

Tension and Resolution in Habakkuk: Linguistic Steps from Confusion to Healing

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1. Introduction

The enigmatic book of Habakkuk continues to challenge readers with its many puzzling aspects.¹⁾ One of the most notable is the closing theophany of ch. 3, which many have argued was not an original part of the book.²⁾ Interpreters are also faced with the challenge of discovering the purpose of the diverse literary forms and genres gathered together within the book.³⁾

This study will present a new reading of Habakkuk as a series of steps from disorientation towards healing by using discourse analysis⁴⁾ within the framework of functional grammar.

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- 1) For a brief survey of some of these issues, see Robert D. Haak, *Habakkuk*, VTSup 44 (Leiden: Brill, 1992), 107-108.
- 2) Grace Ko, *Theodicy in Habakkuk*, PBM (Milton Keynes, UK: Paternoster, 2014), 16-20; James Nogalski, *The Book of the Twelve: Micah-Malachi*, SHBC (Macon, GA: Smyth & Helwys, 2011), 163-64; Francis I. Andersen, *Habakkuk: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, AB 25 (New York: Doubleday, 2001), 259-60; J. J. M. Roberts, *Nahum, Habakkuk, and Zephaniah*, OTL (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 1991), 148-49.
- 3) Michael H. Floyd, *Minor Prophets: Part 2*, FOTL 22 (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2000), 85-86; Walter Dietrich, *Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah*, IECOT, Peter Altmann, trans. (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 2016), 91-94.

It will argue that the configurations of different linguistic⁵⁾ variables manifest different kinds of clashes and disharmony before finally aligning in ch. 3. Linguistic interpretation, then, will be shown to contribute a reading strategy that offers large-scale structural insights above and beyond what is possible with traditional exegetical and critical methods.

2. Methodology⁶⁾

Functional approaches to grammar seek to explain how different meanings are expressed through certain lexical and grammatical choices, focusing on the level of the whole message

4) The term “discourse analysis” generally refers to textual analysis at the level above the clause. Stanley E. Porter, *Idioms of the Greek New Testament*, Biblical Languages: Greek 2, 2nd ed. (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1994), 298. Porter states, “The fundamental starting point of discourse analysis is that language is not used in isolated words or even sentences, but occurs in larger units called discourses.” Topics covered in general works on discourse analysis often include ways that texts express various kinds of organization, structure, and emphasis. See the list given in Stanley E. Porter and Andrew W. Pitts, “New Testament Greek Language and Linguistics in Recent Research,” *CurBR* 6 (2008), 214-55 (235-36).

5) For discussion of the differentiation between “linguistic” criticism proper and the use of languages in conventional exegetical methods, see Stanley E. Porter, “Studying Ancient Languages from a Modern Linguistic Perspective: Essential Terms and Terminology,” *Filologia Neotestamentaria* 2 (1989), 147-72. Especially pertinent is his discussion of modern linguistics as being characterized by investigative methods that are empirical, systematic, synchronic, and descriptive (151-55). Also relevant is his list of common mischaracterizations of “linguistics.” For example, it cannot be equated with polyglotism, traditional grammar, etymologies, or competency in translation (159-68). See also the list of principles found in Stanley E. Porter, “Linguistic Criticism,” *Dictionary of Biblical Criticism and Interpretation*, ed. Stanley E. Porter (New York: Routledge, 2007), 199-202 (199-200).

6) Portions of this section were drawn from David J. Fuller, *A Discourse Analysis of Habakkuk*, SSN 72 (Leiden: Brill, 2020), 18-42.

rather than individual words. Different categories of meanings, or social functions, will have different grammatical actualizations.⁷⁾ M. Halliday argues that these social functions are expressed in discourses through the three variables of field, tenor, and mode.⁸⁾ Corresponding to these three variables at the clause level are three layers of meaning: textual meanings relate to the ways that language creates connections with its larger environment, interpersonal meanings involve the assumption and projection of social roles, and ideational meanings involve the reality being described.⁹⁾ This study will leverage the results of a detailed discourse analysis of Habakkuk to compare the data gathered from these different variables for the series of speeches by YHWH and the prophet throughout the book. Above and beyond the mere collection of data, it will seek to use this linguistic data to better understand how Habakkuk functions as literature, drawing from the discipline

