

Awaiting an Answered Prayer: The Development and Reinterpretation of Habakkuk 3 in its Contexts

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The third chapter of Habakkuk has long vexed scholars wishing to understand the function of this enigmatic text that closes the book. In fact, study of Habakkuk 3 has become its own unique sub-field of research and inquiry in Habakkuk scholarship. Two distinct positions emerge to the fore. First, the vast majority of scholars maintain that the chapter is original to the book and possibly even a composition by the prophet. Second, a smaller yet still significant group takes the chapter as *not* original to the prophet but rather as representing a later addition, most commonly attributed to the work of a postexilic redaction.¹ The chapter's notable absence in the Qumran Habakkuk peshet (1QpHab) supports the point that it had a separate transmission history than the rest of the book. My approach attempts to nuance this second position by tracing out the various redactional stages, history, and contexts of the text that becomes Hab 3.

I contend that the final form of Hab 3 reflects multiple stages of editorial and redactional activity, indicative of a history of reshaping and reinterpreting the chapter for the various contexts it held: a pre-exilic theophany (vv. 3–15), a psalm (the addition of vv. 1–2, 16a, 18–19), its inclusion into the Habakkuk corpus («Habakkuk» in v. 1) and into the Book of the Twelve (vv. 16b–17). This investigation will commence in three parts. First, I will limn the specific literary units for Hab 3, and second, I will discuss each unit in detail, paying specific attention to the editorial reshaping and expansion for each context, as well as suggesting a date for each stage of development. Third, I will conclude with a synthesis of the insights gleaned from an understanding of the developmental history of Hab 3.

¹ See O. Dangl, *Habakkuk in Recent Research*, *CurBS* 9 (2001), 131–168, 144–145, for a brief summary of these two representative positions. I have opted not to list the various scholars holding each view here in the interest of not muting the places where they do indeed differ. As our study moves forward, these positions will receive thorough treatment and interaction.

Establishing the Literary Units of Hab 3

The text of Hab 3 makes it clear where one should delimit its textual units. Nogalski is correct that the »I« speech in vv. 2.7.16.18f. helps to frame the chapter, yielding two units – vv. 3–7 and 8–15 – and a surrounding frame consisting of v. 2 and vv. 16–19.² Hiebert has further shown that a series of *inclusions* mark the chapter, both identifying the various units as well as tethering specific units together into larger blocks of material. Verses 3–7 exhibit a »concentric structure« with the pattern ABCDC'B'A'.³ The shift back to second person speech in vv. 8–15 introduces a second *inclusio*.⁴ Framing this section is the description of YHWH's battle preparations in vv. 8–9 and the narration of the actual battle in vv. 13b–15.⁵ These two central units, vv. 3–7 and vv. 8–15, have been shaped in a way that one can discern both their literary integrity as well as their relationship to one another; they combine to form the larger theophanic unit of vv. 3–15, evident in that theophanic elements are not endemic only to vv. 3–7; vv. 10–11a also depict nature's response to YHWH's appearance. Similarly, the literary flow of vv. 3–15 presents a text with its own cogency: YHWH appears on behalf of his people (vv. 3–4), creation responds (vv. 5–7, 10–11a), YHWH prepares for battle (vv. 8–9), the battle ensues (vv. 11b–14), and YHWH is victorious (v. 15). The frame also has its own inclusive structure, with vv. 16–19 developing the themes of hearing, fear, and fascination from v. 2, and vv. 16–19, like vv. 3–15, exhibiting their own inclusive unity with images of terror and trembling steps moving to joy and steady steps.⁶

The identifiable units comprising Hab 3 are thus vv. 3–7 (theophany), vv. 8–15 (YHWH in battle), and vv. 2.16–19 (the frame). While these respective units have their own literary integrity, they also show evidence of reworking and reshaping to provide a coherent whole that becomes Hab 3.

The Core Theophany (vv. 3–15)

Scholarship disagrees over whether to regard the entirety of vv. 3–15 as a theophany,⁷ or to isolate vv. 3–7 as the theophany and vv. 8–15 as an

² J. Nogalski, *Redactional Processes in the Book of the Twelve*, BZAW 218, 1993, 159–160.

³ T. Hiebert, *The Use of Inclusion in Habakkuk 3*, in: E. R. Follis (ed.), *Directions in Biblical Hebrew Poetry*, JSOTSupp 40, 1987, 119–140, 120.122.

⁴ F. I. Andersen, *Habakkuk*, AB 25, 2001, 284.

⁵ Hiebert, *Inclusion*, 125.

⁶ Hiebert, *Inclusion*, 128–129, 131.

⁷ T. Hiebert, *God of My Victory: The Ancient Hymn in Habakkuk 3*, HSM 38, 1986, 8, takes this position, as do J. M. O'Brien, *Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi*, AOTC, 2004, 81; W. H. Ward, *Habakkuk*, ICC, 1911, 20–21;

example of the *Chaoskampf* motif.⁸ A better and less dichotomizing approach is to understand this layer as described above: comprised of two distinct traditions (vv. 3–7 and vv. 8–15) which together are also a coherent literary unit.⁹ I will begin with vv. 3–7.

