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Rehearsing Mythic Memory: Cultural Memory, Intertextuality, and the Sitz im Leben of Habakkuk's Prophecy

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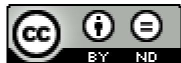

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AMBROSE SEMINARY

REHEARSING MYTHIC MEMORY: CULTURAL MEMORY, INTERTEXTUALITY, AND THE *SITZ IM LEBEN* OF HABAKKUK'S PROPHECY

A THESIS SUBMITTED TO

THE FACULTY OF AMBROSE SEMINARY

FOR THE DEGREE OF

MASTER OF ARTS – BIBLICAL AND THEOLOGICAL STUDIES

BY

CHELSEA D. MAK, B.A.

CALGARY, ALBERTA

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FACULTY OF THEOLOGY

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THESIS COMMITTEE

Cheslea Mak has presented a thesis titled, ***REHEARSING MYTHIC MEMORY: CULTURAL MEMORY, INTERTEXTUALITY, AND THE SITZ IM LEBEN OF HABAKKUK'S PROPHECY*** in an oral thesis hearing which was held on Dec 18, 2017. The following committee members have found the thesis acceptable in form and content, and that the presenter demonstrated satisfactory knowledge of the subject matter.

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Rehearsing Mythic Memory: Cultural Memory, Intertextuality, and the Sitz im Leben of Habakkuk's Prophecy

By Chelsea D. Mak

ABSTRACT

Cultural memory theory as an interdisciplinary field of research is concerned with the usability of the past for the formation of identity in the present. Theorists argue that cultural memories are only re-appropriated and re-cast as they are found to be useful for contemporary communities facing new and complex circumstances. One medium through which a community's memories may be reclaimed and reused is literature and, specifically, through the text forming work of intertextuality. By means of intertextuality, literary compositions become sites of memory with the power to form communal identity. The final hymn of the book of Habakkuk, a frequent topic of scholarly debate, demonstrates strong intertextual ties to ancient Near Eastern mythological portraits of nation deities and, as a result, portrays Yahweh as both victor over cosmological forces and national powers. In its present context, the hymn functions as a response to the prophetic lament concerning the Judahites' ongoing experience of injustice and suffering under the oppressive force of the Babylonians. In this new context, the ancient mythological memory of Yahweh as divine warrior and conqueror of chaos is re-appropriated as an affirmation of faith memorialized through literary composition and ritual recitation. Indeed, Habakkuk's final hymn, understood as an archaic, poetic composition intertextually tied to ancient Near Eastern mythological texts, may be understood as the re-appropriation of an ancient cultural memory concerning the character of Yahweh that functions to sustain and unify the community in light of present trauma and political turmoil. Such an assessment of Habakkuk's final hymn, then, sheds

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new light on a classic form critical concern. That is, when the lens of cultural memory studies is turned on the final hymn of Habakkuk, new insight emerges regarding the *Sitz im Leben* of the prophetic work.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Scholars frequently claim that a key interpretive crux of the book of Habakkuk is the identity of the wicked in 1:4 and 13.[1] Correspondingly, the argument is also made that the ambiguity of the book regarding this phrase indicates a dehistoricizing tendency at work in the text and that the (real or imagined) vacuity of the term רָשָׁע is the means by which the book is easily re-contextualized for subsequent communities.[2] While it is by no means insignificant that Habakkuk's prophecy bears ongoing relevance for future generations of Israel, and even later generations of both Jewish and Christian faith communities, such an emphasis betrays analysis at the level of what Sandra Hübenthal has called an aesthetics of reception.[3] From this perspective, biblical texts are explored as literature that deals with the distant past rather than as literature that addresses the emerging present (i.e., an aesthetics of production).[4]

Depending on the biblical text under consideration, both levels of analysis are possible for the contemporary researcher.[5] The present study is primarily concerned with questions pertaining to the perspective represented by an aesthetics of production. That is, it is informed by

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[1] See, for example, Brevard S. Childs, *Introduction to the Old Testament as Scripture* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1979), 448–49; Ralph L. Smith, *Micah–Malachi*, WBC 32 (Waco, TX: Word, 1984), 94, 99; Richard D. Patterson, *Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah*, Wycliffe Exegetical Commentary (Chicago: Moody Press, 1991), 127; Marvin A. Sweeney, *Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi*, vol. 2 of *The Twelve Prophets,* Berit Olam (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 2000), 454–56; Julia M. O'Brien, *Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi*, AOTC (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2004), 62; and Francis I. Anderson, *Habakkuk: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, AB (New York: Doubleday, 2001), 24.

[2] For example, O'Brien, *Nahum*, 62; and Chwi-Woon Kim, "Rhetoric and Trauma in Habakkuk: Toward a Postexilic Reading of the Book of the Twelve" (paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the SBL, Boston, MA, 19 November 2017).

[3] Sandra Hübenthal, "Social and Cultural Memory in Biblical Exegesis: The Quest for an Adequate Application," in *Cultural Memory in Biblical Exegesis*, ed. Pernille Carstens, Trine Bjørnung Hasselbach, and Niels Peter Lemche, PHSC (Piscatawa, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2012), 176.

[4] Hübenthal, "Social and Cultural Memory," 176.

[5] This, of course, depends on the relationship between the events described in a text, the period in which the text is produced, and the time during which its earliest reception community lives. Analysis at the level of production is possible when the relative date for a text's final form, the events portrayed therein, and its community all coincide within a narrow time frame. Chapter 3 will further demonstrate that such an analysis is possible for the book of Habakkuk.

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questions such as: What needs drove the production of the book of Habakkuk? And, what purposes might the book have served for its community? Given this, the identity of the רָשָׁע will remain important. However, I will also argue that it is not the only way that the book has been historicized (as opposed to dehistoricized). Rather, I will demonstrate, via cultural memory theory, that the whole of Habakkuk's prophecy in its final form responds to a particular historic situation wherein Judah encountered profound external threats to internal cohesion and continuity.[6] In this context, Habakkuk's prophecy functions for group identity preservation in light of a present threat of identity disintegration—a work achieved through the reuse of the ancient, cultural memory found in Hab 3:3–15. Since this function reflects the social situation from which Habakkuk's book emerged, it is informative for the form critical study of a prophetic *Sitz im Leben*. Consequently, it is my proposal that by way of an application of cultural memory theory to an analysis of Habakkuk's prophecy it is possible to examine anew the *Sitz im Leben* of the prophetic book, a topic that gained early consensus in Habakkuk scholarship before

[6] What is meant by the use of the phrase "final form" here is the text tradition preserved in the MT and presented with text critical apparatus in BHS (with reference to the more recently released commentary and apparatus of BHQ). Robertson, Haak, and Smith all argue for the basic reliability of the consonantal tradition preserved in the MT (O. Palmer Robertson, *The Books of Nahum, Habakkuk, and Zephaniah*, NICOT [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990], 41; Robert D. Haak, *Habakkuk*, VTSup XLIV [Leiden: Brill, 1992], 2–3; Smith, *Micah–Malachi*, 96), suggesting that later translations appear to be working with this base text, including the first two chapters of Habakkuk as preserved in 1QpHab. Two anomalies exist, that is, the Barberini version of Hab 3 and the entire absence of Hab 3 from the Qumran pesher. However, while both traditions provide interesting opportunities for text critical and comparative theological analysis, neither pose a significant problem to either the reliability of the consonantal tradition of the MT or the essential unity of the book. The Barberini represents an alternative translation of Hab 3, which Haak argues is likely based on the same Hebrew tradition as the MT, where variances are representative of the translator's characteristically free style (Haak, *Habakkuk*, 6–7). The absence of the final chapter of Habakkuk at Qumran has posed greater questions for the stability of the book as a whole. However, as Haak has argued, the presence of the chapter in the Murabba'at Scroll and the Greek scroll from Nahal Hever, both of roughly the same antiquity as 1QpHab, indicates that the essential unity of the book was early (Haak, *Habakkuk*, 7–8). Indeed, that few full manuscripts have been found at Qumran and the fluidity demonstrated in the use of other books (e.g., books 4 and 5 of the Psalter), suggest that the evidence for the book's unity outweighs that of disunity (Haak, *Habakkuk*, 7–8). Thus, the MT is confidently employed here as a base text for the final form of Habakkuk. Difficulties in translation have been approached with the wisdom of David Tsumura, who has suggested that, "when so many hypothetical readings of the 'original' text are proposed and yet no conclusive solution has been reached, it is certainly wise to keep the available data, in our case the MT, as it stands" (David Toshio Tsumura, "Janus Parallelism in Hab. III 4," *VT* 63 [2013]: 113). For further discussion on particular text critical and translation issues see the appendix.

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fragmenting and, more recently, ceasing to be a point of interest amongst commentators. A brief survey of this history is thus prudent at this juncture, before returning to the driving questions of this study and the tools by which their answers may be addressed.

Significant in the above discussion is the emphasis on the prophetic *book* of Habakkuk, since it is at this level that the prophecy's *Sitz im Leben* will be explored in this study. However, discussions of a *Sitz im Leben* related to Habakkuk's prophecy have not typically been concerned with the book in its final form, a reality that is not surprising given that early form critics attached the question of a prophetic *Sitz im Leben* to hypothetical original oral forms of prophetic address.[7] Instead, the book is most frequently discussed according to the social situation of its two primary sections, Hab 1–2 and Hab 3, and their respective relationships to the temple cult.

Early form critics associated much, if not all, of the prophetic book with a cultic setting, occasionally even describing Habakkuk as a cult prophet who occupied an official role within the temple cult, which accounted for the blending of ritual elements in the prophecies attributed to him (e.g., lament, vision, theophany, and psalmody).[8] Indeed, while Gunkel provided no extended comment on Habakkuk, his inclusion of portions of Hab 3 among illustrations of hymnic elements in his *Introduction to the Psalms,* suggests that he found a link between at least Habakkuk's final chapter and cultic worship.[9] More explicitly, Mowinckel argued that the book of Habakkuk demonstrated the existence in ancient Israel of an active connection between the prophetic office and the institution of the temple.[10] He asserted that the final chapter of the book was written for cultic worship and that the first two chapters formed a prophetic liturgy.

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[7] Robert D. Haak is an exception. Consequently, his work will be considered in greater detail below.

[8] Childs, *Introduction*, 450.

[9] Hermann Gunkel and Joachim Begrich, *Introduction to the Psalms: The Genres of the Religious Lyric of Israel*, trans. James D. Nogalski, Mercer Library of Biblical Studies (Macon: Mercer University Press, 1998), 22.

[10] Sigmund Mowinckel, *The Spirit and the Word: Prophecy and Tradition in Ancient Israel* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2002), 119–20.

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Habakkuk's tie to the cult was strong enough for Mowinckel to suggest that "one might consequently be tempted to say that the two chapters are to be regarded not so much as a prophecy with complaint motifs, but, on the contrary, as a liturgy for a day of prayer that is strongly influenced by the prophetic style."[11]

Subsequently, the notion that Habakkuk 1–2 might be understood according to Gunkel's liturgy genre[12] was further developed and worked out in detail by Paul Humbert.[13] Humbert proposed that the rhetorical strategy of these chapters could be best understood when compared to the shifting speakers associated with the drama of ritual worship. Thus, the lament of the prophet in 1:2–4 and 1:12–17 was determined to be a singular voice symbolic of a communal complaint and the oracular responses of Yhwh in 1:5–11 and 2:1–5 were addressed to the people through the prophet, who acted as their representative.[14] Humbert's theory was widely accepted and, by the mid-twentieth century, the *Sitz im Leben* of both Hab 1–2 and Hab 3, although consistently viewed as distinct units, was firmly associated with the temple cult.

Mowinckel's and Humbert's proposals that Habakkuk, both the prophet and the composite parts of the book associated with his name, was to be closely tied to cult worship persisted with no major alterations into the latter half of the twentieth century, as exemplified in the work of Albright, Fohrer, and Engnell.[15] However, Brevard Childs' comment in his *Introduction to the Old Testament as Scripture* is representative of a shift in Habakkuk

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[11] Mowinckel, *The Spirit and the Word*, 119–20.

[12] Gunkel and Begrich, *Introduction to the Psalms*, 313–18.

[13] Michael H. Floyd, *Minor Prophets: Part 2*, FOTL XXII (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 97. Floyd summarizes the work of Paul Humbert in *Problèmes du livre d'Habacuc* (Mémoires de l'Université de Neuchâtel 18; Neuchâtel: Secrétariat de l'Université, 1944).

[14] Floyd, *Minor Prophets*, 97. See n. 13 for the corresponding original work of Humbert.

[15] W. F. Albright, "The Psalm of Habakkuk," in *Studies in Old Testament Prophecy*, ed. H. H. Rowley (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1957), 9; Georg Fohrer, *Introduction to the Old Testament*, trans. David E. Green (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1968), 453–54; and Ivan Engnell, *Critical Essays on the Old Testament*, trans. Helmer Ringgren (London: S.P.C.K., 1970), 167.

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scholarship. Childs, in diametric opposition to the conclusions of early form critics, argued that the "present shape of the composition is not to be attributed to the influence of the cult."[16] Rather, cultic influence is to be assigned a role in the early development of the book by providing traditional forms, forms that were reworked and reinterpreted for their present context. For Childs, this change of situation is demonstrated by the autobiographical nature of the book, which shifts the social context away from the cult.[17] Indeed, recent scholarship on the book follows Childs' scepticism regarding Mowinckel's early proposal. Contemporary commentators, while making only limited comment on the *Sitz im Leben* out of which the book or portions therein emerged, has shifted decidedly away from confident statements regarding the book's association with the temple cult.[18] Instead, as Childs' hints at, recent research has focused on the tendency of the prophetic literature to exploit or defamiliarize existing forms for new social contexts.[19]

Accordingly, W. H. Bellinger argues that the similarity of Habakkuk's prophecies to cultic material does not mean that Habakkuk was a cult prophet or that the setting of his work was in the cult.[20] Instead, Habakkuk demonstrates the usage of cultic forms for a new setting in life in order to speak to the social crises of the prophet's own time. Bellinger thus challenges the presupposition of early form critics that social setting determines form (and *vice versa*). He writes, "a prophet may skillfully use material that was originally cultic in form, but this does not necessarily mean that he functioned within the cult. The title cult prophet is thus inappropriate

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[16] Childs, *Introduction*, 452.

[17] Childs, *Introduction*, 452.

[18] Walter Dietrich, *Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah*, trans. Peter Altmann, IECOT (Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer, 2016), 92.

[19] Ehud Ben Zvi, "The Prophetic Book: A Key Form of Prophetic Literature," in *The Changing Face of Form Criticism for the Twenty-First Century*, ed. Marvin A. Sweeney and Ehud Ben Zvi (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), 291–92; Anderson, *Habakkuk*, 19.

[20] W. H. Bellinger, Jr., *Psalmody and Prophecy*, ed. David J. A. Clines and Philip R. Davies, JSOTSup 27 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1984), 86.

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for Habakkuk. He rather uses material originally from the cult and applies it to his own day and prophetic message."[21] For Bellinger, it is the function of the prophetic utterance within its reception community that illuminates this reality. Hence, while the forms used in Habakkuk bear a striking resemblance to those used in the cult, Bellinger argues that these should not be too closely associated with the cult because they demonstrate a historical function rather than a liturgical one.[22]

Bellinger's emphatic distancing of the *Sitz im Leben* of the book from the temple cult is not rigidly followed by subsequent scholars. Instead, a middle ground is frequently proposed wherein the composite parts of Habakkuk are seen as representing either different or blended settings in life. Michael Floyd, for example, offers a mediating way forward by proposing that some elements of the book suggest their connection to the cult, such as Hab 3:2–19a, while others display the reuse of cultic forms for the prophetic concern of historical interpretation, for example, 1:5–11.[23] He argues that the book "reflects a setting in which manic scribalism and prophetic psalmody overlapped" and suggests that "it is difficult to tell whether this overlap was generally characteristic of some particular institutional context in late preexilic times, or whether it resulted from a somewhat unusual combination of both kinds of activity in one and the same prophetic role."[24] Floyd thus maintains the possibility of a cultic *Sitz im Leben* for all or parts of Habakkuk's prophecy, while also acknowledging that such a situation can hardly be asserted with certainty given that sections of the book demonstrate strong affinities with other witnesses to the prophetic office.

[21] Bellinger, *Psalmody and Prophecy*, 86.
[22] Bellinger, *Psalmody and Prophecy*, 89.
[23] Floyd, *Minor Prophets*, 87.
[24] Floyd, *Minor Prophets*, 87.

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Finally, Robert Haak represents an outlier in the scholarship regarding the *Sitz im Leben* of Habakkuk.[25] Unique among those surveyed here, Haak proposes that the book of Habakkuk, in its entirety, can be analyzed through the lens of classic form criticism.[26] He argues that the entire book of Habakkuk should be classified as being in the form of a complaint, albeit, one that has been substantially expanded.[27] Given that this genre has traditionally been associated with a judicial setting, Haak goes on to suggest that it is possible that the book may have a judicial background. However, Haak's proposal does not substantially shift his analysis of the book away from earlier form critical studies, since he goes on to state that the nature of Habakkuk's involvement in the judicial process is unclear and that, "the close connection of the book to the cult must be maintained."[28] Consequently, Haak's unique contribution to previous conversations regarding the *Sitz im Leben* of Habakkuk fails to have interpretive significance, even in his own work.

What is intriguing about Haak's argument, however, is his emphasis on the overall unity of Habakkuk's prophecy and his consequent desire to assign one *Sitz im Leben* to the whole of the book. New form critics have recently made a parallel move in the analysis of the prophetic corpus, particularly by way of Ehud Ben Zvi's contention that the prophetic book should be

[25] Ending a survey of the literature on the *Sitz im Leben* of Habakkuk's prophetic activity with Haak, 1998, and Floyd, 2000, appears at first a rather arbitrary conclusion. However, more recent commentators, while demonstrating an ongoing interest in the form of Habakkuk's component parts (e.g., Marvin A. Sweeney, "Structure, Genre, and Intent in the Book of Habakkuk,T 41 [1991]: 63–83; and David Cleaver-Bartholomew, "An Alternative Approach to Hab 1,2–2,20," *SJOT* 17 [2003]: 206–25), refrain from commenting on the notion of a *Sitz im Leben*. Indeed, although it is never expressly stated, this shift in scholarship is likely a response to the heavy critique of form criticism in the latter half of the twentieth century and the subsequent near total abandonment of the pursuit of original oral sub-units and their respective settings in life (Colin M. Toffelmire, "Form Criticism," in *Dictionary of the Old Testament Prophets*, ed. Mark J. Boda and J. Gordon McConville [Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2012], 262).

[26] For a discussion of the differences between classic and new form criticism in biblical studies see ch. 2.

[27] Haak, *Habakkuk*, 19–20.

[28] Haak, *Habakkuk*, 19–20.

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understood as a genre in its own right.[29] Unfortunately, this shift has been largely paired with a loosening of the concept of a *Sitz im Leben* from the study of genre and, indeed, with a near total abandonment of Gunkel's early project.[30] However, as will be further demonstrated in chapter 2 of the present study, the divorce between situation and form need not be absolute. Indeed, new possibilities emerge for the study of life setting when one moves with Bellinger to the question of a prophetic function, function that is profoundly historical and situated in the present needs of the community.[31] Accordingly, upon completion of a tour through the literary history of scholarly reflection on Habakkuk's *Sitz im Leben*, we have, in effect, come full circle and returned to the guiding questions of the present study, that is: What needs drove the production of the book of Habakkuk? And, what purposes might the book have served in the community? The answers to these questions may or may not be found in the temple cult. However, I would suggest that it is possible to say more about the *Sitz im Leben* of the book of Habakkuk than merely to reflect on its association therein. Indeed, it is my proposal that cultural memory theory provides the necessary tools for answering these questions, examining the earliest reception community of Habakkuk's prophecy, and thus commenting on the *Sitz im Leben* of the prophetic book by considering its communal function. Thus, a brief introduction to cultural memory theory is helpful at this juncture, following which this introduction may come to its conclusion and the main text of the study may begin.

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[29] Similar shifts are also taking place in other corpora of the Hebrew Bible. However, my focus here is on Habakkuk and, consequently, situated in work pertaining to the Hebrew prophets (see, Ben Zvi, "The Prophetic Book," 278–83).

[30] One notable exception is the work of Colin M. Toffelmire in "*Sitz Im* What? Context and the Prophetic Book of Obadiah," in *The Book of the Twelve and the New Form Criticism*, ed. Mark J. Boda, Michael H. Floyd, and Colin M. Toffelmire, ANEM 10 (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2015), 221–44; and *A Discourse and Register Analysis of the Prophetic Book of Joel*, SSN 66 (Leiden: Brill, 2016).

[31] Bellinger, *Psalmody and Prophecy*, 10. Toffelmire has similarly argued that renewed analysis of the concept of a *Sitz im Leben* is facilitated by a shift from "excavation to interpretation." (Toffelmire, *A Discourse and Register Analysis of the Prophetic Book of Joel*, 39).

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Cultural memory theory,[32] broadly defined as "the interplay of the present and the past in socio-cultural contexts," is concerned primarily with the usability of a group's past for their emerging present.[33] According to Barry Schwartz, a group's shared memory of the past functions for cohesion and unity among members by providing for continuity through the course of history and validating the practices of the present through the authority of the past.[34] Indeed, cultural memory is less concerned with the actuality of historical events or the ability to reconstruct a factual history, than it is with the lived recollection of a community's shared experience of the ongoing relevance of their remembered past. In this way, while not entirely disconnected from history, memory remains unfixed by historical events. Instead, as Kirk explains, "the activity of memory in articulating the past is dynamic, unceasing, because it is *wired to the ever shifting present*,"[35] which is to say that "current needs and preoccupations determine what elements of a community's past are awarded prominence . . . or, conversely, forgotten."[36] The present circumstances of a community are essential for the formation and commemoration of their shared memories, indicating that the aspects of a group's shared past that are drawn from and reused in the present are reflective of that community's present needs.

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[32] Elsewhere known as Collective Memory Theory or Social Memory Theory, terms that are to some degree synonymous, but which may also be nuanced depending on the school or theorist from which a given study emerges. Cultural memory studies will be used throughout this study. For a helpful discussion on terminology, see Astrid Erll, "Cultural Memory Studies: An Introduction," in *A Companion to Cultural Memory Studies*, ed. Astrid Erll and Ansgar Nünning (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2010), 3–4; Jeffrey K. Olick and Joyce Robbins, "Social Memory Studies: From "Collective Memory" to the Historical Sociology of Mnemonic Practices," *Annual Review of Sociology* 24 (1998): 111–12; and Jeffrey K. Olick, "From Collective Memory to the Sociology of Mnemonic Practices and Products," in *A Companion to Cultural Memory Studies*, ed. Astrid Erll and Ansgar Nünning (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2010), 158. Other terms have also proliferated, including the "history of mentalities," "historical consciousness," and "mnemohistory" all of which, despite unique interests, draw attention to the ways groups make meaning of their experience of time through social, political, and cultural frameworks (Olick, "Collective Memory," 151–52).

[33] Erll, "Cultural Memory Studies," 2; Rachelle Gilmour, "The Function of Place Naming in 2 Samuel 5–6: A Study in Collective Memory," *JSOT* 39 (2015): 410.

[34] Ronald Hendel, "Cultural Memory," in *Reading Genesis: Ten Methods*, ed. Ronald Hendel (Cambridge, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 30.

[35] Alan Kirk, "Social and Cultural Memory," in *Memory, Tradition, and Text: Uses of the Past in Early Christianity*, ed. Alan Kirk and Tom Thatcher, SemeiaSt 78 (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2005), 10. Emphasis original.

[36] Kirk, "Social and Cultural Memory," 10–11.

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Given that cultural memory stands both in continuity with memories held by previous generations and, at the same time, is reconstructed so as to account for and reflect the realities of the new present, consideration of Habakkuk's selections from communal memory reserves is informative regarding the composition, needs, and experiences of Habakkuk's reception community. This is because the viability of the cultural memory is always dependent upon its ability to account for the needs, fears, and interests of the present community. It is only as the memory demonstrates its ongoing viability that it is found to be useful for organizing and giving meaning to present challenges and circumstances.[37] Hence, cultural memories serve an identity forming function for their respective communities, a function that is essential for the survival of a group. By marking particular memories as constitutive for community identity, groups preserve their internal unity over the course of time and in the face of new challenges. This process, according to cultural memory theorists, is facilitated by ritual and commemorative practices, which serve both to unify existing group members and to assimilate new participants.[38] In Habakkuk, then, the choice of ancient Near Eastern mythological memory for community rehearsal is informative regarding the composition and concerns of Habakkuk's community in Judah. Accordingly, cultural memory theory may serve as a means for answering this study's questions regarding Habakkuk's community, as well as for a renewed investigation of the form critical concern for a prophetic *Sitz im Leben.*

[37] Barry Schwartz, "From *Abraham Lincoln and the Forge of American History*," in *The Collective Memory Reader*, ed. Jeffrey K. Olick, Vered Vinitzky-seroussi, and Daniel Levy (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 246.

[38] Kirk, "Social and Cultural Memory," 5. Written texts, too, maybe described as "autonomous commemorative artifacts" and act as sites of memory for community (Kirk, "Social and Cultural Memory," 9). In this way, Habakkuk's prophecy may be analysed on two levels, first as such a written artifact and, second, as a text that witness to a communal, ritual activity in the form of the final hymn (which includes instructions for its performance).

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Unfolding in four chapters, the present study will demonstrate that it is the cultural memory of Hab 3:3–15 that frames and gives meaning to the community's emerging present—as depicted in Hab 1–2—and re-establishes national and cultic boundaries in opposition to Babylon by reaffirming Yhwh's status as Judah's nation deity. This is achieved for the community through the recitation of the prophecy's final chapter, marked as a ritual prayer, which undergirds hope for continuity into the future as an independent nation-state dedicated to the worship of Yhwh. Chapter 2 will begin with a careful consideration of the methodological approach proposed above. Subsequently, chapter 3 will explore what can be said about Habakkuk's community's experience of their emerging present through a focused analysis of the book's historical situation and the content of Hab 1–2. Chapter 4 will address Habakkuk's community's past by means of an investigation into the cultural memory formed and preserved in the book's final chapter and its relationship to the community's present as described in Hab 1–2 (in other words, the *Sitz in der Literatur* of Hab 3:3–15). Finally, the study will come to its conclusion in chapter 5 wherein we will return once more to the question of Habakkuk's *Sitz im Leben vis-à-vis* Judah's active identity negotiation in light of the Neo-Babylonian Empire. To begin, a detailed discussion of cultural memory theory and its intersection with new form criticism is in order.

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2. METHODOLOGY

2.1. Introduction

One of the primary concerns of this study is the community that received Habakkuk's prophecy. That is, I am especially interested in asking questions about what needs drove the writing of this particular textual artifact and what purposes it may have served for those who received it, either as a read document or as an oral recitation.[1] Because of these interests, cultural memory studies has presented itself as an appropriate method for approaching a textual analysis of the book.

The use of cultural memory theory for the analysis of biblical texts is not an entirely new enterprise, although it is only a budding area of inquiry within the discipline broadly. The proliferation of edited volumes applying various insights from the sociological field to the texts of both the Hebrew Bible/Old Testament and the New Testament in the last decade indicates a growth in interest regarding the cross-disciplinary application of cultural memory theory to the study of the Bible.[2] For example, Tom Thatcher, in his introduction to *Memory and Identity in Ancient Judaism and Early Christianity,* co-edited with Barry Schwartz, outlines key questions related to the intersection of biblical studies and cultural memory theory. These include, first, "how can one separate the actual past from the commemorative dressing in the extant sources,

[1] Indeed, that the text may be defined as a communal artifact is especially evident in the hymnic features of the final chapter, indicating ritual among community members. This aspect of Habakkuk's prophecy will be discussed in greater detail in ch. 4.

[2] For example, Alan Kirk and Tom Thatcher, eds., *Memory, Tradition, and Text: Uses of the Past in Early Christianity*, SemeiaSt 52 (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2005); Diana V. Edelman and Ehud Ben Zvi, eds., *Remembering Biblical Figures in the Late Persian and Early Hellenistic Periods* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013); and Barry Schwartz and Tom Thatcher, eds., *Memory and Identity in Ancient Judaism and Early Christianity: A Conversation with Barry Schwartz*, SemeiaSt 78 (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2014); Athalya Brenner and Frank H. Polak, eds., *Performing Memory in Biblical Narrative and Beyond*, The Bible and the Modern World (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix, 2009); Ehud Ben Zvi and Christoph Levin, eds., *Remembering and Forgetting in Early Second Temple Judah*, FAT 85 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2012); and Pernille Carstens, Trine Bjørnung Hasselbach, and Niels Peter Lemche, eds., *Cultural Memory in Biblical Exegesis*, PHSC (Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2012).

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and what difference does it make to do so?"; second, "how did ancient Jews and early Christians draw upon the past to create a durable sense of communal identity, often in the face of trauma?"; and, third, "what strategies of keying and framing are evident in the extant sources, and what can these tell us about those texts and their authors and original audiences?"[3] As is readily apparent, Thatcher's questions regarding the relationship between cultural memory and the biblical texts run closely parallel to my own questions regarding the reception community of Habakkuk's prophecy and its *Sitz im Leben*. Similarly, Ronald Hendel, in his contribution to a volume on methods for reading the book of Genesis, argues that the biblical texts lend themselves to being read through the lens of cultural memory theory because they are in many ways "complex textual amalgam[s] of the cultural memories of ancient Israel" and because they have "served as a repository of cultural memories for Jews and Christians (and, indirectly, for Muslims) for millennia."[4] Accordingly, the application of cultural memory theory to biblical texts is proving to be both a natural pairing and a fruitful area of research. The present study joins those that are even now emerging in this burgeoning field of interest within the discipline of biblical studies broadly, and Hebrew Bible/Old Testament studies specifically.

