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## THE LITERARY STRUCTURE OF THE BOOK OF HABAKKUK

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**C**HIASMUS is the name of the particular literary form which will be described here. The book of Habakkuk has been discovered to consist of a closely knit chiasmic structure throughout. This is the first poem of such length to stand revealed as a literary unit of this kind, though chiasmus has already been discovered throughout many psalms, in prophetic preaching, in Jesus' sayings, in parts of Paul's letters, and even in the arrangement of Matthew's whole gospel. Its presence within the Old Testament was described in *AJSL* 46, p. 104, 1930; within the New Testament in *JR* 10, p. 74, 1930, or *JBL* 50, p. 266, 1931; in the Gospels in *The Anglican Theol. Rev.* 13, pp. 27 and 405, 1931; and in the Psalms in *AJSL* 49, p. 281, 1933.

The word chiasmus is intended to denote a certain pattern of arrangement. Thoughts are the elements that are arranged. The pattern is made up of parallel thoughts arranged with non-parallel thoughts. The simplest form of the pattern is illustrated in the three major parts of Habakkuk, which have been designated I, II, and I' because the first and third are parallel while the central one differs. The form with two central elements instead of one is illustrated by the order of words in the first line of Hab. 2 1, "On my watch let me stand and set myself on the castle". A very typical form of the arrangement is to be seen among the strophes within part I, where the order is A, B, C, B', A'. Thought elements of the size which are here called strophes are important for the pattern as a whole, though many features of the composition have to be considered when our

Occidental minds are trying to rediscover the original writer's plan for them.

The best way to set forth the structure of this prophet's composition will be to print and translate the Hebrew text, displaying its chiasmic features to the eye as well as to the ear. The Semitic rhythm of words will be indicated as far as possible, since manner of expression is associated with thought in the construction of parallelisms; hence the Massoretic *maḳḳēf* will be disregarded sometimes, and the particle 'ִנְּ will be considered unaccented in most cases. The following introductory notes will point out the main features of the chiasmus. One should be warned that ancient writers of this literary style seem to have avoided rather than sought after regularity either in rhythms or in number of *stichoi* throughout long portions. Parallelism of thought will govern the arrangement printed below.

### *Part I*

In *strophe A* the thought is the prophet's plea to the Lord that a condition of wrongness exists; he is expecting the Lord's answer. Details include the bad man set over against the good, and several words meaning wrongness or to see. The poet expresses himself in the first person, addressing the Lord in the second; he uses the negative with a verb three times, and asks two questions. Within the last third of the *strophe* stands a nice little chiasmus indicated by "thereupon justice goes out," with the general proposition in the center.

When it comes to *strophe B*, the thought changes to description of the Chaldean's coming into the land; he is a destructive warrior who forces his will over the inhabitants, exulting in his power. Expression is all in the third person, with one exception at the beginning. Within the *strophe*, the thought of the first line has parallelism with the last line, and so forth for each pair of lines as one progresses from the extremes toward the center.

*Strophe C* again pleads to the Lord, implying that His righteousness ought to effect correction. This thought is central to

the part. Its likeness to strophes A and A' in thought and expressional forms is a not uncommon feature of chiasmus (e. g. "cleansing the house" in Lev. 14 49-53, cf. *AJSL* 46, p. 118). Within the strophe, God's long-suffering and the questions stand at the extremes, His righteous nature in the center.

When it comes to *strophe B'*, the thought changes back to description of the Chaldean, especially to his significance; he is like a destructive fisherman who forces his will upon the inhabitants of the sea, exulting in his power. Again expression is all in the third person, with one exception at the beginning. In both B and B' each beginning includes the Deity, each center expresses the exultant feelings, while at or near each end comes the idea "he whose might is his god", or "he sacrifices to his net". Within this strophe, the first and last lines are similar in idea and length, while the pair of lines on each side of the center are obviously parallel.

In *strophe A'* the thought again presents the prophet with his plea, waiting for the Lord's answer; now it comes to him as a vision experience which results in intellectual assurance for his religious faith. Again appear the same details of thought and expression as in strophe A, save that here the address to the Lord is implied in the third person and the questions are indirect ones. Within the strophe, the initial "what He will speak" is balanced at the end by the content of the answer, while the center pictures the character of the reply. Three parallel elements in the center are often found. Within the last third of the strophe stands a nice little chiasmus, where the first and fifth lines are parallel synthetically, the second and fourth antithetically, with the general proposition in the center.

