

Why did Paul cite Habakkuk 2:4b?

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Abstract

One of the most perplexing uses of the Old Testament in the New is Paul's quotation of 'the one who is righteous will live by faith' to support his view that: divine righteousness is revealed through faith (Rom 1:17); no one is justified before God by the law (Gal 3:11); and no one is justified by the works of the law but through faith in Jesus Christ (Gal 2:16). Why did Paul quote Hab 2:4b, since this half-verse is not ostensibly about judgment and salvation? In this article, I show that Paul's selection is explicable when it is realized that there was a Jewish tradition, as reflected in Peshet Habakkuk (1QpHab), which interpreted righteousness and living by faith as salvation for the righteous and judgment for the wicked.

Keywords

Faith, justification, Habakkuk, Paul, Peshet

'Night and day I pondered,' Martin Luther recalled, 'until I saw the connection between the justice of God and the statement that "the just shall live by his faith"'. Then I grasped that the justice of God is that the righteousness by which through grace and sheer mercy God justifies us through faith.'¹

The statement that Luther quotes in his recollection is Hab 2:4b. Why did Paul cite this verse from a small, obscure book of the Hebrew Bible? The prophecy has fifty-six *pasuqim*, according to the Masorah, and its verses are infrequently quoted by other Jews in the late Second Temple period. Yet, for Luther and Paul, its importance is inversely proportional

to its short half-verse. As one scholar writing at the beginning of the 20th century describes it: 'There is no single text in the Old Testament that plays a larger rôle in the doctrinal discussions of the New Testament than this little sentence from the prophecy of the prophet Habakkuk. It was also one of the foundational stones on which Martin Luther built his anti-papal doctrines of the Reformation, and changed the course of history'.² Seen from Luther's

² Ira Price, 'The Just Shall Live by Faith: Hab 2:4' *The Biblical World* 35.1 (1910): 39.

¹ Cited in Roland Bainton, *Here I Stand* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 1983), p. 65.

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theological understanding of justification by faith, the importance of Hab 2:4b is obvious. Much of the Reformation's conceptualization of the Christian faith centered on the quotation of this short half-verse in Paul's letters.

But it is not so obvious in the context of the Judaism of the time. Habakkuk 2:4b is not unique in the Hebrew Bible to express the view that the status of righteousness is difficult, if not impossible, to attain. Job writes: 'Can a mortal man be righteous before God? Can a man be pure before his maker?' (Job 4:17). Or again when he asks: 'how can a man be just before God?' (Job 9:2; cf. 24:5). Ezra likewise confesses: 'O LORD, God of Israel, you are just. . . Here we are before you in our guilt, though no one can face you because of this (i.e. mixed marriage).' (Ezra 9:15). The LXX Psalm 142:2 states: 'Do not enter into judgment with your slave, for no one living will be counted righteous before you.'

It is, of course, disputed whether Paul understood salvation in the way that Luther had suggested. E. P. Sanders challenged the doctrine of justification by faith as a description of the pattern of Jewish religion, and his book, one of the most important of the past generation, caused a paradigm shift in many quarters and initiated 'the new perspective' in Pauline studies.³ Sanders proposed an alternative description of 'covenantal nomism' and the view that the Jew was not inefficaciously working himself into salvation; he was already saved by 'preventive grace.'⁴

Paul's choice of Hab 2:4b cannot be explained by the unique, or even distinctive, theology that it purportedly reflects.⁵ Likewise,

³ *Paul and Palestinian Judaism* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1977) and James Dunn, *The New Perspective on Paul: Collected Essays* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2005).

⁴ See my 'Covenantal Nomism and the Hebrew Bible' in *Sibyls, Scriptures, and Scrolls: John Collins at Seventy* ed. Joel Baden, Hindy Najman, and Eibert Tigchelaar. (Leiden: Brill, 2016), vol. 2: 868-79.