2.2. History and Development

While memory has occupied the musings of great minds since at least the ancient Greeks, contemporary studies on the social aspects of memory are generally traced back to 1925 and the work of Maurice Halbwachs. Perhaps the most influential theorist in the field of cultural memory

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[3] Tom Thatcher, "Preface: Keys, Frames, and the Problem of the Past," in *Memory and Identity in Ancient Judaism and Early Christianity: A Conversation with Barry Schwartz*, ed. Barry Schwartz and Tom Thatcher, SemeiaSt 78 (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2014), 3.

[4] Hendel, "Cultural Memory," 29. Hendel also argues a foundation for using cultural memory as a methodology in biblical studies was laid by the work and interests of theorists such as Herman Gunkel, whose form critical method emphasised "folklore, social context, and history of traditions" (Hendel, "Cultural Memory," 45). Such a position is in line with my own, that is, that the pairing of cultural memory theory with new form critical inquiry has the potential to expand form criticism in a helpful and productive manner for HB/OT application.

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studies, Halbwachs first reflected on the socially determined nature of memory and coined the term 'collective memory.'[5] Halbwachs, trained first as a philosopher, transitioned to the emerging field of sociology under the tutelage of Emile Durkheim. Durkheim, and his emphasis on the collective over the individual, heavily influenced Halbwachs' own work, which focused on the subjective experience of and the social frameworks through which the past is interpreted.[6] Halbwachs' early work concentrated on expanding the concept of memory beyond the individual and developed, at least to a degree, in opposition to psychology.[7] He proposed that, while it may be individuals who remember, such an activity is impossible outside of group contexts.[8] This notion was further developed in *On Collective Memory,* which, after brief introductory remarks on theory and definition, unfolds in a threefold manner designed to demonstrate the essential role played by various social groups in the process of remembering. In the first of these sections, Halbwachs argued that the family is not only held together by shared memories, but also actively works to construct memory for group participants, particularly parents for their children.[9] In the second section, Halbwachs turns to religion, where he demonstrates that even in situations where the preservation of the past is an active goal for a social group (e.g., the life and liturgy of the Christian church are to be in direct continuity with the life of Christ), the influence of the present on collective recollections of the past is always at work and observable.[10] Halbwachs then moves on to discuss the way that social classes exemplify collective interpretations of the past by organizing the individual's understanding of other group members and reconstructing the past for

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[5] Olick and Robbins, "Social Memory Studies," 105.

[6] Olick, "Collective Memory," 154.

[7] Kirk, "Social and Cultural Memory," 2; and Olick and Robbins, "Social Memory Studies," 109.

[8] Olick, "Collective Memory," 155.

[9] Maurice Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory*, trans. Lewis A. Coser, The Heritage of Sociology (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1992), 54–83; and Jean-Christophe Marcel and Laurent Mucchielli, "Maurice Halbwachs's *Mémoire Collective*," in *A Companion to Cultural Memory Studies*, ed. Astrid Erll and Ansgar Nünning (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2010), 144.

[10] Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory*, 119.

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the present. While Halbwachs' work has not gone without criticism,[11] several of his propositions continue to be operational within cultural memory studies today, particularly the concept of social frameworks (which are always located in space and time), and constructivism in the production of group memory.

Halbwachs used the concept of a social frame to explain the role that social groups play in the individual's experience of memory. He argued that no individual remembers outside of the social groups of which they are a part. These groups provide the framework through which remembering is made possible by giving "coherence and legibility to memories, arranging them within dominant cultural systems of meaning."[12] These social frameworks are determined by two elements that are essential to the organization of collective memory—space and time. The spatio-temporal nature of memory is evidenced, for Halbwachs and for later theorists, by the way that group memory fixes itself to particular locations, landscapes, monuments, and other media, and is either preserved with these mediums or eroded with their collapse.[13] In particular, for Halbwachs, the most important temporal factor for collective memory is the present. Often described as being 'presentist'[14] in his approach to collective memory, Halbwachs argued that "only those recollections subsist that in every period society, working within its present-day

[11] One of the more controversial aspects of Halbwachs' work is his relationship to historiography. Halbwachs originally drew a sharp distinction between historiography and collective memory. Indeed, for him, history was "dead memory," those happenings of the past which no longer have meaningfulness in the present. In contrast, collective memory was understood as the elements of the past that continue to have identity forming significance in the present. Recent approaches to historiography have challenged this position and demonstrated that there are more complexities at play than a mere distinction between the meaningfulness of memory and the objectivity of historiography. Today, the lines between memory and history work have been sufficiently blurred so as to imagine the two fields as being on a continuum, both informing and shaping the work of the other (see Olick and Robbins, "Social Memory Studies," 110–11).

[12] Kirk, "Social and Cultural Memory," 2.

[13] Kirk, "Social and Cultural Memory," 2–3.

[14] See, for example, Lewis A. Coser, "Introduction: Maurice Halbwachs 1877–1945," in *On Collective Memory*, ed. Lewis A. Coser, The Heritage of Sociology (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1992), 13.

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frameworks, can reconstruct."[15] Collective memory, then, is highly constructive and determined by the needs, interests, and concerns of a given group's present.

Despite the significance of Halbwachs' early insights for contemporary cultural memory work, his notion of collective memory did not gain influence until the latter half of the twentieth-century, a shift that may be tied to the postmodern rejection of foundationalism, objectivity, and master narratives, specifically, as per the topic under discussion, as these notions are linked to historiography. The postmodern turn, partnered with the 'death of history'[16] and a new sociological interest in social practices (as opposed to structures or normative systems) and in the layperson (as opposed to the specialist), opened the way for the rediscovery of Halbwachs' work on the collective memory and the usability of the past.[17] Today, cultural memory studies has emerged as a field in its own right, is profoundly interdisciplinary, and is exerting influence in fields as diverse as sociology, art, history, philosophy, psychology, literature, and biblical studies.

2.3. Adaptation for Biblical Studies

Within Hebrew Bible/Old Testament, Ehud Ben Zvi is perhaps best known for advancing cultural memory theory as an approach for historical reconstruction in biblical studies. His own work has included studies of the Deuteronomistic history, Chronicles, and the Latter Prophets.[18]

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[15] Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory*, 189.

[16] A similar turn has also influenced the work of biblical scholars. For a discussion of the implications of the 'death of history' and the postmodern turn for the work of Hebrew Bible scholars see, for example, Leo G. Perdue, *The Collapse of History: Reconstructing Old Testament Theology*, OBT (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1994), 3–11.

[17] Olick and Robbins, "Social Memory Studies," 108.

[18] For example, Ehud Ben Zvi, "Remembering the Prophets through the Reading and Rereading of a Collection of Prophetic Books in Yehud: Methodological Considerations and Explorations," in *Remembering and Forgetting in Early Second Temple Judah*, ed. Ehud Ben Zvi and Christoph Levin, FAT 85 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2012), 17–44; Ehud Ben Zvi, "On Social Memory and Identity Formation in Late Persian Yehud: A Historian's Viewpoint with a Focus on Prophetic Literature, Chronicles and the Deuteronomistic Historical Collection," in *Texts, Contexts and Readings in Postexilic Literature*, ed. Louis Jonker, FAT 2 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2011), 95–148. Notably, however, Ben Zvi prefers the umbrella term 'Social Memory Studies' rather than

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Given his interest in the application of the new approach, it is of little surprise that he has offered extended comment on the usability of cultural memory theory for biblical analysis, including areas of modification to the theory as it is utilized in other fields and areas of particular prominence for application to biblical texts. For example, Ben Zvi has successfully argued that an application of cultural memory to the biblical text necessarily implies that analysis will include exploration of both the construed past and the construed future, given the prominence of images of "utopian futures" in the literature.[19] More significantly, however, Ben Zvi has argued that the investigation of cultural memory in ancient Israel is fundamentally an inquiry into the "social mindscape" of the literati of Yehud.[20] This is because cultural memories exist within

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'Cultural Memory Studies,' which is used in the present study. For a brief discussion on the choice of terms for the present study see ch. 1, p. 8, n. 32.

[19] Ben Zvi, "Remembering the Prophets," 21.

[20] Ben Zvi's emphasis on the "literati" is connected to whether or not it is possible to access the cultural memory of an ancient society for which no living survivors are available to offer testimony (Ben Zvi, "On Social Memory," 101–02). Indeed, the question of access to cultural memory in ancient Israel, and the corresponding question of whose memory is represented in the available evidence, is a significant one for the present study. Ben Zvi suggests that the texts that became both sacred and authoritative for at least this elite class of scribes must provide insight into their cultural memory. At times, Ben Zvi seems hesitant to expand his conclusion regarding cultural memory in ancient Israel beyond the literati of second temple Yehud (Ben Zvi, "On Social Memory," 101). However, he also suggests that the production and maintenance of this social memory was likely tied to the central institutions of the community, namely, the Jerusalem temple and the school for the literati therein. This implies a broader social support for the production of these texts because such a large project in a relatively small community would demand the dedication of shared resources to the funding and maintenance of such a project (Ben Zvi, "On Social Memory," 101–2). Similarly, Karel van der Toorn has argued that "Literacy is a mark of social distinction inasmuch as the illiterate majority holds the written word in high esteem. What would be the social advantage of reading skills if books were irrelevant to the masses?" (Karel van der Toorn, *Scribal Culture and the Making of the Hebrew Bible* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2007), 106). Thus, while those who knew these texts best and were largely responsible for their production—a scribal class of literary elite—it is most probable that the broader community had access to and resonated with the literature of the Hebrew Bible. Indeed, in another context, Ben Zvi also argues that it is very likely "the prophetic books or portions thereof were read aloud" and performed in ritual settings where they "served important roles in building and defining community and identity" (Ben Zvi, "The Prophetic Book," 295–96). Of course, both Ben Zvi and van der Toorn are talking about communities that existed in the second temple period, a time significantly later than that proposed for Habakkuk in this study (see ch. 3). What then of community access to the prophecy of Habakkuk and the cultural memory produced and preserved therein?

On this point David Carr's recent work on the formation of the Hebrew Bible is especially helpful. Carr has suggested that the production of the biblical literature may be spread out over a greater period of Israel's history, rather than concentrated in a rather brief period of time, namely, in Yehud during the Persian period. Indeed, he comments specifically on the production of literature during the exile (a category that, by Ahn's definitions [John J. Ahn, "Forced Migrations Guiding the Exile: Demarcating 597, 587, and 582 B.C.E.," in *By the Irrigation Canals of Babylon: Approaches to the Study of the Exile*, ed. John J. Ahn and Jill Middlemas, LHBOTS 526 (New York: T & T Clark, 2012), 182.], Habakkuk fits into). He states that "whatever texts [the exilic community] reproduced, shaped, or created were for internal consumption, as they used written literature to support the ongoing existence of

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temporally and geographically situated social groups. Cultural memory theory within Hebrew Bible/Old Testament studies is essentially asking questions about the thought patterns (including assumptions, ideologies, community knowledge, and values) of at least some members of ancient Israel.[21] Given the conjectural nature of this investigation, Ben Zvi suggests that any exploration of the cultural memory of ancient Israel must be paired with a comprehensive analysis of its historical situation. Such work is essential to understanding issues of power relations, national boundaries, and social self-definition, all of which are involved in the production of group memory.[22] Even though cultural memory theory tends to draw attention away from questions of historicity, questions of historical circumstance remain important for studying the memories of ancient cultures because they remain distant from the circumstances of the researcher and because it is their (historically situated) thoughts, imaginings, politics, and social patterns that determine what is remembered and why.[23] Additionally, good historical work allows the researcher to deal responsibly with the limited source material and to gain greater knowledge of what Ben Zvi has termed the *Sitz im Diskurs* of the literature under examination. *Sitz im Diskurs*, as defined by Ben Zvi is "the vast realm that includes the ways of thinking, webs of images, texts, 'common' knowledge and linguistic registers that shaped (a) which issues or sets of issues were likely to come up in a community, and (b) the ways in which the community went about thinking about these issues when they arose and the range of possible responses and interactions

their community and guide their behaviour and expectations" (David M. Carr, *The Formation of the Hebrew Bible: A New Reconstruction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 227). Consequently, there is good reason to think that the book of Habakkuk was accessible by and influential for an early reception community most likely situated at the very beginning of the exile but prior to the destruction of the temple. While textual access in a largely pre-literate society may have been mediated through a literate elite, it remains access none-the-less and, thus, likely also formative.

[21] Ben Zvi, "Remembering the Prophets," 19–20.

[22] Ben Zvi, "Remembering the Prophets," 21–22.

[23] Ben Zvi, "Remembering the Prophets," 22.

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within these responses."[24] Thus, analysis of memory in ancient Israel must be partnered with a thick description of the cultural, historical, and social circumstance in which that memory was produced. The concept of a *Sitz im Diskurs* also attunes the researcher to the importance of literary circumstance for the examination of memory in the prophetic books, an aspect that Ben Zvi, unfortunately, does not emphasize.

Francis Landy highlights the importance of medium, and specifically that the sources under consideration are works of literature, for the study of cultural memory in Hebrew Bible in his response to a volume on cultural memory edited by Ben Zvi.[25] Landy observes that Ben Zvi's primary concerns are those of a historian and that, as a result, his questions and applications of cultural memory theory neglect those aspects of the source text that are explicitly literary.[26] Landy argues that these features must also be taken into account in order to understand the emotive and rhetorical impact of texts that not only reflect cultural memory but also act as commemorative objects for the community through their oral dimension.[27] Similarly, Polak and Hübenthal emphasize the importance of medium for the application of cultural memory theory to the Bible. For Polak, it is the text as *literature* that helps to bridge from the polyphony of ancient Israelite communities to something close to "the relative stability of cultural memory."[28] This possibility emerges because of the way in which the ancient memories of peoples long past are preserved through literary art and thus able to withstand the pressures of time and distance. According to Polak, then, it is the medium itself that allows for the reconstruction of ancient

[24] Ben Zvi, "Remembering the Prophets," 24, n. 9.

[25] See Francis Landy, "Notes toward a Poetics of Memory in Ancient Israel," in *Remembering and Forgetting in Early Second Temple Judah*, ed. Ehud Ben Zvi and Christoph Levin, FAT 85 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2012), 331–45.

[26] Landy, "Notes," 342.

[27] Landy, "Notes," 340–41.

[28] Frank H. Polak, "Afterword: Perspectives in Retrospect," in *Performing Memory in Biblical Narrative and Beyond*, ed. Athalya Brenner and Frank H. Polak, The Bible in the Modern World (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix, 2009), 297.

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cultural memory from biblical texts, reconstruction that will require “literary analysis and historical, social and cultural imagination” on the part of the interpreter.[29]

Finally, Hübenthal explores the issue of terminology at the intersection of cultural memory work and biblical studies and offers a reflection that is of particular relevance for the present conversation. She notes that much of the work relating cultural memory to biblical studies has focused on an aesthetics of reception, rather than an aesthetics of production. This is, in large part, due to the perception that the texts under consideration deal primarily with the remote past.[30] While this may be the case from the perspective of the researcher today, it may not have been the case from the perspective of the reading/listening community that first received the text (this is, of course, a question that has a variety of answers depending on which biblical text is under investigation). Given that the lens through which the text is analyzed influences results, she proposes two key questions for approaching a biblical text from the perspective of cultural memory theory. First, the researcher must ask about “the position of the artifact itself in relation to what it is about” and, second, “the position of the recipient in relation to the artifact.”[31] Consequently, the approximate dates of the final forms of biblical texts and the reception community under consideration are both significant for the analysis of a particular biblical book.[32] Given that the present study is concerned with the earliest reception community of Habakkuk’s prophecy in its final literary form, questions of production, including the chosen medium, are particularly important for the application of cultural memory theory in this case.[33]

[29] Polak, “Afterword,” 298.

[30] Hübenthal, “Social and Cultural Memory,” 176.

[31] Hübenthal, “Social and Cultural Memory,” 191.

[32] Hübenthal’s insight also indicates that each biblical book could be analyzed as an artifact of cultural memory multiple times, from the perspective of multiple reception communities.

[33] For an example of the connection between medium, production, and cultural memory see Hübenthal, “Social and Cultural Memory,” 188–92. There are other areas of contestation regarding the appropriation of cultural memory by biblical scholars. One such example is Edelman’s proposal that the earliest period in which it is viable to study cultural memory within the context of biblical studies is the late Persian or early Hellenistic Periods (c. 400–

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As the above survey demonstrates, fruitful application of cultural memory theory to biblical texts includes many of the activities that already mark biblical criticism as a discipline. Matters of historical circumstance, textual production, and literary structure continue to have prominence in studies emerging at the intersection of biblical studies and cultural memory. They will also have a place in the present study (see, especially, chapter 2). However, there are, of course, unique elements, perspectives, and tools from cultural memory theory that alter the types of questions asked, evidence discussed, and conclusions reached. The breadth of cultural memory theory necessarily limits the discussion here to those aspects of theory that are particularly pertinent for an analysis of Habakkuk's reception community and the *Sitz im Leben* of the prophetic book. These include: identity formation and narrative structuring; framing and keying; writing, ritual, and commemoration; and literature and intertextuality.

2.4. Tools, Concepts, and Perspectives

Memory is fundamentally an individual capacity; only the individual person can engage in the activity of remembering through the properties of the mind. Theorists of cultural memory are ever cognizant of this reality.[34] Indeed, even Halbwachs, who is frequently accused of neglecting the place of the individual within the collective, acknowledged that the mental

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250 BCE). Her position is based on the assertion that this is the earliest timeframe during which one may argue that the texts were being read, in something close to their final forms, as authoritative by at least a literary elite within the communities of the province of Yehud (Diana V. Edelman, "Introduction," in *Remembering Biblical Figures in the Late Persian and Early Hellenistic Periods: Social Memory and Imagination*, ed. Diana V. Edelman and Ehud Ben Zvi (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), xii). In her view, cultural memory theory is not applicable to the study of the formation of texts or their original reception communities and is thus not a viable reading partner for source or redaction critical methods (Edelman, "Introduction," xxi–xxiv). In contrast, Hendel approaches his study of cultural memory in the Jacob narratives through the methods of source criticism as a means for discussing the various reception communities that formed what became the final form of the Genesis text (Hendel, "Cultural Memory," 33–45). It is my position, contra Edelman, that cultural memory theory has implications for both the formation of biblical texts (and is, therefore, a helpful partner for source criticism and redaction criticism) and the reception of biblical texts in their final form. Indeed, Hübenthal's insight regarding the production of cultural memories and their representative artifacts suggest at least a possibly fruitful interaction between cultural memory theory and redaction criticism, not unlike Hendel's reading of Genesis.

[34] Erll, "Cultural Memory Studies," 4–6.

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capacity for remembrance is the property of persons, not groups.[35] However, one of the fundamental insights of Halbwachs' early work, as explored above, was the social dimension of an individual's experience of memory. Thus, it is also now widely accepted that the memory of individual persons is shaped by and "embedded" in social contexts. This is because social structures, practices, and frameworks are essential to the process of individual recollection. For example, factors such as "language, rituals, commemoration practices and sites of memory" all serve the formation of memory.[36] Given that social groups are formed of a plurality of individuals, each engaged in the activity of remembering, there always exists dissonance and contestation with regard to the past, its shape, and its relevance.[37] Because of this polyphony, cultural memory exists in a space with indefinite borders. Nevertheless, this collective, group 'remembering' (now used metaphorically) acts as a stabilizing and unifying force within groups and/or whole societies. Schwartz describes the relationship between the individual and the group by describing cultural memory as "…the distribution throughout society of what individuals believe, know and feel about the past, how they judge the past morally, how closely they identify with it, and how they commemorate it."[38] He uses the term 'distribution' intentionally to indicate that there always exists both variation and similarity, or a centralizing tendency, which "makes total dissensus…impossible."[39] It is this similarity of memory that is referred to in studies of cultural memory and it acts for the unification, coherence, and continuity of groups, even where

[35] Barry Schwartz, "Where There's Smoke, There's Fire: Memory and History," in *Memory and Identity in Ancient Judaism and Early Christianity: A Conversation with Barry Schwartz*, ed. Barry Schwartz and Tom Thatcher, SemeiaSt 78 (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2014), 9; Erll, "Cultural Memory Studies," 4–6.

[36] Barbara A. Misztal, *Theories of Social Remembering* (Maidenhead, BRK: Open University Press, 2003), 6.

[37] Misztal, *Theories of Social Remembering*, 121–24.

[38] Schwartz, "Where There's Smoke," 10.

[39] Schwartz, "Where There's Smoke," 10.

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individuals within the group have "different interests and motivations."[40] In this way, cultural memories provide for and shape group identity because they are told and retold (or written and re-written) over the course of time.[41] Each new generation enters this process of telling and retelling from the perspective of their present experience. This means that, as Halbwachs has shown in his analysis of Christian religious practice, "as members change, die, or disappear, as spatial frames change and the concerns of the time replace past concerns, the collective memory is continually reinterpreted to fit those new conditions."[42] Therefore, group identity as formed through shared memory is not static but dynamic. It exists both in continuity with the past, providing stability, and in discontinuity with the past, remaining relevant to communities in their present.

This group identity, much like group memory, is similar to personal identity in its narrative shape. Groups, like individuals, look both backwards and forwards for their continuity and formation in each concurrent generation.[43] Essential to cultural memory theory is the recognition that memory has a complex relationship to history and, as has already been noted, is not necessarily tied to the 'facts' of the past or the historicity of events. Rather than being constrained by history, cultural memory is constructive and shaped by the needs of the present. Straub argues that one of the primary reasons for this constructive/reconstructive activity is the act of narration, it is the result of fitting the events of the past and present, together with a vision of the future, into a storied form. Narration demands that memories be held as the flexible elements of a storied life (either that of the individual or that of the group). These elements, then,

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[40] Alon Confino, "Memory and the History of Mentalities," in *A Companion to Cultural Memory Studies*, ed. Astrid Erll and Ansgar Nünning (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2010), 81.

[41] Kirk, "Social and Cultural Memory," 4.

[42] Marcel and Mucchielli, "Maurice Halbwachs's *Mémoire Collective*," 147–48.

[43] Olick and Robbins, "Social Memory Studies," 122–23.

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are shaped and reshaped as new experiences are integrated into the larger narrative frame. The past, through recollection, is shaped in light of the new present circumstances and new prospects for the future.[44] In the study of literature, this may be most easily evidenced in works of narrative historiography or historical fiction. However, other genres of literature, here we may consider the prophetic literature of the Hebrew Bible, both contain memory and function for the formation and preservation of memory. They do this in a variety of ways, for example, through their rhetorical and emotive impact,[45] by fitting into a larger narrative structure (such as the narrative plot of the rise and fall of the Israelite Monarchy),[46] or by functioning in ritual settings as liturgy.[47]

The narrative character of group memory necessarily implies the transformation of memorable events through the processes of structuring and organizing information in order to give it a communicable and socially significant meaning. Straub explains how people and, by extension, groups remember. Rather than memorizing "objectively existing things (events, etc.) . . . . They *structure* and *organize* the material of their perception and tie it in with previous knowledge."[48] Memory, according to Straub, "works and interferes with its 'contents' arranging and organizing them" according to available schematic possibilities.[49] These are the categories of Ben Zvi's *Sitz im Diskurs* (see above) and are the result of complex socio-cultural norms that give meaning to and shape an individual's or a group's experiences. Two processes through which cultural memory is organized and structured are framing and keying.

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[44] Jürgen Straub, "Psychology, Narrative, and Cultural Memory: Past and Present," in *A Companion to Cultural Memory Studies*, ed. Astrid Erll and Ansgar Nünning (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2010), 220.
[45] Landy, "Notes," 340–41.
[46] Ben Zvi, "Remembering the Prophets," 34–35.
[47] Paul Connerton, *How Societies Remember* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 58–59.
[48] Straub, "Psychology," 221. Italics original.
[49] Straub, "Psychology," 221.

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Schwartz has theorized extensively on the importance of the processes of framing and keying in the production of cultural memory. His work is particularly focused on how the past functions for the organization and comprehension of present circumstances. He argues that:

> As a model *of* society, collective memory reflects past events in terms of the needs, interests, fears, and aspirations of the present. As a model *for* society, collective memory performs two functions: it embodies a *template* that organizes and animates behaviour and a *frame* within which people locate and find meaning for their present experience. Collective memory affects social reality by *reflecting, shaping,* and *framing* it. Collective memory reflects reality by interpreting the past in terms of images appropriate and relevant to the present; it shapes reality by providing people with a program in terms of which their present lines of conduct can be formulated and enacted; it frames reality through standards in terms of which the effectiveness and moral qualities of their conduct can be discerned.[50]

This interplay between the past and the present in the use and production of cultural memory has already been illustrated in the above conversation concerning narration. What is new and significant here is one of the ways in which the past may serve to shape the present and, thus, influence both the continuity and negotiation of group identity. Cultural memories of a shared past do this work by acting as a frame that gives meaning, justification, or validation to present circumstances. Conversely, the present may also bring new insight regarding the significance of the past. This matching of the present to past frames occurs through the process of keying, a "communicative movement—talk, writing, image-and-music-making—that connects otherwise separate realms of history."[51] An example of this process at work within the New Testament is the way that the Gospels interpret the person and activity of Jesus according to the events and persons of the Hebrew Scriptures.[52] This process is not static or solitary, but one that is ever changing, ever evolving, and ever occurring so that cultural memories accumulate

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[50] Schwartz, "From *Abraham Lincoln*," 245. Italics original.

[51] Barry Schwartz, "Memory as a Cultural System: Abraham Lincoln in World War II," *American Sociological Review* 61 (1996): 911.

[52] Schwartz, "Where There's Smoke," 15–16.

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meaning over time and through their multiple commemorations. Cultural memories may then be described as being “path dependent” in that they are not only affected by their current social contexts, but also by previous representations of their content.[53] Several activities may be employed for the representation and preservation of a group’s cultural memories. Of these, commemoration through ritual performance and writing are of particular relevance for Habakkuk and, as a result, will be considered in greater detail.

Commemoration is the formal activity engaged in by groups to ensure continuity between historically formative events and the ever shifting present. Indeed, commemoration is important for group identity because a complete severing of the past from the present would unravel the essential narrative framework through which identity is constructed and maintained.[54] Thus, acts of commemoration are more than static memorializing events. Rather, they are also orienting events that signify what elements of the past are formative and normative for collective group life. They may then be understood as the activities that serve to balance social change by providing for “social persistence”[55] through the transference of memory from one generation to the next. Commemoration thus serves a meaning making function for communities, whereby the significance of the past and the present are articulated, giving motivation and validation for future action.[56] Two modes of commemoration that are readily apparent in Habakkuk are ritual and writing.

[53] Schwartz, “Where There’s Smoke,” 16. Both the process of keying and the concept of path dependency are clearly related to theories of intertextuality and will be discussed further below.

[54] Kirk, “Social and Cultural Memory,” 7.

[55] Connerton, *How Societies Remember*, 39–40. Connerton’s work is especially concerned with how cultural memory survives or ‘persists’ over the course of time in response to Halbwachs and other theorists who emphasize social change. The key question for Connerton concerns the processes and practices that allow memory to be transferred from one generation to the next. This is an area of research that was neglected by Halbwachs and serves as an important addition to cultural memory theory broadly.

[56] Kirk, “Social and Cultural Memory,” 7.

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Connerton's work focuses especially on the ritual ceremonial practices that commemorate and preserve cultural memories in group settings. He highlights several key features that are significant for understanding the weightiness of ritual practice and for demonstrating how ritual serves social persistence over the course of time. In particular, Connerton emphasizes that it is the form of the ritual, rather than merely its content, that is important for the transference of memory. He argues that, while it is common in work on ritual significance to interpret the content of the ritual (i.e. the mythological) in order to explain its meaning, this act of translation means a loss of "certain things [that] can only be expressed in ritual."[57] Put another way, the *form* of transmission, here ritual practice, is as important as the *content,* here cultural memory often expressed in mythological language. Connerton expands on this insight by demonstrating the impact of the practices that accompany ritual content. For example, bodily positioning, performance, and language.[58] While some of these elements cannot be known about the use and ritualization of Habakkuk, others are of particular importance. For example, chapter 3 of Habakkuk contains textual markers indicating that it was intended to be recited or sung in a group context. Thus, an examination of its language, particularly indications of performative language and the use of the collective first person, may yield new insight into its function for memory and group identity.[59]

Finally, writing also serves as an important commemorative activity. Indeed, written texts may be described as "autonomous commemorative artifacts"[60] and are important sites of memory in numerous communities and, in particular, are one of the key media of premodern memory.[61]

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[57] Connerton, *How Societies Remember*, 54.

[58] Connerton, *How Societies Remember*, 54–59.

[59] For an extended discussion on the use of performative language in ritual see Connerton, *How Societies Remember*, 58–59.

[60] Kirk, "Social and Cultural Memory," 9.

[61] Schwartz, "Where There's Smoke," 10.

