Reconsidering Habakkuk 1:8

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The Book of Habakkuk is famous for containing an amount of textual problems inversely proportional to its size.[1] Many of these textual problems involve factors beyond those mechanical ones that are usually taken into account in text-critical and philological analysis, like variant readings caused by errors of textual transmission or by linguistic deficiencies of the ancient translators. Habakkuk is a literary composition in the deepest sense of the word, so that the need for increased awareness and heightened sensitivity to literary language in reconstructing the textual history of the prophecy can hardly be overemphasised. Nonetheless, this study deals with a controversial phrase from Hab 1:8c(d), where the original meaning of the prophecy seems to have been lost due to well-observable historical factors in the process of textual transmission. The evidence is, however very complex and requires careful examination.

Hab 1:8 is part of a longer description of the Chaldean enemy in vv. 6–11, a nation directly raised and set in motion by YHWH. The endless debates around the rhetorical function of this portrayal of the enemy within the structure of the larger context of Habakkuk 1–2, in particular the relationship between vv. 6–11 with the preceding and following pericopes, need not concern us now. Suffice it to say that beyond similarities with other accounts in the Old Testament (cf. Deut 28:49–50; Isa 5:26–30; 13:17–18; 18:1–2; Jer 4:13; 5:15–16; Joel 2; Nah 2:3–7), the presentation of the Chaldean protagonist on the stage set by Judah's God is purposefully meant to astonish the audience of the prophet (cf. Hab 1:5–6). From a rhetorical point of view, the exotic language prevalent in the poetical characterisation of this enemy parallels this explicit determination of the prophecy.

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[1] István Karasszon authored two important essays in Hungarian on the redactional history of the book of Habakkuk: Próféta 2002, 108–112. 129–137, and Habakuk 2004, 251–267. This short study is offered to him as a small token of appreciation for his inspiring scholarship.

The Masoretic Text of v. 8 is structured as follows:

MT		NRSV
וְקַלּוּ מִנְּמֵרִים סוּסָיו	a	Their horses are swifter than leopards,
וְחַדּוּ מִזְּאֵבֵי עֶרֶב	b	more menacing than wolves at dusk;
וּפָשׁוּ פָּרָשָׁיו	c	their horses charge.
וּפָרָשָׁיו מֵרָחוֹק יָבֹאוּ	d	Their horsemen come from far away;
יָעֻפוּ כְּנֶשֶׁר חָשׁ לֶאֱכוֹל:	e	they fly like an eagle swift to devour.

While this rendering certainly makes sense, the repetition in the phrase פָּרָשָׁיו
וּפָרָשָׁיו is strange. It is true that the current poem uses closely similar terms on
different occasions, and the type of word play assumed by this formulation ap-
pears to belong to the basic repertoire of the poet. Nonetheless in all other in-
stances there are minor differences between the lexemes evoked for such rhe-
torical purposes.[2] Indeed, it is exactly the minute alterations of consonants and
vocals that ultimately makes the difference between an ingenious poem and
epigonic redundancy.[3]

Modern renderings of this phrase of the Masoretic Text intend to diminish
redundancy by arguing that פָּרָשׁ may refer both to 'horseman' and 'team of
horses', and alternate the two in translation.[4] Nevertheless using distinctive
terms or synonyms hardly mirror the poetics of the verse line and only empha-
sise the problem instead of solving it. In spite of all semantic ambivalence, for
the Hebrew reader of this verse פָּרָשָׁיו וּפָרָשָׁיו remains redundant phrasing.[5]

This problem is addressed in the exegetical literature and in bible translations
in three specific ways. (1) A first group of scholars intend to keep פָּרָשָׁיו וּפָרָשָׁיו
together, contrary to the demarcations of the MT. So Sellin proposed a minor

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[2] Cf. Hab 1:5: וְהִתַּמְּהוּ תְּמָהוּ, פֹּעַל פֹּעֵל; 1:10: מִשְׂחָק / יִשְׂחָק. See further also Isa 10:16:
הַפְלֵא וָפֶלֶא :29:14 ;הִשְׁתַּעַשְׁעוּ וָשֹׁעוּ, הִתְמַהְמְהוּ וּתְמָהוּ :29:9 ;מוּסָד מוּסָּד :28:16 ;יְקֹד יְקוֹד. etc.