⁵ Douglas Campbell, 'Romans 1:17--A Crux Interpretum for the πίστις χριστοῦ debate' *JBL* 113.2 (1994): 267, notes that the deployment of Hab 2:4 is surprising. See

it cannot be explained by the verse's centrality or the prominence of the prophecy of Habakkuk as a whole in contemporary Jewish thought. The prophecy of Habakkuk was occasionally used in the literature dating to the turning of the era: the prophecy was copied in the first century CE along with the eleven other minor prophets (MurXII); it was translated by various Greek translators (8HevXIIgr); 1QpHab cited and commented on the first two chapters of the prophecy of Habakkuk; the figure of the prophet appeared in the cycle of stories associated with the Old Greek and Theodotion versions of the book of Daniel called 'Bel and the Serpent'; and the prophet Habakkuk received a midrashic 'make-over' in an anonymous Jewish work, most likely dating to the first century CE, called the *Lives of the Prophets*. Finally, in Rabbinic literature Hab 2:4b was cited as a summary of the law.⁶

In the NT, the book and prophet Habakkuk are quoted here and there. Apart from Paul's citations, the prophecy is quoted by Hebrews 10:37-39 in a conflated text of Isa 26:20 and Hab 2:3-4 that provides a transition between the admonition on endurance and the description of faith.⁷ Luke cites Hab 1:5b and compares Yhwh's declaration of his 'work' with the Chaldeans to the ἔργων of the missionaries to the gentiles (Acts 13:16-41, 45-47); and resonances of Hab 3:18 are detected in Mary's song of praise, the *magnificat* (Luke 1:46-55).⁸ Habakkuk 2:4b is cited four times in the

now Stephen Hultgren, *Habakkuk 2:4 in Early Judaism, in Hebrews, and in Paul* (Paris: La Galbada, 2011), pp. 5-16, who correctly stresses the importance of 1QpHab in understanding Paul's citation of Hab 2:4.

⁶ See my, 'Habakkuk (Book and Person). Second Temple and Hellenistic Judaism' in *Encyclopedia of the Bible and its Reception* Vol. 10: 1042-46. In b.Mak. 23b-24a, Hab 2:4b is understood as a digest of the 613 *mitzvot* that were taught to Moses.

⁷ See my, 'Qumran Scholarship and the Study of the Old Testament in the New Testament' *JSNT* 38.1: 77-78.

⁸ So Gert Steyn, *Septuagint Quotations in the Context of the Petrine and Pauline Speeches of the Acta Apostolorum* (Kampen: Kok Pharos, 1995).

literature of this period, twice by Paul in Rom 1:17 and Gal 3:11, once by the anonymous author of Hebrews (Heb 10:37-39), and once by the pesherist who originally lemmatized (now mutilated) and commented on it as part of his sequential interpretation of Habakkuk.

So why did Paul cite Hab 2:4b, since there are other biblical passages that can be interpreted to say the same thing, and the verse and prophecy are not particularly prominent in late Second Temple Judaism? I suggest that Paul selected Hab 2:4b, because there was already a tradition of Jewish biblical interpretation, evident in Peshar Habakkuk, that understood the verse as a salvation of the righteous from judgment. Paul used the half-verse to polemicize against those Jews, like the Essenes, who understood it as a faithful observance of the Jewish law. In the case of the Essenes, it is the faithful observance of the *torah* as interpreted by the Teacher of Righteousness. Both aspects of salvation/judgment and legal observance are evidenced in the pesher to the prophecy of Habakkuk from cave 1 of Khirbet Qumran.

Paul's Citations of Habakkuk 2:4b

Paul cites the prophecy of Habakkuk in his letters to the Romans and Galatians in two theologically weighty and related contexts. In Romans 1:17, Paul writes: 'For in it the righteousness of God is revealed through faith for faith; as it is written, 'The one who is righteous will live by faith.' The phrase 'in it' (ἐν αὐτῷ) refers back to the gospel (τὸ εὐαγγέλιον) of the previous verse, about which Paul is not ashamed, since it is the power of God that has been unleashed for the salvation of everyone (δύναμις γὰρ θεοῦ ἐστὶν εἰς σωτηρίαν) who has faith, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. In the gospel, the righteousness of God is revealed ἐκ πίστεως εἰς πίστιν. There is an ongoing debate over the meaning of the Greek. The NRSV translation that I used offers 'through faith for faith,' but there are other possibilities, including 'from

faith to faith.'⁹ There is no need to unpack all that is theologically implied in Rom 1:16-17.¹⁰ Here, we only note the uncontroversial point that Hab 2:4b was cited in the context of salvation from judgment.

