
חגי • HAGGAI

INTRODUCTION

When Cyrus conquered Babylon, he not only published a decree (538 BCE) allowing the captive Jews to return to Palestine but also encouraged them to rebuild the Temple in Jerusalem (Ezr 1:1–4). It is possible that under Sheshbazzar's leadership, rebuilding was immediately attempted. However, by 520 BCE, no significant progress was evident; a successful effort was then begun, and the New Temple was completed in the spring of 515 BCE. Assisted by Zechariah, the man principally responsible for this major accomplishment was the prophet Haggai.

The *Book of Haggai* is 10th among the 12 'Minor Prophets' in both the *Masoretic Text* and the *Septuagint*. Fragments of the Hebrew text of this book were found among the *Qumran MSS*, including 4Q77 (4QXII^b) and 4Q80 (4QXII^e).

AUTHORSHIP AND DATES

If the dates given in the *Book of Haggai* are accurate, then the five addresses it contains date from the 6th through the 9th months of 520 BCE. Some presume that Haggai wrote the book himself but he is repeatedly referred to in the third person, which makes it unlikely that he wrote the text; it is more probable that the book was written by a disciple, who sought to preserve the content of Haggai's spoken prophecies. There is a consensus among scholars that the text was completed in 515 BCE.

חגיי פרק א

א בִּשְׁנַת שְׁתַּיִם לְדַרְיוֹשׁ הַמֶּלֶךְ בַּחֹדֶשׁ הַשְּׁשִׁי בַּיּוֹם
אֶחָד לַחֹדֶשׁ הָיָה דְבַר־יְהוָה בִּידְ-חַגִּי הַנְּבִיא אֶל־
זֵרֻבְבָּל בֶּן־שְׁאֵלְתִּיאֵל פַּחַת יְהוּדָה וְאֶל־יְהוֹשֻׁעַ בֶּן־
יְהוֹצָדָק הַכֹּהֵן הַגָּדוֹל לֵאמֹר: ב כֹּה אָמַר יְהוָה
צְבָאוֹת לֵאמֹר הָעַם הַזֶּה אָמְרוּ לֹא עֵת־בָּא עֵת־
בַּיִת יְהוָה לְהַבְנוֹת: {פ}

ג וַיְהִי דְבַר־יְהוָה בִּידְ-חַגִּי הַנְּבִיא לֵאמֹר: ד הֲעֵת
לָכֶם אַתֶּם לְשֹׁבֵת בְּבַתֵּיכֶם סְפוּנִים וְהַבַּיִת הַזֶּה
חָרָב: ה וְעַתָּה כֹּה אָמַר יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת שִׁימוּ לְבַבְכֶם
עַל־דַּרְכֵיכֶם: ו זַרְעֵתֶם הַרְבֵּה וְהָבֵא מְעֹט אֲכֹל
וְאִין־לְשִׁבְעָה שְׂתוּ וְאִין־לְשַׁכְּרָה לְבוֹשׁ וְאִין־לֶחֶם
לוֹ וְהַמְשַׁתְּכֵר מִשְׁתַּכֵּר אֶל־צְרוּר נְקוּב: {פ}

ז כֹּה אָמַר יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת שִׁימוּ לְבַבְכֶם עַל־
דַּרְכֵיכֶם: ח עָלוּ הָהָר וְהִבֵּאתֶם עֵץ וּבְנוּ הַבַּיִת

HAGGAI 1

¹ In the second year of King Darius, in the sixth month, on the first day of the month, the word of Yahweh came through the prophet Haggai to Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and to Joshua the son of Jehozadak, the High Priest as follows: ² “Yahweh Sabaoth says this, “This people says: The time has not yet come to rebuild the Temple of Yahweh.””

³ Then the word of Yahweh came by the prophet Haggai, saying, ⁴ “Is this a time for you to live in your panelled houses, when this House lies in ruins? ⁵ So now, Yahweh Sabaoth says this, “Consider your ways. ⁶ You have sown much and harvested little; you eat but never have enough, drink but never have your fill, put on clothes but feel no warmth. The wage-earner puts his wages in a bag with a hole in it.”