[3] This is not to deny that repetition can have a rhetorical function, as observable in, for
example, אֶבֶן אֹבֶן in Isa 28:16, אֲרִיאֵל אֲרִיאֵל in Isa 29:1; etc. Yet these cases are clearly
different from this point of view from Hab 1:8, where such legitimation is hard to be
granted.

[4] Cf. the New Revised Standard Version; Nederlandse Bijbelgenootschap 1951; Ein-
heitsübersetzung 1980; New International Version 2011; R. D. Haak, Habakkuk 1992,
41; R. D. Patterson, Habakkuk 2003, 140.

[5] Choosing for an ambivalent equivalence in translation, such as English 'cavalry' (cf.
D. J. Clark et al., Handbook 1989, 77; F. Andersen, Habakkuk 2001, 135), covers seman-
tically the intention of the Hebrew text, but poetically it hardly offers any better solution.

emendation, dropping the וּ connecting the two identical words, and taking וּפָשׁוּ
פָרָשָׁיו פָרָשָׁיו as one cola.[6] Others take a bolder step towards conjectural emenda-
tion, reading פָּרְשֵׁי פָרָשָׁיו 'the horses of their cavalry'.[7] (2) A second group of
scholars aim to keep וּפָרָשָׁיו פָרָשָׁיו separate, and thus far they concur with the MT.
But in order to achieve a smoother style, they combine emendation with a more
radical restructuring, reassigning one of the two פָרָשָׁיו to different locations.
Ewald removes the connective וּ from the beginning of וּפָשׁוּ פָרָשָׁיו and attaches
the phrase to the end of v. 8b.[8] Even more radically, Ellinger proposes to insert
9aβ (מִנֶּמֶר פְּנֵיהֶם קְדִימָה) between v. 8c and d.[9] (3) A third way to address stylistic
unevenness was to simply drop וּפָרָשָׁיו, invoking scribal dittography as an argu-
ment in the history of the text of Habakkuk.[10]

The arbitrary nature of these alterations is, however, seriously challenged by
the ancient witnesses of Hab 1:8cd, as the table below illustrates.

MT	וּפָשׁוּ פָרָשָׁיו וּפָרָשָׁיו מֵרָחוֹק יָבֹאוּ
LXX	καὶ ἐξιππάσονται οἱ ἱππεῖς αὐτοῦ καὶ ὁρμήσουσιν μακρόθεν
QpHab	פשו ופרשו פרשו מרחוק
8HevXIIgr[11]	καὶ ὁρμή[σουσιν οἱ ἱππεῖς αὐτοῦ καὶ οἱ ἱπ]πεῖς αὐτοῦ πόρρ[ωθεν ἐλεύσονται]

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[6]   E. Sellin, Zwölfprophetenbuch 1930, 390. He points to Judg 5:22 as a poetic paral-
lel.
[7]   B. Duhm, Habakuk 1906, 24–25; W. Nowack, Die kleinen Propheten 1922, 266; W.
Rudolph, Habakuk 1975, 204; C.-A. Keller et al., Habacuc 1990, 149.
[8]   H. Ewald, Propheten 1840, 1:378: 'und schneller als Parder sind seine Pferde, und
hitziger als Abendwölfe springen seine Rosse'.
[9]   Ellinger, Die Kleinen Propheten 1956, 29. This suggestion in also included in the
critical apparatus of BHS[3].
[10]   Cf. W. H. Ward, Habakkuk 1911, 10; F. Delitzsch, Schreibfehler 1920, 82; I. Ka-
rasszon, Próféta, 130. See also New American Bible 2010; L. Perlitt, Habakuk 2004, 52.
55 both drops one of the duplicate terms and manipulates the verse structure as follows:
"Schneller als Panther sind seine Rosse, 'schärfer' als Wölfe am Abend seine Reiter. Sie
stürmen heran, kommen von fernher geflogen…". For further, more radical solutions, see
the list in D. Barthélemy, Critique textuelle 1992, 3:827.
[11]   The Nahal Hever manuscript of the Twelve is variously dated between the mid-first
century BC and mid-first century AD. See the extensive discussion in E. Tov, Greek
Minor Prophets 1990, 22–26. The reconstructions of the broken text follow this edition
(8HevXIIgr 16:33–34).

