

# Haggai

## Fact Sheet

### Timeline:

- 597 BCE - Babylonian conquest of Jerusalem and first deportation (start of the Babylonian exile)
- 587-86 BCE - Destruction of Jerusalem (including Temple) and second deportation
- 539 BCE - Exile ends, repatriation of exiles
- 520 BCE (between August & mid-December) - the time span about which Haggai is concerned: the beginnings of the rebuilding of the Temple
- 516-15 BCE - Work on the Second Temple is completed

### General Background:

- Haggai is pronounced "Häg'-guy"
- The origin of Haggai is Jerusalem at the return of the exiles from Babylon, when Jerusalem was still recovering and still a relatively "small town." Some scholars feel that Haggai was written (or highly edited) at a later date by folks concerned with priestly affairs (so that rebuilding the Temple really would be an important issue).
- Haggai consists of four prophecies directed at the governor of Judah (Jerusalem is the capital) and the high priest (who was at the time still without a workplace).
- The main goal of Haggai is to encourage and, if necessary, cajole, the rebuilding of the Temple. Think of your own experience with building projects here. (: What's more, the concern is not only for the rebuilt Temple, but also for a purified and faithful community.

### General Notes:

Verse 1: King Darius - the ruler of Persia (the folks who overthrew Babylon) from 522-486 BCE

Verse 1: Haggai - Apart from the prophet's name and the fact that he was a prophet, we know nothing else about him. He is mentioned in Ezra chapters 5-6 alongside Zechariah, but we know nothing else about that possible relationship, either. Haggai's name is derived from the Hebrew verb meaning "to make a pilgrimage," which is fitting since the main pilgrimage destination for Jews was the Temple in Jerusalem.

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Chapter 1, Verse 1: Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah - the grandson of Jehoiachin, the Judean king who enjoyed Babylonian favor while in captivity

Verse 1: Joshua son of Jehozadak, the high priest - Joshua is the first person to be called "high priest" in the Old Testament; also, his father had been a priest among the exiles

Verse 2: "the Lord of Hosts" - "hosts" refers to the heavenly army at the Lord's command. This is one of many instances in the Old Testament where God is depicted as a "Divine Warrior," coming down to earth and really shaking things up.

Verse 2: "These people" - this refers either to the entire Judean community, or to just the remnant who had returned from Babylon

Verse 2: "the Lord's house" - the Temple

Verse 4: paneled houses - probably refers to the nicer houses that the more affluent members/leaders of the community lived in

Verse 6: Asking the question, "See how things are going with the Temple still in ruins?"

Chapter 2, Verses 1-9: The promise of not only a return to prosperity, but an exceeding of the prior way of things

Verse 3: In order to remember back far enough to the old Temple, Haggai's hearers would have to be at least 73 years old.

Verses 10-19: This passage is concerned with consecrating the still un-finished structure. Worship and sacrifice will not be valid based just on the progress of the building project; God's blessing and validation are still required. The Temple is still, for all intents purposes, "dead" (verse 13). This is rectified through Haggai's blessing in verse 19, inspired by the milestone of "stone on stone" - perhaps the laying of a foundation - in verse 15.

Verses 20-23: A prophecy for Zerubbabel alone, again promising that things will be restored and former prosperity exceeded

Verse 23: signet ring - The bearer of a king's signet ring enjoyed the authority of the king; Zerubbabel will enjoy God's authority, acting on His behalf

Sources: HarperCollins Bible Dictionary, Paul Achtemeier, Ed.; HarperCollins Study Bible, esp. article on Haggai by W. Sibley Towner.

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## Additional Discussion Questions

•How does *God's* desire to rebuild the Temple in Haggai relate to *God's* chiding of David in 2 Samuel 7:1-17 when David desired to build the first Temple?

•How do verses like 7-11 of Chapter 1 sound to you in the wake of recent natural disasters?

•Are these prophecies about more than just a physical structure?

Luther thought of the Scriptures as containing both *Law* and *Gospel* throughout, convicting us of our failures and then showing us *God's* grace. So...

Where in this book do you hear the *Law*? That is, what shows our sin, convicting us, driving us to seek *God's* grace?

Where in this book do you hear the *Gospel*? That is, what shows us *God's* future for us, our hope, *God's* grace in our lives?

Why do you think Haggai "made it in" to the Bible?