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- 7) Christopher S. Butler, *Structure and Function: A Guide to Three Major Structural-Functional Theories: Part 2: From Clause to Discourse and Beyond*, SLCS 64 (Philadelphia: John Benjamins, 2003), 4. Butler states, “If linguistics, under the functionalist view, is seriously concerned to explicate language as communication, then it must take as its object of study the whole complex of multileveled patterning which constitutes a language. Furthermore, it must relate that complex of patterns to their use in communicative activities.” He proceeds to contrast this understanding of functionalism with linguistic formalism (as exemplified by Chomsky) by noting that formalism is far more interested in the project of universal grammar than dealing with “meaning.”
- 8) M. A. K. Halliday and Christine Matthiessen, *Halliday’s Introduction to Functional Grammar*, 4th ed. (London/New York: Routledge, 2014), 32–42. Halliday and Matthiessen’s key definitions are as follows: field is “what’s going on in the situation: (i) the nature of the social and semiotic activity; and (ii) the domain of experience this activity relates to (the ‘subject matter’ or ‘topic’)” (33); tenor is “who is taking part in the situation: (i) the roles played by those taking part in the socio-semiotic activity [...] (ii) the values that the interactants imbue the domain with (either neutral or loaded, positively or negatively)” (33); and mode is “what role is being played by language and other semiotic systems in the situation” (33).
- 9) Halliday and Matthiessen, *Halliday’s Introduction*, 30–31.

of Stylistics.¹⁰⁾

Specifically, each of these layers of meaning at the clause level has a related set of grammatical actualizations. This study will focus on the relationships between a few of these variables to comprehensively track their development throughout the book, building on the groundwork laid in Fuller, *A Discourse Analysis of Habakkuk*.¹¹⁾ Within the textual meanings this study will focus on two devices that create cohesion.¹²⁾ Multiple references to the same entities or related entities within a group create what Halliday calls identity and similarity chains.¹³⁾ Repeated-occurrences of members of different chains in the same clauses create chain interaction.¹⁴⁾ The entities throughout a

10) Michael Toolan, *Language in Literature: An Introduction to Stylistics* (London: Routledge, 2013), viii. Toolan states, “Stylistics [...] persists in the attempt to understand technique, or the craft of writing” (ix). While the utilization of systemic linguistic analysis in the process of textual interpretation cannot eliminate (or even lessen) the need for a human subject to process and reflect on the implications of the data, the application of comprehensive methods to gather information regarding crucial linguistic variables is surely a step forward from the often haphazard use of biblical languages in traditional exegesis in terms of both rigor and transparency regarding the information that the interpreter is working from. Regarding this point, Toolan states “So one of the crucial things attempted by Stylistics is to put the discussion of textual effects and techniques on a public, shared, footing—a footing as shared and established and inspectable as is available to informed language-users” (ix).

11) To see the clause divisions (based on the groupings of subjects and predicates in the Hebrew text) and translation choices made, as well as the data charts underlying the present analysis, see Fuller, *Discourse Analysis*, 309-46.

12) M. Halliday and Ruqaiya Hasan, *Cohesion in English* (London: Longman, 1976), 299. Halliday and Hasan define cohesion as, “The concept of a textual or text-forming function in the semantic system provides the most general answer to the question of what cohesion means [...] Cohesion expresses the continuity that exists between one part of the text and another [...] The continuity that is provided by cohesion consists, in the most general terms, in expressing at each stage in the discourse the points of contact with what has gone before.”

13) M. A. K. Halliday and Ruqaiya Hasan, *Language, Context, and Text: Aspects of Language in a Social-Semiotic Perspective* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), 84.

discourse that participate in chain interaction are most significant for the overall coherence of that discourse.¹⁵⁾

Within the interpersonal meanings this study will simply focus on the grammatical subjects of each clause, as these are the key elements which a speaker puts forward for his or her listener(s) to respond to.¹⁶⁾ Finally, within the ideational meanings this study will focus on transitivity, or clauses in which there is both a subject and direct object,¹⁷⁾ as these are particularly determinative for succinctly characterizing the power relations among the entities under discussion. It will also note the different types of verbs (characterized as “process types”)¹⁸⁾ associated with each participant, since the range of process types associated with each entity informs the reader about how “dynamic” that entity is.¹⁹⁾

The analysis below will concisely list and compare these variables for each separate speech within Habakkuk, noting continuities and discontinuities between the most significant elements within each variable. The different types of continuity and discontinuity across these categories will then be compared throughout the six key speeches that comprise the book. The methodological thesis of this study is that the relationships between these variables contribute to creating linguistic tension and resolution that contributes to the contours of the dialogue of the book.

14) Halliday and Hasan, *Language, Context*, 91.