The quotation of Hab 2:4b is not textually supported by any independent witness: ὁ δὲ δίκαιος ἐκ πίστεως ζήσεται 'but the righteous will live by faith'. Compared to the Hebrew original (וְצַדִּיק בְּאֵמוּנָתוֹ יֵחִי), Paul's citation does include the conjunction (δέ); although, that may be a translation of the *vav* as a disjunctive. Absent is the possessive pronoun 'his' (σου), the pronominal suffix of בְּאֵמוּנָתוֹ. The LXX, followed by the author of Hebrews, reads the Hebrew pronominal suffix as a *yod* (י) rather than a *vav* (ו), the two letters being indistinguishable in the scribal hands of many Hebrew manuscripts, and translated it as 'my' (μου). This variant is also found in the original reading of a fifth century witness of Romans (C*) that was no doubt influenced by the LXX.¹¹ The quotation is cited again by Paul in Gal. 3:11 with a minor difference, the absence of the conjunction δέ.

In Galatians, Hab 2:4b is introduced by the statement that '[n]ow it is evident that no one is justified before God by the law' and the *oratio recta* is marked out by ὅτι (3:11; cf. Gal 2:16). The introduction and scriptural citation form part of a contrast between πίστις and νόμος. According to Paul, Abraham believed God (Gal. 3:6-7) and the covenant that was established with him was ratified by God and not annulled by the law that came four hundred and thirty years later (Gal. 3:17-18). Those who believe are the (real) descendants of Abraham (Gal 3:7), and scripture foresaw the justification of the gentiles by faith when the gospel proclaimed beforehand that 'all the gentiles will be blessed in you' (Gal 3:8). He repeats this several verses later when he states that 'in Christ

⁹ Interpreted theologically as God's faithfulness or Christ's faithfulness (an allusion to his faithful death).

¹⁰ See, for instance, Campbell, 'Romans 1:17', 265-85.

Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles, so that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith' (Gal 3:14).

The verses 10-13, follow a pattern of statement and proof-text: verse 10 states that 'all who rely on the works of the law are under a curse' and the proof-text is derived from Deut 27:26; verse 12 states that 'the law does not rest on faith' and this is proved by citing Lev 18:5 contrary to its context ('whoever does the works of the law will live by them'); and verse 13 asserts that 'Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us' and supports it with a proof-text from a version of Deut 27:26.

Luther, following Augustinian tradition, rejected the idea of *iustitia* as a divine attribute that implied punishment, and adopted the view that 'the righteousness of God' is a divine gift.¹² This interpretation of Gal. 3:10-13 has been very influential in the history of the church and NT scholarship.

Sanders, however, understands the text differently. For him, Paul's main proposition is Gal. 3:8, where God 'righteouses' the gentiles by faith, as proved by a quotation of Gen 18:18 ('all Gentiles shall be blessed in you'). The intervening verses 10-13 are subsidiary to verse 8 and consists of a series of Pauline assertions with biblical proof-texts. They express the view that righteousness before God is unattainable. They are transfer-terminology rather than theological statements.¹³

Important for our present purposes is the context of the citation of Hab 2:4b. It occurs in a context, whether understood parenthetically or not, in which the biblical passage is quoted to support the view that no one is justified before God by the law. The phrase ἐν νόμῳ (3:11) is understood as 'doing them (ἀντά)' (3:12), quoted from Leviticus and implying 'works'

(ἔργα) of the law. Hab 2:4b is used to support the view that righteousness could *not* be derived by observance of the law.

Paul, therefore, cites Hab 2:4b in two related contexts: he adduced it to support the view of righteousness through faith within a context of salvation and judgment (Rom 1:17); and he used it as a scriptural proof that no one is justified before God by doing the works of the law (Gal 3:11).

The Half-Verse in the Prophecy of Habakkuk

These two themes of salvation and judgment, however, are not explicitly mentioned in the immediate context of Hab 2:4b. In the prophecy, there is, to be sure, the theme of theodicy, and its implied and unfulfilled judgment, as the prophet cries out to Yhwh for salvation amidst the persistence, and indeed flourishing, of wickedness. Hab 1:2-4 reads in the NRSV translation as follows:

O LORD, how long shall I cry for help,
and you will not listen?
Or cry to you 'Violence!'
and you will not save?
Why do you make me see wrong-doing
and look at trouble?
Destruction and violence are before me;
strife and contention arise.
So the law (תורה) becomes slack
and justice (משפט) never prevails.
The wicked surround the righteous
(הצדיק)—
therefore judgment (משפט) comes forth
perverted.