How one understands the specific geographical designations listed here will be central for how one interprets and ultimately dates this stage. The unit begins by stating that God came from Teman (תִּמָּן). Often in the Hebrew Bible תִּמָּן denotes the direction south,¹⁰ yet it also occurs as a personal name (Gen 36,11.15.42; I Chr 1,36.53) and as a region associated with Edom (Jer 49,7.20; Ez 25,13; Am 1,12; Ob 1,9). Despite this diversity, together the evidence points to an area in the south, most likely associated with Edom. Supporting this conclusion is the fact that where the word occurs in Genesis it names a descendant of Esau, whom biblical tradition clearly associates with Edom.¹¹ The parallel also exists in other theophanic texts. Dtn 33,2 has YHWH coming from Seir, another reference to Esau (Gen 32,4; 33,14.16; 36,8.9.20.21.30), and Jdc 5,4 speaks of Seir and Edom as the *place* from which YHWH comes.

Paran occurs ten times in the Hebrew Bible, and none of the occurrences are any real help in pinpointing its location.¹² Hiebert focuses on I Reg 11,18, concluding that if Hadad's trip to Egypt took him through Midian and then Paran, then Paran must be somewhere between Midian and Egypt.¹³ A more helpful text is Dtn 33,2, which equates Sinai, Seir, and Mount Paran as the place of YHWH's theophanic origin. Thus, Dtn 33,2 confirms the poetic parallelism evident in Hab 3,3: Teman and Mount Paran both refer generally to the area of Edom.

D. Prior, *The Message of Joel, Micah, & Habakkuk: Listening to the Voice of God*, 1998, 265; M. Thompson, *Prayer, Oracle, and Theophany: The Book of Habakkuk*, TynBul 44 (1993), 33–53, 42.

⁸ K. Seybold, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, ZBKAT, 1991, 44–45; O. P. Robertson, *The Books of Nahum, Habakkuk, and Zephaniah*, NIC, 1990, 220; Keller, *Habacuc*, 168.

⁹ This understanding appears most clearly in Andersen, *Habakkuk*, 26, and Nogalski, *Processes*, 159–160.

¹⁰ Andersen, *Habakkuk*, 292, notes that this understanding is also reflected in the Targum, Vulgate, Theodotian, Barbarini, each of which translates the word in accordance with a compass point. For the definition »south,« see Ex 26,18.35; 27,9; 36,23; 38,9; Num 2,10; 3,29; 10,6; Dtn 3,27; Jos 12,3; 13,4; 15,1; Hi 9,9; 39,26; Ps 78,26; Cant 4,16; Jes 43,6; Ez 21,2; 47,19 (x2); 48,28; Sach 6,6; 9,14.

¹¹ Gen 25,30; 32,4; 36,1.8.9.16.17.19.21.31.32.43 (2x). Note that all but two of these occurrences are found in chapter 36, the same chapter in which one finds the three references to תִּמָּן as a descendant of Esau.

¹² Gen 21,21; Num 10,12; 12,16; 13,3.26; Dtn 1,1; 33,2; I Sam 25,1; I Reg 11,18 (2x); Hab 3,3.

¹³ Hiebert, *Victory*, 87.

Cushan (כושן) and Midian (מדין) in v. 7 present other difficulties. Here is the only occurrence of the form כושן in the Hebrew Bible. Some have sought to equate Cushan with Ethiopia, but given that Midian parallels Cushan it seems better to understand the locale as the Cush related to Midian and Moses. Hiebert takes this view, pointing out that Ex 2,15–22 and Num 12,1 label Moses' wife, Zipporah, a Midianite and Kushite.¹⁴

The cumulative evidence of the four geographical locales in vv. 3 and 7 situates the theophany in the southern, Transjordanian area, but it also employs traditions associated with Moses and Sinai. These connections become even clearer in the verses that follow. Hab 3,4 uses the ever-difficult word קרניים, most usually translated »horns« in other contexts. Here the word occurs in relation to light, paralleling Ex 34,29.30.35 where the verbal form קרן indicates the light shining on Moses' face after he speaks with God.¹⁵

Verses 8–15 constitute the second half of the central core theophany. These lines differ from vv. 3–7 in the shift to martial language.¹⁶ Mythological imagery also seems to be present in the ubiquitous references to forms of water: rivers (vv. 8[2x].9), sea (vv. 8.15), flood of waters/mighty waters (vv. 10.15), the deep (v. 10). Andersen contends that the lack of specific »geographic or historical identification« for the waters, coupled with the utter dearth of human characters in these verses highlights the »primeval and mythic« background all the more.¹⁷

Lying behind these verses stands a long tradition of ancient Near Eastern myths which relate the deity's battle with chaos, equated with some form of water. One may liken the portrait of YHWH here to that of the storm god, noting the prevalence in other ancient texts of the storm god armed with weapons and riding into battle on a chariot.¹⁸ Similar enemies as seen in Hab 3,8–15 also appear in these ancient texts. At Ugarit the *Baal Epic* (KTU 1.2) pits Baal against »Prince Sea«//»Judge River,« and in the *Enuma Elish* Marduk defeats Tiamat, the sea-goddess.¹⁹ As a

¹⁴ Hiebert, Victory, 89.

¹⁵ See N. Shupak, The God from Teman and the Egyptian Sun God: A Reconsideration of Habakkuk 3:3–7, JNES 28 (2001), 97–116, 115f., on the relationship between solar imagery and Egypt.

¹⁶ Hiebert, Victory, 97.

¹⁷ Andersen, Habakkuk, 317.