15) Ruqaiya Hasan, “Coherence and Cohesive Harmony,” *Understanding Reading Comprehension*, ed. James Flood (Newark, DA: International Reading Association, 1984) 181-219 (216).

16) Halliday and Matthiessen, *Halliday’s Introduction*, 139.

17) Toolan, *Language*, 78-81.

18) Toolan, *Language*, 77. Toolan lists “material,” “mental,” “verbal,” “relational,” “behavioural,” and “existential” processes.

19) Toolan, *Language*, 87-90.

3. Analysis

3.1. Habakkuk 1:2-4

The complaint from the prophet in 1:2-4 is loaded with references to various kinds of evil things or people, the general class of ills which Habakkuk was objecting to. References to evil things or people occur in 53.5% of the clauses comprising Hab 1:2-4.²⁰ YHWH is referenced in 46% of the clauses making up 1:2-4. Also present is another similarity chain that could be grouped under the heading of “beneficent institutions” (such as “law” and “justice” in 1:4) collectively found in 30.5% of the clauses in this section. Habakkuk’s first-person prophetic personality is present in 30.5% of the clauses in 1:2-4.

Chain interaction takes place between the chains referencing YHWH and the prophet in three clauses. The YHWH chain also interacts with the evil things chain in three clauses. The prophet chain interacts with the evil things chain as well in three clauses.

The subjects Habakkuk puts forward for consideration include YHWH (30% of the clauses), evil forces (30% of the clauses), benevolent institutions (23% of the clauses), and himself (15% of the clauses). This indicates his discourse is equally concerned with the (in)action of YHWH and the rise of evil, with the concerns of the demise of good in society trailing behind and himself coming last.

Regarding transitivity, YHWH acts upon the prophet in one

20) The present study thus differs from translations of רִיב וּמִדּוֹן in 1:3 (“strife and contention” in NRSV) that interpret this word pair as legal terminology referring to Habakkuk’s own complaint rather than societal breakdown itself (such as in Andersen, *Habakkuk*, 116-18). For further discussion, see Dietrich, *Nahum*, 109.

clause (1:3, forcing him to see evil) while the evil things act upon the benevolent institutions in one clause (1:4, surrounding them). Meanwhile, the evil things are depicted as being more dynamic, as they engage in material, relational, and existential processes, whereas YHWH only participates in material and behavioural processes.

When cohesive references and the clausal subjects are compared, the evil things are the most frequently referenced in a generic sense, but they are equally as discussed as YHWH. Meanwhile, the prophet and beneficent institutions are generically referenced the same amount, but the beneficent institutions are explicitly discussed more than the prophet. Meanwhile, in the chain interaction, YHWH, the prophet, and the evil things all interact with each other in three clauses each, but the benevolent institutions are completely absent. There is a correspondence between the transitivity data and the clausal subjects, as YHWH and the evil things both exercise power over another entity in one clause each and are the subjects of an equal number of clauses, but the transitivity clashes with the cohesion data, as there are more overall references to the evil things than YHWH, and the prophet experiences chain interaction with them both but himself is only a direct object and never acts upon another participant. Meanwhile, the evil things are more dynamic than YHWH, which matches with the cohesion data but clashes with the clausal subjects and transitivity.

To concisely summarize the tension in this pericope by focusing on the most significant elements in each category, the evil things are referenced the most overall, although they are tied for chain interaction with YHWH and the prophet. The evil things are also tied for the most clausal subjects with YHWH and they act upon another entity the same amount of times as YHWH, although they are the participant in a broader number

of process types than YHWH. Thus, the key outliers are the sheer number of references to the evil things, along with the dynamism of the evil things.²¹⁾ This creates an effect of occurrences of evil things bombarding the reader, even though they are objectively not any more powerful or significant than YHWH in this pericope.

3.2. Habakkuk 1:5-11

Moving to YHWH's first speech in 1:5-11, the most frequently referenced participant is the Chaldean, who occurs in 61.5% of the clauses. Directly behind him are the Judean recipients of the oracle (23%), followed by the horsemen (15%), animals used for comparison with the Chaldean's horses' speed and mocked royal institutions (11.5% each), and finally YHWH, horses and work (7.5% each).

Nearly all of the chain interaction in 1:5-11 surrounds the mighty and terrifying Chaldean, who interacts with his horsemen, mocked royal institutions, and dirt (which he captures). The only other chain interaction is between the Chaldean's horses and the comparison animals that help explicate their speed.

