

Dr. Marv Wilson, Prophets, Session 21, Habakkuk

Resources from NotebookLM

1) Abstract, 2) Audio podcast, 3) Briefing Document, 4) Study Guide, and 5) FAQs

1. Abstract of Wilson, Prophets, Session 21, Habakkuk, Biblicalelearning.org, BeL

Dr. Marv Wilson's Session 21 focuses on the Book of Habakkuk, exploring its theme of theodicy, or the vindication of God's justice in a world filled with suffering. Wilson analyzes Habakkuk's dialogue with God, specifically the prophet's questions about God's use of the wicked Babylonians to punish Judah. **He emphasizes the importance of Habakkuk 2:4, "the just shall live by faith," as a cornerstone of both Jewish and Christian thought.** The lecture also investigates the historical context of Habakkuk, the structure of the book, and the significance of Chapter 3's theophany, drawing connections to other biblical texts and historical events. **Wilson underscores that while the Bible may not provide complete answers, it does offer relationship with God, a steadfastness that sustains believers through difficult times.** Lastly, the session mentions an upcoming discussion of Kushner's work in relation to Habakkuk, encouraging students to engage with modern perspectives on similar theological questions.

2. 15 - minute Audio Podcast Created on the basis of Dr. Wilson, Prophets, Session 21 – Double click icon to play in Windows media player or go to the Biblicalelearning.org [BeL] Site and click the audio podcast link there (Old Testament → Major Prophets → Prophetic Literature).



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ession21.mp3**

3. Briefing Document: Wilson, Prophets, Session 21, Habakkuk

Okay, here is a detailed briefing document summarizing the key themes and ideas from Dr. Marv Wilson's lecture on the Book of Habakkuk:

Briefing Document: Dr. Marv Wilson on Habakkuk

Introduction:

This document summarizes Dr. Marv Wilson's lecture (Session 21) on the Book of Habakkuk, focusing on its major themes and interpretations. The lecture frames Habakkuk as a study in theodicy – the vindication of God's justice and goodness in a world filled with evil and suffering. Wilson explores the prophet's dialogue with God, the historical context of the book, and its enduring relevance.

Key Themes & Ideas:

1. Habakkuk as a Theodicy:

- Habakkuk is presented as a "theodicy," a wrestling with the question of how a just and loving God can allow evil and suffering in the world.
- Wilson notes, "Theodicy means the vindication of God's ways, the justice, the power, the love of God in the mixed-up world."
- The book is structured as a dialogue between Habakkuk and God, where Habakkuk poses questions and God provides responses.
- The core of the book involves Habakkuk's perplexity over God's plan.

1. Historical Context:

- The book was likely written towards the end of Josiah's reign, around 15-20 years before the fall of the Southern Kingdom.
- The date 612 BC is significant, marking the fall of Nineveh and the rise of Babylon as the dominant power.
- Babylon (Chaldeans) is the looming threat on the horizon which leads to Habakkuk's questioning of God's plans.
- Jeremiah and Habakkuk were contemporaries, both warning of impending exile.

1. Habakkuk's Two Complaints:

- **First Complaint (1:1-4):** Habakkuk questions why God allows violence and injustice to go unpunished.
- He asks, "How long, O Lord, must I call for help? You don't listen or I cry to you violence, but you don't deliver or save."
- He observes, "Why do you make me look at injustice? Why do you tolerate wrong, destruction, and violence?"
- The law seems to be paralyzed and ineffectual.
- **Second Complaint (1:12-17):** Habakkuk questions why God would use the more wicked Babylonians to punish Judah, which is perceived to be less wicked.
- He asks, "Why, then, do you tolerate the treacherous? That's the Babylonians."
- He states, "Your eyes are too pure to look on evil. You cannot tolerate wrong."
- He struggles with the idea of a holy God using an unholy nation as an instrument.
- He uses the metaphor of a net, noting that the Babylonians will "scoop up your people like fish."

1. God's Response and the "Just Shall Live by Faith" (2:2-4):

- God's answer is to write down the revelation, making it clear so "the herald may run with it".
- God emphasizes that the revelation has an appointed time and will not prove false.
- The most significant verse is Habakkuk 2:4: "The man who is a just or a righteous man, that is a man who is in covenant relationship with God, is going to live faithfully."
- This is interpreted as a call to persistence, consistency, and a firm resolve in one's relationship with God.
- This is a pivotal verse that has had huge interpretive importance throughout history in both Jewish and Christian traditions.
- Rabbis throughout history have identified this verse as a summation of the entire Hebrew Bible, focusing on remaining faithful to the covenant regardless of circumstance.