¹⁸ Hiebert, Victory, 98, cites the common epithet of Baal at Ugarit: *rkb 'rpt* (»rider of the clouds,« see KTU 1.2 iv 8). Note also the similar title for YHWH in Ps 68,5. Hiebert further cites Marduk in the *Enuma Elish* as one who rides a chariot into battle along with his weapons of choice, a bow and arrows of lightning. Adad from Mari and Babylon is similarly described.

¹⁹ Andersen, Habakkuk, 317. As it pertains to Marduk and Tiamat, Andersen points out that the cognate תהום is found in Hab 3,10. On this point, see also Hiebert, Victory, 99.

part of this original stage, vv. 8–15 most likely rely upon a *Chaoskampf* motif so prevalent in the ancient Near East.

These two units represent two traditions – a theophany and a re-fashioning of Canaanite epic with YHWH as the divine warrior – which have been joined to one another to create a composite narrative. Frank Cross has persuasively shown that the idea of the divine warrior appearing, preparing for, and entering into battle against chaos patterns ancient Ugaritic and Hebrew poetry, a pattern he identifies in Hab 3.²⁰ In vv. 3–15 one has two separate traditions that have been brought together into a sensible, cohesive text that narrates YHWH's theophany and victory on behalf of his people.

Dating the Core Theophany

Providing a firm date for the composition of this original layer is an arduous task.²¹ Much of the discussion above belies the potential great antiquity of this composite layer, but precisely when can one date it with confidence? Several scholars posit a very early date, prior to the monarchy, adducing the text's affinities with other very ancient texts in the Hebrew Bible, namely Ex 15,14–16; Dtn 33,2–5; Jdc 5,4–5; and Ps 68,8–9 [7–8].²² Common among all these texts is God's triumphant and theophanic march from the south as a past event.²³ It is only in these ancient poems that one finds an association of YHWH with the south. After the establishment of the monarchy, Hiebert claims, this locale »is viewed generally with contempt« and YHWH becomes associated rather with Mt. Zion.²⁴ By situating God's abode in the south/southeast, one begins to see the strong possibility that vv. 3–15 are a product of equal antiquity alongside the texts just mentioned.²⁵

The possible evidence for a pre-monarchic date is not limited strictly to YHWH's southern origin. Mythic parallels to Ugaritic texts already mentioned may reflect a period when ancient Israel was inchoate and still exhibited many of the trademarks of its Canaanite context.²⁶ The form of

²⁰ F. M. Cross, *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic: Essays in the History of the Religion of Israel*, 1973, 150.155f.

²¹ See P. Jöcken, *Das Buch Habakuk*, BBB 48, 1977, 3–115, for a discussion of how scholars have dated Habakkuk. More recently, see Andersen, *Habakkuk*, 24–27, for a survey and discussion of several more recent proposals.

²² Andersen, *Habakkuk*, 24; Hiebert, *Victory*, 1.90.

²³ J. J. M. Roberts, *Nahum, Habakkuk, and Zephaniah*, OTL, 1991, 149.

²⁴ Hiebert, *Victory*, 91. See Am 1,12; Jer 49,7.20; Ez 25,13; Ob 9.

²⁵ I disagree with Hiebert, *Victory*, 120–121, that the frame, vv. 2 and 16–19, must also belong to this pre-monarchic period, as I will show in what follows.

²⁶ Hiebert, *Victory*, 123.

theophany in vv. 3–7 and the mythological motif of YHWH as one engaged in cosmic battle and as victorious warrior bringing deliverance and salvation for his people are also both very ancient in their own right; these themes are held in common amongst Hab 3 and these other ancient biblical texts.

Attention to poetic form and language also supports the possibility of such an early dating. W.F. Albright was among the first to show how the language of Hab 3 comports with these other ancient texts. Albright points to the use of tricola in Ugaritic epic texts as providing a parallel to texts such as Ex 15, Jdc 5, Dtn 33, and Hab 3, all of which employ tricola consistently.²⁷ What Albright labels »climactic parallelism« also serves as a link with fourteenth century Canaanite epic poems.²⁸

One should be cautious in dating the text too late. Nogalski prefers a date of composition in the late exilic or early post-exilic period, given that he sees inherent in the text a waning of Babylonian power and a critical attitude aimed at the surrounding nations.²⁹ Such a view is hard to maintain given that Hab 3 nowhere mentions the Babylonians by name, nor does it offer any specific identity for those whom YHWH attacks. Presumably Nogalski takes the mention of »Chaldeans« in Hab 1,6 as his starting point, yet such an interpretation only holds when one regards Hab 3 as having the same transmission history as Hab 1–2, which Nogalski does not.

The image of YHWH appearing from the south exhibits obvious parallels with pre-monarchic Hebrew poetry such as Ex 15, Dtn 33, and Jdc 5, as well as 14th century Canaanite epic poems, presenting a strong argument for the equal antiquity of vv. 3–15. In light of the material I have here discussed one may date vv. 3–15 with confidence to pre-exilic times, perhaps drawing upon traditions that are even prior to the monarchy. It is tantalizingly plausible, though, that the text's *terminus ad quem* may predate the monarchy, making it one of the most ancient texts in the Hebrew Bible.