## *Part II*

All things considered, verse 2 5c seems to begin a new division. This portion is placed as a contrasting element in between the beginning and end of the book; it consists of a searching analysis into the Chaldean's way of life and a series of woes denouncing

him as unrighteous. The verbatim repetition of 2<sub>8b</sub> in verse 17<sub>b</sub>, a rare phenomenon, must signify two fixed points in unraveling the composer's scheme; the present writers had to do much puzzling over many details before they felt assured of their findings, but at length there came to light an alternating order of strophes with the repeated lines apparently introduced as refrains. Such an alternating order associated with the V-type of pattern has been unearthed in other chiasmus (e. g. in Isa. 55 7-8, cf. *AJSL* 46, p. 110).

In *strophe K* the prophet proclaims that the wronged nations will turn against the Chaldean. This is expressed as a denunciation between the beginning of the strophe and the center, as a deed between center and end, in each case by a question. The final line, not counting the refrain, is an echo of the first line.

The next *strophe, L*, declares that the Chaldean's way with his castle (first) and with a town (last) is denounced by their very stone and wood, in the presence of the Lord's way.

In *strophe K'* recur the same thought and arrangements as in *K* above, save that here the Lord does the turning and the questions are statements. In both *K* and *K'* the center contains the root "honor"; the nations in *K* are named as Lebanon in *K'*. Within *K'*, the beginning, center, and end (not counting the refrain) exhibit the following chiastic arrangements: be satisfied, be sated, dismays; honor, shame-honor, havoc of beasts; cover, . . . , cover.

The next *strophe, L'*, declares that the Chaldean's way with idol gods is denounced in the presence of the Lord. The words "stone" and "wood" at the center of *L* are repeated at the center of *L'*—in reverse order, which is a device frequently found (e. g. in I Cor. 12 9 f., 28 with "gifts of healings" and "workings of miracles"). In *L* the woes stand outside the center, here in *L'* at the center—another device sometimes found (as in Eph. 6 5-9 with "lords" and "Lord"). Similarly, the idea of teaching at the center of the first third of *L'* is reproduced at the extremes of the final third. The thought of the Lord is arranged to contrast with the idols that are unspeaking and are overlaid with gold.

*Part I'*

In *strophe A* the thought is the prophet's plea to the Lord to perform His deed, and he is expecting this. The poet expresses himself in the first person, addressing the Lord in the second person.

When it comes to *strophe B*, the thought changes to description of God's coming into the land; He is a terrible storm that forces its presence over the inhabitants, divine in its power. Expression is all in the third person, with one exception at the end. Within the strophe, geographical names are at the extremes, while in the middle comes the important idea concerning the effect of all this.

*Strophe C* again addresses the Lord, implying that His wrath will effect salvation. This thought is central to the part. Within the strophe, the extremes show God as a rainstorm, the center as a warrior. The dividing line between C and B' is not clear cut.

When it comes to *strophe B'*, the thought presents more description of the Lord's coming, especially its significance; He is like an avenging warrior who forces His presence upon the fighters to save His own side, heroic in His power. Both B and B' begin with a general statement, each second line mentions the heavens, each third line contains "brightness" in company with "light" (typically reversed in order) and here begins the description of specific details, while each central line speaks of "land. . . . races". Within B', the deep is at the extremes, the important idea of saving is in the middle, the missiles are in the median positions.

In *strophe A'* the prophet again is waiting for the Lord's deed; there comes to him an ecstatic experience which results in emotional satisfaction for his religious faith. As in A above, the strophe starts with "I heard", the center contains an idea "in the midst of the year", while the fear and the deed and the mercy expressed in A are taken up, in turn, by A' to be explained; here the address to the Lord is implied in the third person. Within the strophe, the feeling of fear at the beginning is balanced by the feeling of exaltation at the end, the center has three parallel elements, the median positions contrast the result of the Lord's deed for the Chaldean and for the prophet.

