

Habakkuk 3:9

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Thy bow was made quite naked, according to the oaths of the tribes, even thy word. Selah. Thou didst cleave the earth with rivers.

Analysis

Thy bow was made quite naked (קֵשֶׁת עַרְיוֹת/qeshet eryah te'or)—God's bow is completely uncovered, ready for battle. The double expression emphasizes totality: stripped bare for action. This recalls God as Divine Warrior fighting for Israel against enemies. **According to the oaths of the tribes, even thy word** connects divine warfare to covenant promises—God fights because He swore to the patriarchs and tribes.

Thou didst cleave the earth with rivers (נָהָרֹת תְּבִקְעָאֶת/heharot tevaqa-aretz) depicts God splitting the earth so rivers flow forth. This likely references the exodus: splitting the Red Sea (Exodus 14:21), water from the rock (Exodus 17:6, Numbers 20:11), or Jordan's division (Joshua 3:16). The imagery portrays God as sovereign over creation, using nature itself as His weapon. When God acts in salvation, even geological features obey His command.

Historical Context

Habakkuk recounts Israel's foundational salvation history—exodus and conquest—to strengthen faith for coming judgment. Just as God fought against Egypt and Canaan's nations using supernatural means (plagues, sea-parting, sun standing still), He will fight against Babylon. The 'oaths of the tribes' recalls promises to Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and the twelve tribes. These covenant oaths guaranteed God's faithfulness regardless of circumstances. For exiles facing Babylonian

destruction, remembering God's past supernatural interventions provided hope: the God who split seas and stopped the sun could surely preserve a remnant and ultimately judge Babylon.

Related Passages

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Genesis 1:1 — Creation of heavens and earth

Study Questions

1. How does remembering God's past acts of salvation (exodus, conquest) strengthen faith during present trials?
2. What does God's sovereignty over nature demonstrate about His ability to accomplish His purposes despite human opposition?
3. How do God's covenant oaths provide assurance of His faithfulness even when circumstances seem to contradict His promises?

Interlinear Text

עָרֵי הָ	תְּעוֹרָ	קָשְׁתְּ בָּ	שְׁבָע וְתָ	מַט וְתָ
was made quite	naked	Thy bow	according to the oaths	of the tribes
H6181	H5783	H7198	H7621	H4294

אָמָר לְהָ אֶ	בְּלֹהֶ	נָכַר וְתָ	תִּבְקַע	אָרֶץ :
even thy word	Selah	with rivers	Thou didst cleave	the earth
H562	H5542	H5104	H1234	H776

Additional Cross-References

Psalms 105:41 (Parallel theme): He opened the rock, and the waters gushed out; they ran in the dry places like a river.