⁷ Yahweh Sabaoth says this, “Think carefully about your behaviour.

⁸ Go up to the hills, fetch timber and rebuild the House; and I shall take

HAGGAI 1

¹ The date corresponds to August/September 520 BCE; ‘Darius’ was king of the Persian Empire from 521 (522) to 485 (486) BCE.

² ‘Has not yet come’ follows the LXX (*Οὐχ ἔχει ὁ καιρὸς*); the MT is corrupt.

³ The NJB places this verse in parentheses.

⁴ The impropriety of the people living in lavish accommodations while the temple lay unfinished is striking.

⁵ The literal translation of the last half of this verse is, “Set your heart upon your ways.”

⁶ Some translate צְרוּר (*‘bag’*) as ‘pocket’ but the word refers to a pouch or purse: coinage was in use in Haggai’s day.

⁷ This verse is perhaps misplaced; vv. 1–11 possibly contain two distinct units (vv. 1–6, 8 & vv. 7, 9–11), both authentic.

⁸ In place of ‘manifest my glory’, here following the Qere, (וְאֶכְבֹּדָה), the Ketiv has ‘that I may be glorified’ (וְאֶכְבֹּד), possibly a defective cohortative).

וְאַרְצָה־בּוֹ וְאֶכְבַּד וְאֶכְבְּדָה אֲמַר יְהוָה: ^ט פָּנָה אֶל־
הַרְבֵּה וְהִנֵּה לְמַעַט וְהִבַּאתֶם הַבַּיִת וְנִפְחַתִּי בּוֹ יֵעַן
מָה נָאִם יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת יֵעַן בַּיִתִּי אֲשֶׁר־הוּא חָרַב
וְאַתֶּם רְצִים אִישׁ לְבֵיתוֹ: ^י עַל־כֵּן עָלִיכֶם כָּל־אֵו
שָׁמַיִם מִטַּל וְהָאָרֶץ כָּל־אֵה יְבוּלָה: ^{יא} וְאֶקְרָא חָרַב
עַל־הָאָרֶץ וְעַל־הַהָרִים וְעַל־הַדָּגָן וְעַל־הַתִּירוֹשׁ
וְעַל־הַיֵּצֵהָר וְעַל אֲשֶׁר תּוֹצִיא הָאֲדָמָה וְעַל־הָאָדָם
וְעַל־הַבְּהֵמָה וְעַל כָּל־יְגִיעַ כַּפַּיִם: {ס}

^{יב} וַיִּשְׁמַע זְרֻבָבֶל בֶּן־שֶׁלְתִיאֵל וַיְהוֹשֶׁעַ בֶּן־יְהוֹצָדָק
הַכֹּהֵן הַגָּדוֹל וְכָל שְׂאֲרֵי־הָעָם בְּקוֹל יְהוָה
אֱלֹהֵיהֶם וְעַל־דְּבַר־יְהוָה חֲגִי הַנְּבִיא כַּאֲשֶׁר שָׁלַח יְהוָה
אֱלֹהֵיהֶם וַיִּירָאוּ הָעָם מִפְּנֵי יְהוָה: ^{יג} וַיֹּאמֶר חֲגִי
מִלְאָךְ יְהוָה בְּמַלְאָכוֹת יְהוָה לָעַם לֵאמֹר אֲנִי
אִתְּכֶם נָאִם־יְהוָה: ^{יד} וַיַּעַר יְהוָה אֶת־רוּחַ זְרֻבָבֶל
בֶּן־שֶׁלְתִיאֵל פָּחַת יְהוּדָה וְאֶת־רוּחַ יְהוֹשֶׁעַ בֶּן־
יְהוֹצָדָק הַכֹּהֵן הַגָּדוֹל וְאֶת־רוּחַ כָּל שְׂאֲרֵי־הָעָם
וַיָּבֵאוּ וַיַּעֲשׂוּ מְלָאכָה בְּבַיִת־יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת
אֱלֹהֵיהֶם: {פ}

pleasure in it and manifest my glory there, says Yahweh. ⁹ The abundance you expected proved to be little. When you brought the harvest in, I blew it away it. And why? – Yahweh Sabaoth declares. Because, while my House lies in ruins, each of you is busy with his own house. ¹⁰ That is why the sky has withheld the rain and the earth withheld its yield. ¹¹ I have called down drought on land and hills, on grain, on new wine, on olive oil and on all the produce of the ground, on humans and animals and all your labours.”