²⁷ W. F. Albright, The Psalm of Habakkuk, in: H. H. Rowley (ed.), Studies in Old Testament Prophecy Dedicated to T. H. Robinson, 1950, 1–8, 3.5.8. Albright dates our four units to different periods in Israelite history: v. 2 he takes as originally »a very ancient prayer for the prolongation of (a king's) life, on the order of the hymn to Ishtar praying for the life of Ammiditana, *cir.* 1600 B.C.« Verses 16–19 cohere with eighth-seventh century prophecy. Interestingly, Albright provides utterly different dates (perhaps correctly!) for the two central units. Verses 3–7 come from the end of the eleventh century, while vv. 8–15, with its mention of the Davidic king as »anointed« in v. 13 requires a »relatively late [but not post-exilic!] date.«

²⁸ Albright, Psalm, 4–5.

²⁹ Nogalski, Processes, 180.

Psalmic Stage

The addition of psalmic elements constitutes the second stage of development for what becomes Hab 3. Expanding upon the core theophany (vv. 3–15), this stage in the text's transmission reflects a desire to incorporate it into a collection of psalms.³⁰

Hab 3,1 names what follows a prayer (הפלה). As such, scholars have rightly connected chapter 3 with the worship traditions of ancient Israel tied to the cult. This point is borne out at several places in the text which are similar to language endemic and unique to the Psalter. First, the word הפלה occurs in the superscriptions of Pss 17, 86, 90, 102, and 142 and is relatively rare elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible.³¹ As a title, הפלה occurs only in the psalms and in Hab 3,1, lending credence to reading this stage as a psalm. Second, the cultic stage directions in both the superscription (»according to Shigionoth«) and postscript (»to the director, with stringed instruments«) parallel similar mentions in the Psalter. »To the director« (למנצח) occurs fifty-six times in the Hebrew Bible, and fifty-five of those occurrences are in the Psalter.³² The remaining one is found in Hab 3,19.³³ The third element supporting a cultic transmission is the use of »sælāh« (סלה) in vv. 3, 9, and 13. Again, one finds this word only in the Psalter. This stage, then, sees the addition of the superscriptive title »prayer« and direction »according to Shigionoth,« the frame (vv. 2.16a.18–19), and the triple use of sælāh in vv. 3.9.13.

Having identified the text as a psalm, the task now turns to defining its form more specifically. Gunkel unfortunately provides little in the way of explicit guidance, yet the fact that he mentions Hab 3 at several places

³⁰ Hiebert, Inclusion, 134.

³¹ Elsewhere this form of the word occurs only in I Reg 8,38; II Reg 19,4; II Chr 6,29 (which parallels I Reg 8,38, the account of Solomon's prayer, and is attributable to the Chronicler's use of Kings as his source); Jes 1,15; 37,4; 56,7; Thr 3,44; and Dan 9,3. The word does occur another three times in the Psalter outside the superscriptions: Pss 42,9; 65,3; 109,4.

³² The word למנצח appears in the superscription to the following psalms: Pss 4–6; 8f.; 11–14; 18–22; 31; 36; 39–42; 44–47; 49; 51–62; 64–70; 75–77; 80f.; 84f.; 88; 109; 139f.

³³ That here the usual superscriptive element concludes the psalm does not pose a problem. As Hiebert, Victory, 141–142, demonstrates, it may actually attest further to the great antiquity of Hab 3. Hiebert agrees with the conclusions of H. M. I. Gevanyahu, whom he cites, that »on the basis of a comparative study of Akkadian literature ... biblical colophons were originally written at the end of the text and later transferred to the beginning.« The Hebrew Bible preserves this earlier tendency with »hallelujah« (הללויה) as the concluding words in Pss 104, 105, and 115, and in the LXX, »hallelujah« in these psalms in fact occurs at the beginning. Thus, this element at the end of Hab 3 could belie all the more the great antiquity of the text.

in his chapter on hymns may lead one to conclude that to be his sense of the form.³⁴ Hiebert and Watts respectively see the psalm in vv. 3–15 as a victory hymn framed by a lament in vv. 2, 16–19.³⁵

Others, however, regard the psalm not as a hymn of praise but as a lament or complaint. Mowinckel takes such a view in line with the psalmist's request that YHWH remember his past acts of deliverance and act *now* for the sake of his people.³⁶ Bellinger holds that the psalm takes the form of a lament because of the presence of a plea and the certainty that often concludes laments.³⁷ Haak also describes the form as a lament, yet he notes that the psalm opens by following the expected pattern of a hymn of praise.³⁸

Latent in the above discussions on the specific form for Hab 3 is the difficulty inherent in form critical assessment of the psalms. Seldom does one find a truly pure representation of a given form.³⁹ For Andersen the difficulty centers on the overlap between the various forms and the similarity in terminology: what is meant by lament, and does it differ from a complaint?⁴⁰ Yet to my eye the disagreement over form rests, in this instance, upon a strict isolation of the literary units present at this stage in the text's transmission. Those who see a hymn of praise tend to emphasize vv. 3–15, as if they were the only verses contained within this particular layer. The surrounding frame (vv. 2.16a.18–19), however, coheres very well with the expected form of a complaint. Verse 2 is a fine example of a petition urging YHWH to act in the present situation. Similarly, vv. 16a, 18–19 exist as the expression of trust and confidence that usually closes out a complaint psalm. Verse 18 is most illustrative: »But I, I will exult in YHWH, I will rejoice in the God of my salvation.« The psalmic frame transforms the original core theophany into a complaint psalm.