In comparing the general conception and the individual strophes of part I' with those in part I, the student should not fail to compare the lines of I':B with I:B, or the disconnected reference to the sea at the end of I':B' with I:B', or the two pairs of cohortative imperfects in I:A' and I':A' (only). The conclusion becomes well justified that the third portion of the book was conceived as the parallel and the completion of the first part. Habakkuk thus stands out as a creative artist with a comprehensive plan for what he writes, in addition to being a workman skilled in the beauty of detail; his prophetic thought displays a cumulative sweep as it steps intricately on its way. Some later occasion must be responsible for selecting and designating as a psalm his powerful picture of God coming with salvation. The authors of this present exposition humbly hope that many other readers may come to share a deepening appreciation for the ancient seer's literary gem.

The sequence of thoughts in the first chapter has puzzled some scholars. Different types of solution were summed up by George Adam Smith in *The Book of the Twelve Prophets*, II, pp. 115-124, where he accepted Budde's reconstruction of the text and presented his own solution; one may compare *EB*, col. 1921. But now that chiasmus is understood to place non-parallel material between parallel portions, no reconstruction of the text is necessary. The present rediscoverers were sometimes surprised to find an appropriate detail bobbing up in the proper place, once the maker's arrangement began to show itself.

The word "wine" in 2 5 has seemed too extraneous to some commentators. But the idea of wine appears again in II:K', where it evidently means the spirit in which the Chaldean directs his way of life. In 2 5 Habakkuk says, "Yes, but the wine of the wicked!" in contrast with the spirit of faith held by the righteous. The parallel beginning of this strophe refers to the spirit which God will communicate to the prophet; the parallel strophe A mentions God's law and justice going forth; the related final strophe of the book emphasizes the exhilarating effect from the spirit of loyalty to Yahweh. Wine is contrasted with the Holy Spirit in Luke 1 15; Acts 2 13-16; Eph. 5 18.

## ח ב ק ו ק

## Part I

והמשא אשר חנה חבוק הנביא:

	11
עֲדֹאֲנָה יְהוָה שׁוֹעֲתִי וְלֹא תִשְׁמַע	2
אֲזַעַק אֲלֵיךָ חֶמְס וְלֹא תוֹשִׁיעַ:	
לְמָה תִרְאֵנִי אָנוּן וְעַמֶּל תַּבִּיט וְשֹׁד	3
וְחֶמְס לְגַדִּי וַיְהִי רִיב וּמְדוֹן יִשָּׂא:	4
עַל־כֵּן תִּפְּוֹג תּוֹרָה וְלֹא יֵצֵא לְנֹצַח מִשְׁפָּט	
כִּי רָשָׁע מִכְתִּיר אֶת־הַצְּדִיק	
עַל־כֵּן יֵצֵא מִשְׁפָּט מֵעַקֵּל:	
	A
רְאוּ בְגָדִים וְהַבֵּיטוּ וְהִתְמַהוּ תִמְהוּ	5
כִּי־פַעַל פַּעַל בְּיַמֵּיכֶם לֹא תֵאֱמִינוּ כִּי יִסְפָּר:	
כִּי־הִנְנִי מְקִים אֶת־הַבְּשָׂדִים הַגּוֹי הַמֵּר וְהַנִּמְקָר	6
הַהוֹלֵךְ לְמִרְחַבֵי אֶרֶץ לְרֵשֶׁת מִשְׁכָּנוֹת לֹא־לוֹ:	
אֵים וְנוֹרָא הוּא מִמְּנוּ מִשְׁפָּטוֹ וּשְׂאֵתוֹ יֵצֵא:	7
וְקָלוּ מִנְּמָרִים סוֹסָיו וְחָדוּ מִזֹּאבֵי עָרֵב	8
וּפְשׁוּׁי פְרָשָׁיו וּפְרָשָׁיו מִרְחוֹק יָבֹאוּ יַעֲפוּ	
בְּנֹשֶׁר חָשׁ לְאֹכֹל: ° כֹּלָה לְחֶמְס יָבֹוא	
מִנְּמַת פְּנִיָהֶם קְדִימָה וַיֵּאֱסֹף בַּחֹל שְׁבִי:	
וְהוּא בְּמַלְכִים יִתְקַלֵּם וְרוֹזְנִים מִשְׁחָק לוֹ	10
הוּא לְכָל מְבַצֵּר יִשְׁחָק וַיִּצְבֵּר עֶפֶר וַיִּלְכְּדָהּ:	
אָז חָלַף רוּחַ וַיַּעֲבֵר וְאִשָּׁם זֶה כַחַד לְאֱלֹהִים:	11
	B