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Quite obviously, the activity of writing (production) and written artifacts (ancient literature), as has already been explored above, are of particular importance for the application of cultural memory theory to biblical studies and to an analysis of Habakkuk. Thus, along with recent work in cultural memory theory broadly, it is now possible to explore the intersection of memory and literature, particularly through the text forming work of intertextuality.[62]

Erll and Rigney argue that literature has three roles in relation to cultural memory.[63] First, as a contribution to a group's cultural life, literature works to create and shape cultural memory. That is, literature has a constructive force in a group's development and ongoing negotiation of their shared memory and, as a result, their identity. Second, literature or individual literary works may be understood as objects of memory. Finally, literature may be a medium for the study of memory production in that, through the processes of writing about group experiences and rewriting existing texts, the developments, shifts, and negotiations of memory can be traced through the course of a group's existence.[64] When considering literature as a medium for the production and observance of cultural memory, two notions in particular become prominent—genre and intertextuality.[65] Most obviously, fictional and non-fictional historical narrative are

[62] Jonathan Culler provides an operational definition of intertextuality that will serve as the theoretical foundation for my application of the concept to Habakkuk. He writes, "'intertextuality' thus has a double focus. On the one hand, it calls our attention to the importance of prior texts, insisting that the autonomy of texts is a misleading notion and a work has the meaning it does only because certain things have previously been written. Yet, in so far as it focuses on intelligibility, on meaning, 'intertextuality' leads us to consider prior texts as contributions to a code which makes possible the various effects of signification. Intertextuality thus becomes less a name for a work's relation to particular prior texts than a designation of its participation in the discursive space of a culture: the relationship between a text and the various languages or signifying practices of a culture and its relation to those texts which articulate for it the possibilities of that culture. The study of intertextuality is thus not the investigation of sources and influences as traditionally conceived; it casts its net wider to include anonymous discursive practices, codes whose origins are lost, that make possible the signifying practices of later tests" (Jonathan Culler, *The Pursuit of Signs: Semiotics, Literature, Deconstruction*, 2nd ed. (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2001), 103.

[63] Erll and Rigney note that, although much of the initial work in cultural memory focused on identifying 'sites of memory,' more recent work has shifted to the types of media that serve to preserve, communicate, and solidify memory for their communities. This has led to an increased interest in the intersection of literature and cultural memory. See Astrid Erll and Ann Rigney, "Literature and the Production of Cultural Memory: Introduction," *European Journal of English Studies* 10 (2006): 111.

[64] Erll and Rigney, "Literature," 112.

[65] Erll and Rigney, "Literature," 112.

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genres germane to the study of cultural memory and group identity formation. However, as Fentress and Wickham note, the significance of particular genres is culturally and historically specific.[66] Thus, the types of genres that a group selects to produce and preserve memory may be different depending on the given society. Indeed, what genre is chosen is the result of the "communicative praxis of a culture."[67] This, in and of itself, is the work of intertextuality, since the reuse of generic forms creates a link between different literary works so as to encourage the interpretation of one in light of the other. However, it is not only through genre that intertextuality becomes significant for the intersection of memory and literature. Other cases include the recollection of earlier texts, which are quoted, alluded to, or rewritten in the production of literature and the inclusion of cultural tropes or topoi. This rewriting is a part of the process of narration and therefore aides in identity formation. The phenomenon of intertextuality, then, may be described as literature's means for establishing "a memory of its own."[68] Or, to draw on Schwartz, is a way of keying present concerns, challenges, and circumstances to the past, giving them fresh meaning and rendering them useful for the community. The intertexts, be they prior works of literature or the 'texts' of culture, become frames through which the new act of writing is interpreted, both constructing and preserving cultural memory.[69] That intertextuality is important for the work of memory production in literature was already evident in the concerns of several theorists discussed above. For example, Ben Zvi has stressed the significance of a

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[66] James Fentress and Chris Wickham, *Social Memory*, ed. R. I. Moore, New Perspectives on the Past (Oxford: Blackwell, 1992), 78.

[67] Straub, "Psychology," 222.

[68] Erll and Rigney, "Literature," 113.

[69] Renate Lachmann also theorizes about the relationship between intertextuality and memory in literature, arguing that "the memory of the text is formed by the intertextuality of its references." However, Lachmann's approach is structuralist in nature and much narrower than the concept of intertextuality employed here. See Renate Lachmann, "Mnemonic and Intertextual Aspects of Literature," in *A Companion to Cultural Memory Studies*, ed. Astrid Erll and Ansgar Nünning (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2010), 301–10 (304).

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prophetic work's *Sitz im Diskurs*;"[70] Schwartz, through the concept of path dependency, has pointed out that reiterations of cultural memories are always interpreted both in light of their present form and with reference to their past commemorations;[71] and Straub has accentuated the way that the assigned meaning given to memory "conforms to socio-cultural standards (values, rules in the form of norms or conventions, habits, goals, etc.)."[72] Thus, one aspect of literary analysis that is especially important for exploring cultural memory in the books of the Hebrew Bible/Old Testament is the study of intertextual links, both to other written texts and to the 'texts' of social norms and practices. In Habakkuk, one particularly important instance of intertextuality that will be explored is the reuse of archaic poetry in chapter 3 and its connections to the ancient Near Eastern world, including, but not limited to, the nation of Israel. Indeed, it is the use of this ancient poem, re-appropriated and reshaped for placement in the prophetic book, which sheds new light on the *Sitz im Leben* of Habakkuk's prophecy.

2.5. Cultural Memory and Form Criticism

For much of the twentieth century, form criticism enjoyed a place of prominence in Hebrew Bible/Old Testament scholarship. During this time, and building on the pioneering work of Hermann Gunkel, the agenda of form critical analysis was predominantly historical and diachronic—critics intended to uncover the history of tradition that produced the biblical literature that was later canonized for use in religious communities.[73] This work was to be accomplished through the identification and analysis of ancient, standardized genres theoretically tied to specific settings in the corporate life of Israel. Indeed, for Gunkel, genre was the first

[70] Ben Zvi, "Remembering the Prophets," 24, n. 9.
[71] Schwartz, "Where There's Smoke," 16.
[72] Straub, "Psychology," 222.
[73] Marvin A. Sweeney and Ehud Ben Zvi, "Introduction," in *The Changing Face of Form Criticism for the Twenty-First Century*, ed. Marvin A. Sweeney and Ehud Ben Zvi (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), 1; and Mowinckel, *The Spirit and the Word*, 8.

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necessary category for understanding ancient literature and served as a precursor for interpretation.[74]

Classic form criticism applied the category of genre to units of oral prophecy rather than written text. Therefore, the first work of the form critic was to identify the units of text that represented the original, oral proclamation of the prophet.[75] These units, usually quite small, could be analyzed for formulaic elements and thematic content that linked the genre to its *Sitz im Leben*. Hence, for early form critics, *Sitz im Leben* was a concept that referred specifically to the original oral prophecy, not to prophetic books, either in subsections or as whole units, as literature.[76] For example, Sigmund Mowinckel described the relationship between these oral originals, classified into generic forms, and their setting in life, by explaining that "the form, together with its contents, points exactly to the social location of this tradition; the form is socially and psychologically given, the one appropriate in the particular situation."[77] Because of the mutually determinative relationship between form and setting, identifying both the oral sub-unit and the genre category to which it belonged would naturally illuminate historical setting and provide the starting point for the development of a history of tradition or a history of genres. Most often, the setting in life ascribed to these oral genres was tied to a social institution, such as the cult or the family.[78] The assumption that the biblical texts had an accessible oral history, then, was fundamental to the viability of the form critical method.[79] Unfortunately, because there is little evidence illuminating the literary development of the prophetic books and no evidence of

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[74] Hermann Gunkel, "The Prophets as Writers and Poets," in *Prophecy in Israel*, ed. David L. Peterson, IRT (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1987), 22.

[75] Robert R. Wilson, "New Form Criticism and the Prophetic Literature: The Unfinished Agenda," in *The Book of the Twelve and the New Form Criticism*, ed. Mark J. Boda, Michael H. Floyd, and Colin M. Toffelmire, ANEM 10 (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2015), 312; Gunkel, "The Prophets as Writers and Poets," 24.

[76] Toffelmire, "*Sitz Im* What?," 222.

[77] Mowinckel, *The Spirit and the Word*, 7.

[78] Toffelmire, "Form Criticism," 261.

[79] Toffelmire, "*Sitz Im* What?," 223.

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original oral units, classic form criticism came under intense scrutiny in the latter half of the twentieth century.[80] Indeed, scholars such as Antony Campbell now argue that the ongoing relevance of form criticism requires the abandonment of some of the method's original guiding principles—specifically the impetus to identify original oral units within the text.[81]

Such heavy critique has pushed form criticism toward a more synchronic approach, including the analysis of the relationship between diachronic redactional activity and synchronic literary structure, and has encouraged increased interplay between form criticism and newer critical methods, such as rhetorical criticism and linguistic theory.[82] In light of these changes, new form criticism has emerged as a still loosely formed, but viable way forward within and beyond classic form critical methods.[83] Most recently, Mark Boda, Michael Floyd, and Colin Toffelmire have published a volume of essays employing new form criticism for the study of the Book of the Twelve.[84] Although the essays represent a spectrum of perspectives and a variety of new critical methods in partnership with form criticism, Robert Wilson has identified several key features of the new form critical method. First, and most obvious given the above discussion, new form critics have largely given up the pursuit of an original oral substrata behind the biblical text, either because the task of reconstruction is deemed impossible, the oral forms are believed irretrievable, or because the books are considered purely literary (and, as a result, no oral precursors exist at all).[85] Second, new form critics focus attention primarily on the text in its final

[80] Toffelmire, "Form Criticism," 262.

[81] Antony F. Campbell, "Form Criticism's Future," in *The Changing Face of Form Criticism for the Twenty-First Century*, ed. Marvin A. Sweeney and Ehud Ben Zvi (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), 22–23.

[82] Sweeney and Ben Zvi, "Introduction," 3. Marvin A Sweeney and Ehud Ben Zvi's edited volume, *The Changing Face of Form Criticism for the Twenty-First Century,* provides both an overview of the critical changes to form criticism in the past fifty years and numerous essays responding to these changes and exploring potential ways to renew the usefulness of the method in contemporary biblical research.

[83] See Toffelmire, "Form Criticism," 257-71 for emergent themes and defining features of new form criticism.

[84] Mark J. Boda, Michael H. Floyd, and Colin M. Toffelmire, eds., *The Book of the Twelve & the New Form Criticism*, ANEM 10 (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2015).

[85] Wilson, "New Form Criticism," 315.

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form rather than any earlier forms, either oral or written, which may have preceded it.[86] Third, production of the prophetic books is most often assigned to the work of anonymous scribal elites in the exilic and early post-exilic periods.[87] Such a shift does not preclude the classic form critical concern for the function of genres in their social settings, but now includes the message and intentions of the scribal classes that formed works of literature.[88] Fourth, several new form critics have shifted to the study of prophetic books in their entirety.[89] Finally, and of particular importance for the present discussion, Wilson notes that many new form critics de-emphasize the traditional concern for a prophetic *Sitz im Leben*.[90]

Given that Gunkel and early form critics attached the notion of *Sitz im Leben* to their proposed pre-textual oral genres, it is not surprising that this element would be downplayed by contemporary form critics in response to the overwhelming consensus that the reconstruction of an oral history for the biblical literature is largely impossible. Instead, new form critics, cognizant that context remains an important category for interpretation, frequently refer to a sub-section of a text's *Sitz im Buch* or *Sitz in der Literatur*.[91] Both of these are helpful concepts for the analysis of prophetic books and alert the reader to the existence of the prophetic books as works of literature. However, it remains insufficient to simply replace the concept of *Sitz im Leben* with that of a *Sitz im Buch/Sitz in der Literatur*. This is because, as Toffelmire has argued, "the concept of *Sitz im Leben* hits upon the vitally important fact that communication occurs in

[86] Wilson, "New Form Criticism," 316.
[87] Wilson, "New Form Criticism," 316.
[88] Michael H. Floyd, "Introduction," in *The Book of the Twelve & the New Form Criticism*, ed. Mark J. Boda, Michael H. Floyd, and Colin M. Toffelmire, ANEM 10 (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2015), 1.
[89] Wilson, "New Form Criticism," 316. The study of the prophetic book as a generic form is a striking move away from classic form criticism given that Gunkel questioned whether or not 'prophetic book' was a legitimate category and suggested that to speak of a prophetic book would first require the researcher to "investigate whether such a thing exists at all" (Gunkel, "The Prophets as Writers and Poets," 31).
[90] Wilson, "New Form Criticism," 316; see also, Floyd, "Introduction," 15.
[91] Toffelmire, "Form Criticism," 263; Toffelmire, "*Sitz Im* What?," 224.

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context."[92] Thus, to ignore the social setting of an instance of communication, here the prophetic book as a work of literature, is to neglect important elements of textual interpretation.[93] There is a relationship between history and literature that can be examined in the biblical literature, and specifically, the prophetic books. Indeed, as Kim has argued, "we still have an invitation by the text (which often possesses the aspects of both history and story) to imagine or conjecture the various settings of the events, immediate audience, later tradents, final redactor, and beyond."[94] What is at issue, then, is at what level the text is examined for its *Sitz im Leben* and what evidence is available to prevent the researcher from lapsing into purely conjectural descriptions of ancient settings. New form criticism also offers a potential way forward in this regard.

Given that new form critics reject Gunkel's proposition regarding the plausibility of identifying oral originals from the prophetic texts, an examination of a prophetic *Sitz im Leben* must make a parallel move. Accordingly, new studies of *Sitz im Leben* must occur at the level of the text in its final form rather than at the level of a hypothetical oral substratum existing prior to the text as it is now available. Ben Zvi, Kim, and Toffelmire all argue that this work may be done by taking the final form of entire prophetic books as a starting place.[95] With entire books as the objects of examination, the question of evidence also changes. That is, because the interpreter begins with the textual artifact, there exists a standard or a measure of admissible evidence for determining a book's *Sitz im Leben*—the prophetic book itself provides indicators through its structure, content, and rhetorical strategies that may illuminate the setting from which it

[92] Toffelmire, "Form Criticism," 263.

[93] Toffelmire's own work approaches the *Sitz im Leben* of prophetic literature via the concept of context of situation in Systemic Functional Linguistics (see, Toffelmire, "*Sitz Im* What?," 226–31; and Toffelmire, *A Discourse and Register Analysis of the Prophetic Book of Joel*, 36–40).

[94] H. C. P. Kim, "Form Criticism in Dialogue with Other Criticisms: Building the Multidimensional Structures of Texts and Concepts," in *The Changing Face of Form Criticism for the Twenty-First Century*, ed. Marvin A. Sweeney and Ehud Ben Zvi (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), 96.

[95] Ben Zvi, "The Prophetic Book," 293–95; Kim, "Form Criticism," 92; and Toffelmire, "*Sitz Im* What?," 225.

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emerged. These, along with a thick description of the historical time period responsible for the production of the literary artifact (achieved through the use of all sociological, anthropological, and archaeological data available for the region), provide the means through which a prophetic *Sitz im Leben* may be approached anew.[96]

2.6. Conclusion

Already some of the tools provided by cultural memory theory that pair well with new form criticism and offer insight regarding the *Sitz im Leben* of Habakkuk may be readily apparent. For example, as has been discussed at length above, cultural memory theory offers insight regarding the relationship between literature and production communities, the role of memory in community identity negotiation, and the significance of the selections made from past communal experiences (memories) for reuse in the present. As has already been demonstrated, cultural memory theory's insights regarding the reuse of the past for the present means that which aspects of memory are drawn on reveals something about the reception community, including their needs, challenges, and experiences. Partnering cultural memory theory with new form criticism, the present study will shed light on the *Sitz im Leben* of Habakkuk in three stages. First, in chapter 3, the date and historical provenance of the book will be examined in greater detail. At this stage, initial comments will also be made on the structure of the book in its final form, focusing especially on the content of chapters 1–2. In the second stage, Hab 3 will be the primary focus of analysis. The archaic poetry of Hab 3:3–15 will be examined on three levels, first regarding its antiquity; second, for its intertextual links to the ANE, including but not restricted to the nation of Israel; and, finally, for its *Sitz in der Literatur*. This final analysis will provide the foundation on which comments regarding Habakkuk's *Sitz im Leben* will be built, as

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[96] Kim, "Form Criticism," 94.

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it is in considering the relationship between Habakkuk's use of archaic poetry and the first two chapters of the book that questions regarding the function of the book for community identity negotiation might be asked and addressed. Thus, the third and final stage will bring this study to its conclusion by revisiting its initial questions: what needs drove the production of this literary artifact? And, what purpose may it have served for those who received it? In so doing, I align myself, albeit from a different starting place, with the concerns of early form critics who were interested in both the setting in life of prophetic activity and ". . . the function it exercises in the life of the religious community."[97]

[97] Mowinckel, *The Spirit and the Word*, 38.

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3. THE PRESENT: DATE, HISTORICAL CIRCUMSTANCE, AND HABAKKUK 1–2

3.1. Introduction

Guided by questions regarding the earliest reception community of Habakkuk's prophecy, the present chapter emerges as a first response to the methodological matters considered in chapter 2. Given that all groups, past and present, are spatially and temporally situated and bearing in mind Ben Zvi's apt reminder that the study of cultural memory in ancient Israel[1] must be paired with a comprehensive historical analysis, the present chapter will deal primarily with matters of dating and history.[2] However, I am also mindful of both Landy's and Polak's reminders that the artifact under consideration is, quite obviously, literary in nature.[3] Therefore, to attend well to both the history of Habakkuk's community and the context in which Habakkuk's hymn is situated, I will also here consider the structure of the book in its final form and the content of chapters 1 and 2, which may be understood as the primary means by which Habakkuk's prophecy is fitted into the community's shared narrative. This chapter, then, will unfold in three related sections. First, guided by Hübenthal's insight on the significance of distinguishing between an aesthetic of production and an aesthetic of reception, I will carefully consider the earliest date at which we might talk about a completed version of Habakkuk's prophesy and how such a date situates the book in relationship to its earliest reception community.[4] Second, heeding the insights of Ben Zvi, I will examine the historical situation of Habakkuk's reception community, particularly regarding issues of power, national boundaries,

[1] For Ben Zvi, specifically ancient Yehud. For the present study, ancient Judah will be considered. However, "Israel" may be used here as a general signifier encompasses the study of cultural memory in the Hebrew Bible, where specific group labels would depend on the book studied and the reception community under consideration.

[2] Ben Zvi, "Remembering the Prophets," 21–22.

[3] Landy, "Notes," 342; and Polak, "Afterword," 297.

[4] Hübenthal, "Social and Cultural Memory," 176.

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and social identity navigation. Finally, I will conclude the chapter by making initial comments on the literary style of the book and the content of its first two chapters. Upon completion of this final section, then, emerges the possibility of considering Habakkuk's hymn as cultural memory within its *Sitz in der Literatur* and its reception community. If, as has already been argued, cultural memory theory is about the "interplay of the past and the present,"[5] then the present chapter is about what constituted the 'present' for the reception community of Habakkuk's prophecy and, as a result, is an essential first step of analysis for understanding the past's significance for that same community.

3.2. Date

Dating the book of Habakkuk hinges on four inter-related criteria. First, each complaint issued by the prophet (1:2–4 and 1:12–2:1) concerns the activity of a group or individual ambiguously labeled "the wicked" (1:4, 13). Over the course the book's history of interpretation, the referent(s) of these two uses of רָשָׁע has had significant influence over the historical situation in which the book is thought to have been written (the most frequently argued options are first the Judeans/Judean leadership and then the Babylonians, first the Assyrians and then the Babylonians, first the Egyptians and then the Babylonians, or the Babylonians throughout the book).[6] Second, and interwoven with the first, the interpreter must account for the mention of תּוֹרָה in 1:4. Third, there are two points at which the text seems to indicate the presence of a functioning Temple in Judah. The first is located in 2:1, where there is mention of מִשְׁמַרְתִּי, a location associated with priestly activity in the Temple (cf. 2 Chr 7:6; 8:14; 35:2),[7] and the

[5] Erll, "Cultural Memory Studies," 2.
[6] O'Brien, *Nahum*, 62.
[7] James D. Nogalski, *The Book of the Twelve: Micah–Malachi*, SHBC (Macon, Georgia: Smyth & Helwys, 2011), 667.

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second in 2:20, where Yhwh is said to be present in "his holy temple." Finally, and perhaps most significantly, the mention of הַכַּשְׂדִּים, "the Chaldeans," in 1:6. Although 1:6 is the most obvious historical reference within the book as a whole, numerous proposals for alternate readings, emendations, and source critical layering have led to a wide range of dates for the book's final form, beginning in the mid-seventh century and extending into the mid-second century B.C.E. I will briefly survey these options before suggesting that the period of time between the death of Josiah (609 B.C.E.) and the destruction of Solomon's Temple (587/6 B.C.E.) is the most likely timeframe for the composition of the book.

Karl Budde proposed that the first use of רָשָׁע in Hab 1:4 refers to the Assyrians and, as a result, suggested the earliest date for the book, in the mid-seventh century B.C.E.[8] In this view, the Assyrians are experienced as a national oppressor of Judah and the Babylonians, mentioned by name in 1:6, are Yhwh's instrument of punishment and justice in destroying the power of Assyria. A variant on this view was proposed more recently by Patterson, who suggests that the identity of the רָשָׁע in 1:4 is Manassah. He thus proposes a date prior to 652 B.C.E.[9] In both cases, הַכַּשְׂדִּים in 1:6 refers to the Chaldeans, however, it is taken as a prediction of future events produced prior to 612 B.C.E.[10] Although this view does account for the mention of the Chaldeans in 1:6 and locates the identity of the wicked as an entity that had, at one point, enough political sway to cause "the righteous" in Judah distress, there is no internal evidence to suggest that the Assyrians are a concern for Habakkuk.[11]

[8] Anderson, *Habakkuk*, 24. Anderson is summarizing the work of Karl Budde in "Habakuk," *ZDMG* 84 (1930).
[9] Patterson, *Nahum*, 115–17.
[10] Anderson, *Habakkuk*, 24.
[11] Anderson, *Habakkuk*, 24.

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Although Budde and Patterson's early pre-exilic date is not widely embraced by contemporary scholarship, a pre-exilic date in the late seventh century or early sixth century is the most commonly suggested time frame for the provenance of the book. Proponents of this view, however, diverge at the identification of the wicked in Hab 1:4 and 1:13. Three views have been proposed, each hinging on the question of whether or not the two references to the רָשָׁע are speaking about the same oppressor and dealing with two main options: an internal Judean threat and an external Babylonian threat. Of these, Robert D. Haak is unique in asserting that both the רָשָׁע and the צַדִּיק in Habakkuk consistently refer to two royal figures, Jehoiakim and Jehoahaz, respectively. Thus, Haak suggests that Habakkuk is consistently pro-Babylonian and laments the injustice of Jehoahaz's captivity in Egypt.[12] While such a view accounts for 1:2–4 and its description of what appears to be a perversion of justice within Judah (especially if one takes the mention of תּוֹרָה in 1:4 specifically rather than generically), it does not account for the use of the 3ms pronomial suffixes in 1:12 that rely on Yhwh's description of the Babylonians in 1:5–11 for their antecedent. If this is the case, then Habakkuk's lament in 1:12–2:1 must concern the Babylonian distribution of justice promised in 1:5–11, a position difficult to describe as pro-Babylonian.

Similar to Haak, scholars such as Francis L. Anderson,[13] O. Palmer Robertson,[14] Elizabeth Achtemeier,[15] William P. Steeger,[16] and F. F. Bruce[17] are agreed that Habakkuk's complaint in 1:2–4 is related to an internal state of affairs, rather than an international threat.

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[12] Haak, *Habakkuk*, 107–49.

[13] Anderson, *Habakkuk*, 19.

[14] Robertson, *The Books of Nahum, Habakkuk, and Zephaniah*, 34.

[15] Elizabeth Achtemeier, *Nahum–Malachi*, IBC (Atlanta: John Knox, 1986), 25.

[16] William P. Steeger, "Habakkuk," in *The Prophets*, ed. Watson E. Mills and Richard F. Wilson, Mercer Commentary on the Bible (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1996), 322.

[17] F. F. Bruce, "Habakkuk," in *The Minor Prophets: An Exegetical and Expository Commentary*, ed. Thomas McComiskey (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1993), 32–34.

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They also all diverge from Haak in asserting that the two uses of רָשָׁע in 1:4 and 1:13 each have a distinct referent. In this case, the perversion of justice in 1:2–4, leading to the oppression of the righteous by the wicked, results from a breakdown in Judean society. In this case, the mention of תּוֹרָה in 1:4 is a significant factor for interpretation because it indicates "a domestic situation."[18] More specifically, Bruce has argued that the reign of Jehoiakim is a suitable time period for such a complaint to be made, particularly based on the description of Jehoiakim's reign in Jer 22:13–19.[19] Indeed, given that Josiah's reign is an unlikely time period in which a prophet might utter a complaint about the perversion of Torah, a date after 609 B.C.E. is most probable and, given the brevity of Jehoahaz's reign, Jehoiakim is a very likely candidate for the ruling power responsible for the societal conditions described in Hab 1:2–4. Each of these commentators then go on to argue that the second group referred to through Habakkuk's use of רָשָׁע (1:13) is most naturally understood as the Babylonians (based on the use of הַכַּשְׂדִּים in 1:6). A variant on this view is argued by Marvin A. Sweeney and Michael H. Floyd, both of whom suggest a late pre-exilic date for the book, most likely in the late seventh century. Sweeney suggests after 605 B.C.E., once Judah has become a vassal state to Babylon, and Floyd prefers a more generic date, namely, the period of the Babylonian crisis, anywhere between the late seventh century and mid-sixth century B.C.E.[20] However, both Floyd and Sweeney argue that the identity of the רָשָׁע is the Babylonians throughout the book, either suggesting that Habakkuk's initial complaint concerns Babylon and his second complaint concerns his surprise in finding that Yhwh is responsible for the injustice caused by the Babylonians (Sweeney),[21] or by suggesting that Hab 1:2–4 and 12–17

[18] Anderson, *Habakkuk*, 19; See also, Robertson, *The Books of Nahum, Habakkuk, and Zephaniah*, 34.
[19] Bruce, "Habakkuk," 32–34.
[20] Sweeney, *Micah*, 454–55; Floyd, *Minor Prophets*, 82.
[21] Sweeney, *Micah*, 454–55.

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are one continuous complaint that has been interrupted by the insertion of Hab 1:5–11 (Floyd).[22] Floyd's interpretation potentially brings the date for the final form of the book into the exilic period, a view also promoted by Bruckner who argues that the earliest dialogue in the book may be dated to approximately 605 B.C.E., but that the totality of the book covers the period of 605–539 B.C.E., including Assyria's downfall, Babylon's rise to power, the destruction of Jerusalem, and Babylon's anticipated demise.[23] Each section of the book, according to Bruckner, would be interpreted against a different historical backdrop.[24]

Less frequently, post-exilic dates have been suggested for the book. For example, Bernhard Duhm held that the book should be dated to the mid-fourth century, arguing that the רָשָׁע of Habakkuk's complaint be identified as the Greeks under the military leadership of Alexander the Great, and Otto Happel suggested a date as late as the mid-second century, finding the Seleucid Empire under the leadership of Antiochus Epiphanes in the רָשָׁע of 1:4 and 1:13.[25] Both of these suggestions rely on an alternate reading of הַכַּשְׂדִּים in Hab 1:6. Duhm suggested that the text ought to be read Kittim rather than Chaldeans and, thus, refer to the Greeks not the Babylonians. However, as Robertson has argued, the normal use of הַכַּשְׂדִּים is to refer to the Chaldeans, which is the case in the 82 additional times it occurs in the Hebrew Bible.[26] There is very little reason to suggest it would mean otherwise in this case. Additionally, Happel's argument regarding a date for the book during the Seleucid Empire is quickly discounted given that Jesus Ben Sirach makes mention of a "collection of twelve prophets" in the early second

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[22] Floyd, *Minor Prophets*, 82.
[23] James Bruckner, *Jonah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah*, NIVAC (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2004), 202.
[24] Bruckner, *Jonah*, 202.
[25] Anderson, *Habakkuk*, 26.
[26] Robertson, *The Books of Nahum, Habakkuk, and Zephaniah*, 34.

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century B.C.E.[27] Neither of these views are widely embraced in contemporary Habakkuk scholarship, though their influence is still felt in the commentaries.

More recently, James D. Nogalski has suggested a post-exilic date for the book based on source critical concerns. Nogalski argues that Habakkuk should be dated to the Persian Empire because: (1) the superscriptions and the cultic indicators in chapter 3 are very similar to those in the Psalter, books 1–3 of which were not compiled until the Persian period; (2) "intertextual allusions to the Priestly creation story" (e.g. Hab 1:14) indicate a date after the proposed exilic or post-exilic date for the Pentateuch; (3) Habakkuk, similar to Nahum, includes a theophanic hymn and should be dated to a similar time period;[28] and (4) the book, as a theodicy, is most obviously related to the situation in Judah after the destruction of Jerusalem.[29] Such a date is permitted in Nogalski's reasoning because the most significant historical reference in the book, Hab 1:6's mention of Babylon, is thought to be the work of a later redactor, rather than original to the book's core material. Given that Nogalski considers the apparently functioning temple as a key piece of evidence, this leaves a date either prior to the destruction of the temple in 587/6 or during the Second Temple Period.[30] While Nogalski is certainly correct in asserting that the book

[27] Anderson, *Habakkuk*, 26.

[28] Nogalski's use of Nahum to date Habakkuk is related to his view of the unity of the Book of the Twelve. He suggests that, since both hymns indicate the possibility of ritual use and should be dated late, it is likely that they were added to existing, composite literature associated with the prophets Nahum and Habakkuk in the Persian period for the purpose of integrating this literature into the Book of the Twelve (Nogalski, *Micah–Malachi*, 649). Of course, underlying this position is the assumption that the Book of the Twelve may be understood as essentially one book, that the date of its final form is the date of the final form for each 'book' therein, and that the Twelve should primarily be read as a literary unity. This assumption, however, is not universally accepted in current scholarship. O'Brien, for example, argues that at least the superscriptions indicate that each book might be (and perhaps should be) read as a unit unto itself (O'Brien, *Nahum*, 19). Indeed, that each book also fits into and responds to a unique historical situation also indicates that the material is less a literary unity and more a "thematized anthology" (David L. Peterson, "A Book of the Twelve?," in *Reading and Hearing the Book of the Twelve*, ed. James D. Nogalski and Marvin A. Sweeney, SymS 15 [Atlanta: SBL Press, 2000], 10). It is impossible to say with certainty whether or not the thematic commonality between the books is the result of intentional redaction or what was described in ch. 2 as the "social mindscape" of those who composed ancient Hebrew literature (see, Ben Zvi, "Remembering the Prophets," 19–20). Regardless, as has been argued here, there is good reason to date the book of Habakkuk much earlier than Nogalski proposes.