The most frequently occurring subject is the Chaldean (38% of the clauses), with the second most frequent subject being the second person addressees (19%). This indicates that a great deal of this discourse has to do with informing the audience about the Chaldeans and ordering them to be attentive. There are a handful of other minor subjects: the horsemen (11.5%), YHWH (7.5%), and the horses (7.5%). A couple other subjects get only one clause (3.5%) each: the work, justice and authority,

21) Similarly, Renz observes, "Injustice appears to pervade the whole of society [...] The focus is not on the cause of violence but on its effect." Thomas Renz, *The Books of Nahum, Habakkuk, and Zephaniah*, NICOT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2021), 229.

princes, and the thrust of the horsemen.

In the transitivity structure, the Chaldean acts on earth twice (1:10) and on captives once (1:9), while YHWH acts on a “work” once (1:5) and on the Chaldean once (1:6). The Chaldean is by far the most dynamic participant, acting in material, behavioral and relational clauses. Meanwhile, YHWH only acts in material clauses, making him less dynamic than even the recipients.

In comparing these variables, it is interesting to note that while the Chaldean is referenced the most and has the most chain interaction, the second most referenced participant, the Judeans, have no chain interaction. While the cohesive references and clausal subjects are more or less congruent for the most significant entities, it is interesting to note the divergence in the transitivity data. YHWH exercises power over other entities twice as compared to three times for the Chaldean. This similarity between YHWH and the Chaldean is striking given that YHWH is vastly less visible than the Chaldean in the cohesive references and clausal subjects and is far less dynamic in his range of process types. Most importantly, YHWH exercises power over the Chaldean himself. This is the central “tension” of 1:5-11: the cohesion, clausal subjects, and dynamism are dominated by the Chaldean, but in the transitivity, YHWH maintains power over the Chaldean.²²⁾

3.3. Habakkuk 1:12-17

In the prophet’s second speech in 1:12-17, the Chaldean is referenced in 65% of the clauses. References to various kinds of fishing tools (the net, dragnet, and hook) occur in 40% of

22) Floyd states, “Yahweh should be seen as the instigator of the new world order being established by the Babylonians, even if the effect of their rule on subject peoples makes their assumption of this imperial role morally ambiguous.” Floyd, *Minor Prophets*, 107.

the clauses in this section. YHWH is referenced in 35% of the clauses. References in people in general are found in 25% of the clauses. Evil things or people are mentioned in 20% of the clauses in this section. Finally, two much smaller chains can be identified. The “luxuries” of the Chaldean, comprising his “portion” and his food are clearly connected (occurring in 10% of the clauses).

Most of the chain interaction in this section is driven by the Chaldean, who interacts with YHWH (2 clauses), humanity (3 clauses), his fishing tools (7 clauses), and his luxuries (2 clauses). Additionally, YHWH interacts with the evil things (3 clauses) and the Chaldean (2 clauses). The fishing tools also interact with humanity in 3 clauses.

Regarding the subjects of these clauses, the Chaldean is the subject of 45%, while YHWH is the subject of 35%. The luxuries of the Chaldean are the subjects of 10%, and the first common plural “petitioners” of the oracle and (YHWH’s) eyes are 5% each. This indicates that Habakkuk was principally concerned with the Chaldean and YHWH (with the Chaldean occurring in a slightly higher percentage of the clauses than YHWH), while the amount of clauses he devotes to the other entities are much lower.

In the transitivity of 1:12-17, the Chaldean acts upon humanity (3 clauses, 1:15) and his net (1 clause, 1:17). Meanwhile, YHWH controls the Chaldean (2 clauses, 1:12) and humanity (1 clause, 1:14) as well. The Chaldean and YHWH have equal dynamism, as both are the participants in three different process types.

Looking at all these variables together, it is apparent in the cohesive references and the clausal subjects that the most significant participant is the Chaldean. The next most commonly referenced entity is the fishing tools, although they are never a subject, which is also the case for humanity and evil things.

The second most common clausal subject is YHWH, who has the second most amount of chain interaction after the Chaldean. The major tension in this section comes again from the transitivity. While the Chaldean acts upon other entities in 4 clauses (more than YHWH), it is notable that YHWH exercises power over not just the Chaldean but humanity as well. This attribute of YHWH controlling both the Chaldean and the major victim of the Chaldean's aggression,²³⁾ along with the equal dynamism of YHWH and the Chaldean, strains against the pre-eminence of the Chaldean in the cohesive and clausal subject arenas.