¹² Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel, Joshua son of Jehozadak the High Priest and the entire remnant of the people, paid attention to the voice of Yahweh their God and to the words of the prophet Haggai, which Yahweh their God had sent him to deliver; and the people were filled with fear before Yahweh. ¹³ Haggai, the messenger of Yahweh, then passed on Yahweh’s message to the people, “I am with you, says Yahweh.” ¹⁴ And Yahweh roused the spirit of Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel governor of Judah, the spirit of Joshua son of Jehozadak the High Priest and the spirit of the entire remnant of the people; they came and set to work in the Temple of Yahweh Sabaoth, their God.

⁹ The literal translation of ‘blasted it’ is ‘blew it away’.

¹⁰ ‘Rain’ follows the Tg (and NJB); the MT (and NRSV) has ‘dew’.

¹¹ The literal translation of ‘your labours’ is ‘labours of the hand’.

¹² In Hg and Zc, ‘the remnant of the people’ (שְׂאֲרֵי־הָעָם) means the faithful grouped around Jerusalem (see #Is 4:3).

¹³ The Hebrew style is highly repetitive here; some simplify the verse for contemporary English stylistic reasons.

¹⁴ God initiated the rebuilding of the Temple by providing the people with motivation and ability.

טו בַּיּוֹם עֶשְׂרִים וָאַרְבָּעָה לְחֹדֶשׁ בִּשְׁשֵׁי בִשְׁנַת
שְׁתַּיִם לְדַרְיוֹשׁ הַמֶּלֶךְ: ¹⁵ This was on the twenty-fourth day of the sixth month, in the second
year of King Darius.

¹⁵ It is best to regard this as the date for the oracle in 2:15–19, which originally may have stood at this point. Many read the last phase with 2:1.

חגי פרק ב

א בְּשִׁבְעֵי בְּעָשְׂרִים וְאַחַד לַחֹדֶשׁ הָיָה דְבַר־יְהוָה
בִּידְחַגֵּי הַנְּבִיא לֵאמֹר: ב אֲמַרְנָא אֶל־זְרַבְבָּל בֶּן־
שִׁלְתִּיאֵל פַּחַת יְהוּדָה וְאֶל־יְהוֹשֻׁעַ בֶּן־יְהוֹצָדָק
הַכֹּהֵן הַגָּדוֹל וְאֶל־שְׂאֲרֵית הָעָם לֵאמֹר: ג מִי בְכֶם
הַנִּשְׁאָר אֲשֶׁר רָאָה אֶת־הַבַּיִת הַזֶּה בְּכַבּוּדוֹ
הָרִאשׁוֹן וּמָה אַתֶּם רֹאִים אִתּוֹ עַתָּה הֲלוֹא כְמוֹהוּ
כָּאֵן בְּעֵינֵיכֶם: ד וְעַתָּה חֲזַק זְרַבְבָּל | נְאֻם־יְהוָה
וְחֲזַק יְהוֹשֻׁעַ בֶּן־יְהוֹצָדָק הַכֹּהֵן הַגָּדוֹל וְחֲזַק כָּל־עַם
הָאָרֶץ נְאֻם־יְהוָה וְעֲשׂוּ כִּי־אָנִי אִתְּכֶם נְאֻם יְהוָה
צְבָאוֹת: ה אֶת־הַדָּבָר אֲשֶׁר־כִּרְתִּי אִתְּכֶם
בְּצֵאתְכֶם מִמִּצְרַיִם וְרוּחִי עֹמֵד בְּתוֹכְכֶם אֶל־
תִּירְאוּ: {ס}