[29] Nogalski, *Micah–Malachi*, 648–49.

[30] Nogalski, *Micah–Malachi*, 647.

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could be understood as a post-exilic theological reflection on the Babylonian crisis, as it is a composition reflecting on the events of the Babylonian crisis as they unfolded, it is difficult to be dogmatic on the matter.[31] Given that Nogalski's two key pieces of evidence, the use of the creation account in Hab 1:14 and Hab 3's similarities to books 1–3 of the Psalter, are largely unverifiable (to suggest that Habakkuk relies on the priestly account of creation only requires that Habakkuk's community had knowledge of the tradition, not necessarily a copy of the Pentateuch in its final form; the same may be said regarding books 1–3 of the Psalter), it is equally likely that the book was composed prior to the destruction of the temple.

As Floyd has argued, and despite frequent arguments to the contrary,[32] Habakkuk's prophesy is quite clearly historically situated. In fact, Habakkuk can potentially be dated to a relatively narrow timeframe. Of course, this may not seem readily apparent given the broad range of dates proposed above. However, as has been indicated throughout the preceding survey, dates on the extreme end of the spectrum (i.e., the mid-seventh century, the fourth century, and the mid-second century B.C.E.) are largely unaccepted in contemporary scholarship and have been discounted because they cannot readily account for the internal evidence presented in Habakkuk itself. This leaves the period between 609 and 539 B.C.E., an already narrow timeframe. However, in accounting for the four primary criteria outlined above (the mention of תּוֹרָה in 1:4, the identity of the רָשָׁע in 1:4 and 1:13, the presence of a functioning temple in 2:1 and 20, and the mention of הַכַּשְׂדִּים, "the Chaldeans," in 1:6), the possibility of an even narrower timeframe presents itself. That is, as Anderson and Robertson have already argued, the use of the term תּוֹרָה indicates a domestic problem related to internal Judean leadership, the earliest date for

[31] Nogalski, *Micah–Malachi*, 648–49.

[32] It is occasionally argued that dating Habakkuk is a virtually impossible task because the book has been intentionally crafted with high levels of ambiguity in order to promote its re-appropriation in new contexts. See, for example, Childs, *Introduction*, 448–49; and O'Brien, *Nahum*, 62.

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the book is most probably after 609 B.C.E. Additionally, the sequential ordering of the material in the book suggests that the identity of the רָשָׁע shifts from the first complaint to the second. This is evidenced by the way that verses 1:12–17 rely on content from 1:5–11, which explicitly discusses the Babylonians. The description of the Babylonian activity in 1:12–17 and denouncement in the taunt song of 2:6–20 also suggests that the full force of Babylon's power has been or is being experienced by the prophet's community.[33] Consequently, these sections likely indicate a time period after 597 B.C.E., when Judah ceased to exist as an independent nation-state and the first wave of forced migrations took place.[34] However, to account for Habakkuk's assumption of a functioning temple in 2:1 and 2:20, it is unlikely that the book came together after the destruction of Solomon's Temple in 587/6 B.C.E. Indeed, as Floyd has argued, "nothing indicates that the book took a long time to assume its final form, and the final redaction can therefore be dated to a time shortly after the composition of its latest component part. . ."[35] Because chapter three is composed of an archaic hymn reused within its present context, the book as a whole can be dated according to chapters 1 and 2. Thus, it is possible to assert that Habakkuk's prophecy dates to the period of time between the death of Josiah in 609 B.C.E. and the destruction of Solomon's Temple in 587/6 B.C.E.[36]

With this date range established, I return to Hübenthal's interpretive questions, namely: what is the relationship between the artifact and the events it describes? And, what is the relationship between the recipient(s) and the artifact?[37] The answers to these two questions

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[33] J. J. M. Roberts, *Nahum, Habakkuk, and Zephaniah*, OTL (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1991), 82–84.

[34] Ahn, "Forced Migrations," 182.

[35] Floyd, *Minor Prophets*, 88.

[36] Of course, Nogalski's post-exilic date is also a good alternative. However, several of the moves Nogalski relies on to reach a later date are merely possible and not necessary. The internal evidence from the book, taken as a coherent whole, just as easily indicates an earlier date. Given this, Nogalski's view has not been adopted here. Nogalski has accounted for the available evidence, but such a complicated explanation is not necessary.

[37] Hübenthal, "Social and Cultural Memory," 191.

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strongly indicate that an analysis of Habakkuk's prophecy as cultural memory for its earliest reception community requires an aesthetic of production, one that accounts for the medium, content, and performance of the book as elements chosen to meet the specific and immediate needs of Habakkuk's Judahite community as they experienced the Babylonian crisis emerging in their own time. Thus, as a second step in the analysis of Habakkuk's community's present, I propose to offer as "thick" a description of the historical circumstances in which Habakkuk's community lived as biblical and extra-biblical evidence allows.

3.3. Historical Circumstance

Rather than approaching the study of the historical circumstance in which Habakkuk's community was living narrowly (that is, looking specifically at a period of time approximately 20 years in length), I will here begin by looking at the community's recent history in order to account for events in the recent memory of the group and make sense of the political arena, one only recently dramatically altered. Accordingly, though Habakkuk's prophecy may be dated later, our study of its historical circumstances will begin with the events of the mid-seventh century B.C.E.

Josiah inherited the throne in Judah at eight years old, in 640 B.C.E. While the biblical account, telling the history of Judah, presents a uniquely Judah-centric history, the major political powers during Josiah's reign were Egypt and Assyria. However, during this time the power dynamics in the ancient Near Eastern world were already beginning to shift. Assyria's internal political unity was disintegrating as Assurbanipal's two sons, Assur-etel-ilani and Sin-shar-ishkun entered into a dispute concerning the rightful heir to the Assyrian throne. Although Sin-shar-ishkun eventually took full control of Assyria in 623 B.C.E., the brothers' dispute proved fateful for the eventual downfall of the nation. This is because, during the period of

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internal conflict, Assyria neglected to place a king on the throne in their vassal state, Babylon. Given their increased freedom, the time proved ripe for a Babylonian uprising and the nation-state placed their own choice of ruler on the throne in 626 B.C.E.—Nabopalassar.[38] Aligned with the Medes, the Neo-Babylonian Empire emerged as a significant threat to the previously dominant Assyrian military. As warfare increased between Assyrian and Babylon, a political alliance between Egypt and Assyria (in opposition to Babylon) developed and strengthened.[39]

During this time, Judah's role in the international political scene was likely minimal. Accordingly, little information regarding the political and historical events of the ANE are recorded in the Hebrew Bible for this time period. However, the political power struggle between the major nation-states had a significant outcome for Judah. Because Assyria was pre-occupied with defending itself from Babylonian attack, Judah had increased political independence. Josiah appears to have made good use of this freedom by expanding Judah's borders into traditional Benjaminite territory and for religious reform, including the centralization of the cult (2 Kgs 23:1–26; 2 Chr 34–35).[40] As a result, the period of Josiah's reign in the biblical account is remembered as a highpoint in Judahite history, one where the nation-state enjoyed relative autonomy and religious fidelity.

During Josiah's reform, 622–609 B.C.E., events on the international scene were becoming more pressing for Assyria. Assyria's ancient capital city, Asshur, was conquered by Cyaxares, king of the Medes, and Nineveh fell, along with king Sin-shar-ishkun after a 3 month siege by the joint forces of the Medes and Babylonians in 612 B.C.E. Although the Assyrians appointed a new king at Haran, Ashuruaballit, the Babylonians had officially emerged as the

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[38] Richard D. Nelson, *Historical Roots of the Old Testament (1200–63 BCE)*, ed. Leo G. Perdue, BibEnc (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2014), 154–55.
[39] Robertson, *The Books of Nahum, Habakkuk, and Zephaniah*, 10–11.
[40] Nelson, *Historical Roots*, 154–55.

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major political power of the ancient Near Eastern world. Babylon continued its assault on Assyria in 610 B.C.E. at Haran, at which point the Egyptian army, led by Pharaoh Neco, moved to extend military aid to Assyria and maintain a buffer nation between themselves and the Neo-Babylonian Empire. For reasons unclear and likely lost to history, Josiah responded to Neco's extension of assistance to Assyria by moving to either join or intercept him.[41] Regardless of motivation, the events that unfolded led to Josiah's death at the hand of Neco in 609 B.C.E. and yet another turning point in the history of Judah.

Despite Neco's attempt to bring aid to Assyria, the Babylonians were successful in holding Egypt at bay and defeated Assyria at Haran. In 605 B.C.E. The Babylonian armies, now led by Nebuchdrezzar, son of Nabopolassar, crossed over the Euphrates River and launched an assault on the Egyptian stronghold of Charchemish.[42] The Egyptian armies were forced to retreat and, on return to Egypt, Neco took captive Josiah's successor, Jehoahaz, and replaced him with the 'puppet-king' Jehoiakim. The result was a tremendous victory for the Babylonians that allowed them to assume land previously controlled by the Egyptians. This territory included Judah, where Jehoiakim was already reversing the cultic reforms instituted by Josiah and, as a vassal state of Babylon, was enjoying significantly less political freedom. Consequently, Jehoiakim mounted a revolt in 601 B.C.E., to which the Neo-Babylonian Empire responded by marching on and besieging Jerusalem.[43] By the time of their arrival, Jehoiakim had died and Jehoiachin had become king (598 B.C.E). The siege resulted in a tremendous loss for Judah: Jehoiachin was taken captive; Zedekiah was appointed as his replacement by the Babylonians; and in 597 B.C.E., the first wave of forced migrations was inflicted upon Judah's elite. In the ten

[41] Nelson, *Historical Roots*, 160–61.
[42] Robertson, *The Books of Nahum, Habakkuk, and Zephaniah*, 14.
[43] O'Brien, *Nahum*, 61.

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years that followed, Judah existed under the control of the Babylonians until Zedekiah's revolt in 587/6 B.C.E. resulted in the destruction of Jerusalem, the Solomonic Temple, and the end of the Judean state.

This description of the rise of the Neo-Babylonian Empire and the beginning of the Babylonian crisis in Judah largely follows the standard pre-exilic–exilic–(post-exilic) timeline followed in biblical studies for organizing biblical events, figures, and literature. However, one element above is indicative of a recent shift in exilic scholarship and has significant import for my work and questions regarding Habakkuk's community's experiences and needs. This is the use of the term forced migration to describe the movement of Judahite elite out of Judah and into Babylon in 597 B.C.E.

John J. Ahn, among others, has moved research on the Judean experience of exile forward by applying modern studies of forced migration to the biblical accounts of the exile. One significant result concerns the pre-exilic to post-exilic timeline, outlined above and most commonly used in biblical studies.[44] Ahn argues that, while the study of the exilic period typically begins with the destruction of the temple in 587/6 B.C.E., this date is not the first record of forced displacement and resettlement of Judeans to Babylon and, as a result, is not the proper beginning of the "exile." Ahn argues that what has been neglected in studies of the exile is that "Judah was already conquered and annexed by the Neo-Babylonians (597 B.C.E.)."[45] Therefore, it is technically correct to speak of the first wave of forced migrants, those displaced in 597 B.C.E., as exiles. However, the subsequent waves of forced migration, in 587/6 and 582 B.C.E. are actually internal displacements of peoples within Babylon. Significantly, he goes on to say that "Judah ceased to exist autonomously after Jehoiachin relinquished the Davidic throne

[44] Ahn, "Forced Migrations," 173–89.
[45] Ahn, "Forced Migrations," 182.

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in 597 B.C.E. . . . thus the 587 B.C.E. event is not so much a conquering or even a reconquering of Judah or Jerusalem, but the quelling of an insurrection by destroying Judah's religious edifice as punishment, and displacing and resettling another group of its landed gentry to serve as additional expendable laborers in Babylon."[46] Given that the final form of Habakkuk likely dates to the period of time after the first wave of exiles are taken into Babylon and before the destruction of the temple in 587/6 B.C.E., Ahn's re-categorization of events is a helpful distinction. This is because Habakkuk's community, while likely located in Judah near the temple cult, was a community whose nation had recently been annexed by a larger nation-state and whose fellow community members, likely those with some influence and leadership in Jerusalem, had recently be displaced from Judah and were now living in exile within the heart of the Babylonian Empire. For Habakkuk's community, then, the present and the recent past posed significant threats to their political, social, and religious existence—in other words, the community's present dramatically challenged the their shared identity.

Politically, after only a brief 500 years of history, Babylon had recently ended Judah's existence as an independent state. Considering these events, Babylon represented a present threat to Judah's very existence given their power to bring about their vassal's complete collapse.[47] Indeed, history looks back on the exile of Judah to Babylon as the beginning of the diaspora, and a time of significant political restructuring, or deconstructing, which ultimately resulted in the decentralization of leadership and worship, increased the role of family and kinship bonds, and promoted innovations in religious practice.[48] The experience of exile and the eventual

[46] Ahn, "Forced Migrations," 182.

[47] Rainer Albertz, "More and Less Than a Myth: Reality and Significance of Exile for the Political, Social, and Religious History of Judah," in *By the Irrigation Canals of Babylon: Approaches to the Study of the Exile*, ed. John J. Ahn and Jill Middlemas, LHBOTS 526 (New York, NY: T & T Clark International, 2012), 27.

[48] Albertz, "More and Less Than a Myth," 29–31.

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destruction of the temple challenged the dominant "Jerusalemite state theology," which held the temple mount and the city that housed the kings as impenetrable due to Yhwh's presence in the temple and protection of the monarchy.[49] As a result, the displacement of the Judahite king and portions of the community's elite in 597 B.C.E., as well as the looming threat of Babylon both challenged and soon demanded that this theology be reconstructed in order to account for the historical experiences of the religious community. After the destruction of the temple in 587/6 B.C.E., this would mean the radical decentralization of the cult, both in leadership and in theology, as different groups emerged to respond to and makes sense of their loss. Albertz notes that "with the collapse of the Judean state, the destruction of the Jerusalem temple, and the connected theological problem of whether these events demonstrated Yhwh's impotence vis-à-vis the Babylonian gods. . . " resulted in theological changes such as the solidification of monotheism within the community.[50] Habakkuk's community existed in the tension between the old patterns of life and the new challenges presented by the Babylonians, between the standard state theology of Judah and the reconstructed theology of the post-exilic community. Unsurprisingly then, aspects of Habakkuk's prophecy evidence this tension, for example, regarding confidence in Yhwh's presence in the temple (2:20) and on the point of monotheism (2:5, 17; 3:5), as well as the kind of identity negotiation we might expect from a Judahite community at the very beginning of the exilic period.

Two key aspects of this negotiation, according to Wilson and Albertz, were the retelling of the community's stories in ways that integrated new experiences into past frameworks[51] and

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[49] Albertz, "More and Less Than a Myth," 28.

[50] Albertz, "More and Less Than a Myth," 28–29.

[51] Robert R. Wilson, "Forced Migration and the Formation of the Prophetic Literature," in *By the Irrigation Canals of Babylon: Approaches to the Study of the Exile*, ed. John J. Ahn and Jill Middlemas, LHBOTS (New York, NY: T & T Clark International, 2012), 135.

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participation in "confessional acts of religious faith" through which community members could demonstrate and affirm their affiliation with the group and mark distinct boundaries for their corporate identity.[52] While neither Wilson nor Albertz are speaking specifically about issues of memory or a community's identity formation through the use of their shared past, their comments clearly reflect the concerns of those who study cultural memory theory. As was discussed in chapter 2, Straub has demonstrated that reconstructive activity, essential to the process of identity negotiation, is the result of fitting together the events of the present with those of the past while also maintaining a vision of a shared future.[53] Engaging in this process is key for group cohesion and, ultimately, for the survival of a group over time. Consequently, Habakkuk's choices regarding his community's shared past (Hab 3's prayer) and the performance of liturgical acts of remembrance (evidenced in 3:1 and 19), are indicative of Habakkuk's community's present navigation of the threats posed to their existence during the ensuing crisis of Babylonian domination. It is the events of this crisis that will be keyed onto past frames in order for Habakkuk's community to "locate and find meaning in their present experience," a topic that will be the dominant focus of chapter 4.[54] This process, enacted in communal practices, is seen in microcosm in the book of Habakkuk itself. Therefore, an examination of the structure, and content of Habakkuk 1–2 is an appropriate next step for the present study.

3.4. Habakkuk 1–2: Structural and Thematic Analysis

As was highlighted in chapter 2, the act of writing and preserving literary artifacts is an act of commemoration. The content, both old and new, that is selected, interpreted, and

[52] Albertz, "More and Less Than a Myth," 31.
[53] Straub, "Psychology," 220.
[54] Schwartz, "From *Abraham Lincoln*," 245.

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incorporated into a work of literature reflects the perceived needs of the community through the eyes of the writer or the writing community (as may be the case in the production of biblical texts). As the object of study, this content can be analyzed both structurally and topically. That is, how the material is organized and its primary themes. This two part analysis allows for a better understanding of a work of literature as a whole, both providing for attentiveness to literary context and close consideration of key topics. Such an analysis is the focal point of the final section of the present chapter. I will begin with a structural analysis of the book of Habakkuk as a whole, including preliminary comments on Hab 3:3–15's relationship to the book on an organizational level. Following this, a thematic analysis of Hab 1–2 will highlight key issues revealed in Habakkuk's prophecy, including the nature of Habakkuk's lament, the characterization of Babylon, and the desired communal response in light of both, a final theme which serves as a natural precursor to a concentrated exploration of Hab 3.

The book of Habakkuk, as has already been highlighted in the above discussion regarding the date of the book's final form, is largely considered composite material. The source(s) of this material is contested, with some commentators suggesting that all or most of the content can be traced back to a prophet called Habakkuk (albeit originating at different points in the prophet's lifetime)[55] and others suggesting a variety of sources brought together through multiple stages of redactional activity.[56] Given the brief time period during which the material of Habakkuk came together, it is quite possible, if not probable, the one person (perhaps even the prophet called Habakkuk, for whom the book is named) or a small group of people are responsible for bringing the material together. What is most significant here is not that the book is made up of composite material, but that this material shows signs of intentional organization. That is, although it would

[55] Bruckner, *Jonah*, 202.
[56] Nogalski, *Micah–Malachi*, 649.

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be a misnomer to label the book a narrative, the contents of the book display a juxtaposition that allows them to be read progressively so that a "thematic development" arises even though events or actions described therein are not explicitly linked.[57]

Indeed, it is because of this sequencing of material that Babylon is understood as the primary concern of Habakkuk following the introduction of הַכַּשְׂדִּים in 1:6, after which the text assumes that the primary antagonist of Habakkuk's lament will remain at the forefront of the reader's or hearer's mind and comfortably relies on (predominantly 3ms) pronouns to refer to this character throughout. This is also why, even though Habakkuk's second complaint (1:12–2:1) resonates with his first (1:2–4), the interpretation of its content changes based on the intervening material in 1:5–11.[58] Additionally, this sequencing of material means that Yhwh's proclamation of a vision and the subsequent woe oracles are read as a response to the preceding laments. Thus, Roberts is accurate in stating that the material of Habakkuk has been arranged in such a way as to produce a "coherent, sequentially developed argument."[59] Given that Habakkuk displays intentional literary shaping and argumentation, it is also possible to talk about plot development within the book. Loosely presented, then, the book begins with an initial lament concerning a situation of internal Judean conflict. This first lament is followed by a response that announces the emergence of a new international power, Babylon, as the work of Yhwh for the present time. Either this oracle or the actual experience of Babylon's domination then leads to a

[57] Floyd, *Minor Prophets*, 84.

[58] That the Chaldeans are revealed by name in 1:6 changes how the reader/hearer naturally perceives the content of 1:12–2:1. While there may be different source critical explanations for how these materials relate to each other, for example, Floyd and Nogalski's suggestions that one original lament has been interrupted by the content of 1:5–11, in the final form of the book, 1:12–2:1 is naturally interpreted in light of the new revelation from the preceding verses (Floyd, *Minor Prophets*, 81–82; Nogalski, *Micah–Malachi*, 649). Indeed, as O'Brien has argued, the presentation of this material and the similarities in theme (for example, the idolization of power) suggest that these sections should be read in order (O'Brien, *Nahum*, 71).

[59] Roberts, *Nahum*, 81. Although, interestingly, Roberts does not take this argument to its natural conclusion (i.e., that the woe oracles themselves are the content of the vision proclaimed in 2:2), but argues that the vision is delayed until ch. 3.

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second lament, one which intensifies the distress of 1:2–4. The plot then builds to a climax at the close of the second lament with the prophet's assertion of both strong desire and resolve—communicated through the tripartite use of the cohortative in 2:1—to wait on an answer from God and Yhwh's response in 2:2, the first time Yhwh is explicitly identified as speaker. The content of the vision follows, prefaced by the exhortation of 2:3–5 and explicated in a series of 5 woe oracles addressed to Babylon. Finally, the book comes to a conclusion with the response of the prophet (and the community) through a prayer of supplication in Hab 3. This basic plot description is reflected in a structural outline of the book:[60]

I. The *maśśā'* of Habakkuk (1:1–2:20)

A. Superscription (1:1)

B. Habakkuk's first lament (1:2–4)

C. Yhwh's first response (1:5–11)

D. Habakkuk's second lament (1:12–2:1)

[60] Recent structural analyses of Habakkuk are remarkably consistent in numerous areas, for example, the division of ch. 1 into four subsections (1:1; 1:2–4; 1:5–11; and 1:12–17[2:1]) and the identification of five woes in 2:6–20 (Dietrich is an exception, he finds 6 woes beginning in 2:5 [Dietrich, *Nahum*, 144]). However, two significant points of divergence exist: First, the division of the book into 2 or 3 major sections and, second, where to place divisions in the material of 2:1–5. The structural analysis here takes its cues from the structural markers present within the book itself. Thus, the division into two major sections is natural given that the book contains two superscriptions, the first in 1:1 and the second in 3:1. This position is thoroughly argued by Marvin A. Sweeney (Sweeney, "Structure," 63–83) and represented in the work of Bruce and Patterson (Bruce, "Habakkuk," 837; Patterson, *Nahum*, 126–27; Anderson, *Habakkuk*, 15). Interpretive decisions regarding structural divisions in 2:1–5 are more difficult. However, if the MT remains unaltered, structural clues do emerge. The structural outline provided above is based on the following textual markers: (1) 2:1 is included with 1:12–17 since there is no change of speaker and no obvious textual break. Habakkuk is the implied subject of the 1cs verbal forms in 2:1 and, as a result, the verse is best understood as a continuation of his lament, which began in 1:12. Verse 2:2 marks a new section in the text with the introduction of a direct quotation through the use of וַיֹּאמֶר. (2) While 2:4 and 2:5 are frequently divided by commentators (see, for example, Patterson, *Nahum*, 126–27; Dietrich, *Nahum*, 144; Roberts, *Nahum*, 82; and Bruce, "Habakkuk," 837), the verses are tightly tied through the subordinating conjunction וְאַף כִּי and, as result, should be taken as a unit (Michael H. Floyd, "Prophecy and Writing in Habakkuk 2,1–5," *ZAW* 105 (1993): 473–74). Furthermore, although a subsection beginning at 2:6 has been identified above, it should be noted that 2:2–20 comprise one unit, since no change of speaker or prominent structural division can be identified. The subsection at 2:6 is introduced by a second occurrence of וַיֹּאמֶר, this time introducing an indirect quotation (that is, Yhwh remains the primary speaker and reports the speech of another). That these verses are linked is indicated by the 3cp/3mp pronouns at the beginning of verse 6, which find their antecedents in 2:5's references to "the nations" and "the peoples."

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E. Yhwh’s second response (2:2–20)

1. Exhortation (2:2–5)

2. A taunt song raised against Babylon (2:6–20)

II. The Prayer of Habakkuk (3:1–19)

A. Superscription (3:1)

B. Frame: Habakkuk’s supplication (3:2)

C. Prayer (3:3–15)

1. God comes from the South (3:3–7)

2. Yhwh’s battle (3:8–15)

D. Frame: Habakkuk’s response (3:16–19a)

E. Postscript (3:19b)

While Hab 1–2 are tightly woven together under the superscription of 1:1, Hab 3 appears more loosely tied to the book, particularly given the placement of a second superscription at 3:1, which disrupts the sequential flow. However, as will be demonstrated in the subsequent chapter, the prayer of Habakkuk plays an integral part in the rhetoric of the book (most significantly, because of the way it draws on Judah’s shared past in order to re-interpret Judah’s present). This is most readily demonstrated through a thematic analysis of Hab 1–2, one which may serve as a starting place for an exploration of Hab 3. Three key themes emerge: the nature of Habakkuk’s laments, the characterization of Babylon, and the exhortation to ethical living.

Interpreters frequently assert that Habakkuk is a prophetic theodicy addressing the apparent apathy of Yhwh towards the oppression of the righteous in Judah.[61] Such a description is apt, particularly in light of the predominant theme of lament in Hab 1–2, where Habakkuk

[61] For example, Nogalski, *Micah–Malachi*, 645–55; and O’Brien, *Nahum*, 58.

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questions whether or not Yhwh can be called just when the wicked go unpunished and the righteous become their victims.[62] Indeed, as Watts has observed, the psalmody of the book does not begin in Hab 3, but is also evidenced in these opening laments, where the artistry of Hebrew poetry evokes both distress and outrage at Yhwh's "inexplicable passivity in the face of the Chaldean depravations."[63] The rhetorical impact of these prophetic poems is especially felt in the opening verses of Hab 1, where the lines are crafted with pervasive parallelism, exemplified in the A–B–A'–B' intensifying pattern of verse 2 and the repetition of terms describing the community's distress ("violence," "trouble," "iniquity," "destruction," "strife," and "contention") "intensifies the poignancy" of the complaint.[64] As a result, the reading or listening audience is quickly caught up in the intensity of Habakkuk's lament. Indeed, if Habakkuk speaks on behalf of his community, such rhetoric may speak to the personal experiences of those who receive his prophecy.

Like the poetry of Lamentations, Habakkuk opens with a question that invites the reader/listener to contemplate the character of Yhwh in light of present circumstances marked by oppression, רָשָׁע מַכְתִּיר אֶת־הַצַּדִּיק, and injustice, יֵצֵא מִשְׁפָּט מְעֻקָּל (1:4). Although Habakkuk receives a response (1:5–11), the present situation of his community is not improved, but rather, has disintegrated further. Thus, a second lament is issued in 1:12–2:1, this time predicated on the antiquity and faithfulness of Yhwh,[65] as though to heighten the persuasive impact of the complaint.[66] This invocation of the character of Yhwh is not the only indication of an

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[62] Smith, *Micah–Malachi*, 99.

[63] James W. Watts, "Psalmody in Prophecy: Habakkuk 3 in Context," in *Forming Prophetic Literature: Essays on Isaiah and the Twelve in Honor of John D. W. Watts,* ed. James W. Watts and Paul R. House (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1996), 210.

[64] Dietrich, *Nahum*, 114.

[65] Smith, *Micah–Malachi*, 104.

[66] Several elements in Habakkuk's second lament indicate that persuasion may be the intent of the verses. Yhwh is described as the "ancient" one who is holy (v. 12) and who is too pure to even look on evil or harm (v. 13). Such descriptors, entirely absent from vv. 2–4, likely indicate that Habakkuk's second lament is predicated on the

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intensification of the community's distress. Indeed, the repetition of a phrase first found in 1:4, with one significant alteration, also suggests a worsening of the community's situation under Babylonian dominion. In Habakkuk's initial lament, the wicked are said to "surround" (מַכְתִּיר) the righteous. In contrast, v. 13 describes the wicked as "engulfing" or "swallowing" (בָּלַע) the righteous. The Judahites' situation, following the disintegration of internal political leadership and the enforcement of Babylon's oppressive military practices, is characterized as one marked by a greater dearth of hope. Additionally, this theme of consumption, which is here introduced and remains prominent throughout the book, is developed further by the prophet in his description of Babylon as the greedy and powerful fisherman who pulls his portion from the sea (i.e., Judah and the nations), empties his net, and "continually slays[s] nations without compassion" (1:17). Habakkuk thus declares that he will take the position of a watchman and wait on a response from Yhwh. The images of 1:12–2:1 build on 1:2–4, but also nuance the prophet's complaint in light of changed political circumstances. As power shifted in the ancient Near Eastern world, so too did the experience of Habakkuk's community so that the internal chaos described in 1:2–4 under the rule of Jehoiakim, was "outdone by the oppression from without," as the Babylonians exerted control over Judah and the surrounding nations.[67]

Unsurprisingly, then, Babylon is the second key theme, or character, in Hab 1–2. Introduced in 1:6, the Neo-Babylonian Empire is described as a new instrument for Yhwh's work of justice in the world.[68] While undoubtedly a statement affirming Yhwh's sovereignty over the international realm, the depiction of Babylon in the following verses causes the

notion that the deity is more likely to intervene on behalf of humanity if the deity's own reputation is at stake (cf. Exod 32:7–14).

[67] Dietrich, *Nahum*, 140.