הָלוֹא אַתָּה מִקֶּדֶם יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי קֹדְשֵׁי לֹא אֶתְמוֹת יְהוָה לְמִשְׁפָּט שְׁמֹתוֹ וְצוֹר לְהוֹכִיחַ יִסְדָּתוֹ: טְהוֹר עֵינַיִם מִרְאוֹת רֶעַ וְהַבֵּיט אֶל־עַמָּל לֹא תוֹכֵל לָמָּה תִבְיֵט בְּזוֹנְדִים תִּתְּרִישׁ בְּבֹלַע רָשָׁע צְדִיק מִמֶּנּוּ:	}	12   13
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וַתַּעֲשֶׂה אָדָם כְּדֹנֵי הַיָּם כְּרִמָּשׁ לֹא מִשֵּׁל בּוֹ: כָּלָה בַחֲכֹה הָעֵלָה יִגְרֶהוּ בְחֶרְמוֹ וַיִּאֲסָפְהוּ בַמְּכַמְרָתוֹ עַל־כֵּן יִשְׂמַח וַיִּגְיֵל: עַל־כֵּן יִזְבַּח לְחֶרְמוֹ וַיִּקְטֹר לְמְכַמְרָתוֹ כִּי בְהִמָּה שָׁמֵן חִלְקוֹ וּמֵאֲכָלוֹ בְּרֵאָה: הָעַל בֶּן יִרִיק חֶרְמוֹ וְתִמִּיד לְהַרְגֵנוּ לֹא יִחְמוֹל:	}	14  15  16  17
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עַל־מִשְׁמֶרֶתִי אֲעַמְדָּה וְאֶת־יִצְבָּה עַל־מְצוֹר וַיִּצְפָּה לְרְאוֹת מָה יִדְבַר־בִּי וּמָה אֲשִׁיב עַל־תּוֹכְחָתִי: וַיִּנְעֲנֵי יְהוָה וַיֹּאמֶר כָּתַב חֲזוֹן וּבָאָר עַל־הַלְחוֹת לְמַעַן יְרוּץ קוֹרָא בּוֹ: כִּי עוֹד חֲזוֹן לְמוֹעֵד וַיִּפְתַּח לִקְיָן וְלֹא יִכְזָב אִם יִתְמַהֲמַה חֲכֵה לוֹ כִּי־בֹא יָבֵא לֹא יִאֲחֶר: הִנֵּה עֲפָלָה לֹא יִשְׂרָה נִפְשׁוֹ בּוֹ וַצְדִיק בְּאַמּוֹנָתוֹ יִחְיֶה: וְאִף כִּי־הֵיִן בְּנֵד גָּבֵר יְהִיר וְלֹא יִנְוֶה אֲשֶׁר הִרְחִיב בְּשֵׂאוֹל נִפְשׁוֹ וְהוּא כְּמוֹת וְלֹא יִשְׁבַּע	}	1 2  3  3  4  5
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## Part II