MurXII[12]	ופש[ו] פרשיו [ופרשיו מר]ח[וק] יבאו
Pesh.	*wnṭwswn pršwhy wnʾtwn pršwhy mn rwḥqʾ*
Targ.	וירדון פרשוהי ופרשוהי מרחיק ייתון
Vulg.	*et diffundentur equites eius equites namque eius de longe venient*

In spite of the differences with respect to the details of rendering their respective
Hebrew originals, it is clear that the versions all presuppose וּפָרָשָׁיו פָּרָשָׁיו in some
form.[13] All but 1QpHab presuppose the connective וּ before וּפָשׁוּ, and all but
1QpHab and the Pesh. presuppose the connective וּ between פָּרָשָׁיו פָּרָשָׁיו. None
of these deviations from the Masoretic tradition is a sufficient ~~nature~~ to chal-
lenge seriously the MT in a way set out by the above mentioned approaches.

At the same time, one can observe a significant deviation from the MT in the
pre-Masoretic textual tradition of the LXX and 1QpHab exactly with respect to
the phrase וּפָשׁוּ פָּרָשָׁיו וּפָרָשָׁיו addressed in this study.[14]

Source	Text	Syntactic structure
MT	ופשו פרשיו ופרשיו	(w)Predicate + Subject + (w)Subject
LXX	καὶ ἐξιππάσονται οἱ ἱππεῖς αὐτοῦ καὶ ὁρμήσουσιν	(w)Predicate + Subject + (w)Predicate
1QpHab	פָשׁוּ ופרשׁוּ פרשׁוּ	Predicate + (w)Predicate + Subject

However we interpret it, it is clear that one of the פרשׁוּ in the Habakkuk pesher is
a verb rather than a noun, contrary to what we now have in the MT. Likewise
the LXX also presupposes a *Vorlage* which includes two predicates and one sub-
ject. This evidence for another reading is intriguing but requires some comments
as it has elicited various interpretations. It remains a question how far these two
non-Masoretic traditions can be correlated and considered as witnessing to a
more reliable earlier reading or be isolated as idiosyncrasies with little relevance

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[12]   The reconstruction of the second century AD manuscript from Wadi Murabbaʿat
follows B. Ego et al., Biblia Qumranica 2005, 129. See also J. T. Milik et al., Rouleau
1961, 181–205; D. Barthélemy, Critique textuelle 1992, 3:827.
[13]   This has been questioned with regard to the Greek καὶ ὁρμήσουσιν, which some
unjustly hold to be a free rendering of Hebrew יְבֹאוּ instead. See discussion below.
[14]   The other traditions mentioned above basically follow the MT and do not add to the
discussion.

for the textual history of Hab 1:8. I shall first consider both textual traditions separately.

1QpHab 3:7–8 containing the reference to the text of Hab 1:8 shows several differences compared to the MT of Hab 1:8cd. First, the connective ו is lacking both before וּפָשׁוּ, as well as before the second וּפָרָשָׁיו, while it is present in the second position, contrary to the MT. Second, in both instances of פָּרָשָׁיו the pesher has a variant lacking the י. Third, יבאו is clearly missing from the phrase of the Habakkuk citation. All these variations need to be analysed first syn-chronically within the context of the pesher itself before a role is assigned to them within the diachronical reconstruction of the text of Habakkuk.

