



## HINDS' SIGHT

*The LORD God is my strength, and he will make my feet like **hinds'** feet,  
and he will make me to walk upon mine high places.  
Habakkuk 3:19*

Text

Habakkuk 3:1-19

Topic

Now in sync with God's way of thinking, Habakkuk compares himself to a type of mountain deer, the hind, who is driven higher and higher into the mountains by unrelenting danger

Title

*"Great Hinds Think Alike"*

Introduction

The Sundance Kid looks at Butch Cassidy and asks, tongue-in-cheek, "Think you used enough dynamite there, Butch?"

While they are getting their bearings after the explosion, a second train arrives carrying a six-man team of super-lawmen to pursue Butch and Sundance. They learn that the posse has been paid by Union Pacific head E. H. Harriman and is to remain on their trail until Butch and Sundance are dead.

In the chase, the posse forces the two outlaws higher-and-higher, up into the rugged mountain terrain, until there is no place else to go.

In desperation, Butch suggests they jump into the rushing river below - acknowledging that the fall would probably kill them.

I'm going to leave Butch and Sundance on that ledge. You either know what happens next, or you're going to have to watch the movie.

Their flight up into the mountains, higher-and-higher, pursued by those wanting to see them dead, reminded me, to a certain extent, of the prophet, Habakkuk.

He ends his book by picturing himself as a mountain hind, climbing ever higher in order to evade the danger that is stalking him.

There is, however, a big difference between Habakkuk and Butch and Sundance. Habakkuk's climb takes him to spiritual heights where he can rejoice in the Lord, despite the danger. There's no leap of faith into uncharted waters; only a settled confidence in the God of our salvation.

There is going to be a time, or times, when **you** are the hind. God will give you hind's feet on your high places, from which you may rejoice in Him as you climb, despite the danger or the disaster.

I'll organize my thoughts around two points: #1 If You Look Behind History, You'll See God On The Move, and #2 If You Look Beyond Adversity, You'll See Yourself On The Mountain.

## #1 If You Look Behind History, You'll See God On The Move

(v1-16)

In the classic children's story, *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*, when the characters and creatures sense that something profoundly spiritual is happening behind the scenes, they sometimes say, "Aslan is on the move."

For example, in Narnia it was always winter but never Christmas. Unexpectedly Father Christmas arrived with sleigh bells jingling. At once the children and Mr. and Mrs. Beaver suspected that the White Witch was losing her powers.

"I've come at last," says Father Christmas. "She has kept me out for a long time, but I have got in at last. *Aslan is on the move.*"

Habakkuk lived just prior to the southern kingdom of Judah being overrun, overthrown, and its citizens taken away captive by the Chaldeans who ruled Babylon. God was orchestrating this, after many less invasive warnings, in order to punish and discipline His chosen nation for their heinous sins.

The goal of His discipline was their restoration - first, to relationship with God, and second, to their land.

Habakkuk looked out over the situation and saw behind history that God was on the move for His people.

**Hab 3:1** A prayer of Habakkuk the prophet, on Shigionoth.

This "prayer of Habakkuk" was meant to be sung as a hymn of praise.

- As we work through it you see three pauses, marked by the notation *Selah*, which marks a musical pause or an instrumental interlude.
- Then, at the end, you see the instruction, "To the Chief Musician, with my stringed instruments."

It is in the form of a song known as a "Shigionoth." There is some debate over the exact meaning of this musical term, with some scholars saying it is a lament, and others translating the Hebrew as "a highly emotional poetic form." If you look at it's last verses, you get the idea it is anything but a lament.

Shigionoth is a high form of praise - wild, rhythmic and exuberant. It is praise with pumped-up volume and no limits; it is WOW worship punctuated with exclamation marks!

Do you sing, with exuberance, to the Lord? You say you don't have a good voice; you can't carry a tune in a bucket. Moses was "slow of speech." That didn't stop him from writing and singing a song.

If you can't sing very well, you're like Jim Nabors. As TV's Gomer Pyle, he had a crazy, everyday voice. But when he'd sing, it was like he was another person.

That's how God hears **you**; *sing to the Lord!*

Hab 3:2 O LORD, I have heard Your speech and was afraid; O LORD, revive Your work in the midst of the years! In the midst of the years make it known; In wrath remember mercy.