- וַיֹּאסֶף אֱלֹהֵי כְּלֵה־גוֹיִם וַיִּקְבֹּץ אֱלֹהֵי כְּלֵה־עַמִּים: }  
 הַלֹּוא אֱלֹהֵי קָלָם } 6  
 עֲלֵיו מִשָּׁל יִשְׂאוּ וּמְלִיצָה חִידוֹת לוֹ  
 יִיֹאמֶר }  
 הוּי הַמְרָבָה לֹא־לוֹ עַד־מְתֵי וּמִכְבִּיד עֲלָיו עֲבָטִיט: } K  
 הַלֹּוא פָּחַע יְקוּמוּ נִשְׁכִּיף וַיִּקְצוּ מִזְעֵזְעִיד } 7  
 וְהִיִּית לְמַשְׁסוֹת לְמוֹ:  
 כִּי־אֲתָה שְׁלוֹת גּוֹיִם רַבִּים יִשְׁלֹף כְּלֵי־יָתֵר עַמִּים } 8  
 מְדַמֵּי אָדָם וְחַמַּס אֲרִץ קַרְיָה וְכָל יֹשְׁבֵי כָּה: }
- הוּי בָצַע בָּצַע רַע לְבֵיתוֹ } 9  
 לְשׁוּם בְּמֵרוֹם קִנּוּ לְהַנְצִל מִכַּף רַע:  
 יַעֲצֹת בִּשְׁת לְבֵיתָךְ } 10  
 קִצְוֹת עַמִּים רַבִּים וְחוֹטֵא נִפְשָׁךְ:  
 כִּי־אָבֵן מִקִּיר תוֹעֵק וְכַפִּים מַעַץ יַעֲנֶנָּה: } L  
 הוּי בָנָה עִיר בְּדַמִּים וְכוֹנֵן קַרְיָה בְּעוֹלָה: } 11  
 הַלֹּוא הִנֵּה מֵאֵת יְהוָה צָבָאוֹת } 12  
 וַיִּינְעוּ עַמִּים בְּדִי־אֵשׁ וּלְאֲמִים בְּדִי־רִיק יַעֲפוּ: } 13
- כִּי תִמְלֵא הָאָרֶץ לְרַעַת אֶת־כְּבוֹד יְהוָה כַּמִּים יִכְסּוּ עַל־יָם: } 14  
 הוּי מִשְׁקָה רַעְהוּ מִסַּפַּח חֲמָתָךְ וְאִף שִׁכָּר } 15  
 לְמַעַן הַבִּיט עַל־מַעֲזְרֵיהֶם:  
 שְׁבַעְתָּ קִלּוֹן מִכְּבוֹד } 16  
 שְׁתַּה גַּם־אֲתָה וְהָעָרַל } K'  
 תִּסּוּב עֲלֶיךָ כּוֹס יָמִין יְהוָה וְקִיִּקְלוֹן עַל־כְּבוֹדָךְ:  
 כִּי חַמַּס לְבָנוֹן יִכְסֶּךָ וְשֵׁר בְּהַמוֹת יִחְתָּךְ } 17  
 מְדַמֵּי אָדָם וְחַמַּס אֲרִץ קַרְיָה וְכָד יֹשְׁבֵי כָּה: }

	מָה הוּעִיל פֶּסֶל	18
	כִּי פֶסֶלוֹ יִצְרוּ מִסֶּכֶה	
	וּמִזְרָה שֶׁקָּר	
	כִּי בִטַח יִצַר יִצְרוּ עָלָיו	
	לְעִשׂוֹת אֱלִילִים אֱלָמִים:	
	הוּי אָמַר לְעֵץ הַקִּיפָה עוֹרֵי לְאַבֵּן דּוּמָם	19
	הוּא יוֹרָה	
	הִנֵּה הוּא תְּפוּשׁ זָהָב וְכֶסֶף	
	וְכָל רוּחַ אֵין בְּקִרְבּוֹ:	
	נִיהוּזָה בְּהִיבֵל קָדְשׁוֹ	20
	הֵם מִפְּנֵי כְּלֵי־הָאָרֶץ:	

## Part I'

וְחַפְּזָה לְחַבְּקוֹס תָּבִיא עַל שְׁנֵינָחָ:		13
	יִהְיֶה שְׁמַעְתִּי שְׁמַעַךְ יִרְאֵתִי יִהְיֶה פֶּעֱלָךְ	2
	בְּקִרְבַּ שְׁנַיִם חֵייהוּ בְּקִרְבַּ שְׁנַיִם תּוֹדִיעַ	A
	בְּרָגוֹ רַחֵם תִּזְכּוֹר:	
וְסֵלָה	אֱלֹהִים מִתִּימֵן יָבֹא וְקָדוֹשׁ מִהַר פָּאָרָן	3
	בְּסֶפֶה שָׁמַיִם הוֹדוּ וְתִהְלֹתוּ מִלְּאֵה הָאָרֶץ:	
	וְנִגְנָה בְּאֹזֶר תִּהְיֶה	4
	קִרְנַיִם מִזְרוּ לוֹ וְשֵׁם חֲבִיּוֹן עֲזֶה:	
	לְפָנָיו יִלְךְ דָּבָר וַיִּצְא רֶשֶׁף לְרִגְלָיו:	5
	עָמַד   וַיִּמְדַּד אֶרֶץ רָאָה נִתְּרָה גּוֹיִם	6
	וַיִּתְּפָצְצוּ הַרְרֵי עַד שָׁחוּ וְגִבְעוֹת עוֹלָם	
	הִלְכוֹת עוֹלָם לֹ:	
	תַּחַת אָנוּ רְאִיתִי אֱהִלִּי כּוֹשֵׁן יִרְגְּזוּן יִרְעוֹת אֶרֶץ מִדְּגוֹן:	7