[68] Smith, *Micah–Malachi*, 101–2. Although, intriguingly, this assertion can only be made because the oracle follows directly after Habakkuk's lament in 1:2–4. The description of Babylon placed in the mouth of Yhwh here says nothing of justice and may even lead the reader to question what kind of justice could possibly be promoted by such a nation.

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reader/listener to wonder what kind of justice might be brought about by such an instrument. Babylon is depicted as a mighty nation, fully equipped for war with horses and horsemen like animals of prey (1:8) and whose militia is “marching across the breadth of the earth” anticipating easy victory and copious booty (1:6, 9, and 10). Far from describing a reliable tool for righteousness, the text portrays a nation that is מרר, “bitter” and מהר, “impetuous” (v. 6), that comes for “violence” (v. 9), and that mocks nations, kings, and military fortifications (v. 10). Indeed, even in proclaiming Babylon as his own work, Yhwh declares the nation guilty of worshipping its own power (v. 11).

Therefore, Habakkuk, following the pronouncement of Yhwh and likely having experienced the violence of Babylon alongside of the community in Judah, responds by affirming Babylon’s reputation as “terrifying and dreadful” (v. 7) and expanding the depiction of Babylon in 1:5–11 through an extended metaphor in vv. 15–17. According to Habakkuk, the Neo-Babylonian Empire is like an insatiable fisherman who draws his fill from the sea, consumes his “fat” portion, and continues fishing to excess (vv. 15–17). However, the fish who fall prey to Babylon’s greed are not the swarms of creatures that fill the waters, but human beings, created by the hand of Yhwh (v. 14). Habakkuk laments that Babylon worships its own power (here depicted as the idolization of fishing nets—Babylon’s metaphorical instruments of domination) because no one puts a stop to its wickedness (vv. 15–17). The arrogance of Babylon is clearly foreshadowed, even prior to being explicitly denounced in 2:4–5.

Habakkuk 2:4–5 are frequently described as the climax of Habakkuk’s prophecy and yet are notoriously difficult to translate.[69] Regardless of the interpretive challenges, however, they

[69] Dietrich, *Nahum*, 128. See the appendix for textual notes on the translation: “Look! It is puffed up, his life is not straight within him. But a righteous one will live by his faithfulness; and yet, indeed, wine is treacherous. The proud man will not succeed, who has made his throat wide as Sheol. He is like Mot and cannot be satisfied. He gathers to himself all the nations, and collects for himself all the peoples.”

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remain significant for understanding how Habakkuk's prophecy portrays the Neo-Babylonian Empire. Verse 4 creates a contrast between the righteous, likely referring to those who suffer injustice in Habakkuk's Judean community, and the one whose life is "puffed up" or "crooked."[70] The verses are predicated on wisdom's dogmatic affirmation of retributive justice. That the wicked nation (1:13), Babylon, is described as "puffed up" (v. 4) and "proud" (v. 5), is no surprise following its depiction in 1:5–11 and 12–17. Indeed, at the height of Habakkuk's prophecy, Babylon takes centre stage and is portrayed as "monstrously greedy" and "extremely threatening"[71]—in league with an ancient enemy of Yhwh, the deity of death: Mot.[72] Like Mot, Babylon's throat has become "wide as Sheol" and cannot be satisfied (v. 5). Therefore, the one who worships his own nets, consuming without remorse, has aligned himself with Death. However, given the theology the verses are predicated on, an "action-consequence connection," Habakkuk and his community are given the assurance that Babylon too, despite its terrifying power, will not continue unpunished.[73]

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[70] The word צַדִּיק occurs three times in the book of Habakkuk, here and in 1:4 and 13, where it clearly designates Habakkuk's Judean community.

[71] Dietrich, *Nahum*, 145.

[72] Michael C. Legaspi, "Opposition to Idolatry in the Book of Habakkuk," *VT* 67 (2017): 468–69. The depiction of Babylon's engorged gullet is decidedly familiar in its recollection of the Baal Epic's description of Mot's appetite: "My throat is the throat of the lion in the wasteland, and the gullet of the 'snorter' in the sea; And it craves the pool (as do) the wild bulls, (craves) springs as (do) the herds of deer; And, indeed, my throat consumes heaps (of things), yes indeed, I eat by double handfuls; And my seven portions are in my bowl, and they mix (into my) cup a (whole) river" ("The Baʿlu Myth," trans. Dennis Pardee [*COS* 1.86:264–65]).

[73] Dietrich, *Nahum*, 128. Dietrich, while acknowledging that the verses are reflective of wisdom theology's affirmation of retributive justice, does not find that theme present in Habakkuk. Instead, he argues that the case is specific here (rather than the general) and is predicated on the revelation of 1:5–11, which he interprets as the vision declared in 2:2–3. However, the general principle, if grounded in the ordered nature of creation (which wisdom theology claims, cf. Prov 8:1–31; Job 28:23–28), should be applicable in specific situations. Thus, the predication of verses 2:4–5 and the woe oracles that follow do reflect the retributive theology so prevalent in much of the Israelite wisdom tradition. See also, Carol J. Dempsey, "Harrowing Woes and Comforting Promises in the Book of the Twelve," in *The Book of the Twelve & the New Form Criticism*, ed. Mark J. Boda, Michael H. Floyd, and Colin M. Toffelmire, ANEM 10 (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2015), 103–4.

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A taunt song, comprised of five woe oracles, is thus raised up against the arrogant nation.[74] Each of the woes is tied to the depiction of Babylon in 1:5–17 and further clarifies the nature of Babylon’s tyranny over the nations: 2:6–8 condemn Babylon for plundering the nations (cf. 1:6, 9); 2:9–11 indicts the nation for their greed and self-preservation (cf. 1:6, 9–11); 2:12–14 condemn Babylon for pursuing imperial interests through bloodshed and at the expense of humanity (cf. 1:9–10, 14–15); 2:15–17 contain an indictment of exploitation (cf. 1:7, 11—Babylon’s activities have built a reputation of shame and guilt, rather than majesty and justice); and 2:18–20 condemn Babylon for false worship, worship that enshrines the idolization of power and justifies the abuse of others[75] (cf. 1:11, 14–17).[76] The song charges Babylon with the complete “abuse of authority” and suggests that due punishment (i.e., retribution in kind) will befall them.[77] Lastly, the taunt song foreshadows Hab 3’s depiction of Yhwh as divine warrior (in contrast to Babylon, as will be demonstrated in the next chapter), by anticipating a comparison of Babylon with Yhwh. This is achieved through the use of an alternating refrain found in 2:8, 14, 17, and 20. In vv. 8 and 17 the indictment of Babylon is predicated on the “bloodshed of humanity and the violence of the earth, the city, and all who dwell in it;” in 14 and

[74] Interpreting the woe oracles of Habakkuk presents persistent difficulties for commentators. Some of the challenges include: (1) the number of woe oracles (Dietrich finds six instead of five woes based on a reconstruction of v. 5; see Dietrich, *Nahum*, 144); (2) the identity of the speaker (Dietrich, *Nahum*, 144; Smith, *Micah–Malachi*, 110–11; Sweeney, “Structure,” 72); (3) The intended addressee of the oracles (Smith, *Micah–Malachi*, 111; Dietrich, *Nahum*, 144); and (4) the relationship of the fifth woe, vv. 18–20, to the others (Dietrich, *Nahum*, 91). For the purposes of analysis here, the following interpretive decisions have been made: (1) Given that minimal modifications to the MT have been suggested in the text critical notes (see appendix), five woe oracles are read in the text; (2) As was argued in the structural analysis above (see p. 55, n. 60), the speaker is understood to be Yhwh who is reporting the speech of a representative of the nations through an indirect quotation marked by וְיֹאמַר in v. 6; (3) While it is certainly possible that redactional activity has adjusted the original addressee of the oracles (usually posited as Judah), the addressee here is quite clearly Babylon since the oracles are raised against the “proud man who has made his throat wide as Sheol,” the arrogant, consuming nation described in 1:5–17; and (4) the fifth woe, like the others, responds to the description of Babylon in Hab 1 as the nation that worships its own power and turns its tools of oppression into idols.

[75] Legaspi, “Opposition to Idolatry in the Book of Habakkuk,” 458–69.

[76] Anderson, *Habakkuk*, 17; Dietrich, *Nahum*, 145–50; Legaspi, “Opposition to Idolatry in the Book of Habakkuk,” 465–66.

[77] Legaspi, “Opposition to Idolatry in the Book of Habakkuk,” 465–66.

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20 the earth is described as being filled with the glory of Yhwh, who reigns from his holy temple. These four verses are the only ones in which the earth is mentioned and serve to contrast the relationships of Babylon and Yhwh to the earth and all therein. That is, while the might of Babylon brings bloodshed and violence to the earth, the reign of Yhwh brings glory and inspires awe. Thus, already in Hab 2, a predominant theme of Hab 3 is revealed: when Babylon is compared to Yhwh, Yhwh emerges superior.

Given the terrifying and powerful depiction of Babylon, and the oppressive conditions experienced by Habakkuk's community and lamented in 1:12–17, Habakkuk's demand for a divine response in 2:1 is easily defensible. That Habakkuk had such a resolve to wait on Yhwh for an answer in the face of pervasive injustice is likely grounded in Yhwh's reputation as ancient, holy, and pure—a reputation that was invoked as a measure of assurance in 1:12. Habakkuk does receive a response and, with it, an exhortation for the community (indicated explicitly in the text through the command to "write" and "confirm"[78] the vision on tablets so that it may be proclaimed by a runner). The exhortation is for the community to wait on the fulfillment of the vision from Yhwh, a vision that "will surely come" (2:3). While the content of this vision is frequently debated, the most natural interpretation is the remainder of Yhwh's speech as it continues in 2:4 and proceeds through the woe oracles of vv. 6–20, especially considering that the two most frequently stated alternatives are portrayed as past events.[79] Consequently, the community is not to languish in their present suffering, but to wait expectantly for Babylon to meet the consequences of their own wickedness and to face retribution in kind.[80]

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[78] For the translation "and confirm" for וּבָאֵר see the textual notes in the appendix and David Toshio Tsumura, "Hab 2:2 in the Light of Akkadian Legal Practice," *ZAW* 94 (1982): 294–95.

[79] Options include: (1) the speech of Yhwh in 1:5–11 (for example, Dietrich, *Nahum*, 127); (2) the hymn or theophany of Hab 3 (for example, Roberts, *Nahum*, 81); and (3) the second speech of Yhwh, specifically 2:4–20 (Floyd, "Prophecy and Writing," 242).

[80] Smith, *Micah–Malachi*, 107; Richard Coggins and Jin H. Han, *Six Minor Prophets through the Centuries*, Balckwell Bible Commentaries (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011), 4–5.

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Indeed, expectant waiting on the part of the community is also described in as much as it contrasts Babylon—that is, Babylon will fall according to its wickedness (2:5–20), but the righteous, suffering Judahites will live by their "faithfulness" (2:4).[81] The woe oracles, then, serve two functions for the Judahite community: first, they are a comfort and a relief to those who suffer under Babylonian dominion through their assertion that the wicked nation will not prevail[82] and, second, they are instructional in as much as they present how the righteous do not live (i.e., the righteous do not live like Babylon).[83] Finally, as Hab 2 comes to its conclusion, the community is given a final word of comfort: "Yhwh is in his holy temple."

3.5. Conclusion

Given that Habakkuk's community's experience of their emerging present represented significant challenges for group cohesion—internal disputes regarding the appropriate political and theological response to the Neo-Babylonian Empire coupled with the disintegration of community structures due to the displacement and resettlement practices of Babylon—and group continuity—the ongoing threat of further Babylonian interference in Judahite society and the possibility of total loss of national and political boundaries—community identity would have been severely tested. The first wave of forced migrations, the disintegration of independent political leadership, and the experience of Babylon's suppressive military tactics required communal identity negotiation. Evidence of the active navigation of present challenges to group

[81] Habakkuk 2:4 has perhaps received more attention than any other verse in the book due to its reuse in the New Testament. While the use of the OT in the NT is an interesting field of study, it is not within the purview of the present study. One comment will be made here. Such conversations are frequently wrapped up in delineating the difference between "faith" and "faithfulness" (or "steadfastness"). It is my view that the distinction between these two terms is not so pronounced. That is, a strong distinction is not strictly necessary, given that an attitude of faith implies faithful or steady actions and the activity of faithfulness or steadfastness presumes an attitude of faith (See also, Dietrich, *Nahum*, 129–30). Additionally, while it is possible that the verse suggests that the righteous will live by the vision's faithfulness, it is much more likely that the 3ms pronominal suffix refers to the nearest antecedent, which is צַדִּיק. Thus, the righteous one will live by his/her faithfulness (Dietrich, *Nahum*, 129).

[82] Dietrich, *Nahum*, 157; Legaspi, "Opposition to Idolatry in the Book of Habakkuk," 268.

[83] Dempsey, "Harrowing Woes," 101.

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cohesion and identity are present in Habakkuk's prophecy and readily apparent through an analysis of Habakkuk's prominent literary themes: lament, the characterization of Babylon, and the desired communal response to both. These themes represent the community's present as described by the writer of Habakkuk. The subsequent chapter will now focus on the reception community's past and their reuse of it as a meaning making frame for their situation of crisis. Accordingly, chapter 4 will explore Habakkuk's prayer in greater detail, first as communal memory through the work of intertextuality, second as commemoration through ritual performance and ceremonial practice, and finally, as the conclusion to Habakkuk's prophecy, or the prayer's *Sitz in der Literatur*. By the end of chapter 4, the prophetic book's *Sitz im Leben* may be examined and the present study brought to its conclusion.

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4. THE MEMORY: HABAKKUK 3

4.1. Introduction

Situated at a crux in Judah's historical narrative, between 609 and 587/6 B.C.E.—the beginning of the annexation of Judah by Babylon and the biblical period referred to as the exile—the experience of the present for Habakkuk's community was fraught with uncertainty and fear. The political program of the Neo-Babylonian Empire was pressing down on the Judean state and dismantling national identity markers such as political autonomy, geographic boundaries, and religious distinctives. The accompanying social breakdown is characterized in Habakkuk as the perversion of justice (1:13; 2:6–8, 9–11), the exploitation of humanity (1:14–17; 2:15–17), the perpetuation of violence and bloodshed (1:9; 2:8, 12–13, 17), and the corruption of ritual observance (1:11, 17; 2:18–19). Babylon is depicted as a nation whose abuse of power is absolute, so much so that it is branded as the ultimate force of death, the deity, Mot (1:14–17; 2:4–5). Such circumstances posed a threat to the Judahite community's internal cohesion and continuity. Within this context of active identity negotiation (and the threat of identity disintegration), Habakkuk engages in the activity of retelling or, better, rewriting Judah's past in light of Judah's emerging present.[1] The cultural memory from the group's shared past chosen by the writer of Habakkuk is found in the book's concluding chapter and is marked by its use of mythopoetic themes and language—language that is reminiscent of some of the earliest

[1] Identity negotiation through the writing and production of texts is a key feature of exilic writing and features in David Carr's recent work on the formation of the Hebrew Bible. Carr argues that where institutional structures such as the monarchy cease to sponsor the creation of national narratives, the texts of exilic communities are "reproduced, shaped, or created…for internal consumption, as they used literature to support the ongoing existence of their community and guide their behaviour and expectations." Characteristic of this literature is the reuse of the past or the redefinition of the community's significance according to their shared experience of the past. (See Carr, *The Formation of the Hebrew Bible*, 227, 229). Habakkuk, though produced very early in the exilic experience, demonstrates numerous markers of exilic writing as identified by Carr (Carr, *The Formation of the Hebrew Bible*, 249).

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texts in the Hebrew Bible (Deut 33, Judg 5, Ps 68, Exod 15) and of distinctively ancient Near Eastern conceptions of the divine.[2] Thus, building on the preceding chapter's discussion of the

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[2] Of course, this statement assumes that it is methodologically viable to speak of myth as memory, as something recalled from the past—and that it is even possible to speak of the HB/OT in the same category as myth. Given this, a few comments on the definition of myth and its relationship to history, and, correspondingly, to memory, are in order. That the concept of myth is contested space in biblical studies has been succinctly argued by Dexter Callendar and William Scott Green in their introduction to the volume *Myth and Scripture* (Dexter E. Callendar, Jr. and William Scott Green, "Introduction: Scholarship between Myth and Scripture," in *Myth and Scripture: Contemporary Perspectives on Religion, Language, and Imagination*, ed. Dexter E. Callendar, Jr., RBS 78 (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2014), 3). Callendar and Green note that, within biblical studies, it is possible to find such dichotomous definitions for myth as falsehood and narratives that "express a religious community's deepest convictions . . . if not a kind of truth" (Callendar and Green, "Introduction," 3). Others have described myth as a kind of story telling wherein one finds a concentration of divine beings and accounts of the origins of the cosmos (Alan C. Lenzi, *Secrecy and the Gods: Secret Knowledge in Ancient Mesopotamia and Biblical Israel*, SAAS (Helsinki: The Neo-Assyrian Text Corpus Project, 2008), 18). Still others attempt a narrower definition of myth based on descriptive analysis of the narratives most commonly labeled myth (or at least those narratives from the ANE described in such a way). Thus, Childs' definition states that "myth is a form by which the existing structure of reality is understood and maintained. It concerns itself with showing how an action of a deity, conceived of as occurring in the primeval age, determines a phase of contemporary world order. Existing world order is maintained through the actualization of the myth in the cult" (Brevard S. Childs, *Myth and Reality in the Old Testament*, SBT (London: SCM Press, 1962), 29–30). Oswalt, who adopts and expands Childs' definition, argues that the primary characteristic of myth is the notion of 'continuity' (John N. Oswalt, *The Bible among the Myths* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2009), 45–46). Continuity, according to Oswalt, is the lack of distinction between entities, including the human, natural, and divine realms. When continuity is maintained, so too is the orderly functioning of the world. Accordingly, then, Oswalt goes on to argue that the Bible has no place among the myths given its primary principle of divine transcendence, not continuity (Oswalt, *The Bible among the Myths*, 81).

What then can be said about myth? And, more importantly, how can we conceive of something like 'mythic memory?' Alan Lenzi's project on secret knowledge in ancient Mesopotamia provides a helpful way forward. Lenzi argues that, while myth is like story, "mythmaking is a socio-rhetorical strategy that various social groups (social formations) use to authorize their existence, values, institutions, and. . . texts" (Lenzi, *Secrecy and the Gods*, 18). In this case, and in contrast to the examples above, myth is not necessarily concerned with truth and falsehood (though it may comment on or inform a group's notions of both) and it is not restricted to religious communities or the origin stories of the ANE. Rather, as Burton Mack has demonstrated, mythmaking is an essential and formative process in all social groups whereby people "account for the world in which [they] find themselves" (Burton L. Mack, *Who Wrote the New Testament? The Making of the Christian Myth* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1995), 13–14). It is thus unnecessary to be particularly concerned with whether or not the Bible is, or contains, myth. Given that the biblical texts clearly claim to explain the world and the place of humanity therein, they are quite obviously mythmaking material. Similarly, Oswalt's concern for distinctions between the Bible and other ancient Near Eastern myths, and his corresponding desire to remove the Bible from the category of myth, is also quite unnecessary. Considering that mythmaking is a formative task for social groups, we would expect to find numerous myths in history and in the present (J. W. Rogerson, "'Myth' in the Old Testament," in *Myth and Scripture: Contemporary Perspectives on Religion, Language, and Imagination*, ed. Dexter E. Callendar, Jr., RBS 78 (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2014), 20). It is to be expected, then, that the Bible would demonstrate both similarities with and differences from other ancient Near Eastern myths. Finally, Mack notes that myths usually describe events of the remote past, such as the creation of the world and the origins of people groups (whether or not these events are strictly factual, much like cultural memory [see ch. 2] is not essential to their authoritative power [Mack, *Who Wrote the New Testament?*, 14]). Therefore, while it is debatable whether or not myth may be directly associated with historical fact, that myth deals with history as understood by particular social groups is almost certain. Indeed, Walton has highlighted this as a particularly significant reality in the ancient world, where myths would certainly have been considered historical, containing events of the past that held implications for the present, and "important for understanding the world and life in general" (John H. Walton, *Ancient near Eastern Thought and the Old Testament: Introducing the Conceptual*

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community of Habakkuk's present, the current chapter will focus on their renewed encounter with the past as a meaning making frame for their experience of ongoing trauma. Subsequent to preliminary comments on the antiquity of Habakkuk's prayer and its structure, the chapter will unfold in two sections: first, the poetry of Hab 3:3–15 will be explored as an artifact of cultural memory by means of intertextuality; and, second, the *Sitz in der Literatur* of Hab 3:3–15 will be considered, focusing on its use as a communal text for commemoration through ritual performance and its placement at the conclusion to Habakkuk's prophecy. Upon completion of the present chapter, then, the prophetic book's *Sitz im Leben* may be considered anew.

4.2. The Antiquity and Structure of Habakkuk's Prayer

As was discussed in chapter 2, the work accomplished by intertextuality in the production of literary artifacts serves the recollection and commemoration of a group's shared past. This process may include the reuse of generic categories; the quotation of, allusion to, or rewriting of early texts; or the incorporation of cultural tropes, all of which provide for both the preservation and reinterpretation of cultural memory. In the case of Habakkuk, the prophecy's final chapter quite clearly demonstrates the reuse of more ancient themes. Indeed, that the content of Habakkuk's prayer is older than the writer's time is indicated in the text itself (3:2). However, the way in which this material has been reworked for its present context is a point of contention in contemporary scholarship. Three dominant views emerge through a survey of the literature:[3] (1) the chapter is a late composition, originating either with the prophet Habakkuk or a later

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World of the Hebrew Bible (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2006), 43–44). Consequently, to speak of Hab 3 as containing mythic memory is both viable and helpful for an analysis of both its content and its authoritative power.

[3] John Anderson suggests that two primary views exist concerning the origin of the poem in Hab 3 (either it is an archaic poem or it is original to the prophet), however, his own view belies the complexity with which numerous scholars approach the question of antiquity versus originality. Thus the decision to include a third position in my analysis. John E. Anderson, "Awaiting an Answered Prayer: The Development and Reinterpretation of Habakkuk 3 in Its Contexts," *ZAW* 123 (2011): 57.

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redactor; (2) the chapter is archaic, dating most likely to the pre-exilic period and possibly earlier than the monarchy; and (3) a combination of (1) and (2) above, where the chapter is viewed as a complex of older material, original composition, and editorial redaction. In any of these cases, the poem reveals itself as a part of a complex web woven together through the work of intertextuality and held within the social mindscape of the ancient world, Judah included. Given that Habakkuk is the only textual witness to this ancient poetry, certainty regarding its origins and compositional history is impossible.[4] However, given the textual evidence, it is possible to come to tentative conclusions regarding the poem's content and its relationship to the writer of Habakkuk. A brief survey of the options will be considered here, followed an argument in support of a composite final form.

Ralph Smith argues that the superscription of Hab 3:1 indicates that the prophet Habakkuk was the author of the subsequent material and thus dates the poetry therein to the time period of Habakkuk's prophetic activity, the late seventh century or early sixth century B.C.E.[5] Similarly, James Bruckner states that "chapter 3 is a song Habakkuk writes to Yahweh" as a response to the preceding chapters, Hab 1–2,[6] and O. Palmer Robertson argues that the chapter is the prayer of the prophet—the prophetic vocation is highlighted by Robertson, indicating the importance he places on the personal, mediatory work of the man Habakkuk for the community—and represents the prophet's own experience of the divine.[7] For each of these

[4] The question of the poem's originality to the book of Habakkuk is further complicated by the absence of the entire third chapter from the Habakkuk pesher at Qumran. However, general consensus has been reached regarding the relative value of this evidence as a determinative factor for or against originality. That is, the majority of contemporary scholars argue that the absence of Hab 3 at Qumran is just as easily explained by the internal use of the book in the Qumran community (commentators also note that complete versions of biblical texts as we now have them are rare in the commentaries of Qumran). Since all of the other ancient manuscripts contain all three chapters of Habakkuk, it is quite unlikely that there once existed a distinct tradition that contained only Hab 1–2. (See Roberts, *Nahum*, 148–49; Sweeney, *Micah*, 479; David W. Baker, *Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah*, TOTC [Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1988], 46–47; and Robertson, *The Books of Nahum, Habakkuk, and Zephaniah*, 212–13).

[5] Smith, *Micah–Malachi*, 115, 94.

[6] Bruckner, *Jonah*, 198.

[7] Robertson, *The Books of Nahum, Habakkuk, and Zephaniah*, 215.

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commentators, the poem represents the prophet's own experience of the theophany (despite v. 2's reference to the prophet having heard about Yhwh's reputation, a report of which follows in vv. 3–15). Additionally, this particular view of the poem's origin is linked to a tendency towards downplaying the clear connections between Habakkuk's poetry and its ancient Near Eastern context—connections which have been clearly and thoroughly demonstrated elsewhere.[8] For example, each of the above commentators translates the proper names Deber and Resheph in 3:5 as the wartime afflictions associated with them: plague and pestilence.[9] While it is likely that the writer of Habakkuk had a hand in the composition of the material of Hab 3, it is unnecessary to assert that only Habakkuk was responsible for the content or that Habakkuk's work is strikingly different from that of his ancient Near Eastern neighbours. At least, one would have to give an explanation for the shift in style as the poetry moves from 3:3–7 to 3:8–15, which these commentators do not do. From a different perspective, William Hayes Ward also argues that the Hab 3 was composed later in Israel's history. However, he takes the view that the poetry is the product of a writer or multiple writers during the time period after the exile.[10] Given that there is little reason to suspect that the formation of the book of Habakkuk occurred over a long period of time (indeed, there is good reason to think that the entirety of Hab 1–3 came together very early in the exilic period—see chapter 3 for an extended argument), it is unlikely that the poem was written at such a late date.

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[8] For example, U. Cassuto, *Biblical and Oriental Studies*, trans. Israel Abrahams (Jerusalem: The Magnes Press, 1975), 3–15; John Day, "Echoes of Baal's Seven Thunders and Lightnings in Psalm 29 and Habakkuk 3:9 and the Identity of the Seraphim in Isaiah 6," *VT* 29 (1979): 143–51; Theodore Hiebert, *God of My Victory: The Ancient Hymn of Habakkuk 3*, HSM 38 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1986); Nili Shupak, "The God from Teman and the Egyptian Sun God: A Reconsideration of Habakkuk 3:3–7," *JANES* 28 (2001): 97–116.

[9] Bruckner, *Jonah*, 254; Robertson, *The Books of Nahum, Habakkuk, and Zephaniah*, 221; and Smith, *Micah-Malachi*, 113.

[10] William Hayes Ward, "A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Habakkuk," in *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Micah, Zephaniah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Obadiah and Joel*, ed. John Merlin Powis Smith, ICC (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1974), 6.

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In contrast to the above view, and especially to Ward, some commentators argue that Hab 3 is quite ancient in its entirety. This view has been most thoroughly argued by Theodore Hiebert in his monograph, *God of My Victory*. Hiebert's work is an extended argument for the view that the final chapter of Habakkuk is an archaic composition that was written during the tribal league, prior to the existence of a monarchy in Israel.[11] He argues that the poem recites the victory of the divine warrior over cosmic and earthly enemies and the original text, as it can best be reconstructed, displays archaic linguistic features, prosodic style, historical allusions, and mythological motifs that all point towards an origin in antiquity.[12] Indeed, the similarity of Hab 3 to poems such as Deut 33, Judg 5, and Ps 68, all of which share the theme of God's coming from the south and are largely thought to be ancient in origin, further supports this view.[13] Hiebert's argument has undoubtedly influenced contemporary scholarship on Hab 3. However, recent analyses of Hab 3 come to more nuanced positions regarding the material used to compose the poetry that concludes Habakkuk,[14] suggesting that the evidence presented in Hab 3 is best accounted for when viewed as a complex of ancient and original material.

John Anderson has recently argued that the mythic motifs of Hab 3:3–15, including Yhwh's appearance in the south (found in other pre-monarchic poems, such as Exod 15, Deut 33, and Judg 5) and similarities to 14th century Canaanite poetry, indicate the there is a great possibility that this material is among the most ancient in the Hebrew Bible. Analogous to Hiebert's work, he dates this content to the pre-exilic period and perhaps even to the time prior to

[11] Hiebert, *God of My Victory*, 82.

[12] Theodore Hiebert, "The Use of Inclusion in Habakkuk 3," in *Directions in Biblical Hebrew Poetry,* ed. Elaine R. Follis (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1987), 134.

[13] Hiebert, *God of My Victory*, 91. See also, Roberts, *Nahum*, 149.

[14] Floyd argues that Hiebert's evidence is at best ambiguous. For example, he suggests that the archaic linguistic markers posited by Hiebert are less frequent in Hab 3 than would be expected in a legitimately ancient piece of literature and are easily attributed to an impetus to archaize a new composition. Similarly, he argues that the mythological themes in Habakkuk are present at all times within Israel's history and are thus inconclusive as evidence of the poem's antiquity (Floyd, *Minor Prophets*, 159).

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the monarchy.[15] However, Anderson does not argue that these verses originate from one poem, but that the section is “comprised of two distinct traditions (vv. 3–7 and vv. 8–15) which together are also a coherent literary unit.”[16] Similarly, Francis Anderson and Richard Patterson have argued for both the antiquity and the composite nature of Hab 3.[17] In their view, the poetry of Hab 3 is original to the prophecy of Habakkuk, but demonstrates an early reuse of older, perhaps quite ancient material. Indeed, Anderson even argues that it is possible that the prophet Habakkuk “produced the whole work,” during which time older poetry was appropriated and fitted for use in a new context.[18] Such a position accounts well for the nature of the poetry as it is found in Hab 3, particularly the change of style evidenced after v. 7, where the characteristically terse nature of Hebrew poetry becomes even more exaggerated by the entire absence of the conjunctive *waw* and near total absence of the definite article.