¹¹ See my, 'Qumran Scholarship', 75-76.

¹² Cf. Joseph Fitzmyer, *Romans* (New Haven, CT: YUP, 1992), p. 261.

¹³ E. P. Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1977), pp. 22-23.

The LXX does not diverge materially from the MT. It is significant, however, that the LXX's translation uses a number of terms that will become important for Paul's theology: νόμος translates תורה; ἄρκα renders משפט; and

ὁ δίκαιος gives the Greek for הצדיק. The *torah* or *nomos*, however, is not about the Jewish law or its observance. The term is more akin to the rule of law that becomes slack in the midst of destruction and violence perpetrated by the wicked.

Habakkuk 2:4b is not ostensibly concerned with judgment/salvation or the observance of the law.¹⁴ The prophet contrasts the righteous with the proud, whose spirit is not upright in him (Hab 2:4a).¹⁵ The theme of pride is developed in the subsequent woe-oracles that condemn the arrogant man (גבר יהיר). But Hab 2:4 also refers back to the previous vv. 2-3 and Yhwh's announcement that a vision (הזוהר), either the same one as before or another one, will come at its appointed time. The delay is more apparent than real, since the vision will 'pant' to the end-time and will surely come and not delay.

Hab 2:4 is a transitional verse that bridges Yhwh's declaration of the vision and the subsequent woes against the arrogant. It concerns the faithfulness in Yhwh's promise to bring another vision for the appointed time. The first vision that opens the prophecy of Habakkuk has not been fulfilled as the wicked continue to hedge in the righteous. Yhwh answers the prophet's cry by asking Habakkuk to write down the same or another vision for the appointed time. Some scholars believe that the vision is the theophany of Yhwh in Habakkuk 3.

Habakkuk 2:1-4 serves as the *punctum archimedidis* of the prophecy, for from that vantage point, represented by the image of him standing on the watch-tower, the prophet looks back to the first oracle that Yhwh gave, and forward to the one that is still to come. The MT and LXX of Hab 2:1-4 diverge in certain details, but they agree that if the end-time (קץ/מועד, καιρός/πέρας) tarries or is postponed, then the righteous will wait for it, for it will surely come and not delay.¹⁶ The reason given for the steadfastness of the righteous is faithfulness. The MT understands באמונתו as the faithfulness or

loyalty of the righteous, for by it he will live. By contrast, the LXX πίστεώς μου implies that Yhwh is the suffix of the first person singular ('my') and interprets the righteous' trust in the divine.

The Interpretation of the Verse in Peshar Habakkuk

The half-verse of Hab 2:4b is cited by the pesherist at the bottom of col. 7 and interpreted at the top of col. 8 of 1QpHab.¹⁷ Col. 7:14-8:3 serves as the turning point of the pesher. This section introduces the section on the fate of the wicked priests and nations in cols. 8-13.¹⁸ It states that the arrogant and unfaithful will be punished, and the righteous delivered because of their suffering and faithfulness in the Teacher of Righteousness.

My analysis of the structure of 1QpHab differs from all other editions, translations and editions of Peshar Habakkuk. I understand Peshar Habakkuk to have an introduction in column one that refers to the Liar and the Teacher of Righteousness, and a transitional section in cols. 7-8 that foregrounds the punishment of the wicked and the deliverance of the righteous.

¹⁵ The LXX reads: 'If it [i.e. the appointed time] draws back, my soul is not pleased in it [i.e. the appointed time]'. Syriac: 'He [i.e. Yhwh] takes no pleasure in the unjust'. Cf. D.-A. Koch, 'Der Text von Hab 2:4b in der Septuaginta und im Neuen Testament' in *ZNW* 76 (1985): 68-85.

¹⁶ The LXX reads ἐὰν ὑποστειλεται, οὐκ εὐδοκεῖ ἡ ψυχὴ μου ἐν αὐτῷ ('if it shrinks back, my soul is not pleased in it'), which diverges from the MT. It is minus הַנֶּפֶשׁ and understands the subject of הַנֶּפֶשׁ as the soul. Whereas the LXX links it to the previous clause ('if it [i.e. appointed time, τῷ μῶ/γῆ; καὶρὸν/πέρας is late').