In 1QpHab 3:7, the phrase פשו, וּפרשו פרשו מרחוק is clearly delimited from the previous sentence by a distinctive space, one that in this manuscript usually demarcates the comments (peshers) appended to the biblical citations.[15] 1QpHab's different use of the connective ו-s compared to the MT is to be re-garded as intentional variation for which several other examples have been pointed out in case of this scroll.[16] The other ancient witnesses of Hab 1:8 sup-port in this respect the MT.[17]

With regard to the lack of י in the Qumranic וּפרשו פרשו, this implies two things. The first expression, וּפרשו connected to a preceding verb must be a ver-bal form to be vocalised either as וּפָרְשׁוּ or as וּפָרְשׁוֹ a semantic option to which I shall return later in this study. The second פרשו is, however, most probably a plural noun written defectively with a suffix and not a verb,[18] corresponding to the Masoretic פרשיו 'his cavalry'. As Barthélemy has shown, 1QpHab preserved several other examples of the final long suffix יו rendered defectively as ו.[19]

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[15]   See http://dss.collections.imj.org.il/habakkuk (accessed on 12.03.2015) for a digital photograph.

[16]   For the general phenomenon of intentional variants in 1QpHab, see especially J.-H. Kim, Intentionale Varianten 2007, 23–37; for Hab 1:8 see especially p. 30.

[17]   See the table above. The Pesh. is the single exception for its lack of the connective waw between פָּרָשָׁיו וּפָרָשָׁיו, but that is hardly more than a stylistic variation.

[18]   J. J. M. Roberts (Habakkuk 1991, 92) considers this as a possible option, but in his rendering of the verse he ultimately opts for translating both as verbs.

[19]   Cf. סוסיו > סוסו (1:8), אליו > אלו (2:5 2x), עליו > עלו (2:6 2nd occurrence). See D. Barthélemy, Studies 2012, 449–451, concluding that the premasoretic *Vorlage* of the Qumranic text contained this shortened suffix spelling. The two verbs preceding the noun פרשו in 1QpHab are plurals, which makes clear that the author of the pesher under-stood the suffix of פרשו as a plural.

The phrase καὶ ἐξιππάσονται οἱ ἱππεῖς αὐτοῦ καὶ ὁρμήσουσιν μακρόθεν in the LXX conforms to the MT with respect to the copulatives. However, the precise equivalence between the MT and the Old Greek text is debated. When compared to the phrase וּפָשׁוּ פָּרָשָׁיו וּפָרָשָׁיו מֵרָחוֹק יָבֹאוּ it becomes clear that the LXX lacks the translation for one word.

Two different suggestions have been proposed in this respect. It is often argued that the LXX disregarded וּפָרָשָׁיו and rendered יָבֹאוּ rather freely by ὁρμήσουσιν.[20] Some exegetes saw in this an ancient confirmation for the assumed erroneous dittography in the history of the Hebrew text of Hab 1:8 (see above). Others, however, strongly doubt this interpretation of the Greek term and maintain that the LXX rather rendered a predecessor, a verbal form of the Masoretic וּפָרָשָׁיו. Based on Nah 3:16, where ὁρμάω 'to rush' (mis)translates פשט 'to strip', Humbert believed that ופרשיו in Hab 1:8 was an error for ופשטו.[21] More to the point, taking into account the evidence of the Habakkuk pesher from Qumran discussed above, Bosshard suggested that the Greek ὁρμήσουσιν actually overlaps with the Qumranic וּפָרְשׁוּ rendered by him as 'to go away, to depart'.[22] The lack of translation in the LXX for the Masoretic יבאו coincides in his view with 1QpHab, questioning the originality of יבאו in the prophecy of Habakkuk. יבאו is then viewed as a secondary insertion in the MT, related to the verbal > nominal development of the form ופרשיו > ופרשו.[23]

Bosshard rightly rejected the earlier view that ὁρμήσουσιν would be a rendition of Hebrew יָבֹאוּ, and correctly intended to correlate the LXX and the pesher. However, his concrete conclusions, viz. equating ὁρμάω and Hebrew פרשׁ, as well as dropping יָבֹאוּ as a secondary development, remain unconvincing.

To begin with his second point, the lack of יבאו at 1QpHab 3:7, albeit striking at first sight, when examined synchronically within the pesher itself, it turns out to be an intentional change, related to the inner rearrangement of the text by

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[20]   Cf. B. Duhm, Habakuk 1906, 24; W. H. Ward, Habakkuk 1911, 10; W. Nowack, Die kleinen Propheten 1922, 266; W. Rudolph, Habakuk 1975, 204; F. I. Andersen, Habakkuk 2001, 154.