Habakkuk was understandably "afraid." No one could be anything other than "afraid" at the announcement that Judah was to be taken captive to Babylon.

Habakkuk spoke of Judah, and the captivity, as being "in the midst of the years." He may not have known the exact amount of years the captivity would last, which was seventy, but he was praying that, in the midst of them, God's discipline of His people would give way to mercy, and that He would "revive [His] work" with them.

What work? The work of delivering them, and establishing them as His special nation, through whom the Savior of the world would be born.

In verses three through fifteen Habakkuk remembers the work of God among His people as He was on the move behind their history to deliver them - and especially their deliverance from Egypt in the Exodus, and their conquest of the Promised Land.

Hab 3:3 God came from Teman, The Holy One from Mount Paran. Selah His glory covered the heavens, And the earth was full of His praise.

"Teman" in Hebrew can mean *south* and it is also the name of a city of Edom, the country lying south of Judah. "Mount Paran" is the desert region south of Judah extending to Sinai. God is poetically depicted as coming up from these regions. Habakkuk is recalling God's covenant with Israel, made at Mount Sinai.

Hab 3:4 His brightness was like the light; He had rays flashing from His hand, And there His power was hidden.

God's revelation of Himself to Israel is being compared to the sunrise - coming slowly, then bursting over the horizon, sending its rays upon the earth.

This might be a description of God's appearance to the nation at Mount Sinai. I say "might be," because the language, being poetic, is somewhat vague. We're not 100% certain of some of the references.

The gist of this section, however, is easy to see - God was moving to save and establish His people.

Hab 3:5 Before Him went pestilence, And fever followed at His feet.

God had delivered Israel from Egypt by ten plagues, summarized as "the pestilence" and "fever."

Hab 3:6 He stood and measured the earth; He looked and startled the nations. And the everlasting mountains were scattered, The perpetual hills bowed. His ways are everlasting.

God is pictured as surveying Israel's march to the Promised Land. He Himself would "startle the nations" that stood in their way. Nothing could halt their advance, not even "the...mountains and the hills."

Hab 3:7 I saw the tents of Cushan in affliction; The curtains of the land of Midian trembled.

The nations east and west of the Red Sea, represented by "Cushan" and "Midian," trembled in fear as God's people marched.

Hab 3:8 O LORD, were You displeased with the rivers, Was Your anger against the rivers, Was Your wrath against the sea, That You rode on Your horses, Your chariots of salvation?

God was revealed in mighty and miraculous works as He turned the Nile River into blood, and as He parted the Red Sea and later dried up the Jordan River. These physical obstacles to the deliverance and advance of His people became instead "chariots" of their salvation.

Hab 3:9 Your bow was made quite ready; Oaths were sworn over Your arrows. Selah You divided the earth with rivers.

God is pictured as a bowman, ready to strike-out against the enemies of the Jews. Think Legolas in *The Lord of the Rings* and *Hobbit* movies. He never misses and has an endless supply of arrows.

"Oaths... sworn over [His] arrows" was a reminder that God had made oaths - promises - to protect His people.

He also provided for them; He "divided the earth with rivers" could be a reference to the bringing forth of water from the Rock that Moses struck in the wilderness, providing a gusher of water for both man and beast.

Hab 3:10 The mountains saw You and trembled; The overflowing of the water passed by. The deep uttered its voice, And lifted its hands on high.

All of creation was understood as being in submission to God on behalf of His people.

Hab 3:11 The sun and moon stood still in their habitation; At the light of Your arrows they went, At the shining of Your glittering spear.

God caused the sun and the moon, literally, to "stand still" for Joshua during the conquest of the Promised Land.

The "light of Your arrows" and the "shining of Your glittering spear" are references to the flight of Joshua's enemies as a result of hailstorms, perhaps accompanied by lightnings.

Hab 3:12 You marched through the land in indignation; You trampled the nations in anger.

Verse twelve could be on the book jacket of Joshua; it is exactly what happened, as Joshua led the Jews to conquest.