¹⁷ For details, see *The Earliest Commentary on the Prophecy of Habakkuk* (Oxford: OUP, 2020), pp. 107-110.

¹⁸ I suggest that *ha-cōhēn ha-rāšā'* refers to the last three high priests of the Hasmonean dynasty, Aristobulus II, Hyrcanus II and Antigonos (see my, 'A Fresh Approach to a Vexed Problem' in *Continuity, Separation, and Conflict. Emerging Sectarianism in the Dead Sea Scrolls* ed. Ananda Geysler-Fouche and John J. Collins [Leiden: Brill, forthcoming]).

¹⁴ See my 'The Prophecy of Habakkuk' in *The New Oxford Commentary on the Bible* eds. Katharine Dell and David Lincicum (Oxford: OUP, forthcoming).

Translations and editions, including the recent one by Elisha Qimron in Modern Hebrew, reconstruct 'the wicked priest' in line 13 of column 1, a questionable and unlikely reading, since there is no mention of 'the wicked priest' in the following column 2 or anywhere else in the first half of the pesher (up to col. 8).¹⁹ 'The wicked priest' occurs for the first time in col. 8, line 8. I reconstruct line 13 to read: '[its interpretation: *the wicked* is the Man of the Lie, and *the righteous*] is the Teacher of Righteousness.

The transitional section that I have identified needs further explanation, since nothing of Hab 2:4b is preserved in the mutilated line 17 of col. 7. I reconstruct Hab 2:4b on the basis of the lemmatizing pattern that is evident throughout the pesher. Hab 2:4a is cited in col. 7, lines 14 and 15, and Hab 2:5-6 in col. 8, lines 3-8. The quotations of Habakkuk in 1QpHab include variants that differ from the MT, but there is no case where a verse is absent when the uniform tradition of the MT, LXX and versions attest to it.²⁰

On the variant of the pronominal suffix, 'his' or 'my', I reconstruct the third person masculine singular on the basis of the sectarian interpretation of col. 8:1-3 and what it says about 'their faithfulness'.²¹ Significantly, the 'righteous' suffering (עמלם) and faithfulness (אמתם) in the Teacher of Righteousness will deliver them from judgment.

Even though the text is entirely mutilated, it is well-nigh certain that Hab 2:4b is lemmatized here, given the regular pattern of biblical quotation and sectarian comment evident throughout the pesher. Line 1 of col. 8 reads: 'its interpretation concerns' (פשרו על), followed by the

sectarian comment. Lines 3-8 cite Hab 2:5-6. It is safe to assume that the lemma would have been identical to the MT in substance, if not in spelling, given what is said about the passage subsequently. There is no evidence of the LXX variant 'my'. The lemma may or may not have been followed by the usual space.

The scribe wrote column 8 at the beginning of a second sheet of skin. The ruling of this sheet goes to the top of the page, whereas the previous sheet only did so to the top of the line. There is an X-mark at the end of line 3, inscribed on the left-hand margin. Qimron suggests that this is a sign for the completion of the line.²² If so, this scribal technique is not consistently followed in subsequent lines and columns.

One form of the formula (פשרו על) introduces a sectarian comment that identifies the indefinite צדיק of the biblical text with 'all the doers of the law'. In this, the pesherist infers the definite article in 'the righteous' from the poetic text, and imitates the biblical style by taking the singular as a collective (cf. Hab 1:6 where the plural 'Chaldeans' are equated with the singular 'the fierce and impetuous nation').

The qualification of בבית יהודה is significant, since it distinguishes between those who are 'doers of the law' and 'the house of Judah'. The two are not one and the same. In 1QpHab 12:4, a further differentiation occurs between the identification of the 'simple ones' with the beasts of Lebanon of the biblical text; and in 4Q171, frags. 1-2, col. 2, line 13 'the ruthless ones of the covenant' (עריצי הברית) are said to be 'in the house of Judah'. The house of Judah appears to be the designation of Jews in the pesherist's time, some of whom are faithful while others are considered wicked.