[21]   P. Humbert, Problèmes 1944, 36.

[22]   M. Bosshard, Bemerkungen 1969, 481–482.

[23]   Cf. M. Bosshard, Bemerkungen 1969, 481–482. The secondary intrusion of יָבֹאוּ in the Hebrew text has already been suggested by K. Ellinger, Propheten 1956, 29; and it was more recently also taken over by D. Barthélemy, Critique textuelle 1992, 3:828; D. Barthélemy, Studies 2012, 453. 464.

the relocation of the copulatives. The above noted regrouping of the pesher's Habakkuk-citation as Predicate + (w)Predicate + Subject does not require a further predicate within this phrase and it necessarily leads to a logically superfluous יבאו. However, the later section of 1QpHab 3:10–11, which contains the explanation of the biblical citation, clearly shows that the author of the pesher was familiar with a biblical text containing ממרחק יבואו. 1QpHab is therefore not supporting the LXX in its presumed unawareness of the verb יבאו but backs the MT. The only correspondence that can be pointed out between the pesher and the LXX at this point is their common adherence to stylistic and syntactic harmony.

With respect to the correlation between ὁρμάω and the Hebrew פרשׁ, the problem is first of all a semantic one. Biblical Hebrew פרשׁ means 'to give a decision' (qal) and 'to be explained, decided' (pu.).[24] Hebrew פרשׁ certainly does not appear with the meaning 'to go away, to depart' assumed by Bosshard. A verb with this sense is attested only in post-biblical Jewish Aramaic.[25] Moreover, Greek ὁρμάω presupposes moving *towards* rather than *away from* something, so that the two connotations would hardly overlap.

The question may then be raised whether ὁρμάω could eventually render Hebrew פרשׂ instead? This does not appear to be directly the case in any other location of the Old Testament. In one instance in Nah 3:16 ὁρμάω renders Hebrew פשׁט. This Hebrew term can have the sense of qal 'to strip off / spread out' (cloth etc.), a meaning partially also covered by פרשׂ.[26] It is probably this particular sense that the term indicates in this concrete location of Nah 3:16. Nevertheless, the rendering of the LXX suggests that it understood פשׁט in its usual sense of 'to rush upon' (e.g. the enemy), a nuance frequently connected to this verb.[27] It is therefore neither יבאו, nor וּפָרְשׁוּ, nor וּפָרְשׁוּ that Greek ὁρμήσουσιν renders in Hab 1:8.

It is safer to conclude that the author of the LXX actually interchanged the two Hebrew verbs פרשׁ (!) and פושׁ. He translated וּפָשׁוּ by καὶ ὁρμήσουσιν 'to rush

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[24] L. Koehler et al., Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon 2000, 976.

[25] Cf. M. Jastrow, Dictionary 1926, 1241–1243; M. Sokoloff, Jewish Babylonian Aramaic 2002, 939–941; M. Sokoloff, Jewish Palestinian Aramaic 2002, 451–452.

[26] The hiph. of פשׁט and the qal of פרשׁ are both used together in Mic 3:3. But here פרשׁ (=פרס?, cf. H. Ringgren, TWAT 6, 780) has the sense 'to split up' (flesh in small pieces).

[27] Judg 9:33–34; 20:37; 1 Sam 27:8.10; 30:1.14; 2 Chron 14:9.13; 25:13; 28:18; Job 1:17.

upon' and the verb וּפָרְשׁוּ by καὶ ἐξιππάσονται 'they ride forth'.[28] With respect to the first part of the verse this is also confirmed by the Nahal Hever text of Habakkuk. Although fragmentary at this point, this early revision of the LXX[29] underlines the correspondence between פוּשׁ and ὁρμάω in rendering the MT as καὶ ὁπμή[σουσιν οἱ ἱππεῖς αὐτοῦ καὶ οἱ ἱπ]πεῖς αὐτου (…). As for the second part, it is noteworthy that the verb ἐξιππάζομαι does not appear elsewhere in the LXX. This word is etymologically related to ἱππεύς 'horseman, cavalry', also translating the nominal פָּרָשׁ in Hab 1:8.