3.4. Habakkuk 2:2b-6a²⁴⁾

Bracketing for the time being the prophet's narrative aside in 2:1-2a, the divine response in 2:2b-6a is the next turn in the dialogue. The vision is referenced in 42.5% of the clauses in this section and the "proud man" (to be identified with the Chaldean) in 38% of the clauses. The prophet Habakkuk and

23) Of course, at the rhetorical and intertextual levels, this description of YHWH making humanity "like the fish of the sea" (כִּדְגֵי הַיָּם) (1:14, *NRSV*) is meant to be ironic rather than a sincere acknowledgement of YHWH's sovereignty. In other words, even as the linguistic data utilized by the present study would confirm that this pericope describes YHWH's power in an expanded way, other angles of inquiry would nuance the valuative import of this description. Roberts states, "God was treating mankind as having no more value than the fish of the sea or the creeping things that have no ruler [...] it simply underscores the lack of value human existence has to a God who would use the Babylonian as his agent." Roberts, *Nabum*, 104. Nogalski demonstrates how this allusion to Gen 1:26 additionally functions as a critique of current Judahite leadership. Nogalski, *Micah-Malachi*, 176.

24) For an alternative section division that sees 2:5 as initiating a new unit, see Inchol Yang, "A Text Critical Analysis of the First Taunt Song in Habakkuk 2:5-8," *Canon & Culture* 12 (2018), 45-75.

humanity as a general class are both referenced in 14% of the clauses. Three entities occur in 9.5% of the clauses each: the song/sayings, the final appointed time, and the afterlife.

Regarding chain interaction, the vision interacts with the prophet (2 clauses) and the end time (2 clauses). Meanwhile, the proud man interacts with the afterlife (2 clauses) and humanity (3 clauses).

In the clausal subjects, the vision is the subject in 28.5% of the clauses, followed closely by the proud man (23.5%). The prophet is the next frequent subject (14%), followed by the life/throat of the proud man (9.5%), and the reading one, the righteous, the wine, the nations, and the taunt-song each are 4.5% each.

In the transitivity, the prophet acts upon the vision (1 clause, 2:2). The Chaldean controls the nations (2 clauses, 2:5), but at the same time wine acts upon the Chaldean (1 clause, 2:5).²⁵⁾ Finally, the nations raise a taunt-song (1 clause, 2:6). Regarding the process types of different participants, the Chaldean and vision are the most dynamic (three process types each), while the prophet acts in two process types, and the nations only

25) Kenneth L. Barker and Waylon Bailey, *Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah*, NAC 20 (Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 1999), 318, 327; O. Palmer Robertson, *The Books of Nahum, Habakkuk, and Zephaniah*, NICOT (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1990), 174, 184; John Goldingay and Pamela J. Scalise, *Minor Prophets II*, NIBCOT (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2009), 76; G. Michael O'Neal, *Interpreting Habakkuk as Scripture: An Application of the Canonical Approach of Brevard S. Childs*, StBibLit 9 (New York: Peter Lang, 2007), 42, 103-104. Goldingay and Scalise (76) state, "There is no problem with the Heb. for **wine betrays him**, though it is a surprising comment in the context. [...] The way addiction to alcohol can turn a person into someone who betrays their relationships provides an image for the way Babylon's appetite for power turns it into a people that is faithless in relation to Yahweh" [bold in original]. Other renderings tend to emend "wine" (with the article, יַיִן) to "wealth" (הוֹן) (Roberts, *Nahum*, 112) or adopt a much shorter clause division with no direct object (Andersen, *Habakkuk*, 198, 217, "wine is treacherous").

participate in one.

The cohesion and clausal subjects all feature the vision, proud man, and prophet in declining order of prominence. The transitivity analysis deviates from this pattern, however. The prophet's acting upon the vision (writing it) is surprising given the vision's greater visibility in the first two categories. The wine acting upon the Chaldean is particularly notable given that it does not appear at all in the cohesion analysis and is one of the least frequently occurring clausal subjects,²⁶⁾ whereas the Chaldean is the most significant entity in the transitivity and is tied for first in dynamism.

3.5. Habakkuk 2:6b-20

Habakkuk 2:6b-20 is embedded within YHWH's speech that was previously examined, as YHWH quotes the song that the nations will raise against the Chaldean (referred to as the evildoer).

