

# Habakkuk 1:9

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

They shall come all for violence: their faces shall sup up as the east wind, and they shall gather the captivity as the sand.

## Analysis

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**They shall come all for violence: their faces shall sup up as the east wind, and they shall gather the captivity as the sand.** The Chaldean invasion has a singular purpose: **violence** (חַמֵּס/chamas)—not merely military conquest but brutal devastation. This is the same word Habakkuk used in his initial complaint (1:2-3) about violence in Judah. Now God responds that He will judge Judah's violence through an even more violent nation—a troubling answer that intensifies the theodicy problem.

**Their faces shall sup up as the east wind** (פָּנִים קָדִימָה/megammat peneihem qadimah)—a difficult Hebrew phrase, literally "the eagerness of their faces is forward." The east wind (קָדִים/qadim) in Palestine was the scorching desert sirocco that withered vegetation and made life unbearable. Babylon's advance is like this destructive wind—relentless, overwhelming, leaving devastation. Their faces are set forward with singular determination, nothing deflecting them from their purpose.

**Gather the captivity as the sand** (וַיַּאֲסַף כָּחֹל שָׁבֵן/vayye'esof kachol shevi)—they collect captives innumerable as sand grains. This wasn't hyperbole; Babylonian deportation policy involved mass population transfers. After Jerusalem's fall (586 BC), tens of thousands were exiled to Babylon, fulfilling this prophecy literally. The comparison to sand emphasizes both quantity and the casual ease with which Babylon gathered victims.

## Historical Context

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Babylonian records confirm their systematic deportation practices. They forcibly relocated conquered populations to prevent rebellion and provide labor for Mesopotamian building projects. Jeremiah 52:28-30 records specific numbers: 3,023 Judeans in Nebuchadnezzar's seventh year, 832 in his eighteenth year, 745 in his twenty-third year—totaling 4,600 persons, though this likely represents only male heads of households. Including families, the actual number would be much higher. These exiles experienced precisely what Habakkuk predicted: violent conquest, forced march to Babylon, and displacement far from homeland. The "east wind" metaphor proved accurate—Babylon's invasion left Judah devastated, a scorched land depleted of population and resources.

## Related Passages

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**1 John 4:8** — God is love

**1 Corinthians 13:4** — Characteristics of love

## Study Questions

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1. How does God's use of violence (Babylon) to judge violence (Judah) illustrate the principle that sin contains its own judgment?
2. What does the east wind imagery teach about the comprehensive, devastating nature of divine judgment?
3. How should believers understand God's sovereignty over historical catastrophes involving mass suffering and displacement?

## Interlinear Text

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כָּלָה לְפָנֶת סָרֵב וְאַמְגַמֵּת פָּנִים מִמֶּרְאֵת כִּדְיַעַת  
H3605 all for violence They shall come shall sup up their faces as the east wind  
H2555 H935 H4041 H6440 H6921

שְׁבִי כְּחַלְאָס רַיִאָס  
and they shall gather as the sand the captivity  
H622 H2344 H7628

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