Dating the Psalmic Redaction

Dating this stage of editorial activity for the text is much less difficult than dating the core theophany, but obstacles remain. First, given Mowinckel's view that the psalms of the Hebrew Bible literally functioned

³⁴ H. Gunkel and J. Begrich, *Introduction to Psalms: The Genres of the Religious Lyric of Israel*, trans. J. Nogalski, 1998, 22.28.32–34.36.

³⁵ Hiebert, *Victory*, 118; J. W. Watts, *Psalmody in Prophecy: Habakkuk 3 in Context*, in: J. W. Watts / P. R. House (eds.), *Forming Prophetic Literature: Essays on Isaiah and the Twelve in Honor of John D. W. Watts*, JSOTSup 235, 1996, 209–223, 214.

³⁶ S. Mowinckel, *Zum Psalm des Habakuk*, TZ 9 (1953), 1–23, 23.

³⁷ W. H. Bellinger, Jr., *Psalmody and Prophecy*, JSOTSup 27, 1984, 84.

³⁸ R. D. Haak, *Habakkuk*, VTSup, 1992, 16.

³⁹ Andersen, *Habakkuk*, 270.

⁴⁰ Andersen, *Habakkuk*, 270.

within the cult of ancient Israel leads one to suppose that Hab 3 would likewise have played an important part in the cult. Yet many of the specific cultic elements added at this stage seem to point to a later date, early on in the Persian period. Nogalski astutely recognizes that the word *šēlāh* is limited largely to the first three books of the Psalter and appears only three times (Pss 140,4.6; 143,6) in the final two books, leading to his conclusion that the word was »in vogue« during this period and only for a very limited time.⁴¹ The meaning and function of סלה remains elusive, but its frequency in Books I–III of the Psalter situates it in several psalms that presuppose Jerusalem's destruction (Pss 44, 60, 82, 89).⁴² Most striking is that למנצח also occurs almost entirely in the first three books of the Psalter.⁴³ Given these affinities between this psalmic stage in the development of Hab 3 and Books I–III of the Psalter, one may postulate that these elements point to a common period of reworking for both, resulting in a *terminus a quo* in the post-exilic period. To substantiate this dating even further, Brevard Childs' important work on the Psalms' superscriptions and subscripts concludes that these were added to various psalms between the work of the Chronicler, who does not include these elements, and the Psalms scroll from Qumran (11QPs^a), where they occur regularly.⁴⁴ Yet as I will show in the subsequent section on the inclusion of Hab 3 into the corpus of Hab and the Twelve, the *terminus ad quem* cannot be later than the late fifth century or early fourth century BCE. Hence, the early Persian period is the best time for dating this psalmic stage in the development of Hab 3.

Incorporation into the Habakkuk Corpus and the Book of the Twelve

One of the most pressing issues to examine in regards to the incorporation of Hab 3 into the Habakkuk corpus is also to make sense of its addition and placement within the larger literary corpus of the Twelve. Two seminal figures in this discussion are James Nogalski and Aaron Schart. While Nogalski and Schart are quite similar in many areas, the differences lie in the nuances of their proposals.

⁴¹ Nogalski, *Processes*, 156, 180; J. Nogalski, *From Psalm to Psalms to Psalter*, in: H. W. Ballard, Jr. / W. D. Tucker, Jr. (eds.), *An Introduction to Wisdom Literature and the Psalms* (Festschrift Tate), 2000, 37–54, 46.

⁴² Nogalski, *Psalter*, 46, correctly notes that »the *selah* notations were probably used by performers at a point when Psalms 3–89 were *transmitted* together.«

⁴³ The three exceptions are Pss 109, 139, and 140.

⁴⁴ B. S. Childs, *Psalm Titles and Midrashic Exegesis*, JSS 16 (1971), 137–150, 148. Leading to this conclusion, Childs states: »the Psalm titles do not appear to reflect independent historical tradition but are the result of an exegetical activity which derived its material from within the text itself« (143).

Both Nogalski and Schart correctly understand the inclusion of Hab 3 to have happened at the time of its association with Nahum, specifically Nah 1,2–8 in parallel with Hab 3,3–15.⁴⁵ This association only seems natural: while Nah opens with a theophanic hymn (Nah 1,2–8), Hab closes with one (Hab 3,3–15). One may thus discern an *inclusio* spanning the books of Nah and Hab, positioning them as a larger literary unit within the Twelve.⁴⁶ An additional tether between Nah and Hab exists in the historical movement within ancient Israel across the two. Whereas Nah addresses concerns over Assyria and its destruction, Hab addresses concerns over Babylon and its destruction. Not only does this notice establish an historical trajectory from Assyria to Babylon as the two successive superpowers, it also seeks to explain their respective declines in power.⁴⁷ For Schart, Hab 3,2 points back to the Nahum hymn, showing that as Nah foresaw the defeat of the Assyrians, Hab now waits for a corresponding act of YHWH upon Babylon.⁴⁸ Here one sees another reason Schart desires to connect Nah and Hab: for him, they embody a unique conception of prophecy as compared with elsewhere in the emerging Book of the Twelve in that Nah and Hab contain no words of judgment *against* Israel but rather focus solely upon the decline of the two world superpowers, Assyria and Babylon.⁴⁹

Nogalski and Schart understand the insertion of Nah and Hab into the Twelve differently. For Nogalski this parallel between Nah and Hab amplifies the connection between Assyria and Babylon through the use of Joel-related language.⁵⁰ Nahum and Habakkuk become a part of the

⁴⁵ Nogalski, *Processes*, 181; A. Schart, *Die Entstehung des Zwölfprophetenbuchs: Neubearbeitungen von Amos im Rahmen schriftenerübergreifender Redaktionsprozesse*, BZAW 260, 1998, 244.