Accordingly, as Dietrich has argued, the frame provided by v. 2 and vv. 16–19 serves “to integrate a ‘foreign’ text into the book of Habakkuk.”[19] That the frame is distinct from the middle section of poetry is evidenced in the use of 1cs verbal forms, which mark these verses as the writer’s own voice. However, I would also argue that portions of the intervening verses may also be the work of the writer of Habakkuk. For example, the first person perspective reappears in v. 7 and v. 14, much to the surprise of contemporary interpreters.[20] It seems likely that a writer already reworking existing material for a new context may also gloss the text for communal use—that is, the reappearance of the first person at the mid-point of the text and at the point of described distress may serve ritual purposes (see the discussion on ritual and commemoration

[15] Anderson, “Awaiting an Answered Prayer,” 62.
[16] Anderson, “Awaiting an Answered Prayer,” 59.
[17] Anderson, *Habakkuk*, 260; Patterson, *Nahum*, 122–23.
[18] Anderson, *Habakkuk*, 260.
[19] Dietrich, *Nahum*, 178.
[20] For example, G. R. Driver, “On Habakkuk 3:7,” *JBL* 62 (1943): 121; and Dietrich, *Nahum*, 164.

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below). Additionally, the difficult phrase in 3:14, "their arrogance, as to devour the afflicted in a secret place" is likely also a gloss by the prophet tying this portion of the poem to the rest of the book by portraying the enemy as one who consumes human beings, a description employed to depict Babylon's allegiance with Mot in Hab 1–2 (cf. 1:14–17; 2:4–5). As a result, the older material and themes at the conclusion of Habakkuk's prophecy may be understood as the cultural memory through which the past is drawn on by way of intertextuality, including (but not limited to) the rewriting of earlier texts, the usage of literary allusion, and the employment of prominent cultural motifs.

As the above discussion has already alluded to, the basic structure of Hab 3 can be broken down into 3 major sections, encased on either end by a superscript and a postscript, and represented by the following outline:

The Prayer of Habakkuk (3:1–19)

- A. Superscript (3:1)
- B. Frame: Habakkuk's supplication (3:2)
- C. Core (3:3–15)
  - 1. God comes from the South (3:3–7)
  - 2. Yhwh's battle (3:8–15)
- D. Frame: Habakkuk's response (3:16–19a)
- E. Postscript (3:19b)

The poetry is easily broken into units based on linguistic indicators present in the text itself: (1) the superscript and postscript are easily identifiable by the designation of the chapter as "a prayer of Habakkuk" and the use of musical notation; (2) as has already been noted, the frame is marked by 1cs verbal forms, a perspective that only occurs elsewhere at 3:7 and in the form of a 1cs

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pronominal suffix in 3:14; (3) the body of the prayer, which is comprised of reworked ancient poetry, is also set apart by shifting verbal forms—a change from 1cs forms to 3ms at 3:3 and from 2ms to 1cs at 3:16. This middle section of the poem, while thematically interconnected, can be further divided into two subsections: 3:3–7, which is in the third person, and 3:8–15, which is in the second person and addressed to Yhwh directly. Additionally, the two middle subsections are stylistically distinct, with 3:8–15 demonstrating increased terseness and consistently rhythmic parallelism.[21]

The genre of Hab 3 is frequently debated, with the variety of generic categories assigned to the poetry largely emerging from the differences between the frame and the core content.[22] This generic clash is the result of the inclusion of older material into a new context. Thus, while the core section of Hab 3 may have originally been a hymn of victory,[23] it should now be understood according to its final form, which is internally classified as a prayer much like those found in the psalter.[24] Indeed, elements in the frame of Hab 3 indicate that the poetry was composed as a psalm and was likely associated with the cult. These include: the designation of the text as a prayer through the use of תפלה, which also occurs in Pss 17, 86, 90, 102, and 142; the superscript and the postscript (similar to those used in the Psalms); the use of למצח ("to the director"), a term that occurs fifty-six times in the Hebrew Bible, with the additional fifty-five occurring in the Psalter; and, finally, the use of the technical term, Selah, which elsewhere only

[21] See, for example, the structural outlines of Hiebert, and Anderson, who both come to a conclusion similar the one presented here. (Hiebert, "The Use of Inclusion in Habakkuk 3," 120–22; Anderson, "Awaiting an Answered Prayer," 58).

[22] Anderson, "Awaiting an Answered Prayer," 64.

[23] Hiebert, *God of My Victory*, 118.

[24] Shmuel Aḥituv, "The Sinai Theophany in the Psalm of Habakkuk," in *Birkat Shalom: Studies in the Bible, Ancient Near Eastern Literature, and Postbiblical Judaism Presented to Shalom M. Paul on the Occasion of His Seventieth Birthday,* ed. Shalom M. Paul and Chaim Cohen. (Winona Lake, Ind: Eisenbrauns, 2008), 225; G. T. M. Prinsloo, "Reading Habakkuk 3 in the Light of Ancient Unit Delimiters," *HvTSt* 69, (2013): 4–6.

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occurs in the Psalter.[25] Consequently, while the prophecy of Habakkuk is largely written from the first person, singular perspective (with the exception of the plural imperatives in 1:5), the book has clearly been marked for communal use and represents a text for the community. The first person perspective, particularly in Hab 3, is significant for this context and will be explored in greater detail below.

First, however, having established how we may speak of Hab 3 as memory for the community, it is prudent to discuss the content of the chapter. That is, we must address the question: 'memory of what, exactly?' Accordingly, the following section will consider Habakkuk's mythological memory as it is reported in 3:3–15. This exploration will then serve as the foundation for an analysis of the way that the present circumstances of Habakkuk's community are keyed to its past. This is because it is this portion of Habakkuk, by means of intertextuality, that is the frame through which the new act of writing (or the present as revealed in Hab 1–2) is interpreted and made useful for group cohesion and continuity in the face of present challenges and trauma.

4.3. Habakkuk's Hymn and the Fabric of Ancient Near Eastern Mythology

That Hab 3:3–15 demonstrates profound affinity with other textual witnesses to the mythological memory of the ancient Near Eastern world has been amply demonstrated in biblical scholarship. The verses may fruitfully be compared, for example, to the Ugaritic, *Baal Epic*, the Babylonian, *Enuma Elish*, and the Egyptian, *Hymn to the Aten*. Indeed, these relationships will be discussed in detail below, as they helpfully illuminate the nature of Habakkuk's cultural memory and the meaning making potential of the ancient materials incorporated into the prophecy. However, prior to this analysis, a note on definitions is in order.

[25] Anderson, "Awaiting an Answered Prayer," 63.

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The concept of intertextuality was explored in chapter 2 of the present study for the way that it facilitates the creation and preservation of cultural memory in works of literature. Indeed, the notion of intertextuality has had and will continue to have a prominent role in the present chapter. Quite frequently, however, when intertextuality is adopted as a theoretical approach for the study of the Hebrew Bible, it is reduced to the analysis of clear allusions or direct quotations between texts. Relevant intertexts are determined by the ability to demonstrate a direct link and, quite often, path dependency—that is, which text originates first and how it is altered or employed in its new context—plays a significant role in interpretation. Indeed, this process is noticeable in discussions regarding the relationship of Hab 3 to the ancient Near Eastern world and other works of literature produced therein. Thus, J. Anderson can suggest that "vv. 8–15 most likely *rely upon*" the *Chaoskampf* motif of the ancient Near East and U. Cassuto can argue that the poem wraps the myths of the neighbouring nations around Yhwh and "concentrates all these attributes in [its] God."[26] Both of which imply that the biblical text is reliant upon or actively changing other ancient Near Eastern texts and themes either to build its own theology or to create a polemic against its cultural context. This is frequently the case in biblical studies, where other ancient Near Eastern literature is assumed to be more original than the biblical texts and, consequently, their themes reused and possibly (although not necessarily) altered to fit the theological agenda of the Bible. Such instances would, of course, fall under the umbrella of intertextuality, albeit in a limited sense. This problem also exists in the study of Hab 3, where debates regarding dependency frequently occupy the literature.[27] Given that numerous paths of

[26] Anderson, "Awaiting an Answered Prayer," 61; Cassuto, *Biblical and Oriental Studies*, 5.

[27] For example, Ferris J. Stephens, "The Babylonian Dragon Myth in Habakkuk 3," *JBL* 43 (1924): 290–93. Shupak, "The God from Teman," 106; John Day, *God's Conflict with the Dragon and the Sea: Echoes of Canaanite Myth in the Old Testament*, UCOP (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 1.

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dependency are proposed and none are based on the clear linguistic evidence of quotation, it is prudent to return to the concept of intertextuality as it was introduced in chapter 2.

Jonathan Culler's work on semiotics has provided this study with a foundational definition of intertextuality.[28] While Culler has argued for the importance of recognizing the significance of prior texts for the interpretation of more recent texts (as is frequently the emphasis in biblical studies), he has also highlighted that intertextuality is actually a much broader concept than this view holds and which is represented by the restricted analytical framework described above. Instead, Culler alerts interpreters to the reality that intertextuality is "less a name for a work's relation to particular prior texts than a designation of its participation in the discursive space of a culture: the relationship between a text and various languages or signifying practices of a culture and its relation to those texts which articulate for it the possibilities of that culture."[29] In this way, intertextuality is related to Ben Zvi's articulation of the social mindscape of ancient groups in that it is asking questions about the thought patterns, assumptions, ideologies, community knowledge, and values that are influential in the production of a cultural group's textual artifacts.[30] Intertextuality is, consequently, a theoretically enormous category of analysis and is, as a result, always approached in a limited way. It does not, however, lose its significance. As we now turn our attention back to the text of Hab 3 and its place within the web of meaning that produced ancient Near Eastern mythology, it is prudent to recognize literary dependency will not feature prominently in our discussion. Rather, the comparative analysis of Hab 3 with related ancient Near Eastern texts will illuminate a "part of how people

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[28] For the full definition see pg. 28, n. 62.
[29] Culler, *The Pursuit of Signs*, 103.
[30] Ben Zvi, "Remembering the Prophets," 19–20.

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thought in the ancient world."[31] Indeed, because the "biblical literature in general and the hymn of Habakkuk 3 in particular are rooted in traditions and concepts that were prevalent in the Near East" we can expect that the text would reflect those thought patterns as it depicts the divine.[32]

For the purposes of analysis, the poetry of Hab 3:3–15 will be divided into two sections based on the structural outline provided above. This is because the two subsections, now woven into one poem and displaying some thematic overlap (for example, water imagery and militaristic motifs), are linguistically and topically distinct. Accordingly, Hab 3:3–7 will be considered first, followed by 3:8–15.

One significant detail that emerged in the above discussion of the antiquity of this portion of Habakkuk was that the poetry describes the coming of God from the south. It was noted that only a small number of biblical texts depict the coming of God according to this tradition, including Deut 33, Judg 5, and Ps 68—passages that also share a claim to antiquity, as has already been noted. That Hab 3 belongs in this tradition is demonstrated by the use of four place names, two in 3:3 and two in 3:7, which create an inclusio that delimits this subsection of the text.[33] The first pair, Teman and Mount Paran, are associated with the geographic area of Edom (cf. Jer 49:7, 20; Ezek 25:13; Amos 1:12; Obad 1:9; and, Deut 33:2). Indeed, Teman may also be used as a generic term for the south.[34] Thus, Haak and Dietrich both argue that the place names are best understood as general, not specific locations both of which refer to a tradition that remembered God's march from the southern regions.[35] Similarly, the second pair of place names,

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[31] Walton, *Ancient near Eastern Thought*, 95. Walton's comment is specifically related to the relationship between revelation, the Hebrew Bible, and the ancient Near Eastern thought world as it relates to the notion of the divine council.

[32] Shupak, "The God from Teman," 116.

[33] Hiebert, "The Use of Inclusion in Habakkuk 3," 120–22; Prinsloo, "Reading Habakkuk 3," 4–6; and Anderson, *Habakkuk*, 312.

[34] Anderson, "Awaiting an Answered Prayer," 59.

[35] Haak, *Habakkuk*, 83; Dietrich, *Nahum*, 167.

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Cushan and Midian, should be considered nearly synonymous. This is especially evidenced by the use of both to describe the nationality of Moses' wife, Zipporah, who is called a Midianite in Exod 2:15–22 and a Kushite in Num 12:1.[36] The geographic region may include Sinai (particularly since Mt. Paran parallels Sinai in Deut 33:2), but this association is not made explicit in Habakkuk.[37]

Hence, the first two lines of poetry open with a vision of God emerging from his mountain abode in the far southland. Although the poetry will soon offer a more anthropomorphic depiction of the divine warrior, beginning in 3:5, the initial imagery used to portray Eloah, the Holy One (v. 3) suggests affinities with the worship of the sun god in the ancient Near East.[38] The second half of verse three likens God's appearance to a sunrise over the mountain peaks of Paran, which the verb יָבוֹא may already allude to in 3:3a.[39] Accordingly, the majesty of God that fills the sky in 3:3b is equated with the illumination depicted in 3:4a and likened to that of אוֹר, "the sun." It is this radiance that inspires the praise of Eloah in 3:3c, much as the "splendor of god in the sky evokes the praise of people on earth . . . in Babylonian (and earlier Sumerian) hymns."[40] For example, a description of the divine similar to that in Hab 3 is found in the Akkadian, *Shamash Hymn*, where the sun god is portrayed as the "illuminator of all, the whole heaven, who makes light the d[arkeness] for mankind above and below, your radiance

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[36] Anderson, "Awaiting an Answered Prayer," 60.

[37] Interpreters frequently associate the vision of God marching from the south with Sinai and, as a result, with the Exodus/Moses tradition (see, for example, Anderson, "Awaiting an Answered Prayer," 60; Aḥituv, "The Sinai Theophany," 231–32; Shupak, "The God from Teman," 106–7; and Anderson, *Habakkuk*, 292). However, strictly speaking, no mention is made of Moses, the Exodus, or even Sinai in Habakkuk. Indeed, even Aḥituv acknowledges that Habakkuk is "devoid of any historical allusions" (Aḥituv, "The Sinai Theophany," 232). Although it is possible that the reuse of the theme in this case may have triggered recollections of the Exodus in the minds of Habakkuk's community, it would be difficult to make such an argument with surety. Consequently, it is likely better, with Deitrich, to suggest "a thematic reservoir from which these texts drew," albeit it "independently of one another" (Dietrich, *Nahum*, 167).

[38] Anderson, *Habakkuk*, 290–94; Dietrich, *Nahum*, 168; Shupak, "The God from Teman," 102.

[39] Anderson, *Habakkuk*, 290.

[40] Anderson, *Habakkuk*, 294.

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[spre]ads out like a net [over the world], you brighten the gloom of the distant mountains."[41] Here, as in Hab 3, Shamash is depicted as the one who rises over the mountain peaks and floods the earth with light. Possible comparative analysis also extends to the Egyptian pantheon. Indeed, Nili Shupak has provided an extended discussion of the affinities between the imagery used to describe Judah's God in 3:3–4 with that employed to depict Aten, particularly in 14th century Amarna religion. Shupak argues that the verses, especially v. 4, should be interpreted as "the epiphany of God [that] resembles the rising sun, accompanied by intense light, and in his rays, which are his hands, his charismatic power lies hidden."[42]

Shupak goes on to argue that this symbolic representation of the Amarna sun god "was borrowed to describe the appearance of the Hebrew God."[43] However, the crux of his argument lies in an emendation to the already difficult second line of verse 4: קַרְנַיִם מִיָּדוֹ לוֹ ("horns/rays are from his hand, belonging to him). Shupak argues that the initial *mem* prefixed to מִיָּדוֹ should be omitted as dittography and that the verse may then be interpreted to mean that the rays *are* the deity's hands, just as in iconography of Aten, hands are depicted at the end of each of his rays of sunlight.[44] The comparison is already striking, even without the emendation, but strict dependency is not entirely defensible here. Given that the line is notoriously difficult to interpret, as the extended discussion in Anderson's commentary indicates,[45] and that other comparative literature is available for the passage, it seems more likely to suggest Habakkuk is drawing from widely attested cultural imagery—imagery that is typically used to depict the worship of the sun god, be it Shamash or Aten. The leitmotif describes the radiance and life giving illumination that

[41] "The Shamash Hymn," trans. Benjamin R. Foster (*COS* 1.117, 418–419). Anderson also finds similarities between the imagery here and that of the "iconography of the rising sun god" (Anderson, *Habakkuk*, 290).

[42] Shupak, "The God from Teman," 106.

[43] Shupak, "The God from Teman," 106.

[44] Shupak, "The God from Teman," 107.

[45] Anderson, *Habakkuk*, 297–98.

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accompany a visitation from the deity, here named Eloah. Regarding the difficulty in translating קַרְנַיִם (3:4b), it is likely prudent to follow David Tsumura in recognizing the possibility of a double entendre here, assisted by the Janus parallelism evident in the three lines of v. 4.[46] קַרְנַיִם, then, might be understood as rays when read with 3:4a, following Shupak's extended and largely convincing argument, and as 'horns' when read with 3:4c, following Haak, who has provided an extended discourse on the connection in Ugaritic literature and iconography between horns and power or strength.[47] Given these two associations, the imagery indicates that God is worshiped as both the one who is life giving and full of strength.

Having described God as the one who emerges like the sun in majesty and strength, the poet deviates from the imagery of illumination and introduces the militaristic motif that will dominate from 3:5 through 3:15. The appearance in 3:5 of the two deities, Deber and Resheph signals this change. They are "divine beings who are members of God's cosmic army and who march with him into his holy war."[48] Deber, associated with plague and pestilence, is lesser known in the ancient world. Resheph, however, was widely worshiped throughout the ancient Near East: he kept company with Baal in Ugarit, was associated with the Babylonian war God Nergal, enjoyed a particularly prominent place in the pantheon at Ebla, and was one of the foreign gods embraced in Egypt.[49] Here both of the lesser deities are depicted as members of Eloah's wartime retinue who march in front of and behind him, a common military formation found in other depictions of both gods and kings in the ANE.[50] While there is little textual evidence here to suggest that the two beings should not be understood according to their status as

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[46] Tsumura, "Janus Parallelism in Hab. III 4," 115–16.

[47] Haak, *Habakkuk*, 86–89.

[48] Hiebert, *God of My Victory*, 92.

[49] *HALOT* 3, s.v. רֶשֶׁף I, 1297–98; Aḥituv, "The Sinai Theophany," 229–30; Dietrich, *Nahum*, 168–69; Shupak, "The God from Teman," 111.

[50] Anderson, *Habakkuk*, 300–306; Hiebert, *God of My Victory*, 93; Aḥituv, "The Sinai Theophany," 229–30.

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deities in the ancient world, Dietrich does note that, in contrast to other texts that describe them, both Deber and Resheph have fewer personal attributes in this instance. Indeed, Eloah seems to take on the roles normally attributed to Resheph, thus demoting the deity to assistant.[51] The appearance (3:3–4) and march (3:5) of God is predictably accompanied by the dramatic response of the cosmos as described in 3:6: "He stopped and moved the earth. He looked and made the nations jump, and eternal mountains were shattered, ancient hills cowered, orbits of old were his."[52] Indeed, the tent-curtains of Cushan and Midian tremble at the deity's appearance (3:7). The subsection comes to its conclusion with an image of the divine warrior prepared for battle and accompanied by his wartime assistants. Such an appearance disrupts the natural order of the cosmos and anticipates the next subsection of the poem beginning in 3:8.

Habakkuk 3:8–15 reflects literary affinity with other ancient Near Eastern texts that share in common the *Chaoskampf* motif. Related to the ancient cosmology that understood the world as being enveloped in a cosmic sea. Held at bay above the earth by a domed firmament, the sea fed the rivers and seas from subterranean water reserves and provided the earth with rain through windows in the heavens.[53] The story of the taming of these waters, which symbolized chaos in the primeval era, is common in ancient Near Eastern mythology and appears to be the body of discourse presupposed in Hab 3:8–15. Hence, just as 3:3–7 displayed numerous connections to ancient Near Eastern conceptions of the divine, 3:8–15 also reflect extensive literary "participation in the discursive space of [its] culture."[54] In particular, Hab 3 is most frequently compared to the Ugaritic *Baal Epic* and the Babylonian *Enuma Elish*. However, it also contains

[51] Dietrich, *Nahum*, 169.

[52] Shupak notes that the "revelation of god is accompanied by earthquakes and celestial turbulence" in Egyptian, Mesopotamian, and Ugaritic literature (Shupak, "The God from Teman," 111).

[53] Day, *God's Conflict*, 4; Anderson, "Awaiting an Answered Prayer," 60–61.

[54] Culler, *The Pursuit of Signs*, 103.

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similarities to the Hittite, *The Storm God and the Serpent*. The motif is closely associated with the creation of the cosmos. So, for example, when Marduk defeats Tiamat in *Enuma Elish*, he uses her corpse for the creation of the world.[55] Additionally, kingship and the chaos conflict are associated in the ancient Near Eastern texts. For example, in the *Baal Epic*, Baal is installed as king in his sanctuary after defeating Yam;[56] in the *Enuma Elish*, the establishment of Marduk's temple and reign over Babylon follows his defeat of Tiamat;[57] and in Pss 29, 74, and 93, Yhwh's enthronement is linked to his defeat of chaos.[58] That the *Chaoskampf* motif is present in Hab 3:8–15 is evidenced by the repetition of references to water (3:8, 9, 10, and 15), the mention of תְּהוֹם (3:10), and the description of the Yhwh's chariot (3:8; Baal and Marduk also rode chariots into their battles with Yam/Tiamat).[59] The ways in which this text presupposes the thought patterns of other similar texts is significant for its interpretation.

Habakkuk 3:8 picks up these ancient themes in its tripartite questioning of Yhwh: "Did it burn against the rivers, O LORD? Was your wrath against the rivers? Was you rage against the sea?" Despite the fact that, as Anderson has noted, the verse does not contain enough evidence to recreate the narrative or epic that may lie behind the Hebrew poem, the parallelism between בַּיָּם/בַּנְּהָרִים, which is frequently employed in the Baal Epic, and the occurrence of the Hebrew cognate term for Tiamat (תְּהוֹם) in 3:10 indicate that the *Chaoskampf* motif, wherein "creation…had to be wrestled away from chaos" is present here.[60] Unlike the creation account of

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[55] "Epic of Creation," trans. Benjamin R. Foster (*COS* 1.111, 398–99).

[56] "The Ba'lu Myth," trans. Dennis Pardee (*COS* 1.86, 262–63).

[57] "Epic of Creation," trans. Benjamin R. Foster (COS 1.111, 399–400).

[58] Day, *God's Conflict*, 19.

[59] Day, *God's Conflict*, 106; Anderson, *Habakkuk*, 60–61.

[60] Anderson, *Habakkuk*, 317–18; Dietrich, *Nahum*, 171. Pinker suggests an alternative interpretation wherein the water imagery explicitly refers to Babylon, who he suggests was known by a code name including the mention of two rivers—"Syria of Two Rivers." In this interpretation *yam* would refer to -*a lagoon in the southeastern part of the Chaldean territory (Aron Pinker, "Problems and Solutions of Habakkuk 3:8," *JBQ* 31, [2003]: 7). While Babylon does seem to enter the poem through an allusion to Mot in 3:14, where the primordial begins to blur with the present, such an allusion is less convincing at this juncture. Similarly, others have argued that the crossing the Reed Sea and/or the River Jordan is indicated in these verses (Pinker, "Problems and Solutions," 3–

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Gen 1, however, the text attributes powerful emotions to Yhwh at the time of chaos' defeat, emotions that may hint at a struggle with the forces of cosmic chaos and that highlight the militaristic imagery present throughout Hab 3:5–15. Indeed, Yhwh's wrath precedes the initiation of battle in 3:9, at which point he draws his weaponry, ready to engage in warfare. That Hab 3:9 is a brandishing or show of weaponry that takes place before battle is perhaps the easiest aspect of the verse to interpret. Indeed, the Hebrew grammar is exceedingly difficult, with 3:9b nearly unintelligible in its sequence of three apparently unrelated nouns: שְׁבֻעוֹת מַטּוֹת אֹמֶר. While "arrows" is frequently posited as a translation for מַטּוֹת,[61] "clubs" or possibly "maces" seems more likely given that the storm gods in our parallel texts both carry maces (Marduk has both a mace and a bow with arrows) into their battles with chaos.[62] The remainder of the phrase continues to be difficult to understand, however, the tentative translation "[your] clubs were sworn [with] a word" has been adopted in light of the extended commissioning of Baal's maces in the *Baal Epic*.[63] Yhwh, like Baal and Marduk, is portrayed as a divine warrior, ready to engage in battle.

5; Anderson, *Habakkuk*, 317–18). Again, much in the way that the appearance of God from the south has been associated with the Exodus, so too has the *chaoskampf* motif been associated with the Israelite flight from Egypt and entrance into Canaan. Neither are explicitly mentioned by Habakkuk but, of course, the association of the same motif to all three circumstances creates the possibility that they would all be recalled in the minds of the readers/listeners, whether such recollection was intended or not.

[61] For example, Day, "Echoes," 146.

[62] David Toshio Tsumura, "The 'Word Pair' *QšT and *Mṭ in Habakkuk 3:9 in the Light of Ugaritic and Akkadian," in *'Go to the Land I Will Show You': Studies in Honor of Dwight W Young,* ed. by Joseph E. Coleson, Dwight W. Young, and Victor Harold Matthews (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1996), 361. See also, "The Ba'lu Myth," trans. Dennis Pardee (*COS* 1.86, 248–49); and "Epic of Creation," trans. Benjamin R. Foster (*COS* 1.111, 397).

[63] For example, "Kotaru prepares two maces and proclaims their names: You, your name is Yagrusu; Yagrusu, drive out Yammu, drive Yammu from his throne, Naharu from his seat of sovereignty. You'll whirl in Ba 'lu's hand, like a hawk in his fingers, Strike Prince Yammu on the shoulder, Ruler Naharu on the chest" ("The Ba'lu Epic," trans. Dennis Pardee [COS 1.86, 248–249]). Pinker suggests an interesting, but unconvincing interpretation where the Lord's bow in the passage refers to the rainbow, consisting of seven colors. He thus repoints שבעות to read "seven" and takes the second line as a reference to the seven colors of the rainbow, which he suggests the prophet would have understood as being made out of wooden slats (Aron Pinker, "The Lord's Bow in Habakkuk 3,9a," *Bib* 84 [2003]: 417–18).

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The response of the elements to Yhwh's march is again depicted in 3:10–11 (cf. 3:6) and, just as in the preceding verses, the poetry suggests the fear of the elements at Yhwh's display of power: the mountains writhe, Tehom gives forth her voice, the heights lift their hands in surrender, and the sun and moon are halted in the heavens.[64] Similarly, Baal's thunderous "voice causes the earth [to tremble], [at his thunder] the mountains shake with fear . . . the high places of the earth totter." Significantly, Baal's show of power also causes his enemies to seek security in the protection of trees and mountains.[65] Verse 3:12 completes the description of the divine warrior's entrance into battle by repeating the assertion of Yhwh's wrath that began the subsection—Yhwh marches in indignation and anger as he moves into battle to aide his people (3:13).

That primordial mythology continues to have ongoing significance in the present is made explicit Hab 3:13, where the defeat of the chaos monster is blended with the defeat of Israel's enemies. The repetition of יֵשַׁע in the verse foreshadows the hope expressed by the prophet and his community at the close of the prayer. That Yhwh battles for his people and his anointed—most likely a later insertion into the ancient poetry, but certainly reflective of the monarchy[66]—merges the *chaoskampf* motif with the present and demonstrates that ". . . the primordial wrestling about the existence of creation is continued in the struggle over the existence of the people of God."[67] The activity of Yhwh in the defeat of Israel's enemies is graphic, though not altogether clear. The victim, already prostrate from a blow to the head

[64] Anderson, *Habakkuk*, 327–32; Gareth J. Wearne, "Habakkuk 3:10–11: In Defence of a Masoretic Unit Division," *VT* 64 (2014): 518.
[65] "The Baʿlu Myth," trans. Dennis Pardee (COS 1.86, 262–263).
[66] Haak, *Habakkuk*, 99; Anderson, *Habakkuk*, 335.
[67] Dietrich, *Nahum*, 174–75.

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(רֹאשׁ מִבֵּית), is laid bare from bottom to top (3:13). Anderson suggests that the options include being "stripped naked," or disembowelment, i.e., "his brains are bashed out and his innards are exposed by slicing him open 'from foundation to neck.'"[68] The latter is more likely, given the gruesome depictions of both Baal's and Marduk's defeat of their cosmic enemies.[69] Indeed, Yhwh's show of force and violence continues into v. 14, where he is described as having "pierced" the heads of the enemy warriors with their own weapons. As the poetry marches forward, the blending of the primordial with the present continues and the first person perspective briefly reappears: "They stormed when they scattered me" represents the outlook of Habakkuk's community and bonds the description of their present foe with the water imagery associated with chaos ("they stormed," v. 14). The present enemy is depicted as having devoured the afflicted, a reference that Cassuto has suggested is likely to trigger in the mind of the ancient reader the figure Mot—indeed, this is all the more likely given the prominent place Mot received in Hab 1–2's presentation of Babylon.[70] Finally, the subsection is brought to its conclusion through an allusion to 3:8 with the repetition of יָם, "sea" and סוּסֶיךָ, "your horses." Now, however, the description of Judah's present foe has so overlapped that of the primordial waters that both ancient and contemporary enemies of Yhwh are active in the mind of the reader/listener.[71] That is, Yhwh's horses ride upon the backs of Babylon—victory is assured.

