

# The Journal of Hebrew Scriptures

ISSN 1203-1542

<http://www.jhsonline.org> and

<http://purl.org/jhs>



Articles in JHS are being indexed in the ATLA Religion Database, [RAMBI](#), and [BiBIL](#). Their abstracts appear in Religious and Theological Abstracts. The journal is archived by *Library and Archives Canada* and is accessible for consultation and research at the Electronic Collection site maintained by [Library and Archives Canada](#) (for a direct link, click [here](#)).

## VOLUME 8, ARTICLE 19

**ELIE ASSIS,  
THE TEMPLE IN THE BOOK OF HAGGAI**

## THE TEMPLE IN THE BOOK OF HAGGAI

ELIE ASSIS  
BAR ILAN-UNIVERSITY

The purpose of this article is to discuss the Temple ideology that characterizes the book of Haggai. Although Haggai does not directly elaborate on the theological importance of the Temple, nevertheless, we may draw some conclusions about the particular Temple theology advanced in the book in general and the prescribed role of the Temple in the life of Israel.

Clearly the Temple occupies a central position in the book of Haggai. In fact, most of the book deals with Temple matters. Three out of the four prophetic speeches in the book deal, in one way or another with the Temple, and the fourth is not unrelated to it either. In his first prophecy, Haggai calls upon the nation to build the Temple (chapter 1). In the second, he urges them on when they slacken, after the construction work is already underway (2:1–9). The subject matter of the third prophecy is debated. The prevailing view is that this pericope is to be understood literally, that is, as dealing with matters of ritual purity in the Temple.<sup>1</sup> Another position is that the prophecy expresses opposition to any intermingling with those from the northern region, later identified as Samaritans (2:10–19).<sup>2</sup> If this is the case, the prophecy would also be related to the building of the Temple, since, within this understanding, it would address the desire on the part of the Samaritans to participate in the building of the Temple in Jerusalem (cf. the account in Ezra 4:1–5, which likewise reflects opposition to their inclusion in the project). According to this approach, Haggai maintains that the project will be successful and lead to immediate economic abundance

---

<sup>1</sup> See for instance, C.L. Meyers and E.M. Meyers, *Haggai, Zechariah 1–8* (AB, 25B; New York: Doubleday, 1987) 55–67; P.A. Verhoef, *The Books of Haggai and Malachi* (NICOT; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1987) 114–138; J. Kessler, *The Book of Haggai: Prophecy and Society in Early Persian Yehud* (VTSup, 91; Leiden: Brill, 2002) 203–206.

<sup>2</sup> J. W. Rothstein, *Juden und Samaritaner: Die grundlegende Scheidung von Judentum und Heidentum. Eine kritische Studie zum Buche Haggai und zur jüdische Geschichte im ersten nachexilischen Jahrhundert* (BWANT, 3; Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1908) 5–41; H. W. Wolff, *Haggai* (BKAT; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1986) 71–73. Many disagree with Rothstein's hypothesis. See, for instance, K. Koch, "Haggai unreines Volk," *ZAW* 79 (1967) 52–66 and H. G. May, "'This People' and 'This Nation' in Haggai," *VT* 18 (1968) 190–197.

(2:15–19) if the people in Judah remain separate from the Samaritans will. Hence these scholars have inferred from the text that one of the considerations in favor of cooperation with the Samaritans was the assistance that they provided for the building of the Temple in Jerusalem.<sup>3</sup> Haggai's, fourth and final prophecy (2:20–23) addresses the future status of Zerubbabel, a scion of the house of David. At least formally, it is not directly related to the subject of the Temple, although it is likely that Zerubbabel's status would be influenced by the future status of the Temple.<sup>4</sup> In any event, this prophecy is extremely brief, covering only three verses out of the total of 38 verses that comprise the book of Haggai.