		הַבְּנֵה־רִים חָרָה יְהוָה	8
		אִם בְּנֵה־רִים אֶפֶס אִם בָּיִם עֲבַרְתָּ	
וסלה:	C	כִּי תִרְכַּב עַל־סוּסֶיךָ מִרְכַּבְתִּיךָ יְשׁוּעָה:	9
		עֲרִיָּה תַעְזֹר קִשְׁתְּךָ שְׁבָעוֹת מַטּוֹת אִמָּר	
		נְהַרֹת תִּבְקַע אֲרָץ: <sup>10</sup> רְאוּךָ יַחֲלִיז הָרִים	
		וְרִם מִיָּם עֲבַר	

		נָתַן תְּהוֹם קוֹלוֹ	
		רוּם יִדְיֵהוּ נִשְׂאָ: <sup>11</sup> שֶׁמֶשׁ יָרַח עָמַד וְזָבְלָה	
		לְאוֹר חֲצִיךָ יִהְיֶיכוּ לְנֶגַה בְּרַק חֲנִיתְךָ:	
		בְּזַעַם תִּצְעַד אֲרָץ בְּאַף תִּדְרוֹשׁ גּוֹיִם:	12
	B'	יִצְאֲתָ לִישַׁע עֲמֹךָ לִישַׁע אֶת־מְשִׁיחֲךָ	13
וסלה:		מִחֲצֵתָ רֹאשׁ מִבֵּית רְשָׁע עֲרוֹת יְסוּד עַד־צִנְאָרָה	
		נִקְבְּתָ בְּמִטְוֵי רֹאשׁ פְּרָזוֹ	14
		יִסְעֲרוּ לְהַפִּיצֵנִי עַל־יָצְתָם כְּמוֹ לֶאֱכַל עֵנִי בַמִּסְתָּר:	
		דְּרַכְתָּ בָיִם סוּסֶיךָ חֲמָר מִיָּם רַבִּים:	15

		שִׁמְעֵתִי   וַתִּרְצֵנִי בְטָנִי לְקוֹל צִלְלוֹ שִׁפְתֵי	16
		יְבוֹא רִקֵּב בְּעֲצָמֵי וַתַּחֲמֵי אֲרָצוֹ	
		אֲשֶׁר אָנֹנִח לַיּוֹם צָרָה לְעֵלוֹת לְעַם יִגְדָּנֹנִי:	
	A'	כִּי־תֵאָנֵה לֹא תִפְרָח וְאִין יְבוּל בְּגִפְנֵים	17
		כַּחַשׁ מַעֲשֵׂה זֵית וּשְׂדֵמֹת לֹא עָשָׂה אֲכָל	
		גֹּזֵר מִמְכָּלָה צֹאן וְאִין בְּקָר בְּרִפְטִים:	
		וְאִנִּי בִיהֵנָה אֶעֱלֹזָה אֲנִי־לָהּ בְּאֵלֵהִי יִשְׁעֵי:	18
		יְהוָה אֲדַנִּי חִילִי	19
		וְיִשָּׁם רְגְלֵי בְּאֵילוֹת וְעַל בְּמוֹתֵי יְדַרְכֵנִי	

ולמנצח בגיטות:

## TRANSLATION

## HABAKKUK

1:1

(The burden which Habakkuk the prophet envisioned.)