This summarizes the *past* works of God on Israel's behalf. The next several verses might summarize the *prophesied* works of God on Israel's behalf in overthrowing Babylon:

Hab 3:13 You went forth for the salvation of Your people, For salvation with Your Anointed. You struck the head from the house of the wicked, By laying bare from foundation to neck. Selah

Hab 3:14 You thrust through with his own arrows The head of his villages. They came out like a whirlwind to scatter me; Their rejoicing was like feasting on the poor in secret.

Hab 3:15 You walked through the sea with Your horses, Through the heap of great waters.

"For salvation with Your Anointed" means God would deliver the Jews, and establish them, because it was through them that Jesus Christ was to be born to save mankind from sin.



Notice the mention in verse thirteen, "You struck the head..." Babylon is depicted in Scripture as the head of gold atop the kingdoms of the world.

God would "walk through the sea with [His] horses..." History records that Babylon fell as the Medes and Persians blocked the Euphrates River and came in under the walls.

Hab 3:16 When I heard, my body trembled; My lips quivered at the voice; Rottenness entered my bones; And I trembled in myself, That I might rest in the day of trouble. When he comes up to the people, He will invade them with his troops.

The only possible physical response to God's mighty and miraculous works is trembling; but the only possible spiritual response is resting.

Verse sixteen - it's a mini-sermon on suffering. It draws dramatic, seemingly contradictory, contrasts:

- While in the worst possible trouble, such that you tremble, you can nevertheless rest.
- While being totally overwhelmed, you can confidently declare God will conquer your enemy.

How does that make sense? It makes spiritual sense, in your experience of the Lord.

Let me provide an example. One of the dear sisters here in our fellowship just came through a terrifying medical ordeal. She spoke to me about it on Wednesday night, letting me know that, as it was unfolding, she experienced God's perfect peace. She was at "rest in the day of trouble."

Because of God's mighty works to deliver them, Habakkuk was confident He was on the move, and that in the midst of their trouble, He had a plan He was working out - to His glory, and for their good.

We are not Judah; we are not Jews. We are the church, and God has a plan for us - a plan no less dear to His heart for a people no less loved by Him.

His plan is for us to go into the world and, as we are going, to share the Good News that Jesus is the Savior of all men - especially those who believe.

He has promised that the gates of Hell cannot prevail against His church on earth.

He told us He would return for us, to resurrect us or rapture us, and bring us to the homes He has been preparing for us in Heaven.

But Jesus also promised us that, in the world, we would have tribulation. Some of us more than others; but, for all of us, trouble of various sorts will be our lot in life.

Whatever you or I must endure, we know, do we not, that God is on the move? We tremble, but rest; we are troubled, but our enemies are conquered.

## #2 If You Look Beyond Adversity, You'll See Yourself On The Mountain

(v17-19)

A few years ago, it became popular to hang framed motivational posters in your office. They feature a single word, with an inspiring photo above it, and a clever saying under it.

I prefer what came next: the demotivators. Here are a few of my favorites:

- Believe in Yourself: The rest of us think you're an idiot.
- Mistakes: It could be that the purpose of your life is only to serve as a warning to others.
- Meetings: None of us is as dumb as all of us.

And my all-time favorite, showing a grizzly about to snag a salmon swimming upstream, Ambition: The journey of a thousand miles sometimes ends very, very badly.

The reason the demotivators work is because we all recognize that simply having a positive outlook, captured by a saying, isn't enough in a world whose prince and ruler is the devil.

These last verses in Habakkuk are not wishful, positive motivators. They aren't an attempt to turn lemons into lemonade.

They are a description of the imminent and unrelenting danger you will encounter that drives you to deeper and deeper spiritual devotion.

More than that: They describe how God, if you will co-operate, will give you hind's feet on high places.

They are about Him giving you the strength, the spiritual strength, for the climb - no matter how high up you might be required to ascend.

Things were not going to get better for Habakkuk and those in Judah and Jerusalem.

Hab 3:17 Though the fig tree may not blossom, Nor fruit be on the vines; Though the labor of the olive may fail, And the fields yield no food; Though the flock may be cut off from the fold, And there be no herd in the stalls -

If your life and livelihood depended on agriculture, this would be the worst headline you could read. It meant you would be destitute.