⁴⁶ More than just the presence of a theophanic hymn connects Nah and Hab. Indeed, the very elements natural to theophany occur in Hab 3 in exactly the reverse order as they do in Nah 1, forming a series of successive *inclusiones* that further tie these two together. The structure is represented in the following chart:

<i>Nahum</i>	<i>Habakkuk</i>
sea/rivers (v. 4a)	rivers/sea (v. 8)
affect on specific locales (v. 4b)	affect on specific locales (v. 7)
mountains/hills (v. 5a)	mountains/hills (v. 6b)
earth (v. 5b)	earth/nations (v. 3b)

⁴⁷ Schart, *Entstehung*, 248, contends that the reason for inserting Nah/Hab into the »DK« (»D corpus«) would be that Nah fulfills Hos and Amos, the latter of whom foresaw the breakdown and defeat of Assyria by the Babylonians.

⁴⁸ Schart, *Entstehung*, 245.

⁴⁹ Schart, *Entstehung*, 247–248.

⁵⁰ J. Nogalski, Joel as »Literary Anchor« for the Book of the Twelve, in: J. D. Nogalski / M. A. Sweeney (eds.), *Reading and Hearing the Book of the Twelve*. SBLSymS 15, 2000, 91–109, 104.108.

Twelve contemporaneous with Joel.⁵¹ To solidify its place within the Twelve, Nogalski sees Hab 3,17 as a purposeful insertion that succeeds in picking up the motif of locusts from Joel 1–2 and transforming that imagery into a reference for the invading nations (specifically, Babylon).⁵² Schart proposes, on the other hand, that Nah and Hab are incorporated into the preexisting D corpus (DK) – originally consisting of Hosea, Amos, Micah, and Zephaniah – and are inserted between Mi and Zeph. Contrary to Nogalski, Schart maintains that the addition of Hab 3,16b–17 belongs to a later stage in the growth of the Twelve when the Joel–Obadiah corpus is included.⁵³ The crux of the differences between Nogalski and Schart regarding Nah and Hab rests upon, whether they entered the Twelve *alongside* Joel (Nogalski) or *prior to* Joel (Schart). This question is sufficiently large enough to occupy several dissertations, and I cannot hope to resolve any issues definitively within the confines of this study. I do, however, find Schart's formal and thematic rationale for the development of the Twelve more convincing.⁵⁴ It is not inconsequential, though, that both Nogalski and Schart – correctly, I believe – associate Hab 3,17 with Joel language, solidifying the place of Hab 3 within the expanding corpus of the Twelve. The specific editorial additions for this stage of the text's development, then, are the name »Habakkuk« in v. 1, the connection with imagery from Joel 1–2 in v. 17, and the reinterpretation applied to the whole text by means of v. 16b, which I will treat in the next section.

The Relationship of Hab 3 to Hab 1–2

In light of my dating of the psalmic stage above to the early Persian period, it seems elementary that the final redactional association of Hab 3 with Hab 1–2 and the developing canon of the Twelve would come subsequent to this time. Hiebert espouses such a dating, proffering a set of

⁵¹ Nogalski, *Processes*, 181.

⁵² Nogalski, *Anchor*, 103 (see also his n. 23). Nogalski correctly sees this imagery as reinterpreted in such a way also in Am, Nah, and Mal.

⁵³ Schart, *Entstehung*, 274.

⁵⁴ For Schart, Hos, Amos, Mic, Zeph comprise the oldest collection, the DK. His rationale for grouping these four together is that they all have dated superscriptions and thus must have at one time comprised a single corpus. His next stage sees the expansion through Nah and Hab, largely because each has the superscript with $\text{N}^{\text{W}}\text{D}$, which Schart interprets as a *Gattung* notation, and because of the parallel theophanic hymns in Nah 1,2–8 and Hab 3,3–15. In the third stage Hag and Zech are appended, a determination he makes through the dating of particular single sayings. Joel and Obadiah enter the corpus next because they are both dominated by the theme of the Day of YHWH. The last stage sees Jonah and Malachi enter the corpus, rounding out the Twelve (see Schart, *Entstehung*, 304, for a fine summary of his position).

circumstances that would have led to this redactional addition in post-exilic Judah. With the Babylonian onslaught came the end of the Davidic dynasty, which thus »freed« the psalm from its place in the royal cult. Those who had returned to the land under the Edict of Cyrus in 539 BCE then »reinterpreted« the psalm in line with »the apocalyptic fervor of the postexilic era.«⁵⁵ Verse 16b, however, presents a problem. There the prophet awaits the »day of distress« (יִּום צָרָה) brought about by »the people rising up to invade us« (לְעֵלוֹת לָעַם יְיָדֵנוּ), which at this stage of development *must* be a reference to the impending attack by Babylon, placing the verse confusingly into the pre-exilic era. How can one make sense of this seeming chronological inconsistency?