ו כִּי כֹה אָמַר יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת עוֹד אַחַת מְעַט הִיא
וְאָנִי מְרַעִישׁ אֶת־הַשָּׁמַיִם וְאֶת־הָאָרֶץ וְאֶת־הַיָּם

HAGGAI 2

¹ On the twenty-first day of the seventh month, the word of Yahweh came through the prophet Haggai, as follows, ² “You are to speak to Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel governor of Judah, to Joshua son of Jehozadak the High Priest and to the remnant of the people. Say this, ³ “Is there anyone left among you who saw this Temple in its former glory. How does it look to you now? Does it not seem as though there is nothing there? ⁴ Yet, take courage now, Zerubbabel – Yahweh declares! Courage, Joshua son of Jehozadak, High Priest; courage, all you people of the country – Yahweh declares! To work: I am with you – Yahweh Sabaoth declares – ⁵ according to the promise that I made you when you came out of Egypt, and my spirit is present among you. Do not be afraid!

⁶ For, Yahweh Sabaoth says this: Once again, in just a little while now, I shall shake the heavens, and the earth, and the sea, and the dry land. ⁷ I

HAGGAI 2

- ¹ The seventh month was Tishri; the date corresponds to September/October 520 BCE – the last day of the Feast of Shelters (Nb 29:32–34); it also coincided with the date 440 years earlier (960 BCE) when Solomon finished building his temple (1K 6:38, 8:2).
- ² Some prefer to clarify this verse by rearranging as, “Joshua, the High Priest, son of Jehozadak.”
- ³ Solomon’s temple was demolished in 586 BCE, 66 years prior to Haggai’s time.
- ⁴ The phrase ‘people of the country’ (עַם הָאָרֶץ) refers to free citizens, as opposed to slaves.
- ⁵ The NJB, following the LXX, lacks ‘according ... Egypt’ (here following the MT & NRSV).
- ⁶ The phrase עוֹד אַחַת מְעַט הִיא (‘once again, in a little while now’), is difficult; literally translated, it reads, ‘yet once, it is a little’ and the LXX (ἔτι ἄπαξ) omits the last two Hebrew words, reading, ‘yet once’.
- ⁷ The literal translation of ‘treasure’ (חֶמְדָּת – singular in the collective sense) is ‘what is precious’ or ‘what is desired’.

וְאֶת־הַחֲרָבָה: יְוַהֲרַעְשֵׁתִי אֶת־כָּל־הַגּוֹיִם וּבָאוּ
 חֲמֻדַּת כָּל־הַגּוֹיִם וּמִלְאֲתֵי אֶת־הַבַּיִת הַזֶּה כְּבוֹד
 אָמַר יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת: ^ח לִי הַכֶּסֶף וְלִי הַזָּהָב נְאֻם
 יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת: ^ט גְּדוֹל יִהְיֶה כְבוֹד הַבַּיִת הַזֶּה
 הָאֲחֵרוֹן מִן־הָרֵאשׁוֹן אָמַר יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת וּבַמְּקוֹם
 הַזֶּה אֶתֵּן שָׁלוֹם נְאֻם יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת: {פ}

