

Habakkuk 3:2

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

O LORD, I have heard thy speech, and was afraid: O LORD, revive thy work in the midst of the years, in the midst of the years make known; in wrath remember mercy.

Analysis

Habakkuk's prayer petitions: 'O LORD, I have heard thy speech, and was afraid: O LORD, revive thy work in the midst of the years, in the midst of the years make known; in wrath remember mercy' (Yahweh shamati shim'akha yareti Yahweh pa'alekha beqerev shanim chayyehu beqerev shanim todhi'a berogez rachem tizkkor). Having heard God's plan to use Babylon, the prophet is 'afraid' (yareti)—properly terrified by coming judgment. Yet he prays: 'revive thy work' (chayyehu pa'alekha)—bring life to Your deeds, preserve Your purposes. 'In the midst of the years make known' (beqerev shanim todhi'a)—reveal Yourself during the crisis. Most crucially: 'in wrath remember mercy' (berogez rachem tizkkor)—while executing judgment, don't forget compassion. This is the prayer of one who accepts God's justice yet pleads for mercy. It demonstrates mature faith: not demanding God change His plans but asking Him to preserve His people through coming judgment. Habakkuk submits to divine will while interceding for divine compassion.

Historical Context

This prayer anticipates the exile and pleads for preservation through it. God answered: though Jerusalem was destroyed and Judah exiled, a remnant survived and returned. In the midst of wrath (Babylonian conquest), God remembered mercy (preserving a people, maintaining covenant hope, ultimately sending Messiah from this preserved remnant). Daniel prayed similarly during exile (Daniel

9), acknowledging deserved judgment while pleading for mercy. These prayers demonstrate that accepting God's justice and pleading for His mercy aren't contradictory but complementary. Believers can simultaneously affirm 'we deserve judgment' and petition 'please show mercy.' God's character includes both justice and mercy, and prayer appeals to both.

Related Passages

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

1 John 4:8 — God is love

Study Questions

1. How can believers simultaneously accept that judgment is deserved yet plead for divine mercy?
2. What does it mean to ask God to 'revive' His work during times of judgment or difficulty?
3. How does this prayer model appropriate intercession—submitting to God's will while petitioning for compassion?

Interlinear Text

בָּקָר כָּבֵד פָּעָלָב בָּקָר כָּבֵד

O LORD I have heard thy speech and was afraid **O LORD** thy work in the midst

H3068

H8085

H8088

H3372

H3068

H6467

H7130

בָּתִים בָּרָא תֹּודֵעַ בָּתִים בָּרָא תֹּודֵעַ

of the years revive in the midst of the years make known in wrath mercy

H8141

H2421

H7130

H8141

H3045

H7267

H7355

תִּזְכֹּר:

remember

H2142

Additional Cross-References

Psalms 85:6 (Parallel theme): Wilt thou not revive us again: that thy people may rejoice in thee?

Lamentations 3:32 (Parallel theme): But though he cause grief, yet will he have compassion according to the multitude of his mercies.

Habakkuk 3:16 (Parallel theme): When I heard, my belly trembled; my lips quivered at the voice: rottenness entered into my bones, and I trembled in myself, that I might rest in the day of trouble: when he cometh up unto the people, he will invade them with his troops.

Philippians 1:6 (Parallel theme): Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ:

Jeremiah 10:24 (Judgment): O LORD, correct me, but with judgment; not in thine anger, lest thou bring me to nothing.

Isaiah 54:8 (Grace): In a little wrath I hid my face from thee for a moment; but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee, saith the LORD thy Redeemer.

Psalms 119:120 (Judgment): My flesh trembleth for fear of thee; and I am afraid of thy judgments.

Psalms 44:1 (Parallel theme): We have heard with our ears, O God, our fathers have told us, what work thou didst in their days, in the times of old.

John 10:10 (Parallel theme): The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly.

Jeremiah 29:10 (References Lord): For thus saith the LORD, That after seventy years be accomplished at Babylon I will visit you, and perform my good word toward you, in causing you to return to this place.