That God will deliver the doers of the law (יצילים) is expected. But why would they require this deliverance 'from the house of judgment' (מבית המשפט)? In 10:1-5, it is said that 'the house of judgment' is the place of divine judgment, where presumably the wicked and righteous will learn of their fate. The doers of the

¹⁹ Qimron, מגילות מדבר יהודה החיבורים העבריים כרך ראשון (Jerusalem: Yad Ben Zvi, 2010), p. 245.

²⁰ The pesherist did not comment on Hab 3, but it is unclear whether his *Vorlage* only had the first two chapters of the prophecy, he left his work unfinished or he lost interest. Pesher Habakkuk is, in any case, a complete commentary (*Earliest Commentary*, p. 11).

²¹ The singular and plural interchange throughout the prophecy of Habakkuk (e.g., Hab 1:6 הגוי המר והנמהר) as well as in the Pesher (*Earliest Commentary*, pp. 18-19, 60)

²² מגילות מדבר יהודה, p. 252 n. 1.

law, who are the righteous, will be vindicated by God. They will be saved from this house of judgment.

In col. 8:2-3, the pesherist interpreted the biblical verb 'will live' (יִחִי) as a divinely enabled escape from judgment. Because of their 'doing of the law', namely *torah*-observance, they will be cleared of wrongdoing on account of what they had suffered for and their loyalty towards the Teacher of Righteousness. The two terms 'their suffering' (עֲמַלָּם) and 'their faithfulness' (אֱמֻנָתָם) are derived from Hab 2:3, 13 and 2:4 respectively. The former is the 'trouble or wrong' that the righteous had experienced and about which the prophet Habakkuk had complained, and upon which Yhwh was unable to set his eyes. The latter is the 'faith' or belief in the surety that the second vision will indeed come to pass. In the hands of the pesherist, however, both the suffering and the faith are associated with belief in the Teacher of Righteousness (בַּמְּוִרָה הַצְּדִיק).

In an earlier passage, the pesherist implies what he means by *'ēmūnāh*. In 1:16-2:10, the pesherist interprets Hab 1:5. The lemma is mutilated at the bottom of column 1, and in the MT it reads: 'Look at the nations, and see! Be amazed! Be astonished! For I am doing a work in your days, and you will not believe when told.' The pesherist makes three exegetical moves. First, he uses the variant בּוֹגְדִים instead of the MT בְּגוֹיִם, understanding the verse to be addressing the 'traitors', those who are disloyal in betraying trust, rather than 'the nations' in whose direction Yhwh wants the addressees, the righteous, to look. This variant and the understanding of Hab 1:5 is attested in the LXX (οἱ καταφρονῆτάι). Second, the pesherist interprets יִסְפָּר not in the conditional sense of 'if it were told', but as a prediction of the end-time, 'foretold'. The MT and the LXX understands יִסְפָּר as conditionally declarative and not predictive, but the predictive is a possible rendering of the pual. The ruthless ones are those who will not believe when the Teacher of Righteousness has explained to them from the oracles of the prophets all that is to come upon his people.

Finally, the pesherist interprets the one-verse of Hab 1:5 in three related ways. The lemma refers to the traitors with the man of the lie, because they did not believe in the words of the Teacher of Righteousness, which were from the mouth of God (col. 2:1-3). Nothing explicit is said about the nature of that belief, but it seems to refer to the words or teachings of the Teacher of Righteousness. The phrase מִפִּי אֵל ('from the mouth of God'; Jer 23:16) is a Jeremianic expression that underscores the divine source of the teaching, and identifies the Teacher of Righteousness, like Jeremiah, as the true prophet.²³ One would be justified to infer that the traitors are so designated because they did not place their trust in the teachings of God's true prophet.

In line 3, an elliptical formula (וְעַל) introduces a second interpretation of Hab 1:5. The sectarian comment again refers to the traitors. The reference to the 'new covenant' is partially reconstructed, based on Jer 31:31. Here, as elsewhere in the sectarian scrolls, 'the new covenant' (בְּרִית הַדְּשָׁה; CD 6:19; 8:21; 20:12) refers to *that* covenant in the prophecy of Jeremiah. The בְּרִית אֵל הָאֱמִינוּ ('they did not believe in the covenant of God') evokes another Jeremianic clause 'because they [i.e. the fathers] did not abide in my covenant' (ὅτι αὐτοὶ οὐκ ἐνέμειναν ἐν τῇ διαθήκῃ μου), which is a plus of the new covenant passage in LXX Jer 38:32. The pesherist, then, has in view as the traitors those who were, like 'the fathers' in Jeremiah, once faithful to the covenant. Their treachery in the form of disloyalty ('they did not remain faithful in the covenant of God') is described by the pesherist as the defilement of the divine name.²⁴