What appears to have happened is that the Greek translator considered the second ופרשׁ in its retroversion a unique instance of the verb פרשׁ 'to ride (forth)', adhering stylistically to the Hebrew text in using an exotic Greek term as an equivalent of what he deemed to have been an equally unique instance of a Hebrew verb.

To conclude, 1QpHab presupposes a Hebrew version of Hab 1:8 in which one of the two terms of פָּרָשָׁיו וּפָרְשָׁיו known from the MT is a verb (either וּפָרְשׁוּ or וּפָרְשׁוּ), the other one is a plural noun with sg. 3 masc. suffix (פָּרָשָׁיו). The deviant use of the connective ו-s within this three-word sequence is a peculiar evolution that should be explained within the textual history of the pesher itself. After filtering out the characteristic traces in the synchronic inner-textual development of the LXX, we arrive at a *Vorlage* presupposing the text וּפָשׁוּ פָּרָשָׁיו וּפָרְשׁוּ, thereby backing the MT with respect to the copulatives, and supporting the Habakkuk pesher in reading one of the two פרשׁיו of the current MT as a verb.

This common evidence of two pre-Masoretic traditions is enormously significant for the history of Hab 1:8. The different syntactic structure of 1QpHab 3:7–8 and the LXX of Hab 1:8 is a sign that these textual traditions are indeed completely distinctive. It is therefore all the more remarkable that from unrelated perspectives both traditions arrive at virtually the same conclusion: one of the Masoretic פרשׁיו ופרשׁיו must be read as the verbal form וּפָרְשׁוּ.[30] When syn-

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[28]   Cf. D. Barthélemy, Critique textuelle 1992, 3:827; D. Barthélemy, Studies 2012, 451 presupposes that the LXX may have found a phrase ordered as ופרשׁ פרשׁיו ופשׁו in its *Vorlage,* but the presupposition of such a Hebrew original is hardly necessary to account for the misplaced Greek terms in the LXX.

[29]   For the Nahal Hever text as a revision of the LXX, see E. Tov, Greek Minor Prophets 1990, 103.

[30]   There is actually another similar case, namely Hab 1:5, where the LXX (also 8HevXIIgr and Pesh.) and 1QpHab basically agree in their reading בגדים over against

chronic characteristics of these two witnesses are strained against the larger background of the other ancient sources for the purposes of diachronic textual reconstruction, we arrive at the following pre-masoretic Hebrew version of the phrase from Hab 1:8: וּפָשׁוּ פָּרָשָׁיו‎‏‏וּפָרָשָׁיו‎.

The precise interpretation and vocalisation of וּפָרְשׁוּ still requires some comment. As we have seen, the LXX presupposed וּפָרְשׁוּ, thereby implying a unique case of the Hebrew verb פרשׁ meaning 'to ride out', a denominative of פָּרָשׁ 'rider'.[31] This connotation, however, has no support either in the biblical texts, or in Semitic etymology. As we have seen, Bosshard's suggestion to assign the verb פרשׁ the meaning 'to depart' is also problematic both linguistically and in the context.[32] A third proposal to regard פרשׁ a phonetic variant of פרץ 'to break down, break through' put forward by Van der Woude[33] also lacks solid biblical or etymological support. As a fourth option, פרשׁ can eventually have the sense of 'to separate, divide'.[34] The idea of a cavalry splitting up into several cohorts