A satisfactory answer begins to materialize upon examination of Hab 3 in relation to Hab 1–2. Despite the impressive development for Hab 3 outlined here, scholarship has rightly seen the chapter as an integral and connected piece of the prophet's message and themes.⁵⁶ Everson rightly believes one of the central unifying themes within the book is theodicy.⁵⁷ The book opens with a question boldly addressed to YHWH, asking about the perversion of justice as »the wicked surround the righteous« (1,4). YHWH responds in 1,5 f., plainly stating that the Chaldeans (v. 6) are on the move, and YHWH is at the helm! Habakkuk again replies in 1,12 f., continuing his line of questioning about how YHWH could use a rogue enemy nation as an instrument of justice. Hab 2 similarly begins with the prophet adamantly stationed at his post, awaiting an answer. YHWH again responds, but this time in a series of five woe oracles. A brief look at these oracles and their function will be foundational for how one should understand 3,16b.

One may demarcate five woe units based upon the word »alas/woe« (הוֹי) in 2,6.9.12.15.19. Each oracle deals with utterly different objects of the woe statements, highlighting their seeming incongruity within the prophetic corpus. Moreover, Andersen and Keller respectively and correctly state that the oracles maintain a general, even vague sense about them, making them applicable to almost any time and circumstance.⁵⁸ Nogalski contends that the prophet has here reinterpreted the original or plain meaning of the oracles in a way that ties their content to the

⁵⁵ Hiebert, Victory, 142.

⁵⁶ M. A. Sweeney, Structure, Genre, and Intent in the Book of Habakkuk, VT 41 (1991), 63–83, 80; G. M. O'Neal, Interpreting Habakkuk as Scripture: An Application of the Canonical Approach of Brevard S. Childs, Studies in Biblical Literature 9, 2007, 61; Roberts, Nahum, Habakkuk, and Zephaniah, 81–82. See also Dangel, Research, 145, for a fine survey of the scholarship relating Hab 3 to Hab 1 and 2.

⁵⁷ A. J. Everson, The Canonical Location of Habakkuk, in: P. L. Redditt / A. Scharf (eds.), Thematic Threads in the Book of the Twelve, BZAW 325, 2003, 165–174, 171.

⁵⁸ Andersen, Habakkuk, 233; Keller, Habacuc, 161–162.

Babylonian forces.⁵⁹ The first oracle, vv. 6–8, speaks of the person that amasses great wealth through borrowing, only to have the creditors arise and demand payment. But v. 8 »reinterprets this pseudo-wealthy individual as a personified nation, or king.«⁶⁰ In the second woe, vv. 9–11, a greedy household is reinterpreted in v. 10 in a political sense,⁶¹ most likely as a symbol for the rapacious nation, Babylon. The third woe, vv. 12–14, presents a more complex case. Nogalski points out that Hab 2,12 parallels Mi 3,10, demonstrating that the original woe was directed at Jerusalem's leaders; a subsequent expansion in Hab 2,13, which poses a near perfect parallel to Jer 51,58, recasts the recipient of the woe as Babylon.⁶²

The final two woes, vv. 15–17 and 18–20, pick up on different themes from elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible. Verses 15–17 have parallels to other places in the Twelve, namely Ob 15 ff. and Nah 1,4. Verses 18–20 pick up on themes present in Deutero-Isaiah. These expansions again continue the reinterpretation, making Babylon the object of the prophetic woe.⁶³ These five reinterpretations are a part of what Nogalski calls the »Babylonian Commentary.«⁶⁴

With a sense of the whole of Habakkuk, one can now return to 3,16b with a renewed perspective. What may seem at first glance to require an exilic dating becomes, much like in the woe oracles of Hab 2, a post-exilic addition that prompts the reinterpretation of the entirety of Hab 3 as a reference to the »future« Babylonian onslaught.⁶⁵ The rhetorical questions in v. 8 take on another dimension. No longer do the waters carry the sense of being YHWH's opposition; Babylon will be the object of YHWH's wrath. Similarly, the Moses/Exodus imagery from vv. 3–7, when read in light of the prophet's request in 3,2b, desires that YHWH act in the prophet's time for the benefit of YHWH's people, just as he acted during the Exodus on behalf of his people. Set within this new interpretive context, the text depicts post-exilic Judah reflecting upon the Babylonian crisis and shaping Hab 3 as the assurance that its suffering

⁵⁹ See also Schart, *Entstehung*, 250; Eckart Otto, *Die Theologie des Buches Habakuk*, VT 35 (1985), 274–295, 283.

⁶⁰ Nogalski, *Processes*, 130.

⁶¹ Nogalski, *Processes*, 131.

⁶² Nogalski, *Processes*, 132.

⁶³ Nogalski, *Processes*, 133.

⁶⁴ This Babylonian Commentary expands upon what was original to Habakkuk and reflects upon and reinterprets material that was originally concerned with Judean affairs in the light of the situation with the Babylonians. Hab 1,5–11.12b.15–17, along with the specific places where the woe oracles of chapter 2 are reinterpreted, and all of chapter 3 make up the Babylonian Commentary.

⁶⁵ Nogalski, *Processes*, 180.

would not go unanswered. Evident from much of Scripture in this period is the attempt to make sense of the events of 597 BCE and following. The addition of Hab 3 to Hab 1–2 depicts just such an attempt. Therefore, I date this stage with Nogalski to »a time well into the Persian period.«⁶⁶ Read in this way, Hab 3 becomes the response to Habakkuk's central (theodical) question throughout. The answer is that YHWH will indeed punish Babylon.