- Wilson highlights how Martin Luther picked this verse as the battle cry of the Reformation in the form "the just shall live by faith".

1. **Emunah (Faithfulness/Steadiness):**

- The Hebrew word "emunah" is key in understanding Habakkuk 2:4.
- It means firmness, steadiness, and unswerving loyalty to revelation, not a Pollyanna version of faith.
- It is tied to the idea of not crumbling when faced with difficult circumstances.
- Wilson connects this word to the image of Moses' arms being held steady during battle, illustrating the need for unwavering faith.
- The word "amen" comes from this root, indicating something firm and solid.
- "When you say amen, you're saying I affirm that. That's solid, that's steady, that's grounded."

1. **Babylon's Condemnation and Five Woes (Chapter 2):**

- Chapter 2 contains five woes condemning Babylon for its sins and injustices.
- The sins cataloged are: piling up stolen goods, building a realm by unjust gain, building a city with bloodshed, giving drink to neighbors (exploitation), and idolatry.
- These woes illustrate Babylon's lust for empire and wealth, coupled with various vices and idolatry.

1. **The Theophany in Chapter 3:**

- Chapter 3 is a theophany, a powerful manifestation of God in "bigger-than-life terms".
- Wilson notes that chapter 3 is "closer to a psalm in the way it's composed than typical prophetic material such as an oracle."
- The chapter describes God as a powerful warrior, drawing on imagery of God's intervention at the Red Sea, to deliver Israel, and also draws from the tradition of God's coming from the south.
- This revelation of God provides the ultimate answer, though not a rational one, to Habakkuk's question of theodicy.

1. The Importance of Relationship Over Reason:

- The lecture concludes by emphasizing that relationship with God is more important than having all the answers.
- "Relationship, biblically speaking, takes precedence over reason."
- The Bible does not always provide final answers, but it does offer relationship with God, which sustains people through hard times.
- Wilson compares Habakkuk's posture to Job's in that both stay steadfast in relationship with God in the midst of difficulty.

1. The Habakkuk Commentary (Qumran):

- The Habakkuk Commentary, found among the Dead Sea Scrolls, is an example of early biblical commentary using the "Midrash Peshar" method.
- This method involves quoting a verse and then providing an interpretation or application of it to the contemporary context.
- The commentary notably omits the third chapter of Habakkuk.
- The commentary applied the text to problems within the commentator's own time (probably relating to the Romans).

1. Apocryphal Stories:

- The apocryphal book of Bell and the Dragon is mentioned as including a story of Habakkuk being miraculously transported to Babylon to feed Daniel in the lion's den.
- This highlights how Habakkuk's stories were being added to in other writings.

Quotes:

- "Theodicy means the vindication of God's ways, the justice, the power, the love of God in the mixed-up world."
- "How long, O Lord, must I call for help? You don't listen or I cry to you violence, but you don't deliver or save."
- "Why, then, do you tolerate the treacherous? That's the Babylonians."
- "Your eyes are too pure to look on evil. You cannot tolerate wrong."

- “The man who is a just or a righteous man, that is a man who is in covenant relationship with God, is going to live faithfully.”
- "When you say amen, you're saying I affirm that. That's solid, that's steady, that's grounded."
- "Relationship, biblically speaking, takes precedence over reason."

Conclusion:

Dr. Wilson's lecture offers a detailed and insightful look at the Book of Habakkuk, emphasizing its role in exploring the tension between faith and the presence of evil in the world. The book is not just a historical text, but a guide for believers on how to navigate hardship, remain faithful, and trust in God's ultimate justice, even in the face of seemingly insurmountable challenges. The emphasis is on *emunah*, or steadfastness, in one's relationship with God which leads to an inner peace and strength.

4. Study Guide: Wilson, Prophets, Session 21, Habakkuk

Habakkuk Study Guide

Quiz

Instructions: Answer each question in 2-3 complete sentences.

1. What does the term "theodicy" mean, and how does it relate to the Book of Habakkuk?
2. What are Habakkuk's two main complaints or questions directed towards God?
3. What is the significance of the date 612 BCE in the context of Habakkuk's prophecy?
4. What are the "five woes" in Habakkuk chapter 2, and to whom are they likely addressed?
5. Describe the Midrash Pesher method of biblical interpretation, as exemplified by the Habakkuk Commentary.
6. How does God respond to Habakkuk's first complaint, and what is Habakkuk's reaction to this answer?
7. How does Habakkuk 2:4 ("the righteous shall live by his faith") function within the book of Habakkuk, and how did it become significant for both Jewish and Christian traditions?
8. What does the word *emunah* mean, and how does it relate to Habakkuk's message?
9. What is the significance of Habakkuk 3 as a theophany, and what imagery is used to describe God's appearance?
10. How does Habakkuk's final declaration, beginning with "Though the fig tree does not blossom," exemplify faith and trust in God?