בגוים of the MT (and MurXII). Although 1QpHab is fragmentary when citing the text of Habakkuk directly, the pesher section makes clear that it is this term that the author reckons with in his version of the prophecy. The Nahal Hever Greek text of Habakkuk is also fragmentary, but its single preserved letter probably also supports reading בגדים (8HevXIIgr 16:22; cf. E. Tov, Greek Minor Prophets 1990, 51. 91). From the perspective of 8HevXIIgr this is all the more remarkable as this Greek version revises the LXX according to a *Vorlage* usually very close to the MT. The testimony of the LXX, 8HevXIIgr, 1QpHab and the Pesh. is in my view a strong case for an earlier version of the prophecy different from the MT. Contra e.g., P. Humbert, Habacuc 1944, 33; W. Rudolph, Habakuk 1975, 203; D. Barthélemy, Critique textuelle 1992, 3:824; D. Barthélemy, Studies 2012, 452, and the vast majority of modern bible translations. Three other less significant and more easily explainable cases where 1QpHab and the LXX agree over against the MT are found in Hab 1:17 (MT העל כן (= 8HevXIIgr) / 1QpHab על כן = LXX διὰ τοῦτο), 2:6 (MT ויאמר / 1QpHab ויומרו = LXX καὶ ἐροῦσιν), 2:19 (MT דומם / 1QpHab רומה = LXX ὑψώθητι).

[31]   This is also taken over in D. Barthélemy, Critique textuelle 1992, 3:828: 'depuis le lointain ils chevauchent'. Cf. D. Barthélemy, Studies 2012, 251. 464.

[32]   M. Bosshard, Bemerkungen 1969, 482. It is not clear how R. L. Smith (Micah 1984, 99–100) arrives to the translation 'they spring forward', but neither is this specific connotation covered by the verb פרשׁ.

[33]   A. S. van der Woude, Habakuk 1978, 23. He also suggested that the י in the Masoretic ופרשיו is a remnant of an earlier final ו, and the final ו is a copulative thus arriving to the reconstruction וּפָרְשׁוּ וּמֵרָחוֹק. But in the light of the examination above, this presupposition is hardly necessary.

[34]   See J. Hoftijzer et al., Dictionary 1995, 944. For late Aramaic, see M. Sokoloff, Dictionary 2002, 939.

would suite the context. However, this connotation would require here a niph. or hitp. form of the verb.

It is more convincing to argue that the earliest form of Hab 1:8 contained the form וּפָרְשׁוּ, i.e. the qal of פרשׂ 'to spread (out), stretch (over)'. This option has been measured by Brownlee and Roberts.[35] The latter opted for the translation 'his steeds gallop and fly', suggesting that פרשׂ actually refers to the spreading of wings even when wings are not directly mentioned in relation to the verb. While the concretisation of the metaphor in this sense remains uncertain,[36] the verb can refer to the spreading out of a large horde of army.[37]

Opting for the verb פרשׂ in particular may have been an intentional decision. For it creates a semantic allusion to the following עוף 'to fly' that makes the more obvious transition from the imagery of the rushing cavalry to that of the flying eagle. But פרשׂ also makes good sense with פושׁ, which although rarely used, appears to refer to the abrupt gambolling of animals (Jer 50:11; Mal 3:20). As noted, פרשׂ may also cover the meaning of 'to break in pieces' (Mic 3:3), that correlates well with this impetuous trampling. On the other hand, the niph. of פושׁ is used in Nah 3:18 with the sense of 'to scatter', i.e. coming close to פרשׂ.[38]

The reconstruction of the middle section of Hab 1:8 argued for above in this study necessarily leads to a new restructuring and interpretation of the remaining lines of this verse.

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[35]   W. H. Brownlee, Pesher 1979, 70: 'trample and scatter'; J. J. M. Roberts, Habakkuk 1990, 92–93.

[36]   J. J. M. Roberts builds his idea on the single difficult text of 1 Chr 28:18. The reading of this passage is, however, problematic, and can hardly be used as evidence for the assumption that פרשׂ means the spreading of wings without adding כָּנָף.

[37]   The Dt (?) form of the Akkadian (Neo-Babylonian) *parāsu* II appears to bear this sense in relation to an army according to W. von Soden, Handwörterbuch 1972, 2:832 (*ḫiʾālu ittaparras*, 'the troops swarmed out'; cf. also J. Black et al., Akkadian 2000, 266). R. D. Biggs et al. (Assyrian Dictionary 2005, 178) derives the word from the better known *naprušu,* which often has the sense 'to speed, to rush', also used of quick moving messengers.