Much like the modern literary trope "once upon a time," the dominant use of water imagery in Hab 3:8–15 relates the story (told here in the form of poetry) to a series of other ancient Near Eastern stories and thus may be described as a "powerful intertextual operator."[72]

[68] Anderson, *Habakkuk*, 334.
[69] Hiebert, *God of My Victory*, 103.
[70] Cassuto, *Biblical and Oriental Studies*, 13.
[71] Cassuto, *Biblical and Oriental Studies*, 13–14.
[72] Culler, *The Pursuit of Signs*, 115.

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Similarly, the usage of common cultural motifs for the worship of the sun god in Hab 3:3–7 indicates that the text is in dialogue with other texts, including the 'texts' of social convention and religious practice.[73] Thus, by studying the way in which Hab 3 is embedded in the social discourse of the ancient world, its intertexual participation within its own context, the import of the poetry may be illuminated for the contemporary, and markedly distant, reader. Here an image of Yhwh as the source of life and strength (3:3–4), the warrior ready for battle (3:5–7), and the king over chaos (3:8–15) has emerged via a study of intertextuality. This participation of Hab 3 in the intertextual discourse of the ancient world serves as the intersection of memory and literature for Habakkuk's community. Therefore, having closely considered the content portrayed as Habakkuk's community's shared experience of the past, it is now possible to turn once more to the present and establish the *Sitz in der Literatur* of 3:3–15, Habakkuk's cultural memory.

4.4. The *Sitz in der Literatur* of Hab 3:3–15

Already in the above discussion of Hab 3:3–15 the present concerns of Habakkuk's community began to move once more to the forefront of the conversation. However, the connections that are achieved through the blending of the *chaoskampf* motif with the literary portrayal of contemporary trauma from Hab 1–2 are not the primary means by which Hab 3 is fitted into its place at the conclusion of Habakkuk's prophecy. Indeed, this work is achieved primarily through the framing material of the poem, Hab 3:2 and 16–19.[74] Thus, an assessment of these verses is the logical first step in considering the *Sitz in der Literatur* of Hab 3:3–15. My

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[73] Umberto Eco, *On Literature* (Orlando: Harcourt Books, 2002), 227.

[74] To a lesser degree, the superscription also ties this portion of Habakkuk to Hab 1–2 by attributing the material to the same prophetic figure. However, what kind of work is accomplished by the placement of a new superscription is debatable. Some view this insertion as a means of attaching disparate material to the main body of Habakkuk's prophecy (e.g., Nogalski, *Micah–Malachi*, 648). In this view then, the superscription, rather than tying the two sections of the book together, actually indicates that the material of the book is unrelated as one moves from ch. 2 to ch. 3. As a result, the literary connections between the frame created by Hab 3:2 and 16–19 may be more significant for an argument in favour of literary unity within the book as a whole.

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analysis will begin by considering how these verses frame the core material reviewed in the previous section, after which, one final aspect of Hab 3 will be explored in greater detail: its use for communal prayer as indicated through the markers of psalmody in 3:1, 3, 9, 13 and 19. Accordingly, having thoroughly explored the final chapter of Habakkuk, we might return to the questions posed early in the present study. That is, what needs drove the production of this particular textual artifact and what purposes might it have served for those who received it? These questions may be addressed by taking notice of the ways Hab 3 is used as a meaning making frame for Hab 1–2—the past as used for the needs of the present—through the keying of Babylon's suppressive military tactics to Yhwh's primordial defeat of chaos.

Habakkuk 3:2 begins by invoking the name of Yhwh, who is the addressee of the unfolding prayer. What follows is the return of the first person perspective that distinguished Hab 1:2–4 and 1:12–2:1 as the voice of the prophet. Thus, with the statements שָׁמַעְתִּי, "I have heard" and יָרֵאתִי, "I fear," this voice returns to the book, albeit with what appears to be a rather dramatic change in tone. These verses display reverence and awe in the presence of Yhwh and contrast the last report of the prophet's speech in 2:1, where Habakkuk's resolve to challenge God for a reply was expressed resolutely and in spite of possible rebuke. Perhaps the intervening material has changed the prophet's perspective or perhaps it is the upcoming report of Yhwh's reputation (שִׁמְעֲךָ) and work (פָּעָלְךָ), which Habakkuk declares he has heard. Regardless, there is a decided shift in outlook between the opening verses of Hab 1–2 and the beginning of chapter 3's prayer—one that becomes increasingly pronounced in 3:16–19.[75] The prophetic petition follows Habakkuk's assertion that he has heard of Yhwh's great reputation. Unfortunately, the text is extremely difficult at this point and suggested emendations abound.[76] However, as Michael L.

[75] Anderson, *Habakkuk*, 342.
[76] See appendix for a more detailed discussion.

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Barré notes, that the final two thirds of the verse form a perfect syntactic and near perfect semantic tricola indicates that it is unlikely that the verse is severely corrupted.[77] Thus, a rather wooden English translation reads, "In [the] midst of years, revive it. In [the] midst of years, make known. In trembling, remember to have mercy." While the time frame indicated by "in the midst of years" is unclear to the contemporary reader (although, possibly not to a native speaker of ancient Hebrew), the verse indicates a "request that the ancient deeds [reported in 3:3–15] be repeated," most likely in the prophet's own time.[78]

Subsequent to the retelling of Yhwh's primordial victories (3:3–15), the prophet's voice returns once more. Habakkuk 3:16, which presents Habakkuk's response to the memory of Yhwh's ancient deeds, reflects back on 3:2 through the repetition of שָׁמַעְתִּי and רגז, what the prophet has heard causes trembling. That this tremulous response is the result of the prophet's fear, also reported in 3:2, is made evident in the description of 3:16. This is not merely an intellectual or emotional reaction to the work of Yhwh, but a visceral reverberation that impacts stomach, lips, bones, and footsteps—Habakkuk shakes where he stands.[79] Quickly, however, this state of whole body fear gives way to נוח, "ease" or "rest" while waiting for vengeance to fall upon the present enemy.[80] Verse 17, then, declares that the new found trust of the prophet in Yhwh's ability to re-establish his ancient victories will endure even in the midst of wartime famine, when productivity in the land is lost.[81] Indeed, even when Death grips the land, the prophet will remain hopeful that salvation is on the horizon (v. 18).[82] As the prayer closes, Habakkuk makes a final bold affirmation of faith, "The LORD, my lord, is my strength and he

[77] Michael L. Barré, "Habakkuk 3:2: Translation in Context," *CBQ* 50 (1988): 186.

[78] Anderson, *Habakkuk*, 278–79. See also, Day, *God's Conflict*, 105; and Cassuto, *Biblical and Oriental Studies*, 9.

[79] Robert D. Holmstedt, "Habakkuk 3:16—Where Did the 'ašEr Go?," *HS* 44 (2003): 138.

[80] Anderson, *Habakkuk*, 345.

[81] Aron Pinker, "Infertile Quartet of Flora," *ZAW* 115 (2003): 623.

[82] Legaspi, "Opposition to Idolatry in the Book of Habakkuk," 469.

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makes my feet like does' [feet] and upon my high places (בָּמוֹתָי) he makes me tread," where בָּמוֹתָי is an allusion to the back of the chaos monster[83]—"Habakkuk tramples his enemies."[84]

Having considered the content of Habakkuk's cultural memory, it is now possible to turn to the form in which the material is presented—a form clearly marked for ritual observance. That form is as important as content has already been discussed in chapter 2 and is particularly relevant since the form here indicates that the memory of Habakkuk was recited in communal practice.[85] Indeed, as was already discussed above, Hab 3 is unique in the prophetic literature because of the musical notation included in 3:1, 3, 9, 13, and 19. Through these markings, so common in the psalter, the poetry of Habakkuk turns out to be the song and prayer of the community.[86] Given these ritual indicators, it is apt at this juncture to remember Connerton's assertion that the practices that accompany ritual, such as bodily positioning, performance, and language are formative aspects of the cultic engagement. Although a study of positioning and performance is not possible here (since, if these existed as a part of the ritual in this case, they are now lost to history), Habakkuk's use of liturgical language is informative for understanding the relevance of Hab 3 for community constitution and coherence.

Connerton explains that an essential feature of liturgical language is that, in and of itself, it is a performative action, which is why it "works so powerfully as a mnemonic device."[87] Performative language is not a commentary on the activity of ritual, it is the activity itself. Through the liturgy, members of the group come together in solidarity and create a space through which their present experience is bound, once more, to the formative events of their shared past.

[83] *HALOT* 1, s.v. בָּמָה, 136.
[84] Anderson, *Habakkuk*, 349.
[85] Connerton, *How Societies Remember*, 54–59.
[86] Dietrich, *Nahum*, 179.
[87] Connerton, *How Societies Remember*, 57–58.

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The group is thus reconstituted as a result in their shared practice. This effect is achieved through the use of the communal first person, which Connerton notes frequently occurs in first person plural pronouns such as 'us' and 'we.'[88] In Habakkuk, however, the community comes together as a collective through the use of the first person singular, 'I' and 'me.' This is a common feature of Hebrew psalmody, where both the first person plural and the first person singular are used in collective worship.[89] Each individual community member joins the group in solidarity, affirming their shared experience of the divine and their shared hope in a future victory. Accordingly, it is Habakkuk *and the community* who petition Yhwh to re-enact ancient victories in the present time (3:2); it is Habakkuk *and the community* who observe the theodicy that shakes the curtains of Cushan and Midian (3:7);[90] it is Habakkuk *and the community* who join together and declare that they have been scattered by their enemy (3:13); and, finally, it is Habakkuk *and the community* that respond in both fear and faith at the recounting of Yhwh's great and mighty deeds (3:16–19).[91]

The repetition of the first person, even at points that are unexpected (such as 3:7 and 3:13) is significant for communal engagement. The individual, as a member of the community, inserts himself or herself into the memory of the past events and declares them relevant for the

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[88] Connerton, *How Societies Remember*, 58.

[89] See, for example, the Songs of Ascents (Pss 120–134), which employ both the first person singular (Pss 120–23, 129, and 130–132) and the first person plural (Pss 123–24, 126) for use in groups of Israelite pilgrims making their way to the temple in Jerusalem (see, for example, Leslie C. Allen, *Psalms 101–150*, WBC 21 (Waco, TX: Word, 1983), 148; and John Goldingay, *Psalms*, 3 vols. BCOTWP (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008), 752).

[90] That the present community was not actually, physically present at this event does not mean that they are unable to claim their presence there with their ancestors. Indeed, this kind of "presence in absence" is no more profound than in Deuteronomy, where Moses addresses the second generation of wilderness wanderers as if they too were present at Sinai to receive the law (Deut 1:6).

[91] Contra Anderson who views the use of the first person perspective throughout the poem as the prophet's personal "tremendous assertion of faith" and states that the "response is intensely individual. There is no prophetic outreach to the people" (Anderson, *Habakkuk*, 347). Anderson himself notes that such a situation would be the exception among the prophets, whose work was "always for public purposes" (Anderson, *Habakkuk*, 347). What Anderson misses is the significance of the ritual indicators in the text, indicators which suggest that the material therein is not for the benefit of the prophet alone, but for the shared edification of the prophet's community.

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present. This is especially the case in 3:13, where each member of the community together expresses their experience of their present distress and their outrage at the enemy's behaviour in light of Yhwh's past victory. Perhaps most significant, however, is the use of first person performative language in 3:16–19, verses which contemporary commentators find surprising, but which are quite logical in a ritual setting.[92]

As was noted above, there is an abrupt shift of mood in v. 16, from fear to quiet trust. This declaration of the intent to rest and wait for Yhwh to act is then followed by a sequence of similar assertions: "I will exalt in the LORD," "I will rejoice in the God of my salvation" and "the LORD, my lord, is my strength" (vv. 18–19). Each of these express another common feature of liturgical language: the presupposition of "certain attitudes—of trust and veneration, of submission, contrition and gratitude—which come into effect the moment when, by virtue of the enunciation of the sentence, the corresponding act takes place."[93] These affirmations should be understood, not as the pre-existing experience of the attitudes they describe, but as means for bringing such faith to reality in the community. That is, these are statements that "effectively bring those attitudes into existence by virtue of the illocutionary act."[94] Consequently, through communal ritual engagement, the community of Habakkuk together affirms the significance of their shared memory, Hab 3:3–15, for their present circumstances and performs a corresponding, faithful response. Such commemoration of cultural memory is significant for identity negotiation and group continuity because it prevents a complete severing from the past by determining which events will orient the group, balancing social change and allowing for "social persistence."[95]

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[92] For example, Anderson, *Habakkuk*, 345.

[93] Connerton, *How Societies Remember*, 58.

[94] Connerton, *How Societies Remember*, 58; Ward describes this as the community's opportunity to "try on this attitude for themselves" (Ward, "Habakkuk," 6).

[95] Kirk, "Social and Cultural Memory," 7; Connerton, *How Societies Remember*, 39–40.

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Accordingly, Habakkuk 3 should be viewed as a dynamic expression of cultural memory that serves for community constitution in present circumstances that threaten group continuity. This interaction between past and present illuminates the *Sitz in der Literatur* of Hab 3:3–15, and will bring the present chapter to its conclusion.

That Hab 3 is intended as a response to Hab 1–2 is indicated by verbal cues in 3:2 and 16–19, whereby the first person voice of the prophet Habakkuk in 1:2–4 and 1:12–2:1, and the pronouncement of Yhwh in 1:5–11 are echoed. The first of these is the repetition of the root שׁמע, "to hear," first occurring in 1:2 as a part of the prophet's accusation that Yhwh does not hear a cry for help. The root then occurs 3 times in Hab 3, twice in 3:2 and once in 3:16, where it is the prophet who hears of Yhwh's reputation. Similarly, the root ישׁע, "to save" or "salvation" also occurs in 1:2 as a part of Habakkuk's lament at Yhwh's inactivity on behalf of the community's distress. Notably, the prophet asserts that Yhwh does not save. When the root reoccurs in Hab 3, the opposite assertion is made, indeed, the root occurs in noun form four times as a declaration that Yhwh is the one who comes for the salvation of his people (3:8, 13x2, and 18). Finally, פעל, "work" or "deed" occurs twice in Hab 1:5 and is then repeated in 3:2. This time Yhwh speaks first, declaring that he is doing a new work in the days of Habakkuk (1:5). The inversion comes on the lips of the prophet in 3:2, with the request that Yhwh work once more in "the midst of years."[96] While Yhwh announces the coming of the Chaldeans, Habakkuk, in altered circumstances, petitions Yhwh to defeat the oppressive nation. Thus, that Hab 3 responds to Hab 1–2 is indicated linguistically through the frame of Habakkuk's prayer. The community's prayer, and the cultural memory fitted therein, is intrinsically linked to Habakkuk's lament. This is made

[96] Dietrich, *Nahum*, 166.

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particularly evident when the key themes of Hab 1–2 are placed in relationship with the content of Hab 3.

Habakkuk 1–2 are chapters of prophecy particularly concerned with the apparent apathy of Yhwh in light of the suffering righteous. They open with the characteristic questioning of lament and mourn the violence, trouble, destruction, and bloodshed brought about by the military and political tactics of the Neo-Babylonian Empire. By the end of Hab 1, the hopelessness of the community is palpable in the face of an enemy that consumes its victims like the insatiable Mot and whose God does not save (1:2). In contrast, Hab 3 describes Yhwh as the one who rises like the sun (3:3–4) and marches for the salvation of his people (3:8, 13). The God of Hab 3 is anything but passive in the face of primeval chaos, instead this God rages against the ancient, watery enemy (3:8), tramples the earth in indignation on behalf of his people, and exacts violent and thorough punishment on their oppressors (3:13–14). The questioning of Habakkuk's laments finds its answer in the community's mythic memory: "God came in power before all ages, and God will come in power again" to exact revenge on behalf of his people.[97] Consequently, the memory undergirds ongoing faith in Yhwh as Judah's national deity.

Similarly, Habakkuk 1–2's depiction of Judah's present oppressor is matched to and compared with the character of Yhwh. The contrast between the two is highlighted at several points. First, Babylon is introduced through a report of the nation's reputation as bitter, impetuous, terrifying, and dreadful (1:6–7). Correspondingly, Yhwh is also introduced according to his reputation (3:2), which is said to inspire praise throughout the earth (3:3). Second, in Hab 1:8 Babylon's horses and horsemen are likened to animals of prey, whereas, in Hab 3:8 Yhwh mounts his horses and war-chariots to battle the primordial waters, emerging victorious to

[97] Dietrich, *Nahum*, 164. See also Carr on the desire for revenge as a prevalent theme in exilic literature (Carr, *The Formation of the Hebrew Bible*, 249).

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trample the sea in 3:15. Third, Babylon is described as marching across the earth (1:6) for violence (1:9). In contrast, Yhwh is said to march in formation with his wartime retinue, Deber and Resheph (3:5), for salvation (3:13). Fourth, Babylon is said to mock kings and fortified cities (1:10)—Yhwh merely moves and the cosmos shudders (3:6, 10–11). Finally, Babylon is depicted as the arrogant nation who has abused its power absolutely, placing itself in league with Mot (1:10, 14–17; 2:4–5) and Yhwh is portrayed as the one who defeats the arrogant one who has consumed the afflicted (3:14). Although Babylon's armies may be brutal and victorious, they pale in comparison to the divine warrior remembered in Hab 3. Indeed, a comparison between the Hab 3's characterization of Yhwh and Hab 1–2's depiction of Babylon undermines the "enemy's ferocious reputation," offering hope to the suffering community.[98]

Finally, Hab 1–2 anticipates a communal response to Yhwh's revelation characterized by faithful, expectant waiting (2:4–5). The community is offered the hope of retributive justice through the woe oracles of Hab 2:6–20 and is urged to live in confident patience emerging from the comfort that Yhwh remains present in his temple (2:20). Here too Hab 3 responds to, or rather provides the response for, Hab 1–2. That is, instead of offering an alternative view of Yhwh, as in the case of Habakkuk's lament, or presenting a superior picture of the divine warrior, as in the case of Babylon's ferocity, Hab 3 makes available the means through which the community may experience hope and continue in faith. It does this by *becoming* the prayer on their lips offered to Yhwh as an expression of trust built on their collective memory of the past. Consequently, as the above analysis of the *Sitz in der Literatur* demonstrates, the cultural memory of Habakkuk 3:3–15 has been carefully fitted into the book of Habakkuk in order to provide a meaning making frame for the community's present experience of trauma. It thus

[98] Watts, "Psalmody in Prophecy" 215–16.

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reflects and provides for the negotiation of identity in Habakkuk's community as they experienced the early impact of the exile.

4.5. Conclusion

Barry Schwartz has argued that "as a model *for* society, collective memory performs two functions: it embodies a *template* that organizes and animates behaviour and a *frame* within which people locate and find meaning for their present experience."[99] Habakkuk's community lived under Babylonian dominion in the early sixth century B.C.E., dominion that threatened their very existence. Babylon's imperial program was designed to dismantle threats to the internal unity of the empire and expand national boundaries in the pursuit of national glory.[100] As a vassal state, Judah was at the mercy of Babylon and had already experienced the force of their suppressive tactics through the first forced migration in 597 B.C.E. Their present experience was one marked by uncertainty, fear, and violence—a reality described explicitly in the first two chapters of Habakkuk's prophecy. In negotiating their present trauma, then, the collective memory of Hab 3:3–15, shaped as a prayer of the prophet Habakkuk and marked for ritual use, became for them both a frame through which meaning and hope for the future might be located and a template by which present action might take the form of fortitude in the face of fear. This is the *Sitz in der Literatur* of Habakkuk's cultural memory, it is the meaning making frame to which the present circumstances of Hab 1–2 are keyed and through which the community may persist in the process of identity negotiation. Accordingly, having arrived at the *Sitz in der Literatur* of Habakkuk's mythic memory, the present study may come to a conclusion by

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[99] Schwartz, "From *Abraham Lincoln*," 245.

[100] Rainer Albertz, *Israel in Exile*, ed. Dennis T. Olson and Sharon H. Ringe, trans. David Green, StBibLit 3 (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2003), 53–56.

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returning to the question of Habakkuk's *Sitz im Leben* via Habakkuk's community's negotiation of identity *vis-à-vis* Babylon. Such will be the topic of the final chapter of the present study.

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5. CONCLUSION

5.1. Introduction

Hermann Gunkel's early form critical program pursued the history of traditions in ancient Israel through the analysis of the biblical material.[1] Gunkel proposed that this history was accessible if the ancient, standardized genres of the original, oral precursors to the text could be delineated and studied. Since these genres were thought to be inextricably linked to specific social and institutional settings in the corporate life of Israel, locating and cataloging them would provide a picture of the earliest and most authentic version of Israelite religion. In the prophetic literature, the diachronic and historical work of classic biblical form critics sought oral utterances that had been preserved within the biblical texts, even as they were altered to fit their new literary context. Once these utterances had been identified and their genres established, their *Sitz im Leben* could be determined and insight could be gained regarding the ancient religion of Israel. Unfortunately, as has already been explored, recent scholarship has questioned the possibility of identifying an oral substratum in the Hebrew Bible/Old Testament, and the prophetic literature more specifically.[2] As a result, this work has been almost completely abandoned. However, Gunkel's form critical method has not lost it significance in biblical scholarship.

Recently a new form critical method has been proposed as a means of continuing, and also moving beyond, Gunkel's program.[3] New form critics have made helpful strides forward in

[1] Sweeney and Ben Zvi, "Introduction," 1.

[2] For an extended conversation on this shift in scholarship see ch. 2.

[3] See, for example, Marvin A. Sweeney and Ehud Ben Zvi, eds., *The Changing Face of Form Criticism for the Twenty-First Century* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003); and Boda, Floyd, and Toffelmire, *The Book of the Twelve*.

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the study of genre, both sub-genres within biblical books (the study of a *Sitz im Buch* or *Sitz in der Literatur*) and the study of entire books as genres in their own right (for example, Ben Zvi's classification of the genre, "prophetic book").[4] Indicative of the new form critical shift away from a search for oral precursors, the new program focuses especially on biblical texts in their final forms as works of literature. Thus, since Gunkel's notion of a *Sitz im Leben* was attached to his proposed pre-textual oral genres, it has been largely discarded with the movement to literary analysis.[5]

However, as Toffelmire's work demonstrates, there is ongoing value in the study of the life settings from which biblical texts emerged for communal use.[6] Such study allows the researcher to focus on questions of literary production and function in ancient Israel, the types of questions that are the driving force of the present study. What is necessary in this renewed study of a (prophetic) *Sitz im Leben* is a move with new form critics away from a hypothetical oral substratum to the text in its final form, as well as a corresponding move from what Toffelmire has called "excavation" to "interpretation," or the investigation of the setting in life revealed by the communicative activity of the text itself.[7] That is, the *Sitz im Leben* of a genre, here the prophetic book, may be examined via a study of its content and its communal function. This link between genre and function was established in the study of Habakkuk's *Sitz im Leben* by Bellinger, albeit from a different angle, who argued that the setting of the prophet's work could not be determined merely by the genre categories he employed but also required analysis of their social function.[8]

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[4] Toffelmire, "Form Criticism," 224; Ben Zvi, "The Prophetic Book," 278–83.

[5] Wilson, "New Form Criticism," 91.

[6] Toffelmire, "*Sitz Im* What?," 221–44; and Toffelmire, *A Discourse and Register Analysis of the Prophetic Book of Joel*, 199–205.

[7] Toffelmire, *A Discourse and Register Analysis of the Prophetic Book of Joel*, 39.

[8] Bellinger, *Psalmody and Prophecy*, 86.

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One fruitful avenue for the study of literary function has been thoroughly explored in the preceding chapters. That is, the application of cultural memory theory to the analysis of biblical texts, here the book of Habakkuk, provides insight into their function in reception communities. This is because works of literature both create and preserve a group's cultural memory and, as a result, may be studied synchronically (as objects of memory) and diachronically (as works of memory production).[9] As works of memory, these literary products serve communal identity navigation, both for preservation (in continuity with previous generations) and for negotiation (change according to the needs of the present). The group's shared memory, here represented in their works of literature, functions for cohesion and unity among members by providing for continuity through the course of history and validating the practices and experiences of the present according to the authority of the past.[10] The *Sitz im Leben* of a biblical text, then, may be explored by way of cultural memory theory as it illuminates the needs of the reception community and its function therein.

The preceding chapters have demonstrated how the production of the book of Habakkuk responded to the needs of the Judahite community's emerging present. As a group that existed on the edge of national disintegration and the beginning of the biblical exile, Habakkuk's reception community lived in the tension between old patterns of life and new challenges presented by the Neo-Babylonian Empire. These new challenges posed a significant threat to the community's cultic, political, and social identity. It is thus not surprising that the book of Habakkuk would reflect internal tension and active navigation of group identity, particularly as these related to the standard state theology of Judah that validated the nation's cultic distinctness, political

[9] Erll and Rigney, "Literature," 112.

[10] Hendel, "Cultural Memory," 30. See also Carr's recent work on the formation of the Hebrew Bible (Carr, *The Formation of the Hebrew Bible*, 227).

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boundaries, and hope in a future existence as a nation-state in the ancient Near East. Each of these areas reflects a key theme of the book of Habakkuk (outlined in chapters 3 and 4). Accordingly, as the present study draws to its conclusion, I will return to these themes and reflect on each one in turn in order to illuminate the *Sitz im Leben* of Habakkuk's prophecy.

5.2. Cult Worship

Habakkuk 1–2 contain two prophetic laments concerning the inactivity and apparent apathy of Yhwh in light of present circumstances of distress and injustice. The questioning of the prophetic voice challenges the character of Yhwh, demanding to know how a pure and holy God can allow the persistence of evil and the destruction of the righteous (1:12–13). The complaint is especially poignant because it is uttered in the community established as Yhwh's own. It is reflective of a communal questioning of God's power, or possible impotency, given the success of the Neo-Babylonian Empire. Indeed, that Babylon constituted a real and daunting threat is reflected in the text's repeated characterization of the nation as the deity of death, Mot. Since Judah identified itself as the people of Yhwh, Yhwh's apparent disregard for or inability to act on behalf of the community presented a real threat to internal group cohesion (particularly since the establishment of centralized worship in Josiah's time). The result is a question regarding who is more worthy of worship and more able to offer protection, Yhwh or the gods of Babylon?

This negotiation of Judah's identity in relationship to Yhwh is also reflected in a persistent tension in the text—the question of right worship and monotheism. As was discussed in chapter 2, Albertz has argued that the challenge posed to Jerusalemite state theology by the Neo-Babylonian Empire eventually led to the establishment of monotheism as a distinctive

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marker for early Jewish religion.[11] That Habakkuk is not a monotheistic text is quite evident in its references to the deities Mot (2:5), Deber (3:5), and Resheph (3:5), which suggest that the writer of Habakkuk felt little or no tension at placing these deities alongside of Yhwh or in their depiction as Yhwh's assistants. At the same time, other aspects of the book indicate a movement towards purely monotheistic religion, such as the depiction of Yhwh as a deity whose influence extends to other nations and who uses current national powers to establish his own will and work in human history (Hab 1:5–11),[12] as well as the critique of Babylon's cult practices.[13] Of course, in order for monotheism to firmly take hold in the community's theology, it would be necessary to demonstrate that Yhwh was indeed as powerful, and perhaps more powerful, than Babylon's gods. Hence, just as was thoroughly explored in chapter 4, the cultural memory of Yhwh as the source of life and the divine warrior who defeats chaos provides a response to Habakkuk's questioning and re-establishes the place of Yhwh as Judah's rightful and trustworthy nation-deity. In so doing, Habakkuk's prophecy affirms a group identity that is consonant with previous generations, an identity that is intimately tied to their status as the worshipers of Yhwh. This drive for continuity, rather than the development of new identity markers, is reflective of the community's historical location at the beginning of the exile but prior to the destruction of the temple. The radical negotiation of theological tenets and, consequently, group identity markers that resulted from the fall of Jerusalem and the loss of Solomon's Temple have not yet impacted Habakkuk's community. Indeed, the desire to preserve group identity consonant with that of

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[11] Albertz, "More and Less Than a Myth," 28–29. For a discussion of the development of monotheism in ancient Israel see Mark S. Smith, *The Early History of God: Yahweh and the Other Deities in Ancient Israel* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1990).

[12] Dietrich, *Nahum*, 117–18.

[13] Although, the exact indictment of Babylon's use of idols is not entirely clear. Legaspi has convincingly argued that Hab 2:18–20 does not condemn Babylon for polytheistic worship and idolatry, but for unethical worship that leads to the exploitation of the nations—a perspective that would be consistent with Hab 1:11 and 15–17's accusation that Babylon worships its own power (see, Legaspi, "Opposition to Idolatry in the Book of Habakkuk," 458–69).

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previous generations is also exhibited in the negotiation of political boundaries *vis-à-vis* Yhwh's superiority over Babylon's military might.

5.3. National Existence

The first two chapters of Habakkuk describe the social situation in Judah as one characterized by pervasive injustice (1:13; 2:6–8, 9–11), exploitation (1:14–17; 2:15–17), violence (1:9; 2:8, 12–13, 17), and corrupt ritual practice (1:11, 17; 2:18–19). These conditions are the result of Judah's present enemy, the recently established Neo-Babylonian Empire. Indeed, Babylon is the second prominent theme in the prophetic book and the depiction of the nation occupies much of Hab 1–2. The nation is portrayed as powerful and as possessing an active militia (1:6, 9, and 10). Their actions are described as exacting violence, exploitation, bloodshed, and degradation upon the nations (1:9; 2:6–8, 12–14, and 15–17), and their power is such that they mock kings and military fortifications (1:10). Their greed is monstrous and, as a result, they are depicted as being in league with Mot (1:15–17; 2:4–5). That these chapters are introduced by two prophetic laments concerning internal circumstances of distress indicates the fear and uncertainty faced by the community. Given Judah's position as vassal to Babylon and Jehoiachin's captivity, the Empire posed a real and present threat to the community's identity. Indeed, Babylon had the power to bring about its vassal-state's complete collapse—or total identity disintegration.

