

Habakkuk 3:6

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

He stood, and measured the earth: he beheld, and drove asunder the nations; and the everlasting mountains were scattered, the perpetual hills did bow: his ways are everlasting.

Analysis

He stood, and measured the earth: he beheld, and drove asunder the nations; and the everlasting mountains were scattered, the perpetual hills did bow: his ways are everlasting. God's sovereign power over all creation is displayed. "He stood, and measured the earth" (אָמַד וַיִּמְדֹּד אֶרֶץ/amad vayemoded eretz)—God stands and surveys, measuring out the earth like a builder assessing dimensions. The verb מָדַד (madad, measure) suggests both evaluation and ownership—God apportions the earth according to His purposes.

"He beheld, and drove asunder the nations" (וַיַּתֵּר גּוֹיִם/ra'ah vayatter goyim)—one look from God scatters nations. Human empires, seemingly permanent and powerful, dissolve at His glance. This directly addresses Babylon's pride—their empire will crumble when God acts. "The everlasting mountains were scattered, the perpetual hills did bow" (וַיִּתְּפֹצְטוּ הַרְרֵי־עֹד שָׁחוּ גִבְעוֹת עוֹלָם/vayitpotzetu harrey-ad shachu giv'ot olam)—even the most permanent features of creation—ancient mountains and eternal hills—bow before God. If mountains yield, how much more human kingdoms?

"His ways are everlasting" (לֹא יִהְיוּ לְעוֹלָם/halikhot olam lo)—while empires rise and fall, God's patterns and purposes endure eternally. Mountains may scatter, but God's character and covenant remain unchanging. This provides ultimate security—everything temporal fails, but God's eternal ways persist.

Historical Context

The imagery recalls God's appearance at Sinai when the mountain quaked (Exodus 19:18), the Red Sea parted (Exodus 14), and the Jordan stopped flowing (Joshua 3:16-17). Throughout Israel's history, God demonstrated power over nature—earthquakes, storms, celestial signs—validating His supremacy over creation. Mountains represented permanence in ancient thought, yet Habakkuk declares even they bow before God.

For Jews facing Babylon's seemingly invincible power, this vision provided perspective: Babylon is temporary; God is eternal. The empire's fall (539 BC) proved this—mountains remained, but Babylon's power evaporated overnight. The principle continues: all human powers are transient; only God's kingdom is everlasting (Daniel 2:44, Hebrews 12:28).

Related Passages

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Study Questions

1. How does God's power to scatter nations and bow mountains provide comfort when facing overwhelming earthly powers?
2. What does it mean practically that 'his ways are everlasting' while all earthly kingdoms and structures are temporary?
3. How should believers maintain perspective on political powers and social structures in light of their ultimate impermanence?

Interlinear Text

הָעָמָד	וַיִּמְדָּד	אֶרֶץ	רָאָה	וַיִּדְרֹס	גּוֹיִם
He stood	H4058	the earth	he beheld	and drove asunder	the nations
H5975		H776	H7200	H5425	H1471
וַיִּפְּצוּ	הַרֵי	עַד	שָׁחוּ	גְּבֻעֹת	עוֹלָם
were scattered	mountains	and the everlasting	did bow	hills	are everlasting
H6327	H2042	H5703	H7817	H1389	H5769
הַלִּיכֹת	עוֹלָם	לֹא			
his ways	are everlasting	H0			
H1979	H5769				

Additional Cross-References

Genesis 49:26 (Eternal Life): The blessings of thy father have prevailed above the blessings of my progenitors unto the utmost bound of the everlasting hills: they shall be on the head of Joseph, and on the crown of the head of him that was separate from his brethren.

Nahum 1:5 (Parallel theme): The mountains quake at him, and the hills melt, and the earth is burned at his presence, yea, the world, and all that dwell therein.

Deuteronomy 33:15 (Parallel theme): And for the chief things of the ancient mountains, and for the precious things of the lasting hills,

Acts 17:26 (Parallel theme): And hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation;

Luke 1:50 (Parallel theme): And his mercy is on them that fear him from generation to generation.