## PART I

2 How long, O Lord, I cried, but hearest thou not.  
 I call toward thee, "A wrong!", but savest thou not.  
 3 Oh, why dost thou have me see sorrow, and trouble o'erlookest, and havoc?  
 A { Confronting me wrong, and exists a strife, and contention is borne.  
 4 Thereupon is torah faint, and forever justice does not go out.  
 For the bad man is capping the good man;  
 5 Thereupon perverted justice goes out.

6 See the <sup>a</sup>wicked and look, and be surely astonished;  
 For a deed is doing in your days—you would not have faith that it's told.  
 For, behold, the Chaldeans I'm raising, the race who is bitter and hasty;  
 Who is going the breadth of the land to possess the dwellings not his.  
 7 Appalling and feared is he; from him his justice and bearing goes out.  
 8 And swifter than leopards his horses and keener than wolves of the evening.  
 B { His horsemen <sup>b</sup>cavort and his horsemen, from afar they come a-flying.  
 Like a vulture quick to feed, <sup>c</sup> altogether for wrong he comes.  
 The set of their faces is hostile, and he gathers like sand the captives.  
 10 And he at the kings derides, and sultans as sport he has.  
 'Tis he to every fortress sports and throws up a dust and takes it.  
 11 When then the wind has swept and gone past, has offended he whose force is his god.

12 Art not thyself from antiquity, Lord? My God, my Sacred, <sup>d</sup>thou diest not.  
 C { Thou, Lord, for justice hast set him, and, Rock, for adjudging arraigned him.  
 13 Too pure of eyes to see an evil, and to look toward trouble thou able art not.  
 Oh, why dost thou o'erlook the wicked art silent in the bad man's swallowing the better than he?

14 { Thou hast rendered mankind like fish of the sea, like creatures—not a ruler o'er him.  
 15 {     Altogether by hook he brought up.  
       Him he drags in his net and gathers him in his meshes.  
 B' {     Thereupon he disports and exults,  
 16 {     Thereupon sacrifices t' his net and makes smoke to meshes of his;  
       For by these things rich is his portion and his feeding is fat.  
 17 {     Will he thereupon empty his net and always to slay the races pity not?

2:1 { On the watch of mine let me stand and let station myself on the castle,  
 And observe to see what he speaks in me and what I reply on my chiding.  
 2 {     The Lord me answered and said:<sup>e</sup>  
       "Write the vision and mark on the tablets, in order that runs the reader of it.  
 3 {     For still is a vision for a season; it pants for the end and falsifies not.  
 A' {     It may dilly-dally—wait for it, for surely it comes, it carries not."  
 4 { Behold, is swollen—not upright his soul in him;  
       But the good man lives by his faithfulness.  
 5 {     How much less the wine of the wicked!  
       The 'hero' is haughty but habitates not;  
 One who has broadened Sheol-like his soul, and he is like death and sated is not.

## PART II

6 { He gathered toward him all of the races and assembled toward him all of the nations.  
       Will not together these  
       On him a by-word bear and a satire, enigmas to him?  
       And say:<sup>e</sup>  
 K {     Woe, who multiplies not-his (a 'How long') and has debts load honor on him!  
 7 {     Shall not of a sudden your creditors rise and your terrorizers wake,  
       And you become booty for them?  
 8 { For you have despoiled so many races, so spoil you all the other nations.  
       From the blood of mankind and the wrong of the land, the town and all the dwellers in it.

9 { Woe, who gains an evil gain for his house,  
       To set in the high spot his nest, to be rescued from evil's hand!  
 10 { You advised disgrace for your house,  
       To cut off so many nations, who sins with your soul.  
 L {     For a stone from the wall calls out, and a beam from the wood gives it answer.  
 11 { Woe, who builds a city by blood and founds a town by violence!  
 12 {     Is it not, behold, from beside the Lord of Hosts,  
 13 {     When nations toil oft as fire and folk oft as emptiness weary?

