

The Hebrew Corner

In the midst of a world-wide pandemic, it may be hard for many to see God's presence. One prophet of the Tanach, Habakkuk, was in a similar situation, not being able to understand what God was doing, in a time just prior to the Babylonian invasion and conquest of the southern kingdom of Judah. He starts out by questioning God's inactivity (Habakkuk 1:2-4):

“O LORD, how long shall I cry, and thou wilt not hear! even cry out unto thee of violence, and thou wilt not save! Why dost thou shew me iniquity, and cause me to behold grievance? for spoiling and violence are before me: and there are that raise up strife and contention. Therefore the law is slacked, and judgment doth never go forth: for the wicked doth compass about the righteous; therefore wrong judgment proceedeth.”

Violence is an important word on this passage, as it is the violence of the Babylonian (Chaldean) invaders that is being considered here. Violence in Hebrew is *hamas* (הַמָּס, hah-MAHS). Habakkuk is crying out to God against this violence, and he is not seeing God's deliverance. He considers this a miscarriage of justice, in that wicked people are oppressing righteous people. The word translated as judgment in this passage, is the Hebrew word *mishpat* (מִשְׁפָּט, mihsh-PAHT), which can also mean justice.

God makes it clear to Habakkuk that he is the one who is raising up the Babylonians, to execute judgment upon Judah for its idol worship. Yet he also is aware that the Babylonians are not going to

attribute their success to him (Habakkuk 1:9-11):

“They shall come all for violence: their faces shall sup up as the east wind, and they shall gather the captivity as the sand. And they shall scoff at the kings, and the princes shall be a scorn unto them: they shall deride every strong hold; for they shall heap dust, and take it. Then shall his mind change, and he shall pass over, and offend, imputing this his power unto his god.”

So God is using a wicked nation, Babylon to execute judgment upon a nation that has become wicked through their idol worship. Habakkuk questions this in the next passage (Habakkuk 1:13):

“Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look on iniquity: wherefore lookest thou upon them that deal treacherously, and holdest thy tongue when the wicked devoureth the man that is more righteous than he?”

In God's reply, he states a principle that not only Habakkuk, but all mankind can live by (Habakkuk 2:2-4):

“And the LORD answered me, and said, Write the vision, and make it plain upon tables, that he may run that readeth it. For the vision is yet for an appointed time, but at the end it shall speak, and not lie: though it tarry, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not tarry. Behold, his soul which is lifted up is not upright in him: but the just shall live by his faith.”

Two important Hebrew words are used in the last verse. The

Hebrew word translated as just is tsaddiq (צַדִּיק, tsahd-DEEK), also meaning righteous, and the word translated as faith is emuna (אמונה, eh-moo-NAH). A more direct translation of this word would be either faithfulness or trust, implying some degree of action on the part of the individual. In other words, the righteous or just person will live actively by his or her faithfulness, trusting in God. Habakkuk exhibits this thinking in his prayer to God in the final chapter (Habakkuk 3:17-18):

“Although the fig tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls: Yet I will rejoice in the LORD, I will joy in the God of my salvation.”

This is a time world-wide for people who believe in God, and have received the gift of salvation that he has given us through his son, Jesus our Yeshua, to live our lives faithfully, no matter what we see. This crisis will pass, but God's promises to us will not. He will never leave us or forsake us. Blessings, and keep vigilant during the month.