I'm ignorant when it comes to economics. I've been taking notice, however, of a trend lately, of articles warning us of another economic collapse. Headlines like, *Ten Key Events that Preceded the Last Financial Crisis are Happening Again*; and, *How Plunging Oil Prices Could Lead to World War III*.

I sure hope those are exaggerations. But whether or not lower prices at the pumps is a sign we are headed for trouble, I think we all know that trouble is always at the door.

Habakkuk, and the Jews, would, in fact, experience a total collapse. Worse, they would be carried away as captives to the rivers of Babylon, where they would weep.

How should they live?

Hab 3:18 Yet I will rejoice in the LORD, I will joy in the God of my salvation.

Habakkuk speaks of "joy" and "rejoicing." It was because he had joy that he could rejoice; so let's look at his joy first.

He joyed "in the God of my salvation." Salvation, in the Bible, is really three things:

1. It is the moment you receive the Lord by grace, through faith, and are saved.
2. It is the on-going growth of your life with God as He keeps you and completes the work He has begun in you.
3. It is your final arrival into His presence.

Habakkuk had joy realizing and resting in his salvation. Despite circumstances that were awful, nothing and no-one could affect his salvation on any of those three levels.

I would expand this idea of salvation to include God's desire to save the lost. The apostle Peter wrote, "the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation" (Second Peter 3:15). It means God goes to great lengths, even delaying judgment, in order to reach-out to sinners.

If you start with Habakkuk, and read about God's plan to punish and discipline the Jews using the wicked Chaldeans, God can come across as cruel.

Start instead with Israel's history, and see God's deliverance and protection and provision.

Hear Him promise them He would bless them for obedience; but that He, like any good father, must discipline them for their disobedience, when they went beyond His loving boundaries and committed sin.

See Him sending prophets and plagues to His people, to warn them they have strayed into idolatry. See Him warning them for decades, even centuries, before He sends Babylon to conquer and capture them.

Then understand that, even in Babylon, His intention was to restore them to Himself and to their land - which He does!

Our God saves. While His longsuffering waits, wickedness and evil are allowed to continue. But more-and-more men, women, and kids are being saved.

I hope you see, now, how Habakkuk could, in his trouble, "rejoice in the Lord."

I prefer verse nineteen in its more poetic KJV translation:

Hab 3:19 The LORD God is my strength, and he will make my feet like hinds' feet, and he will make me to walk upon mine high places. To the chief singer on my stringed instruments.

One of the first devotional books I read as a brand-new believer was *Hind's Feet on High Places*, by Hannah Hurnard. It's just my observation, and not very scientific, but it seems that Christian authors used to talk more about joy and rejoicing despite trouble, whereas now all the popular books are more about finding personal happiness.

The thing to note about verse nineteen is that God does all the heavy lifting. **He** is "my strength," and "**He will make** my feet like" those of the hind.

It is more of a *promise* than it is a *preparation*. It is what God *can* and *will* do - not what I must find the strength to do.

Hey, I really can't wake up tomorrow and deal with the total collapse of the economy and our society. I can't even handle the aches and pains of my old age in a strong economy.

The Christian life is God living in me, and then through me. I need His strength, His empowering, 100% of the time. Only then can I enjoy the places I find myself as "my high places," as I am in fellowship with Him.

I'm not saying we simply "let go and let God." That isn't what Habakkuk did.

He prayed; he watched; ultimately, he submitted to God.

That is our part, our co-operation. To pursue spiritual disciplines, like prayer; and to submit to God, in every area.

Then my life, and your life, can become His song. Here is what I mean.

The Old Testament prophet Zephaniah wrote, "the LORD your God in your midst, The Mighty One, will save; He will rejoice over you with gladness, He will quiet you with His love, **He will rejoice over you with singing**" (3:17).

Zephaniah was describing Jesus in His Second Coming to the earth, during the Kingdom of Heaven on earth.

But since Jesus is the same yesterday, today, and forever, we can confidently say He rejoices over His followers with singing.

In the New Testament book of Ephesians there's a description of believers as "God's workmanship," where the word "workmanship" is our English word, *poem*.

You and I are God's poems, and it isn't really a stretch to say we are poems set to music.

What would your life sound like if it were set to music?

It should - it can - be Shigionoth!