- 14 { For the land is filled to know the honor of the Lord as water o'erwhelms on the sea.  
 15 { Woe, who his friend has drink from thy pouring of fury until he is drunk,  
     In order to look on their nakedness!  
 16 { K' } You were sated with shame more than honor.  
     So drink you too, be uncovered;  
     Comes round upon you the cup of the Lord's right hand and pooh-pooh upon your honor.  
 17 { For the wrong of Lebanon o'erwhelms you, and the havoc of beasts 'dismays you.  
     From the blood of mankind and the wrong of the land, the town and all the dwellers in it.
- 18 { What avail has a carving?  
     For its former carved a casting  
     And teacher of lies.  
     For the former of his form relied upon it  
     To render unspeaking idols.  
 19 { L' } Woe, who says to a wood, "Awake"; "Bestir", to a silent stone!  
     Shall it be teaching?  
     Behold, 'tis it laid hold of with gold and silver,  
     But of all of the wind there is none within it.  
 20 { But the Lord in his sacred temple —  
     Hush before him all of the land.

## PART I'

- 3:1 (A prayer of Habakkuk's, the prophet, upon Shigionoth.)  
 2 { A } O Lord, I heard thy report; I feared, O Lord, thy deed.  
     Within the years have it live, within the years have known.  
     In the shake-up mercy remember.
- 3 { B } God from Teman comes, and the Sacred from Paran's mountain.  
     His splendor o'erwhelmed the heavens and filled the land his praise.  
 4 { And a brightness like light exists;  
     Rays from his hand he has, and there is the veil of his might.  
 5 { Before him pestilence goes, and the firebolt goes out for his feet.  
 6 { He stood and measured the land, he saw and made races start up.  
     The mountains olden scattered themselves, the hills eternal bow low.  
     Goings eternal he has.  
 7 { Beneath a sorrow I saw the tents of Cushan; the flaps of the land of Midian shake.

8                    { In the streams did it burn, O Lord?  
                       { Maybe in streams thy wrath, maybe in sea thine outburst;  
                       {       For thou rid'st on thy horses, thy chariots of saving.  
 9                    {       Unbared is thy bow bestirred; the oaths of the shafts a saying.  
                       { With streams thou cleavest the land; 10 the mountains saw thee, they dance.  
                       { The rainstorm of water went past.

                      { The deep presented its voice;  
                       {       On high its hands upbore \*11 the sun; the moon did stand aloft.  
                       {       For light thine arrows go, for brightness the flash of thy spear.  
 12                   {       In rage thou stridest the land, in wrath thou tramplest the races.  
 13                   { B'       Thou went'st out to save thy nation, to save thine anointed one.  
                       {       Thou smotest the head from the house of the bad man, the foundation laidst bare till the neck.<sup>g</sup>  
 14                   {       Thou didst pierce by his shafts the head of his chargers.  
                       {       They stormed to scatter me with their joying as if to feed on the lowly in hiding.  
 15                   {       Thou didst tread in the sea with thy horses, a foaming of many waters.

16                   { I heard, and my body shakes; to the sound my lips do tingle.  
                       { Decay in my members comes, and beneath me I shake—  
                       {       One who awaits for the day of distress to come up to the nation oppressing us.  
 17                   {       For the fig-tree does not bud forth, and there's not any yield in the vines;  
                       {       Deceives the olive's rendering, and the acreage does not render food;  
                       {       Cut off from the fold is the flock, and there's not any herd in the stalls.  
 18                   {       But let me in the Lord rejoice, let exult in the God of my safety.  
 19                   { Yahweh, my Lord, is my strength;  
                       { He sets my feet like the hind's and on my heights has me tread.

(For the director. On my stringed instruments.)

## NOTES

\* This word from the Greek and Syriac is somewhat favored by the chiasmus, because the related position at the end of the strophe contains the idea. The Hebrew reads וַיִּשְׂמַח.

<sup>b</sup> This word means "cavort" in Mal. 4 2 and Jer. 50 11, and can well mean the same here because the centers of this strophe and of the parallel strophe B'

are full of the idea. However, the parallelism close at hand may call for a meaning more akin to "be scattered" as in Nah. 3 18, the only other occurrence of this Hebrew verb.

° The structure would call for this verse division to be put elsewhere.

♠ The Sopherim changed this into **תִּזְכֹּר**.

° Lines or words like this seem frequently not to be integral to the structure of the chiasmus.

† With the versions.

♣ For the meaning recall the first part of strophe L.