[38]   Note the Vulg. rendering *diffundentur* 'to spread out'. A. S. van der Woude (Habakkuk 1978, 23) proposed to consider פושׁ a variant of Hebrew פצץ 'to break into pieces' (cf. note 33 above). In the commentary on this passage, 1QpHab 3:9–10 also uses the verb דושׁ (cf. Jer 50:11) to explain the meaning of Hab 1:8. But unfortunately, it is not clear whether the interpreter wanted to semantically correlate or equate פושׁ with דושׁ. At any rate, there is no need to redraw the connotation of פושׁ along the lines proposed by A. S. van der Woude.

Reconstructed text	v. 8	Translation[39]
וּפָשׁוּ פָּרָשָׁיו וּפָרָשׁוֹ	c	Their horses gambol and swarm out,
מֵרָחוֹק יָבֹאוּ יָעֻפוּ	d	from afar they come, they fly,
כְּנֶשֶׁר חָשׁ לֶאֱכוֹל	e	like an eagle swift to devour.

Strikingly the text so obtained is formally much smoother than the current Masoretic variant, providing regular three word long colas that are typical for most other lines of the prophecy in Hab 1:6–11. This formal synchronism could be another retrospective confirmation for the probability of the above proposed reconstruction of the earliest version of Hab 1:8c.

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[39] For connecting יָבֹאוּ and יָעֻפוּ within one cola, see also B. Duhm, Habakuk 1906, 25; W. Nowack, Die kleinen Propheten 1922, 266; E. Sellin, Zwölfprophetenbuch 1930, 288. 300; W. Rudolph, Habakuk 1975, 204.

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——, Habakuk 3, in: I. Karasszon, Az Ószövetség varázsa, Budapest 2004, 251–267.

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Errata

Page	Line	Current version	Correct version
114	4	וְחַדוּ	וְחַדּוּ
114	5	וּפָשׁוּ פָּרָשָׁיו	וּפָשׁוּ פָּרָשָׁיו
114	6	וּפֶרָשָׁיו	וּפָרָשָׁיו
114	9	וּפֶרָשָׁיו	וּפָרָשָׁיו
114	21	וּפֶרָשָׁיו	וּפָרָשָׁיו
114	23	וּפֶרָשָׁיו	וּפָרָשָׁיו
114 n. 2	25	פֹּעַל פֹּעֵל	פֹּעַל פֹּעֵל
114 n. 2	26	פִּיקוֹד	כִּיקוֹד
114 n. 2	26	מוּסָד מוּסָד	מוּסָד מוּסָד
115	1	וּפָשׁוּ	וּפָשׁוּ
115	3	פָּרָשֵׁי פָּרָשָׁיו	פָּרָשֵׁי פָּרָשָׁיו
115	4	פָּרָשָׁיו וּפֶרָשָׁיו	פָּרָשָׁיו וּפָרָשָׁיו
115	10	וּפֶרָשָׁיו	וּפָרָשָׁיו
116	6	פָּרָשָׁיו וּפֶרָשָׁיו	פָּרָשָׁיו וּפָרָשָׁיו
116	8	פָּרָשָׁיו וּפֶרָשָׁיו	פָּרָשָׁיו וּפָרָשָׁיו
116	9	tradition is a sufficient nature to	tradition is sufficient to
116	13	וּפֶרָשָׁיו	וּפָרָשָׁיו
116	18	פשׁו ופרשׁו פרשׁו	פשׁו ופרשׁו פרשׁו
116	19	פרשׁו	פרשׁו
117	6	פָּרָשָׁיו	פרשׁיו
117	11	the phrase ופרשׁו פרשׁו מרחוק, פשׁו is	the phrase פשׁו ופרשׁו פרשׁו מרחוק is
117	18	ופרשׁו פרשׁו	ופרשׁו פרשׁו
117	19	ופרשׁו	ופרשׁו

117	21	פרשו	פרשו
117 n. 19	36	פרשו	פרשו
117 n. 19	37	פרשו	פרשו
120	28	ופרשו	ופרשו
121	4	וּפָשׁוּ פָּרָשָׁיו וּפָרָשָׁיו	וּפָשׁוּ פָּרָשָׁיו ופרשו
121	5	ופרשו	ופרשו