יְבַעֲשֵׂרִים וְאַרְבַּעָה לַתְּשִׁיעֵי בְשַׁנַּת שְׁתַּיִם
 לְדַרְיוֹשׁ הָיָה דְבַר־יְהוָה אֶל־חַגִּי הַנְּבִיא לֵאמֹר:
^{יא} כֹּה אָמַר יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת שְׁאַל־נָא אֶת־הַכֹּהֲנִים
 תּוֹרָה לֵאמֹר: ^{יב} הֲנָ | יִשְׂאֵ־אִישׁ בְּשַׂר־קֹדֶשׁ בְּכַנְף
 בְּגָדוֹ וְנִגַּע בְּכַנְפוֹ אֶל־הַלֶּחֶם וְאֶל־הַנֶּזֶד וְאֶל־הַיַּיִן
 וְאֶל־שֶׁמֶן וְאֶל־כָּל־מֵאֲכָל הַיְקֻדָּשׁ וַיַּעֲנוּ הַכֹּהֲנִים
 וַיֹּאמְרוּ לֹא: ^{יג} וַיֹּאמֶר חַגִּי אִם־יִגַּע טְמֵא־נֶפֶשׁ בְּכָל־
 אֵלֶּה הִיטְמָא וַיַּעֲנוּ הַכֹּהֲנִים וַיֹּאמְרוּ יטְמָא: ^{יד} וַיַּעַן
 חַגִּי וַיֹּאמֶר בֵּן הָעַם־הַזֶּה וְכֹן־הִגְוִי הַזֶּה לְפָנַי נְאֻם־
 יְהוָה וְכֹן כָּל־מַעֲשֵׂה יְדֵיהֶם וְאֲשֶׁר יִקְרִיבוּ שֵׁם

shall also shake all the nations, and the treasure of all the nations will flow in, and I shall fill this Temple with glory, says Yahweh Sabaoth.

⁸ Mine is the silver, and mine is the gold, says Yahweh Sabaoth! ⁹ The splendour of this new Temple will surpass that of the former, says Yahweh Sabaoth, and, in this place, I shall give peace – Yahweh Sabaoth says.”

¹⁰ On the twenty-fourth day of the ninth month, in the second year of Darius, the word of Yahweh came to the prophet Haggai as follows,

¹¹ “Yahweh Sabaoth says this, “Ask the priests to give a ruling saying:

¹² If one carries consecrated meat in the fold of his gown and allows the fold to touch bread, broth, wine, oil or food of any kind, will that become holy?”

The priests replied, “No.” ¹³ Haggai then said, “If one made unclean by contact with a corpse touches any of these things, will that become unclean?” The priests replied, “It will become unclean.”

¹⁴ Haggai then said. “So it is with this people, and with this nation, in my view, Yahweh says, the same with every work of their hands; and

⁸ The NJB lacks the repetition of ‘mine is’, here following the MT (and NRSV).

⁹ At the end of this verse, the LXX adds, “and peace of soul, to save all those who laid the foundations for the rebuilding of this Temple;” (καὶ εἰρήνην ψυχῆς εἰς περιποίησιν παντὶ τῷ κτιζοντι τοῦ ἀναστῆσαι τὸν ναὸν τοῦτου).

¹⁰ The date corresponds to November/December 520 BCE.

¹¹ The word ‘ruling’ here translates תּוֹרָה (‘torah’ – literally, ‘a law’).

¹² This is probably not an appeal to the Torah as such but to a priestly ruling (but cf. Lv 6:27).

¹³ ‘Uncleanness’ is more contagious than ‘holiness’ – a ritualistic view.

¹⁴ The LXX adds, “because of their quickly won gains, they will suffer for their labours, and you hated those dispensing justice at the city gate;” (ἔνεκεν τῶν λημμάτων αὐτῶν τῶν ὀρθρινῶν, ὀδυνηθήσονται ἀπὸ προσώπου πόνων αὐτῶν· καὶ ἐμισεῖτε ἐν πύλαις ἐλέγγοντας).

טמא הוא: ^{טו} ועתה שימונא לבבכם מנהיום הזה ומעלה מטרים שום-אבן אל-אבן בהיכל יהוה: ^{טז} מהיותם בא אל-ערמת עשרים והיתה עשרה בא אל-היקב לחשף חמשים פורה והיתה עשרים: ^{יז} הליתי אתכם בשדפון ובירקון ובברד את כל-מעשה ידיכם ואין-אתכם אלי נאס-יהוה: ^{יח} שימונא לבבכם מנהיום הזה ומעלה מיום עשרים וארבעה לתשיעי למנהיום אשר-יסד היכל-יהוה שימו לבבכם: ^{יט} העוד הזרע במגורה ועד-הגפן והתאנה והרמון ועץ הזית לא נשא מן-היום הזה אברך: {ס}