The evildoer is referenced in 66% of the clauses in 2:6.3-2:20.2, which is far more than any other participant. The next frequently referenced entity is the idol, appearing in 19% of the clauses in the woe oracles. After it comes YHWH and the peoples/nations, which each occur in 13.5% of the clauses in this section. Closely behind them, occurring in 11% of the clauses is the earth. Blood and violence occur in 8% of the clauses. A final grouping of pairs of elements that are mostly restricted to one oracle each occupy 5.5% of the clauses in this section individually: assets of the hoarder, creditors/terrifying ones, house of evildoer, city/town of evildoer, things people labor for, neighbor, shame, glory (of evildoer), and descriptors of idols.

26) O'Neal observes this surprising twist, stating "Irony is present in stating that wine, which the oppressor has consumed heartily, will eventually deceive him." O'Neal, *Habakkuk*, 103-104.

Most of the chain interaction does relate again to the Chaldean: he interacts with his enemies, assets, his house, the nations, his city and its qualities, neighbor, shame, glory, and violence. Other than some minor interactions that are specific to individual oracles, the earth interacts with both YHWH and violence.

The most frequently occurring subject is the evildoer, occupying 7 clauses (25%). Next, both the nations/peoples and the idol are the subjects of 3 clauses (10.5%) each. Following these participants, the idol-maker, the building materials (stone and beam), the creditors/terrifying ones, and violence/devastation have 2 clauses (7%) each. Finally, a number of subjects only occur in 1 clause (3.5%) each: life of the evildoer, earth, “it,” cup, disgrace, breath, and YHWH.

In the transitivity analysis, the Chaldean acts upon the nations once (2:8) and builds his city (2:12, 1 clause). The nations loot the Chaldean (2:8, 1 clause). Violence and devastation also act upon the Chaldean (2:17). Finally, the idol-maker acts upon the idol (2:18). The Chaldean is the most dynamic participant, functioning in material, mental, and relational processes, while the idol-maker and the idol are the only other participants that occur with more than one process type (two each).

While the Chaldean is clearly the most prominent element in the cohesion analysis, clausal subjects, and dynamism, the transitivity analysis challenges this configuration. While the Chaldean does exercise power over the nations and his city, he is also acted upon. He is acted upon by the nations (2:8), which are drastically less prominent in the cohesion analysis and somewhat less prominent as clausal subjects.²⁷⁾ He is also

27) Roberts describes this as “poetic justice,” and notes the remaining questions of (a) whether this punishment was YHWH’s direct intervention or a natural feature of the universe and (b) whether these nations had previously been defeated by Babylon or not. Roberts, *Nahum*, 120. Andersen notes the open status of

acted upon by violence and devastation (2:17),²⁸ which are even more marginal in the discourse than the nations.

3.6. Habakkuk 3:2-19a

In the prophet's final hymn in ch. 3, YHWH is referenced in 59% of the clauses. References to the prophet occur in 23%, and types of water are in 12.5%. A number of similarity chains have participants referenced in 6% of the clauses: the earth, YHWH's anger, the weapons of YHWH, the warriors of the wicked leader, and agricultural plants. Occurring in 4.5% of the clauses are mountains and Habakkuk's body parts. Several more chains occur in 3% of the clauses in this section: YHWH's horses, the nations, the work of YHWH, the wicked leader, and Habakkuk's audience; places YHWH comes from, YHWH's glory, places filled with YHWH's glory, diseases coming from YHWH, heights that are humbled, and dwellings.

To encapsulate the chain interaction in Hab 3, the YHWH chain interacts with the prophet, earth, YHWH's work, the nations, YHWH's horses, wicked leader, YHWH's places, facets of YHWH's glory, diseases, YHWH's anger, water, YHWH's

the latter question as well. Andersen, *Habakkuk*, 237. Robertson observes that Babylon is culpable for its mistreatment of all of creation, not just humanity. Robertson, *Nahum*, 190.

- 28) Thomas notes that the same words for "violence" (הָרָצָה) and "devastation" (שָׂרַף) occurred back in Hab 1:3, where they referred to Judah's sins which YHWH punished by using Babylon. He states, "This wordplay reveals that Babylon's various sins come back upon them." Heath A. Thomas, *Habakkuk*, THOTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2018), 130. Roberts describes the background of Babylon's exploitation of Lebanon and connects this to Babylon's guilt for failing to properly steward the natural world. Roberts, *Nahum*, 125. Robertson uniquely reads this image as pointing to "towering cedars crashing down on the heads of those who had presumed to chop them down [...]". Robertson, *Nahum*, 205.

weapons, and wicked warriors. The prophet interacts with YHWH, the wicked warriors and his own body parts.