Answer Key

1. Theodicy refers to the vindication of God's justice and goodness in the face of evil and suffering in the world. In Habakkuk, the prophet struggles with theodicy, questioning why God allows injustice and how He can use wicked nations to punish His people.

2. Habakkuk's first complaint is about God's tolerance of violence and injustice within Judah, asking why God doesn't intervene. His second complaint arises when God says He will use the Babylonians to punish Judah, asking why God would use a more wicked nation against a less wicked one.
3. The date 612 BCE is when Nineveh fell, marking the rise of Babylon as the dominant power in the ancient Near East and the new looming threat. This historical shift is important in understanding the context of Habakkuk's questions about God's use of the Chaldeans (Babylonians).
4. The "five woes" are a catalog of sins found in Habakkuk chapter 2, and they are likely addressed to the nation of Babylon, criticizing its greed, injustice, violence, and idolatry. These woes reveal the depth of Babylon's wickedness.
5. The Midrash Pesher is an interpretive commentary method that begins by quoting a verse and then follows with a "Pesher," an explanation or application of the verse to contemporary events. The Habakkuk Commentary applies Habakkuk's descriptions of wickedness to the Roman era.
6. God responds to Habakkuk's first complaint by saying that He will punish Judah by using the Babylonians. Habakkuk is not satisfied with this answer, as he views the Babylonians as being more wicked than the people of Judah.
7. In Habakkuk, this verse means that the righteous will live faithfully, with consistency and persistence, despite the circumstances. For the Jewish tradition, it was viewed as a summary of what the Torah asks people to do; in the Christian tradition, Martin Luther used it as a justification for salvation by faith.
8. *Emunah* means firmness, steadiness, or unswerving loyalty. It relates to Habakkuk's message by emphasizing the importance of remaining faithful to God, even in the midst of suffering. In essence, faith is that which allows one to persist through difficult times.
9. Habakkuk 3 is a theophany (a manifestation of God) that depicts a powerful, awe-inspiring image of God, using hyperbolic, exaggerated imagery to portray God's glory, power, and role as a warrior coming to deliver his people.
10. Habakkuk's final declaration demonstrates that even if there is complete agricultural and economic collapse, the prophet will rejoice in the Lord, his Savior and Deliverer. This emphasizes the steadfast faith in God as the ultimate source of strength and joy, independent of circumstances.

Essay Questions

1. Discuss the nature of Habakkuk's dialogue with God, focusing on the progression of his complaints and the different ways God responds. How does the book as a whole contribute to our understanding of the relationship between humanity and God?
2. Analyze the significance of Habakkuk 2:4, "the righteous shall live by his faith," exploring its original context within the book and its subsequent interpretations in Jewish and Christian traditions. How has this verse functioned differently across these different traditions?
3. Examine the historical and political context of Habakkuk's prophecy, and how these circumstances may have influenced his message. Consider the significance of the rise of Babylon and its impact on Judah, as well as how Habakkuk's concerns about justice and theodicy would resonate in this context.
4. Explore the literary aspects of the Book of Habakkuk, considering the use of rhetorical questions, poetic language, and the psalm-like qualities of chapter 3. How does the literary structure of the book contribute to its message and impact on the reader?
5. Compare and contrast the concept of *emunah* as it is presented in Habakkuk with how faith or belief is presented in other parts of the Old Testament or in the New Testament. How does Habakkuk's emphasis on steadfastness challenge or complement other understandings of faith?

Glossary

- **Theodicy:** The vindication of God's justice and goodness in the face of evil and suffering.
- **Chaldeans:** Another name for the Babylonians, the empire that was rising to power during the time of Habakkuk.
- **Shigionoth:** A musical notation in Habakkuk 3, possibly indicating a type of melody or instrumental accompaniment.
- **Selah:** A word found in Psalms and Habakkuk, likely a musical or liturgical direction, possibly indicating a pause or interlude.
- **Apocrypha:** Biblical writings recognized by the Catholic and Orthodox traditions, but considered non-canonical by Protestants.
- **Midrash Peshet:** A method of biblical interpretation that involves explaining and applying the text to contemporary events or circumstances.
- **Emunah:** A Hebrew word meaning firmness, steadiness, or unswerving loyalty; it is often translated as "faith" or "faithfulness."
- **Theophany:** A visible manifestation of God, often accompanied by dramatic and powerful imagery.
- **Magnalia:** The great redemptive acts or works of God in history.
- **Shavuot:** A major Jewish holiday, also known as Pentecost, celebrated seven weeks after Passover.

