture	they fly	comes	from afar	and their cavalry	their chargers
Prep-l   V-Qal-Inf	V-Qal-Prtcpl-ms	Prep-k   N-ms	V-Qal-Imperf-3mp	V-Qal-Imperf-3mp	Prep-m   Adj-ms	Conj-w   N-mpc   3ms	N-mpc   3ms

1. Descriptors (continued two):

- h. “horses are swifter than leopards” –
- i. “(horses) more fierce than the evening wolves” –
- j. “Horsemen (“chargers” or “cavalry”)

  - i. “press proudly on” –
  - ii. “come from afar” –
  - iii. “fly like an eagle (vulture) swift to devour” -

1:9 – “They all come for violence, all their faces forward. They gather captives like sand.

7628 [e] še·bī.	2344 [e] ka·ḥō·wl	622 [e] way·ye·'ē·sōp	6921 [e] qā·dī·māh;	6440 [e] pə·nê·hem	4041 [e] mə·ḡam·mat	935 [e] yā·bō·w,	2555 [e] lə·ḥā·mās	3605 [e] kul·lōh
שְׁבִי:	כְּחֹל	וַיֵּאָסְפוּ	קְדִימָה	פְּנֵיהֶם	מְגַמַּת	יָבֹאוּ	לְחַמָּס	כֻּלָּה 9
captives	like sand	and they gather	[like] the east [wind]	their faces	are set	Come	for violence	They all
N-ms	Prep-k, Art   N-ms	Conj-w   V-Qal-Conseclmpf-3ms	N-ms   3fs	N-mpc   3mp	N-fsc	V-Qal-Imperf-3ms	Prep-l   N-ms	N-msc   3ms

1. Descriptors (continued three):

- k. “all come for violence” – *hamas* –
- l. “all their faces forward” – (“their faces are set like the east wind”) –

  - a. To face the rising sun (east) is to face forward
  - m. “gather captives like sand” -

1:10 – “At kings they scoff, and at rulers they laugh.

They laugh at every fortress, for they pile up earth and take it.

3605 [e]	1931 [e]		4890 [e]	7336 [e]	7046 [e]	4428 [e]	1931 [e]
lə·kāl	hū	lōw;	miš·ḥāq	wə·rō·zə·nīm	yit·qal·lās,	bam·mə·lā·kīm	wə·hū
לְכָל־	הוא	לוֹ	מִשְׁחָק	וְרוֹזְנִים	יִתְקַלֵּס	בְּמַלְכִים	וְהוא 10
every	He	by him	are scorned	and princes	scoffs	at kings	And He
Prep-I   N-msc	Pro-3ms	Prep   3ms	N-ms	Conj-w   V-Qal-Prtcpl-mp	V-Hitpael-Imperf-3ms	Prep-b, Art   N-mp	Conj-w   Pro-3ms

	3920 [e]	6083 [e]	6651 [e]	7832 [e]	4013 [e]
	way·yil·kə·dāh.	'ā·pār	way·yiš·bōr	yiš·ḥāq,	mib·ṣār
	וַיִּלְכְּדָהּ:	עָפָר	וַיַּצְבֵּר	יִשְׁחָק	מִבְצָר
	and seize it	earthen [mounds]	for he heaps up	derides	stronghold
	Conj-w   V-Qal-ConseclImperf-3ms   3fs	N-ms	Conj-w   V-Qal-ConseclImperf-3ms	V-Qal-Imperf-3ms	N-ms

1. Descriptors (continued four):

- n. “at kings they scoff” – *yitqallas* - /yit-qal-las/ - “to mock”, “to scoff”
- o. “at rules (princes) they laugh (scorn)” – *mishaq* /mis-hawq/ - “object of derision” or “object of ridicule and mockery”
- p. “every fortress they laugh (deride)” – *yishaq* - /yis-haq/ - “to laugh” or “to be amused” or “to make sport of”
- q. “pile up earth” or “heaps up earthen mounds” refers to the siege ramps the Assyrians and Babylonians would build up against a city’s walls:
  - i. 2 Kings 19:32-33 (also, Isaiah 37:33) – “Therefore thus says the Lord concerning the king of Assyria: He shall not come into this city or shoot an arrow there, or come before it with a shield or cast up a siege mound against it. By the way that he came, by the same he shall return, and he shall not come into this city, declares the Lord.
  - ii. Jeremiah 6:6 – “For thus says the Lord of hosts: “Cut down her trees; cast up a siege mound against Jerusalem. This is the city that must be punished; there is nothing but oppression within her.”
  - iii. Sennacherib writes himself about his destruction of all the fortified cities in Judah before he arrived at Jerusalem (information that is in agreement with the Bible):”I besieged forty-six of Hezekiah’s fortified walled cities ... using packed-down ramps and applying battering rams, infantry attacks by mines, breeches, and sieg machines.”
- r. “take it” or “seize it” – *wayyilkedah* - /way-yil-ke-dah/ -



The structure on the tel is the siege ramp built by Sennacherib and the Assyrians in 701 BC. This Assyrian Siege ramp was built to take the city. This ramp can be seen in Assyrian reliefs in the palace in Nineveh. Sennacherib devoted an entire room to this battle and guarded it with a series of three pairs of colossal human-headed winged bulls. Nebuchadnezzar did the same thing to Lachish.



From the wall of Sennacherib's palace the siege of Lachish showing the siege engine with battering ram, the ramps and the Jews fighting from the walls throwing flaming torches down to burn the wooden siege engine. Arrows and sling stones are shot at the Jews by Assyrians.



Stone slingers (above); Stone slingers and archers (below):





1:11 – “Then they sweep by like the wind and go on, guilty men, whose own might is their god!”

430 [e]	3581 [e]	2098 [e]	816 [e]	5674 [e]	7307 [e]	2498 [e]	227 [e]
lê·lō·hōw.	kō·hōw	zū	we·'ā·šēm;	way·ya·'ā·bōr	rū·ah	hā·lap	'āz
לֵאלֹהֵי:	כְּחוּ	וַיֵּ	וַאֲשֶׁם	וַיַּעַבֵר	רִוּחַ	תִּלְפַחַת	אָז
to his god	power	[Ascribing] this	and He commits offense	and he transgresses	[his] mind	changes	Then
Prep-l   N-msc   3ms	N-msc   3ms	Pro-r	Conj-w   V-Qal-ConjPerf-3ms	Conj-w   V-Qal-ConseclImperf-3ms	N-cs	V-Qal-Perf-3ms	Adv

1. Descriptors (continue five):

- s. “sweep by like the wind and go on” “Then changes his mind and he transgresses” –
  - i. “changes” – halap - means “to pas on or away” and “pass through”
  - ii. “tramsgresses” – abar – means “to pass over, pass through or pass by”
- t. “guilty men” or “commits offense” – means “to offend” or “to be guilty”
- u. “own might is their god” or “ascribing this power to his god” –

(21<sup>st</sup> descriptor, or 23<sup>rd</sup>)

- 2. This verse is difficult and uncertain.
- 3. Babylonian inscriptions always give credit to their gods for military victory.