The most frequently occurring clausal subject throughout this discourse is YHWH, who is the subject of 33% of the clauses. In second place by a considerable margin is the prophet, who is the subject of 12.5%. Next are the mountains, the subjects of 4.5%, and the deep, the subject of 2 clauses (3%). Finally, a large number of entities are the subjects of just 1.5% each: splendor of YHWH, praise of YHWH, brightness, rays, veiling, pestilence, plague, hills, ways of YHWH, curtains of Midian, anger of YHWH, wrath of YHWH, bow of YHWH, rods, waters, sun and moon, arrows of YHWH, spear of YHWH, warriors, exaltation of warriors, belly of prophet, lips of prophet, rottenness, fig tree, fruit, work, field, flock, and herd.

In the transitivity, YHWH acts on the earth (3 clauses, 3:6, 9, 12), the nations (2 clauses, 3:6, 12), his work (3:2), the head of the wicked (3:13), the heads of the warriors (3:14), the prophet's feet (3:19), and the prophet (3:19). YHWH's glory acts on heaven and earth (3:3). Water acts on its voice and its hand (3:10). Agricultural plants act on food (3:17). YHWH acts in a wide range of process types: material, verbal, mental, behavioral, and relational. The next most dynamic participant is the prophet, who acts in behavioral, material, and mental processes.

The most striking feature of the above linguistic data about Habakkuk 3 is the sheer alignment and congruence of the main analytical categories. The most frequently referenced entities are YHWH and the prophet, and they are both the only entities to have chain interaction with multiple other participants. They are also the most prominent clausal subjects. This pattern of YHWH being the most significant element in each category continues in the transitivity, where he exercises power over a multitude of other entities,²⁹⁾ as well as the dynamism.

4. Synthesis

The three speeches in Habakkuk 1 create an intriguing trajectory of linguistic tensions. In the prophet's lament in 1:2-4, the evil things and YHWH are equally visible as clausal subjects and agents exercising power over other entities (acting in separate spheres), but the evil things are referenced more overall and are more dynamic. An even greater clash is apparent in the relationship between the Chaldean and YHWH in YHWH's oracle in 1:5-11, as the Chaldean has the most cohesive references and occurrences as a clausal subject as well the greatest dynamism, while YHWH is one of the least prominent entities in these areas. However, in the transitivity YHWH acts upon the Chaldean, which is striking given YHWH's marginalization in these other areas (and the lack of chain interaction between YHWH and the Chaldean). The speech of 1:12-17 reduces the tension somewhat by depicting YHWH as more prominent in the cohesive references and clausal subjects than in 1:5-11, although the Chaldean still leads these categories. However, in the transitivity analysis YHWH now exercises power over both the Chaldean and the Chaldean's main victim, humanity, which

29) This analysis would thus differ from the conclusions of Floyd who reads 3:2-19a as a "Prophetic Complaint" due to his interpretation of the theophany report in 3:3-15 being a response to the prophet's request for YHWH to work and be merciful in 3:2. Floyd, *Minor Prophets*, 155. It would also challenge the general consensus that the book overall functions as a "complaint" (Ko, *Theodicy*, 28), or that ch. 3 is "framed by a lament" due to 3:2, 16-19a (Ko, *Theodicy*, 99). The linguistic patterns discovered in the present study would instead support the conclusions of Dietrich states, "The difficult questions that arose previously [ch. 1] [...] receive an answer in this prayer: God came in power before all ages, and God will come in power again." Dietrich, *Nahum*, 164. Nogalski likewise argues that 3:2 (contra Floyd) expresses hope for the survival of the nation, that the contents of 3:3-15 are entirely about YHWH's battle against Babylon, and that Habakkuk consequently vows to wait faithfully for deliverance (3:16-19). Nogalski, *Micah-Malachi*, 167.

is a notable progression from simply controlling the Chaldean in 1:5-11. YHWH and the Chaldean now experience chain interaction and have equal dynamism, which also brings them closer together.

A shift of focus takes place in 2:2b-6a, where the cohesion and clausal subjects feature the vision, Chaldean, and prophet. However, the transitivity analysis deviates from this pattern as wine, a participant absent from the cohesion analysis and only a clausal subject once, acts upon the Chaldean. This theme of the Chaldean being prominent element but also vulnerable continues in the woe oracles of 2:6b-20, where the Chaldean is the most significant entity in the cohesion and clausal subjects, but is acted upon by three other parties in the transitivity. Finally, in ch. 3 the tension is resolved as YHWH is dramatically the most prominent element in the cohesion, clausal subjects, transitivity, and dynamism.