5. FAQs on Wilson, Prophets, Session 21, Habakkuk, Biblicalelearning.org (BeL)

Frequently Asked Questions about Habakkuk

1. **What is the main theme of the Book of Habakkuk, and what does the term "theodicy" mean in this context?**
2. The central theme of Habakkuk is a theodicy, which refers to the vindication of God's justice, power, and love in a world filled with apparent injustice and evil. The book explores the struggle of understanding how a just God can allow the existence and even the rise of wickedness. Habakkuk grapples with God's use of the more wicked Babylonians to punish Judah, which appears to contradict God's nature.
3. **What are Habakkuk's two main complaints, and how does God respond to them?**
4. Habakkuk's first complaint (Habakkuk 1:2-4) is that God allows violence, injustice, and evil to persist without intervening. God responds (Habakkuk 1:5-11) by revealing that He will punish Judah through the Babylonians. Habakkuk's second complaint (Habakkuk 1:12-17) is that God is using the more wicked Babylonians to punish Judah, who are less wicked. He questions how a holy God can use a cruel and barbarous nation against His covenant people. God's answer to the second complaint is in Habakkuk 2:2-4, where it is revealed that the vision is for an appointed time, and while it may linger, it will come. Ultimately, the righteous will live by their faithfulness (emunah).
5. **What is the significance of Habakkuk 2:4, and how has this verse been interpreted in both Jewish and Christian traditions?**
6. Habakkuk 2:4, "the righteous will live by his faithfulness," is considered a crucial verse. In early Jewish thought, it emphasizes the importance of persisting in one's faith with constancy and firmness despite hardships. Rabbi Simlai considered it the bottom line of the Hebrew Bible. Martin Luther and the reformers picked this verse as the basis for the idea that "the just shall live by faith," which became a cornerstone of the Reformation, as found multiple times in the New Testament. It signifies the concept of justification by faith rather than by works. Though, it is crucial to recognize that the context in Habakkuk does not discuss justification by faith, but emphasizes emunah.

7. **What is "emunah," and how is it related to the message of Habakkuk?**
8. "Emunah" is a Hebrew word that translates to faithfulness, firmness, or steadiness. It appears in the Old Testament story where Moses' arms remained firm or "emunah" during battle. In the context of Habakkuk, "emunah" is an inner resolve, unwavering loyalty to God's revelation, that enables the righteous to live and carry on in difficult times. It represents the inner strength and confidence of the soul to endure trials and hardship. This inner firmness gives a person strength and constancy of soul.
9. **What are the "five woes" in Habakkuk 2, and who are they addressed to?**
10. The "five woes" in Habakkuk 2 (verses 6-20) are a catalog of sins and judgments against the nation of Babylon. They describe the wickedness of Babylon including the piling up of stolen goods, the building of a realm with unjust gain, building cities with bloodshed, giving drink to neighbors in order to humiliate them, and idolatry. These woes highlight the injustice and moral bankruptcy of the Babylonian empire.
11. **What is the significance of Habakkuk chapter 3, and what are some of its key themes?**
12. Chapter 3 of Habakkuk is a magnificent theophany, a revelation of God's power and glory. It describes God coming with power and might, recalling His past redemptive acts, like the parting of the Red Sea. The chapter is poetic and psalm-like in style, emphasizing God's sovereignty and justice. It serves as a powerful reminder of God's nature and His ultimate control over history, which Habakkuk takes to heart, finding strength in the Lord.
13. **What is the Habakkuk Commentary found among the Dead Sea Scrolls, and how does it approach the text of Habakkuk?**
14. The Habakkuk Commentary is an example of an early commentary on the Hebrew Bible found at Qumran. It uses the "Midrash Pesher" method, which involves quoting a verse of Habakkuk and then giving its "Pesher," or explanation, by applying it to the contemporary events and issues of the writer's time, often relating to the Romans. This commentary excludes Chapter 3 of Habakkuk, and provides an example of biblical interpretation from before the time of Jesus.

- 15. How does the Book of Habakkuk ultimately address the question of theodicy, and what is its message for those facing injustice and hardship?**
16. Habakkuk ultimately doesn't provide a complete, rational answer to the question of theodicy but leads to a relationship with God. The book does not promise an easy life, but rather the inner peace, steadfastness, and strength needed to endure and carry on despite difficulties and apparent injustice. The central message is to maintain an unwavering loyalty to God, to faithfully live through trials, knowing that God is sovereign, and a source of strength. Even in the face of an agricultural disaster or other hardships, one can still rejoice in the Lord, the God of their salvation.