

Habakkuk 2:6-8

<https://thebiblesays.com/commentary/hab/hab-2/habakkuk-26-8/>

The LORD denounces those who acquire their wealth dishonestly.

God continues to answer Habakkuk's question, how a righteous God could judge the wickedness of Judah through the Babylonians/Chaldeans, who were even more wicked than Judah (Habakkuk 1:12-15). In Habakkuk 2:6-20, God is making clear that He will judge the Chaldeans in due time.

The first half of verse 6 sets the tone for the oracles. It introduces the whole series of oracles in this passage. It tells the reader that the text that follows is a "taunt song," a song intended to mock or ridicule someone. Moreover, the first part of the verse is a negative question that requires a positive answer: *Will not all of these take up a taunt-song against him?*

The subject *all of these* refers to the nations and people groups that Babylonia/Chaldea had conquered. The pronoun *him* is used throughout the song for the Chaldeans/Babylonians, as described in the previous verse (2:5). The term translated as *taunt* is "mashal" in Hebrew. Sometimes, it means "proverb" (Proverbs 1:1) or a discourse/parable (Numbers 23:7). In our passage, the context suggests that "mashal" means *taunt* since it is directed against Babylonia and since it involves ridicule or derision, as in Isaiah 14:4.

Biblical writers often used the *taunt* to draw a comparison to help the reader understand the matter in view more fully (Isaiah 14:4-23). In our passage, the LORD used it to explain the defeat of the Chaldeans and the mockery they would eventually and inevitably suffer at the hands of the nations they had defeated. Simply stated, all the peoples whom the Chaldean King had conquered would *take up a taunt-song against him, even mockery and insinuations against him*.

The term translated *mockery* is "mēlîšâ" in Hebrew and refers to an allusive expression or a proverb. In the book of Proverbs, it is used in parallel with the term "mashal" (Proverbs 1:6). The Hebrew word for *insinuation* is "chîdhâh." It refers to a riddle, an ambiguous saying, the real meaning of which remains a matter of guess. Like the words "mashal" and "mēlîšâ," the word "chîdhâh" also appears in Proverbs 1:6.

"To understand a proverb ('mashal') and a figure ('mēlîšâ'),
The words of the wise and their riddles ('chidhah')."
(Proverbs 1:6)

The second half of verse 6 describes what the conquered peoples would say to the Chaldeans on the day of their judgment: *Woe to him who increases what is not his*. The term translated as *woe* is "hōy" in Hebrew (Amos 6:1). Sometimes, it is translated as "Alas!" (Amos 5:18). For instance, the prophet Jeremiah told King Zedekiah of Judah that people would cry at his funeral, "Alas, lord!" (Jeremiah 34:5; 1 Kings 13:30). The people of Israel and Judah normally used

“hoy” as a mourning shout at funerals since it describes despair and agony (Nahum 3:1). In our passage, the term suggests that Chaldea was on the verge of judgement.

The Chaldeans built their wealth by exploiting other people groups and nations. But *for how long?* The interrogative phrase *how long* indicates the impatience of the people groups as they suffered mistreatment at the hands of the Chaldeans. They could not wait to see the fate of the wicked Chaldeans.

The people of Chaldea were cruel and greedy. They seized goods that did not belong to them and made themselves *rich with loans!* The word translated as *loan* is “‘abtit” in Hebrew. It can be translated as pledge or deposit. It refers to an object that a borrower either stipulates or hands over as a security pledge upon receiving a *loan*. In such a case, the lender has the right to keep the object and use it as needed if the borrower cannot repay the *loan*. In Deuteronomy, Moses provided regulations regarding how to handle this practice. The goal was to ensure the humane treatment of the borrower while protecting the lender from losing his money (Deuteronomy 24:10–13). In Habakkuk, however, the Chaldeans seized the pledges of their victims and forced them to pay what they did not owe.

Therefore, the LORD asked another negative question requiring a positive answer: *Will not your creditors rise up suddenly, and those who collect from you awaken?* For many years, the Chaldeans had used robbery and fraud to gain wealth and power. But now the situation would be reversed as their creditors would arise *suddenly* to attack them. The attackers would overtake Chaldea. As the LORD declared, *Indeed, you will become plunder for them.* That means that the other nations would take Chaldea’s possessions by force (Nahum 2:9).

The Chaldeans took advantage of the other nations by stealing their goods. The LORD was about to judge them, and the punishment would fit the crime. As God said, *Because you have looted many nations, all the remainder of the peoples will loot you.*

It is common in scripture for God to judge by doing to people what they did to others. Jesus gave as a principle in the Sermon on the Mount that God’s forgiveness of our sins (that affect our fellowship with Him) will be given just as we forgive others (Matthew 6:14-15). Jesus also stated that God’s judgement of believers will be directly proportional to how we judge others (Matthew 7:2). In this case, Babylon is having done to them what they did to other nations.

The verb *loot* means to steal goods from other people groups and nations, especially during a war or riot. It describes the action of the Chaldeans who invaded the other nations and plundered their wealth. Now all those who survived the Chaldean invasion would capture her wealth. This would happen *because of human bloodshed and violence done to the land, the town, and all its inhabitants.*

The word *blood* is plural in the Hebrew language, suggesting abundant bloodshed that consistently flows (Hosea 4:2). Moreover, the term used here for *violence* ranges from murder and rape to wickedness (Obadiah 1:10). The Chaldeans were cruel and ruthless (Habakkuk 1:17). They continually attacked smaller nations around them to consolidate their power. But the

LORD would turn the table on them. They would soon suffer defeat at the hands of the peoples whom they had oppressed.

Babylon's defeat is chronicled in scripture in [Daniel 5](#).

Biblical Text

**⁶ “Will not all of these take up a taunt-song against him,
Even mockery *and* insinuations against him
And say, ‘Woe to him who increases what is not his—
For how long—
And makes himself rich with loans?’**

**⁷ “Will not your creditors rise up suddenly,
And those who collect from you awaken?
Indeed, you will become plunder for them.**

**⁸ “Because you have looted many nations,
All the remainder of the peoples will loot you—
Because of human bloodshed and violence done to the land,
To the town and all its inhabitants.**