Two features of the patterns that emerged in the data used in this study are apparent: that transitivity is often the variable that is the outlier, and that the overlap it creates between entities can be either dependent or independent of the relationships created in the chain interaction. The prophet's initial speech in 1:2-4 is an exception to this, as here YHWH and the evil things do have chain interaction and the outlier variables are the cohesive references and dynamism. However, YHWH's transitivity is the outlier in 1:5-11 and 1:12-17, although chain interaction between YHWH and the Chaldean gives the latter less tension than the former. The pericopae of ch. 2 follow a similar pattern as the second and third pericopae of ch. 1: in 2:2b-6a the Chaldean is acted upon by wine, an entity with whom he never experiences chain interaction (and which never appears in the cohesion references), while in the woe oracles of 2:6b-20 the parties that act upon the Chaldean also experience chain interaction with him (and he acts upon the nations once).

This demonstrates that chs. 1 and 2 each contain a small lessening of tension before the final resolution in ch. 3.

5. Conclusion

The analysis of this study drew upon quantifiable data to demonstrate the existence of patterns of tension and minor release before the significant resolution in the final speech of the book. Throughout the latter parts of ch. 1 and the whole of ch. 2, the Chaldean is the linguistically most prominent element in many ways, yet he is acted upon by YHWH, wine, and the nations and violence, respectively. Finally, in the prophet's final hymn there is a convergence of all the variables as YHWH becomes the most significant element in all of them. While this linguistic level meaning itself is not exhaustive and operates in concert with the surface significance of the individual clauses and the various intertextual resonances throughout, it nonetheless creates an important effect of tension and resolution that complements the book's message of the healing effect of reflection on YHWH's sovereignty amid the traumatic destabilization of society.

<Keywords>

Habakkuk, linguistics, Hebrew, discourse analysis, literary criticism

<주요어>

하박국, 언어학, 히브리어, 담론분석, 문학비평

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<Abstract>

**Tension and Resolution in Habakkuk:
Linguistic Steps from Confusion to Healing**

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The enigmatic book of Habakkuk continues to challenge readers with its many puzzling aspects. One of the most notable is the closing theophany of chapter 3, which many have argued was not an original part of the book. Interpreters are also faced with the challenge of discovering the purpose of the diverse literary forms and genres gathered together within the book. This study will present a new reading of Habakkuk as a series of steps from disorientation towards healing by using discourse analysis within the framework of functional grammar. It will argue that the configurations of different linguistic variables manifest different kinds of clashes and disharmony before finally aligning in ch. 3. Linguistic interpretation, then, will be shown to contribute reading strategy that offers large-scale structural insights above and beyond what is possible with traditional exegetical and critical methods. While this linguistic level of meaning itself is not exhaustive and operates in concert with the surface significance of the individual clauses and the various intertextual resonances throughout, it nonetheless creates an important effect of tension and resolution that complements the book's message of the healing effect of reflection on YHWH's sovereignty amid the traumatic destabilization of society.

<초록>

하박국서의 긴장과 해결:

혼란에서 치유로의 언어적 단계

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하박국서이라는 불가사의한 책은 많은 난해한 측면으로 독자들에게 계속해서 도전을 주고 있다. 가장 주목할만한 것 중 하나는 많은 사람들이 이 책의 원래 부분이 아니라고 주장해 온 3장의 마지막 신의 현현이다. 해석가들은 책 안에 한데 모인 다양한 문학 형식과 장르의 목적을 발견해야 하는 과제에 직면해 있다. 본 연구는 기능적 문법의 틀 안에서 담화 분석을 통해 방향 감각 상실에서 치유로 이어지는 일련의 단계로서 하박국서의 새로운 독해를 제시하고자 한다. 서로 다른 언어 변수의 구성이 3장에서 최종적으로 정렬되기 전에 서로 다른 종류의 충돌과 부조화를 나타낸다고 주장할 것이다. 그러면 언어 해석은 전통적인 주석 및 비평 방법으로 가능한 것 이상으로 대규모 구조적 통찰력을 제공하는 읽기 전략에 기여하는 것으로 나타날 것이다. 이 언어적 수준의 의미 자체는 완전하지 않고 개별 절의 표면적 의미 및 다양한 텍스트 간 공명과 함께 작동하지만 그럼에도 불구하고 충격적인 사회 불안정 속에서 YHWH의 주권에 대한 성찰의 치유 효과라는 책의 메시지를 보완하는 중요한 긴장과 해결 효과를 생성한다.