^כ ויהי דבר-יהוה | שנית אל-חגי בעשרים וארבעה לחדש לאמר: ^{כא} אמר אל-זרובבל פחת-יהודה לאמר אני מרעיש את-השמים ואת-הארץ: ^{כב} והפכתי כסא ממלכות והשמדתי חזק

whatever they offer here is unclean. ¹⁵ “So now consider, today and henceforth: before one stone had been laid on another in the Sanctuary of Yahweh, ¹⁶ what state were you in? You would come to a twenty-measure heap and find only ten; you would come to a vat to draw fifty measures and find only twenty. ¹⁷ All you turned your hands to, I struck with windblast, mildew, and hail, and still you would not return to me, Yahweh says. ¹⁸ So, consider, today and henceforth, from the twenty-fourth day of the ninth month, from the day the foundation of the Sanctuary of Yahweh was laid; think carefully ¹⁹ if seed-corn is still short in the barn, and if vine and fig tree, pomegranate and olive tree still bear no fruit. From today onwards, I intend to bless you.”

²⁰ On the twenty-fourth day of the month, the word of Yahweh came a second time to Haggai, as follows, ²¹ “Speak to Zerubbabel governor of Judah. Say this, “I am going to shake the heavens and the earth. ²² I shall overturn the thrones of kingdoms and destroy the power of the kings of

¹⁵ This passage, completing 1:1-15, should perhaps be read after 1:15^a.

¹⁶ ‘What state were you in’ follows the LXX; the MT has ‘of your existence’. ‘You would come’ (indefinite) follows the LXX; the MT has ‘he would come’. After ‘vat’, the MT adds ‘press’ – a gloss on ‘vat’ absent from the LXX.

¹⁷ ‘I struck’ is a conjectural translation following the NJB; the MT has ‘I struck you’.

¹⁸ The NJB parenthesises most of this verse (from ‘from the twenty-fourth day’) – it is a partly inaccurate gloss (‘ninth’ maybe an error for ‘sixth’).

¹⁹ ‘If seed-corn is still short in the barn’ is a conjectural translation following the NJB; the MT has ‘until seed-corn is in the barn’ and the LXX has ‘and if seed-corn is still in the barn’ (εἰ ἔτι ἐπιγυωσθήσεται ἐπὶ τῆς ἄλω).

²⁰ The date corresponds to Kislev 24 or December 18, 520 BCE.

²¹ Compare this verse to v. 6 and Jl 3:16.

²² ‘Kings’ follows the LXX (βασιλέω); the MT repeats ‘kingdoms’.

מַמְלָכוֹת הַגּוֹיִם וְהַפָּכָתִי מִרֶכֶבָּהּ וּרְכָבֶיהָ וַיִּרְדּוּ
סוֹסִים וּרְכָבֵיהֶם אִישׁ בַּחֶרֶב אָחִיו: ^{כג} בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא
נֹאֲסִיָּהוּהָ עֲבָאוֹת אֶקְחֶךָ זְרֻבָבֶל בֶּן־שֶׁאֲלִתִּיאֵל
עַבְדִּי נֹאֲסִיָּהוּהָ וְשִׁמְתִּיךָ כַּחוֹתָם כִּי־בָךְ בַּחֲרָתִי
נֹאֲסִיָּהוּהָ עֲבָאוֹת:
{ש}

the nations. I shall overthrow the chariots and their crews; horses and their riders will fall, every one to the sword of his comrade.” ²³ “When that day comes, says Yahweh Sabaoth, I shall take you, Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel my servant, Yahweh says, and make you like a signet ring. For, I have chosen you, Yahweh Sabaoth says.”

²³ The expression ‘I shall take you’ implies election to a notable function in the history of salvation. The ‘signet ring’, used for sealing documents and letters (1K 21:8) was kept carefully hung from the neck (Gn 38:18) or worn on the finger, as in Jr 22:24, where King Jehoiachin is compared to a discarded signet ring.