For a third time, the pesherist comments on Hab 1:5, introduced by the conjunction and particle (וְכֵן). The sense of 'and also' is to

²³ The prosthetic *aleph* is probably a scribal error that anticipates the following word *el*. See Lim, 'The Tetragrammaton in the Habakkuk Pesher' in *Strength to Strength. Essays in Appreciation of Shaye J. D. Cohen* ed. Michael Satlow (Atlanta: Brown Judaic Studies, 2018), p. 167.

²⁴ Lim, 'Tetragrammaton', p. 167.

be followed by an introductory formula ('the interpretation of the passage concerns'), but a scribal error of copying inadvertently added an unnecessary *vacat*. This time the perspective is eschatological. The traitors at the end of days are identified as 'the ruthless ones of the covenant' (עריצי ברית) who will not believe all that they hear about the last generation.²⁵ The term עריץ, 'ruthless', as a substantive or adjective in the singular or plural is used several times in the scrolls. In 4Q171, it describes those in the house of Judah who plot to destroy 'the doers of the law', a plausible reference to the Essenes.

In this passage, therefore, the pesherist defines the concept negatively by underscoring the essence of disbelief as a betrayal of trust as regards the divinely revealed interpretation, and the defilement of the name of God. Framed negatively, the 'man of the lie' and the traitors are the 'ruthless ones of the covenant' because they did not believe in the words of the Teacher of Righteousness, from the mouth of God, nor did they remain faithful (האמינו [לן]א) in the new covenant by defiling his Holy name.²⁶

Conclusions

Paul and the pesherist did not understand Hab 2:4b precisely the same way.²⁷ Nonetheless, it is significant that they chose this verse to comment

on salvation/judgment and legal observance, especially when there are other scriptural passages that could be interpreted to say the same thing, and the half-verse is not ostensibly concerned with either theme.

This is further evidence of the sectarian matrix from which both the community reflected in the pesher and Paul drew their inspiration. They hit upon the same passage, but drew different lessons from it.²⁸ Pesher Habakkuk interprets *'ēmūnāh* to mean both 'faithfulness' and 'faith'. To have *'ēmūnāh* is to maintain the covenant of God by following the revealed interpretation of the Teacher of Righteousness, God's true prophet.

Without Pesher Habakkuk, Paul's choice of Hab 2:4b would be inexplicable, despite what Luther believed, since this half-verse, in the context of the prophecy of Habakkuk, does not refer to judgment and salvation. Paul was a Pharisee of Pharisees and an astute reader of scripture in Hebrew and Greek. The rationale for his selection of Hab 2:4b is laid bare when it is realized that there was already a Jewish interpretative tradition,²⁹ reflected in Pesher Habakkuk, which understood righteousness and living by faith as a statement of salvation for the righteous and judgment for the wicked.

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²⁵ The biblical sources of the terminology derives from Ezekiel and the apocalypse of Isaiah, see *Earliest Commentary*, p. 50.

²⁶ This has been taken as a reference to the pronunciation of the Tetragrammaton, but that is unlikely (see Lim, 'Tetragrammaton', pp. 157-168). Another possibility, suggested by Vered Noam, is that this defilement refers to the breaking of the oath, which includes the swearing by the divine name, when a novice first joins the sect (see Lim, *Earliest Commentary*, p. 48).

²⁷ In a postscript to his 'Messianic Motifs of Qumran and the New Testament' *NTS* 3 (1956-7): 209, William Brownlee asserted the difference ('a great chasm lies between the different interpretations') without discussion.

²⁸ See my 'Towards a Description of the Sectarian Matrix' in *Echoes from the Caves: Qumran and the New Testament* ed. Florentino García Martínez (Brill Academic Publishers, 2009), pp. 7-31.

²⁹ Fitzmyer, in 'Habakkuk 2:3-4 and the New Testament' in *To Advance the Gospel*, last of the collected essays, argues that Paul's use of *ek pisteos* is dependent on a Greek translation rather than the Hebrew.