Conclusion

The text that would become Hab 3 has certainly experienced a long and fascinating development. As a composite text that has been shaped and reshaped over time, it contains elements of and allusions to ancient Canaanite epic, some of the oldest biblical Hebrew poetry, the Psalms, and the Book of the Twelve, a time period that spans nearly all the literature in the Old Testament canon.

I have described this development in three specific stages. First, the theophanic core (vv. 3–15) is combined from two separate traditions: a theophany (vv. 3–7) and an account of the divine warrior engaged in battle (vv. 8–15). This stage most certainly is pre-exilic. Second, a psalmic stage sees the addition of a superscription and subscript, along with a three-fold use of *sælāh*, and dates to the early Persian period. In the third and final stage Hab 3 takes its place alongside Hab 1–2 in the expanding Book of the Four (Hos, Am, Mi, Zeph). Here what constitutes the original, Judah-centric material becomes the object of reinterpretation through the addition of the Babylonian Commentary, which instead makes Babylon the focus. Hab 3,16b-17 and the name »Habakkuk« in the superscription are the new elements during this final stage, serving to position chapter three both within the corpus of Habakkuk, the Book of the Four, and the overarching historical narrative of the emerging Book of the Twelve.

Set against this developmental backdrop, one can begin to appreciate the rich history and traditions that make up the Hebrew Scriptures. Traditional, ancient, even Canaanite (a derogatory term within scholarship!) material can be recast as a message of hope, a reason for faith, and a foundation for identity. This scenario is precisely what one finds in Hab 3. Through its growth, development, and inclusion into the corpus of Habakkuk, the post-exilic community was able to look back, reflect upon, and make sense of the pivotal moment in its history, the Babylonian exile.

⁶⁶ Nogalski, *Processes*, 181.

This study looks at the growth and development of the text of Hab 3, arguing that three specific stages of editorial activity are in evidence. At each stage one may discern a reinterpretation fitting its context. First, the theophanic core (vv. 3–15) is comprised of an ancient theophanic tradition (vv. 3–7) and an equally ancient *Chaoskampf* motif (vv. 8–15). This unit is dated prior to the exile. Second, a psalmic redaction sees the addition of various superscriptive elements in v. 1, a frame for the core theophany (vv. 2.16a.18–19), and the three occurrences of *šēlāh* (vv. 3.9.13). This text belongs to the early Persian period and sees the transformation of the theophanic core into a complaint psalm imploring YHWH's assistance. Third, its incorporation into the growing corpus of the Twelve sees the inclusion of the name »Habakkuk« (v. 1) and Joel-related language in vv. 16b–17. At this final stage one may detect a final interpretation of the earlier complaint, couched now in terms of divine assurance that Babylon would not go unpunished. Hab 3 thus serves as a sort of microcosm for the way in which Judah experienced, struggled with, and ultimately made sense of the experience of exile.

Cette étude concerne l'élaboration littéraire de Hab 3, retenant comme plausible un développement en trois phases. Chaque étape suppose ainsi une réinterprétation en vue de l'adapter à son contexte: – Le noyau primitif comporte ainsi la section théophanique (vv. 3–15) comme centre, qui inclut une antique tradition théophanique (vv. 3–7) ainsi qu'un récit du combat primordial contre le chaos (vv. 8–15), de même époque pré-exilique. – Une rédaction psalmiste, qui ajoute plusieurs éléments de suscription (v. 1), un cadre pour la théophanie (vv. 2.16a.18–19), et le triple *šēlāh* (vv. 3.9.13), appartient à la première époque perse. Elle fait de la théophanie un psaume de lamentation. – La troisième rédaction complète au v. 1 le nom de »Habakkuk« et comporte, aux vv. 16b.17, une langue proche de celle de Joël. Ainsi est réalisée l'intégration du texte au livre des douze prophètes, tout en apportant un nouvel élément de réponse à la plainte concernant le non-jugement de Babylone. Hab 3 est ainsi une sorte de microcosme où l'on peut discerner comment Juda a vécu l'expérience de l'exil, comment il lutta contre elle, pour finalement lui donner une signification.

Der Beitrag beschäftigt sich mit dem literarischen Wachstum von Hab 3 und hält drei Phasen redaktioneller Tätigkeit für plausibel. Auf jeder Stufe erfolgte eine Reinterpretation, die sich in ihren Kontext einfügte. Die Grundfassung umfasst demnach den Theophanieabschnitt als Zentrum (V. 3–15), in dem sich neben einer alten Theophanietradition (V. 3–7) auch, vergleichbar alt, ein Chaoskampfmotiv (V. 8–15) findet. Diese Stufe wird vorexilisch datiert. In der frühen Perserzeit ergänzt eine psalmistische Redaktion verschiedene Überschriftenelemente in V. 1, die Rahmung der Theophanie (V. 2.16a.18–19), und das dreifache *šēlāh* (V. 3.9.13). Diese Redaktion macht aus der Theophanie einen Klagepsalm. Die dritte Redaktion ergänzt mit V. 1 den Namen »Habakkuk« und in den V. 16b.17 eine an Joel anklingende Sprache. Damit wird ein Beitrag zur Einbettung in das Zwölfprophetenbuch geleistet und zugleich die Klage, dass Babylon straflos geblieben sei, neu beantwortet. Hab 3 liefert somit eine Art Mikrokosmos, in dem sich erkennen lässt, wie Juda die Erfahrungen des Exils erlebte, mit ihnen rang und letzten Endes aus ihnen Sinn generierte.