In light of this threat, the cultural memory of Hab 3 provides a meaningful response wherein the political events of Judah's present are placed within the framework of Yhwh's past military victory. As was explored in chapter 4, the depiction of Babylon in Hab 1–2 is matched with and undermined by the depiction of Yhwh in Hab 3. The blended material of Habakkuk's ancient, cultural memory portrays a deity that is ultimate in strength and power. Where Babylon

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is fierce, Yhwh is ferocious. The contrast is accomplished through the comparison of Babylon and Yhwh's reputations, weaponry, military retinues, purposes, and victories. Most importantly, the mythological memory of Yhwh as divine warrior and past conqueror of chaos is blended with present circumstances so as to offer assurance of a new victory over Babylon. This is achieved especially in Hab 3:13–15, which is introduced by the affirmation that Yhwh has gone out for the salvation of his people and his anointed one (3:13). Following this, the human enemy of the prayer is said to have "stormed" in their attack—a watery image that ties the present enemy with the watery chaos enemy from vv. 8–12. Next, the first-person perspective of the prayer's frame briefly returns in the statement, "they stormed when they scattered me," and inserts the present experience of the prophet and the community into the ancient memory of Yhwh's victories. Finally, in v. 14, the enemy of the prayer is said to be arrogant in their consumption of the afflicted, a description reminiscent of Mot and the depiction of Babylon in Hab 1–2 (cf. 1:15–17; 2:4–5). As a result of this conflation of past and present in the mythological memory, the statement of ultimate victory in v. 15, "you tread upon the sea [with] your horses, foaming mighty waters," declares Yhwh's victory over chaos as his victory over Babylon.

This fitting together of events past with events present re-establishes Judah's national boundaries in opposition to Babylon by pronouncing the ultimate defeat of the enemy nation. While Habakkuk is occasionally described as a non-violent prophet, it is notable that his prophecy's portrait of the divine warrior is far from passive.[14] Instead, the brutal depiction of Yhwh indicates that the community's desire is not primarily an end to violence, but an end to Babylon and its infliction of violence on the nations. Indeed, this aspect of the book is reflective

[14] For example, S. D. Snyman, "Non-Violent Prophet and Violent God in the Book of Habakkuk," *OTE* 16 (2003): 422–34.

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of the desire for revenge that Carr's work has highlighted as a marker of exilic texts.[15] One of the primary concerns of Habakkuk's prophecy is the enactment of justice and the future of Yhwh's people as a nation dedicated to Yhwh worship. Consequently, while Babylon is a present threat to identity in continuity with previous generations, their shared memory of the past and the victories of Yhwh undergirds ongoing internal group cohesion and hope for continuity into the future as the independent nation-state of Judah.[16] The cultural memory embedded in the final chapter of Habakkuk's prophecy serves the community in the way that Schwartz has described memory's capacity to frame and bring meaning to present circumstances.[17] There is one final aspect of Habakkuk's mythological memory that also reflects its function for the community. That is, Hab 3's prayer also functions as what Schwartz has called a template for present behaviour.[18] In so doing, the shared memory of the community embodies renewed faith in the worship of Yhwh and undergirds hope for their future as a nation.

5.4. Future Hope

The final theme identified in the book of Habakkuk concerned an anticipated communal response to Judah's present circumstances. Hab 1–2 describes this response as one marked by expectant waiting rather than hopeless languishing in present suffering (2:4). Habakkuk's community, while experiencing the social breakdown that accompanies political disaster, was to continue in faithfulness while anticipating that Babylon would meet the consequences of their wickedness and receive retribution in kind (2:4–20). This reaction is already justified in Hab 2 through an affirmation of traditional Jerusalemite state theology, that is, the assurance that Yhwh

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[15] Carr, *The Formation of the Hebrew Bible*, 249.

[16] Of course, history tells a different story and other biblical texts reflect on the collapse of this hope as it corresponds to the destruction of the temple, the later return from exile, and the subsequent failure to re-establish the monarchy.

[17] Schwartz, "From *Abraham Lincoln*," 245.

[18] Schwartz, "From *Abraham Lincoln*," 245.

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remains in his holy temple (2:20). The righteous of Habakkuk's community are to live in diametric opposition to the activity of Babylon (the pedagogical impact of the woe oracles) as they wait for the right ordering of their world wherein righteousness is blessed and wickedness is punished.

Habakkuk 3, then, provides the template and even the means through which the anticipated communal behaviour might be performed. This is achieved through ritual use of the chapter, indicated by the liturgical markers dispersed throughout Habakkuk's prayer. In the communal performance of their shared memory of the past, the attitudes of expectancy (3:16), resolve (3:17–18), faith (3:18), and hope (3:19) may be brought about in their midst.[19] Indeed, in ritual participation, the community already behaves according to the expectations of Hab 1–2, their shared memory becomes their prayer and praise. Through this act of worship, the community persists in their status as the people of Yhwh and establishes their hope in a shared, national future. Habakkuk 3's ritual prayer and the mythical memory embedded therein is thus reflective of the two key aspects of exilic identity negotiation identified by Wilson and Albertz: (1) the community engages in the retelling of their stories in such a way as to integrate the present into past frameworks, and (2) the community participates in "confessional acts of religious faith" in order to affirm their affiliation with the group and mark distinct boundaries for their shared identity, boundaries marked here in direct opposition to the imperial program of Babylon.[20]

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[19] Connerton, *How Societies Remember*, 58.
[20] Wilson, "Forced Migration," 135; Albertz, "More and Less Than a Myth," 31.

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5.5. Conclusion

Collective remembering acts as a stabilizing and unifying force within groups and even whole societies. This is true even as memories of the past are re-appropriated and re-worked in order to be fitted into a narrative structure that makes sense of the past, the present, and a hoped for future. Indeed, this constructive activity, which is essential to the process of identity negotiation, is foundational for group cohesion and for the survival of the group over time. The book of Habakkuk represents this process in microcosm and, as a result, reflects the needs, concerns, and hopes of its reception community in Judah. Through the text forming work of intertextuality, the ancient mythological memory of Yhwh as divine warrior was fashioned into a ritual, communal prayer and fitted for the present circumstances, as represented in Hab 1–2, of the Judahite community. As a result, the book functioned for internal group cohesion and stability in light of present trauma and uncertainty that instigated active identity negotiation. By selecting the mythological memory as significant for the present circumstances of Judah, the writer of Habakkuk marked this aspect of the group's shared past as constitutive for community identity and provided for the preservation of internal unity over the course of time. This process, in turn, was facilitated by the use of the memory in ritual, commemorative practice, as is indicated by the musical notation in Hab 3.

Given the results of this study's application of cultural memory theory to the book of Habakkuk, and the methodological refinements made to classic form criticism by new form critics, it is now possible to summarize the above conclusions, which provide answers to the driving questions of this study and reflect the *Sitz im Leben* of Habakkuk's prophecy. The needs that initiated the production of the book of Habakkuk are indicated by the book's historical and social setting. The book of Habakkuk, situated at the beginning of the exile, but prior to the

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destruction of the temple,[21] was produced in a time of political upheaval as internal Judahite leadership disintegrated and the first wave of forced migrants were taken into Babylon. The corresponding social breakdown and cultic uncertainty is reflected in Hab 1–2. Into this situation of cultic, political, and social disorientation, the mythic memory of Yhwh as divine warrior is re-appropriated and rehearsed for the purpose of group cohesion and continuity. Within this context, the book of Habakkuk served an identity forming function for those who received it. As communal literature, the book was able to function within Judah for the re-establishment of cultic and national boundaries in opposition to the enemy nation, Babylon. These boundaries, in turn, served to support the preservation of the community's identity as Judahite worshipers of Yhwh, an identity consonant with past generations. Finally, the performance of Habakkuk's final hymn encouraged fortitude and faith as it established for the community a hope in their future as the national entity, Judah.

[21] See ch. 3 for an explanation of this definition.

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APPENDIX

Habakkuk

1:1 The oracle that the prophet Habakkuk saw.

1:2 How long, O LORD, shall I cry for help but you do not hear?
Cry out to you, ‘violence!’ but you do not save?

1:3 Why do you make me see iniquity and look[1] at trouble?
Destruction and violence are before me.
There is strife and contention rises up.

1:4 Therefore, Torah turns cold,
and justice never comes forth.
Because the wicked surrounds the righteous,
(therefore) judgement comes forth confused.

1:5 Look at the nations and see!
Be horrified! Be astonished!
For [I am][2] working a work in your days,
you would not believe even if it were told.

1:6 For behold! I am raising up the Chaldeans,
the bitter and impetuous nation.
The one marching across the breadth of the earth,
to seize dwellings that do not belong to him.

1:7 He is terrifying and dreadful.
His justice and his majesty come forth from himself.

1:8 His horses are faster than leopards,

---

[1] Haak has proposed that the subject of תַּבִּיט is Yhwh, and not the prophet, based on the absence of a 1cs pronominal suffix on the verb form, as is the case for תַרְאֵנִי (Haak, *Habakkuk*, 31–32). However, the absence of the particle is unsurprising in this instance, given that elision is common in Hebrew poetry, and especially since the interrogative particle is also elided in the second clause. Thus, the subject is best understood as the prophet.

[2] The subject for the active participle פֹּעֵל is absent. Three options are possible: (1) the particle may be re-pointed as a passive, as is suggested by the Vulgate (BHQ, *The Twelve Minor Prophets*, Hab 1:5, 115); (2) the MT may be amended to match the LXX, which includes εγω (Smith, *Micah–Malachi*, 111); or (3) the first person pronoun may be understood based on v. 6, where it appears as the pronominal suffix on הִנְנִי. In this case, the pronoun is elided in v. 5. The final option has been adopted here, however, for readability in English the pronoun is provided in square brackets.

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quicker than wolves of the evening.
His horsemen charge,
and is horsemen[3] come from far away.
They fly like an eagle, eager to devour.

1:9 All of them[4] come for violence.
Mgmt[5] of their faces are eastward.[6]
He gathers captives like sand.

1:10 And he mocks kings,
and rulers are a joke to him.
He laughs at every fortified city,
and heaps up earth and takes it.

1:11 Then he passes over like the wind[7]
and passes by and becomes guilty,
whose power is his god.

1:12 Are you not from ancient times, O LORD,
my God, my Holy One?
We shall not die.[8]

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[3] BHS suggests that the final word of the phrase וּפָשׁוּ פָּרָשָׁיו וּפָרָשָׁיו is an instance of dittography. However, as Haak has noted, the repetition of horses/horse and rider terminology binds the verse together (Haak, *Habakkuk*, 42–43). It is not strictly necessary to emend the MT, so both instances of פָּרָשָׁיו are translated here.

[4] BDB suggests that a literal reading of כֻּלֹּה would be "the whole of it," but also suggests "all of them" or "every one" as viable translations (BDB, s.v. כֹּל, 481–82). The rendering "all of them" was chosen in this case to match the 3mp pronominal suffix in the following line. However, the passage more commonly uses 3ms pronouns to refer to Babylon (as is already evident in the final line of this verse).

[5] The meaning of מְגַמַּת is uncertain. However, given that it occurs in this form in 1QpHab, textual corruption is unlikely. As a result, emendation is an unfavourable option. While Haak suggests the translation "multitude" (Haak, *Habakkuk*, 44), I have followed Anderson and left the word untranslated (Anderson, *Habakkuk*, 155).

[6] Similarly, the meaning of קָדִימָה is difficult in this context. The most natural rendering of the word is "eastward." However, it is unclear what reason the Babylonian army would have for marching eastward here. As a result, Smith, Robertson, Haak, and Anderson all translate "forward" (Smith, *Micah–Malachi*, 100; Robertson, *The Books of Nahum, Habakkuk, and Zephaniah*, 150; Haak, *Habakkuk*, 45; and Anderson, *Habakkuk*, 155). "Eastward" has been maintained in the translation. However, as Haak has argued, "in any case, no historical theories should be predicated on the meaning of this word" (Haak, *Habakkuk*, 45).

[7] There is some disagreement regarding the syntactic function of רוּחַ in this verse. Anderson takes the word as the subject of the 3ms verb, חָלַף, translating "then the spirit swept on" (Anderson, *Habakkuk*, 4). Haak suggests that the phrase is best understood as a simile, since רוּחַ cannot be the subject of the verb due to the lack of gender agreement. It is more likely that רוּחַ should be understood as an adverbial accusative in this case (Bruce K. Waltke and M. O'Connor, *An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1990), 172).

[8] The phrase, לֹא נָמוּת is one of the 18 *tiqqune soferim,* "corrections of the scribes" in the Hebrew Bible. The correction suggests a shift from the 1cp verbal form to a 2ms verbal form. However, BHQ suggests that this is most likely a false correction (BHQ, *The Twelve Minor Prophets*, Hab 1:12, 117). Haak also follows the MT, suggesting

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O LORD, you have set him up for judgement,
O Rock, you have established him for rebuke.

1:13 Eyes too pure to behold evil,
and to look on harm, you are not able.
Why do you look on treachery?
Why are you silent while the wicked engulf those more righteous than them?

1:14 And you made humankind like the fish of the sea,
like swarming creatures, no one rules over them.[9]

1:15 He pulls all of them[10] out by a hook.
He drags them in his net.
And he gathers them in his fishing net.
Therefore, he rejoices, he shouts in exultation.

1:16 This is why he sacrifices to his net:
he makes sacrifices to his fishing nets
because by them his portion is fat
and his food is rich.

1:17 Because of this, will he empty his net
and continually slay nations without compassion?

2:1 I will stand on my watch,
and I will take my stand upon my watch tower,
and I will be on the lookout to see what he will say against me,
and what I will reply[11] concerning my reproach.

2:2 And the LORD answered me and said,
"Write a vision,
and confirm[12] it on tablets,

---

the support of 1QpHab and the LXX indicate that it is original (Haak, *Habakkuk*, 48–49). The MT has been followed here.

[9] The singular pronoun וֹ has been translated as a plural based on the gender inclusive translation "humankind" for אָדָם in the preceding line.

[10] See n. 4.

[11] The emendation of אָשִׁיב to a 3ms form is widely accepted and supported by 1QpHab (Anderson, *Habakkuk*, 194) However, there is no significant textual or interpretive reason to emend the MT at this point. Therefore, the MT has been preserved in translation, as is also suggested by Haak's and Anderson's renderings (Haak, *Habakkuk*, 54; Anderson, *Habakkuk*, 194).

[12] Tsumura has convincingly argued that, rather than the traditional translation "make plain" or "write clearly," באר should be related to Akkadian parallels, which are used "to establish the true legal situation

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so that the one proclaiming it may run.

2:3 For [there is] still a vision for the appointed time,
and it witnesses[13] to the end; it does not lie.
It will certainly not tarry,[14] wait for it!
It will surely come, it will not delay.

2:4 Look! It is puffed up,
His life is not right within him.[15]
But a righteous one will live by his faithfulness;

2:5 and yet, indeed, wine is treacherous.
The proud man will not succeed,
who has made his throat wide as Sheol,
(and) he is like Mot and cannot be satisfied.
He will gather to himself all the nations,
and collect for himself all the peoples.

2:6 Will not these, all of them, lift up a saying over him?
And a proverb enigmas, against him?

(ownership, liability, etc.) by a legal procedure involving ordeal, oath, or testimony" (Tsumura, "Hab 2:2," 294). Consequently, he argues that the Hebrew word means "to confirm" by witnesses. The verse on a whole, then, signifies the importance of the content of the written message by wrapping its delivery in legal terms rather than merely indicating the need to communicate clearly.

[13] Following Tsumura's argument (above) and the legal language already present in v. 2, Haring has persuasively demonstrated that both וְיָפֵחַ and אִם should be understood according to a legal setting or context. Thus, יָפֵחַ, which frequently occurs parallel to עוד ("to testify"), is likely a synonym meaning to witness or to testify (James W. Haring, "'He Will Certainly Not Hesitate, Wait for Him!': Evidence for an Unrecognized Oath in Habakkuk 2,3b, and Its Implications for Interpreting Habakkuk 2,2–4," *ZAW* 126 (2014): 376–77; see also Haak, *Habakkuk*, 56–57).

[14] Haring has also convincingly argued that the presence of אִם in this verse signifies an oath rather than a conditional statement. His argument is based on the use of the word for swearing oaths elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible, the recently illuminated legal language that permeates the opening verses of Hab 2, and the poetic parallelism of the verse (Haring, "He Will Certainly Not Hesitate," 372–78). Given that Haring's argument accounts well for the available evidence and makes significantly more sense than the traditional rendering, "Though it linger, wait for it; it will certainly come and will not delay" (NIV), it has been followed in this case.

[15] The form עֻפְּלָה is a rare word and its subject is contested. As a result, it is frequently emended (for example, Dietrich emends to a participle in order to give נַפְשׁוֹ an antecedent, thus, "the presumptuous one" (Dietrich, *Nahum,* 113). The translation here follows that provided by *DCH* (VI, s.v. עפל, 513), "to swelled up, be puffed up" (*HALOT* also suggests "to become weak, dwindle away" but the existence of this word is contested in *DCH*; *HALOT* 2, s.v. עפל, 860). An implied subject in the first line is followed by an explicit subject in the second line, נַפְשׁוֹ. The problem of an antecedent for the pronominal suffix on בּוֹ remains. However, this is not an unusual problem in the book. Given the predominant use of 3ms pronouns to refer to Babylon, and the portrayal of the nation as the arrogant one in 1:10–11, the reader quite easily interprets Babylon as the appropriate antecedent for the pronouns in this case.

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And one will say,[16] ‘Woe to the one who makes numerous what is not his—
how long?[17]—and makes himself rich [on] pledges.

2:7 Will your creditors not suddenly rise
and wake the ones who bark at you?
Then your will be their spoil.

2:8 Because you have plundered many nations,
all those left of the peoples will plunder you,
more than the bloodshed of humanity and the violence of the earth,
the city, and all who dwell in it.

2:9 Woe to the one who makes profit from unjust gain—evil for his house!—
to put is his nest in a high place,
to save himself from the hand of evil.

2:10 You devised shame for your house
[by] bringing an end to many people and sinning against your life.

2:11 For a stone from the wall will cry out,
and a beam from the woodwork will answer it.

2:12 Woe to the one who builds a city with bloodshed,
and establishes a city with injustice.

2:13 Behold! Is it not from the LORD of Hosts
that peoples toil for fire
and nations, for emptiness, grow weary?

2:14 For the earth will be filled
[with] the knowledge of the glory of the LORD,
as waters cover over the sea.

2:15 Woe to the one who makes his neighbour drink,

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[16] Anderson notes that numerous emendations have been suggested for the opening clause of this verse, which is “extraordinary for having five words before the verb,” only one verb that apparently relates to 3 nouns, and two nouns juxtaposed with no obvious syntactic relationship between them. However, Anderson also argues that, while emendation may solve interpretive problems, it is not strictly necessary. As a result the more difficult reading of the MT is preferred (Anderson, *Habakkuk*, 230–33). The same decision is reflected in the above translation.

[17] The interrogative, עַד־מָתַי, is frequently deleted. It has been maintained here as an interjection, given the absence of textual evidence in favour of its deletion (Anderson, *Habakkuk*, 236).

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pouring out[18] your wrath, even making drunk,
in order to look on their genitals.

2:16 You have satiated yourself with shame rather than glory.
Drink! Even you, and expose your foreskin.
For the cup of the LORD's right hand will come around to you,
and disgrace will cover your glory.

2:17 For the violence of Lebanon will cover you,
and the cruelty of Behemoth[19] will shatter,[20]
more than the bloodshed of humanity and the violence of the earth,
the city and all who dwell in it.

2:18 What does one benefit from an idol,
since he fashions his creation?
A cast image and a teacher of lies.
For he trusts in forming his creation for himself,
making dumb gods.

2:19 Woe to the one saying to wood, 'wake up!'
To silent stone, 'stir!'
He teaches:
'Look! It has been overlaid with gold and silver!'
Yet there is not any spirit within it.

2:20 But the LORD is in his holy temple,
silence before him, all the earth.'"

3:1 A prayer of the prophet Habakkuk,

---

[18] The participle, מְסַפֵּחַ, is occasionally emended to מסף by omitting the final ח (as dittography). The Hebrew is then translated as "cup." While the emendation simplifies translation, the participle form is more likely since each of the woe oracles has a pair of participles in parallel lines. This leaves a decision about which root is present here, either "to pour out" or "to join with." Neither root is attested in the *piel* participle form, other than this case, nor is the root common in other circumstances (Anderson, *Habakkuk*, 245). Thus, it is primarily an interpretive decision. The meaning "to pour out" has been adopted here based primarily on context and the topic of drinking liberally.

[19] Following Haak, Lebanon and Behemoth are the English translations provided. These are understood as subjective (rather than objective) genitives. Haak has argued that both indicate mythical beings associated with the mountains of Lebanon and either "the Great Ridge" or "'the Beast' par excellence." As a result, the verse has mythical overtones that Haak ties to the Gilgamesh Epic and the storm god (Haak, *Habakkuk*, 70–76).

[20] The translation is based on a proposed emendation of the final *nun* to final *cof*, following the recommendation of the commentary on the critical apparatus in BHQ. Confusion between final *nun* and final *cof* would be an easy copying error. The emendation also brings the already strong parallelism between the two lines into complete parallelism. Finally, the reading is supported by the Targum, the Greek scroll of the Twelve found at Nahal Hever, and the Syriac (BHQ, *The Twelve Minor Prophets*, Hab 2:17, 121).

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according to *shigionoth*.[21]

3:2 O LORD, I have heard of your reputation,
I fear, O LORD, your work.
In [the] midst of years, revive it,
In [the] midst of years, make known,
In trembling, remember to have mercy.[22]

3:3 God comes from Teman,
and the Holy One from the mountain of Paran. *Selah.*
His majesty covers the sky,
(and) his praise fills the earth.

3:4 And [his] light is like the sun,
rays/horns are from his hand, belonging to him,
and there is the hiding place of his strength.[23]

3:5 Before him marches Deber,
and Resheph goes out behind him.

3:6 He stopped and moved [the] earth.
He looked and made [the] nations jump.
And eternal mountains were shattered,
ancient hills cowered,

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[21] The origin and meaning of שִׁגְיֹנוֹת are uncertain. Three possible options include: (1) the Akkadian *šigŭ*, a lamentation;" (2) the Hebrew שׁגה, "to stagger," possibly indicating the song of an ecstatic; and (3) the Arabic for "to stimulate great excitement." Altogether, the evidence is uncertain and any interpretation should be held loosely (*HALOT* 4, s.v. שִׁגָּיוֹן, 1414–15). Given its appearance in the Psalter (Ps 7), the term seems to refer to a genre or style of cultic song. Given this, prudence suggests the best decision is to leave the word untranslated, understanding its function as related to the music of the cult.

[22] Textual corruptions are frequently postulated as the explanation for the second half of the verse and it is often rearranged into 2 lines instead of 3. However, Barré rightly notes that the final two-thirds of the verse form a perfect, syntactic tricolon and are thus unlikely to be severely corrupted (Barré, "Habakkuk 3:2," 186). Given this, the translation provided here attempts to make sense of the verse as presented in the MT. In the second line of the tricolon, תּוֹדִיעַ is often changed to the *niphal* on the assumption that Yhwh makes Yhwh's self known. However, no emendation is required if the 3ms pronoun from the previous line has simply been elided. Finally, the traditional interpretation of בְּרֹגֶז as "anger" or "wrath," which assumes a contrast between wrath and mercy in this verse, has not been adopted in translation. Instead, given the second occurrence of the root רגז in v. 16, the more common interpretation of the word, "agitation, turmoil, trouble" (*DCH* VII, s.v. רגז, 410), has been used.

[23] The primary interpretive difficulty in the verse is the meaning of קַרְנַיִם. Specifically, whether the meaning in this case is the more common, "horns," or the less common, "rays." Tsumura offers a mediating position that has been followed in the translation. In light of the blurred differentiation between "horns" and "rays" suggested by "the description of the new moon as 'horned' in Mesopotamia and Ugarit," Tsumura suggests that קַרְנַיִם is best understood as a play on words "involving both of these two meanings" (Tsumura, "Janus Parallelism in Hab. III 4," 114–16 [116]). The verse is an example of Janus parallelism.

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orbits of old were his.

3:7 Under trouble
I saw the tents of Cushan,
they tremble, the curtains of the land of Midian.[24]

3:8 Did it burn against the rivers, O LORD?
Was your wrath against the rivers?
Was your rage against the sea?
When you mounted your horses,
your war-chariots of salvation?

3:9 Your naked bow was awakened,[25]
[your] clubs were sworn [with] a word.[26] *Selah*.
You split the earth with rivers.

3:10 They saw you,[27] the mountains writhed,
the storm water flooded,[28]
Tehom raised his voice,
the heights lifted their hands,

3:11 Sun [and] Moon stood still in [their] lofty abode,
to Sun your arrows went,
to Moon your flashing spear.

3:12 In indignation you marched [the] earth,

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[24] Following Haak and Anderson, the verb יִרְגְּזוּן has been interpreted as a "two-way middle" or as performing "double-duty" for both lines (Haak, *Habakkuk*, 92; Anderson, *Habakkuk*, 311). This accounts for the lack of gender agreement between the noun phrase and the verb in the second line.

[25] The subject of the verb תֵּעוֹר has been understood in two ways: (1) as internal to the verb (a 2ms *niphil* imperfective) or as having an expressed subject (a 3fs *niphil* imperfective form). Tsumura, Haak, and Smith all translate according to the assumption that the verb is a 3fs form with the subject קַשְׁתֶּךָ (David Toshio Tsumura, "Niphal with an Internal Object in Habakkuk 3:9a," *JSS* 31 (1986): 16; Haak, *Habakkuk*, 94; and Smith, *Micah–Malachi*, 113), this interpretation is also represented in translation here.

[26] The Hebrew grammar is difficult in the second line of the verse, with its sequence of three apparently unrelated nouns: שְׁבֻעוֹת מַטּוֹת אֹמֶר. While "arrows" is frequently posited as a translation for מַטּוֹת, "clubs" or possibly "maces" seems more likely given that the storm gods in parallel texts both carry maces (see, for example, "The Ba'lu Epic," trans. Dennis Pardee [COS 1.86, 248–49]; "Epic of Creation," trans. Benjamin R. Foster [COS 1.111, 397]; and Tsumura, "The 'Word Pair' *QšT and *Mṭ in Habakkuk 3:9," 361). The remainder of the phrase continues to be difficult to understand, however, the tentative translation adopted here is suggested by the extended commissioning of Baal's maces in the Baal Epic ("The Ba'lu Epic," trans. Dennis Pardee [COS 1.86, 248–49]).

[27] Anderson suggestion that the subject of the verb, רָאוּךָ, is "not simply the 'mountains,' but all the elements—mountains, flood, abyss, sun, and moon" has been adopted in the translation (Anderson, *Habakkuk*, 330).

[28] Following Dietrich, *Nahum*, 162.

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in anger you trampled [the] nations.

3:13 You went out for the salvation of your people,
for the salvation of your anointed.
You smashed the head of the wicked house,
laying bare [from] foundation to neck. *Selah*.

3:14 Your pierced the head of his warriors with his own clubs.
They stormed when they scattered me.
Their arrogance,
as to devour the afflicted in a secret place.[29]

3:15 You tread upon the sea [with] your horses,
foaming mighty waters.

3:16 I hear and my stomach trembles,
at the sound my lips quiver.
Rottenness enters my bones,
and beneath me I tremble,
where[30] I wait for the day of distress,
to come upon the people who attack us.

3:17 If the fig tree does not sprout,
and there is no fruit on the vines,
the labour of the olive tree fails,
and the groves do not produce food,
the flock is cut off from the fold,
and there are no cattle in the stalls,

---

[29] The second two-thirds of the verse are difficult and have engendered a variety of interpretations, including Dietrich's "They attack; to scatter me is their desire, so as to swallow up the poor in the hideout" (Dietrich, *Nahum*, 159); Smith's "they stormed out to scatter me. They rejoiced as they devoured the poor in secret" (Smith, *Micah–Malachi*, 113); Haak's "They storm in order to scatter me. He causes (them) exaltation. You bring low because of the devouring of the poor in secret" (Haak, *Habakkuk*, 93); and Anderson's "Their hair thou didst scatter to the wind, thou didst gloat over them. . . " (Anderson, *Habakkuk*, 313). Anderson goes so far as to suggest that the latter half of the verse is better left untranslated. However, the his interpretive decision appears to be more the result of his uncertainty regarding the verse's meaning in the context of Hab 3 rather than the Hebrew itself (Anderson, *Habakkuk*, 338). There are syntactic challenges for the interpreter, but they are not insurmountable.

[30] Anderson reads the אֲשֶׁר with the preceding line and suggests it be re-vocalised to אָשֵׁר, "step" (Anderson, *Habakkuk*, 345.). However, Homstedt argues that there is little evidence to support this change and argues in favour of reading the relative particle as it is. He states that the pronoun introduces a relative clause (a common function of the word), where וְתַחְתַּי is the head of the clause. The prepositional phrase may be translated "beneath me" or, according to Holmstedt, "in my place" and constitutes an allusion to 2:1, where the prophet declared his intention to wait on the Lord (Holmstedt, "Habakkuk 3:16," 129–30, 37).

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3:18 still I will exalt in the LORD.
I will rejoice in the God of my salvation.

3:19 The LORD, my lord, is my strength,
and he makes my feet like does’ [feet],
and upon my high places he makes me tread.

To the director of music, in my *neginoth*.

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