What kind of Temple ideology was Haggai promoting? To begin with, according to Haggai, it was intolerable that Israel lived in the land without a Temple. Although an altar had been constructed in Jerusalem (Ezra 3:1–6) at the beginning of the Second Temple Period, and some temporary structure likely existed for the performance of its rituals,<sup>5</sup> this was clearly insufficient for Haggai: He demanded that the Temple be rebuilt immediately (1:7; 2:4). The rebuilding of the Temple was the crux of Cyrus's declaration (as formulated in Ezra 1:2–5) that facilitated the return of the exiles. Indeed, the people had intended to build the Temple immediately upon their return to Judah (Ezra 3:8–13). But according to Haggai the people, who are suffering economic hardship, decided to establish themselves economically before directing their efforts to rebuilding the Temple (Haggai 1:5–6, 9–11).<sup>6</sup> The prophet, however, maintained that, notwithstanding the sacrifice involved, the building of the Temple must take precedence over the accumulation of personal wealth. Seemingly, due to Haggai's insistence that the Temple be built immediately, despite the difficult economic situation, the edifice was unimpressive, and clearly a far cry from the splendor of Solomon's Temple (2:3). To be sure, Haggai believed and prophesized that the Temple should eventually be magnificent

---

<sup>3</sup> See W. Rudolph, *Haggai—Sacharja 1–8—Sacharja 9–14—Maleachi* (KAT; Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus Gerd Mohn, 1976) 48–50.

<sup>4</sup> On the importance of the Davidic descendent in the restoration of the Temple in Haggai, see A. Laato, *Josiah and David Redivivus: The Historical Josiah and the Messianic Expectations of Exilic and Postexilic Times* (ConB Old Testament Series, 33; Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell International, 1992) 226–229. See also A. Laato, “Zachariah 4, 6b – 10a and the Akkadian Royal Building Inscriptions,” *ZAW* 106 (1994) 53–69.

<sup>5</sup> It is clearly evident from Jer 41:5 that after the Temple's destruction, offerings were still brought to the site, and pilgrims continued to visit there. See, among others, S. Japhet, “The Temple of the Restoration Period: Realty and Ideology,” S. Ahituv and A. Mazar (eds), *The History of Jerusalem: The Biblical Period*, (Jerusalem: Yad Ben Zvi Press, 2000) 345–382 (369–372) (Hebrew). But see O. Lipschits, *The Fall and Rise of Jerusalem: Judah under Babylonian Rule* (Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 2005) 112–118.

<sup>6</sup> H. W. Wolff, *Haggai, A Commentary* (Hermeneia; Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1988) 41; J. Kessler, *Haggai*, 126.

(2:6–9). In the meantime, however, a modest building devoid of splendor was preferable to a situation in which there is no Temple at all.<sup>7</sup>

To what extent should the perception of the Temple in Haggai be regarded as an innovation? The Pentateuch contains no explicit command to build a/the Temple, but the portable Sanctuary fulfilled its role in the wilderness. The prophets of the monarchic period lived at a time in which there was the majestic Temple in Jerusalem, which played a central role in the theology, politics, and economy of Judah. These prophets would often castigate Judah and its leaders for their wrongdoings—including an improper attitude towards the Temple itself. But one cannot compare the proclamations of these prophets with those of Haggai, since they lived in and dealt with drastically different circumstances.

At least from the perspective of the action that they encourage and the ideological grounds on which its necessity is communicated, it seems interesting – and perhaps more pertinent – to compare the attitude reflected in Haggai’s urging to build the Temple with the presentation of David’s original initiative to build the Temple, in 2 Samuel 7. The latter presents the need for a Temple as a human need, as David’s initiative. David regarded the Sanctuary as a dwelling that was unbefitting God’s glory, in view of the king’s own majestic palace (2 Sam 7:2). The initial reaction of Nathan, the prophet, is one of support: “Do whatever is in your heart, for God is with you” (2 Sam 7:3), but there is no indication in his words that God demands the building of the Temple. According to Nathan, God will accede to David’s request because He supports him and his actions. This suggests that God has no need for a Temple. To build it is only a privilege granted to the king, and ultimately it is postponed from David’s time until the reign of the son who will succeed him.<sup>8</sup> It follows then that according to the perspective of this text (a) it could have been possible for Israel to continue for a long time without a Temple; and (b) the building of the Temple was considered a human initiative, for the sake of humans and for the sake of the king, with God only allowing for its construction, subject to certain conditions. This position stands in contrast to the one advanced by the tabernacle tradition, in which the deity is the initiator (e.g. Exod 26:1–7). It is also very different from Haggai’s Temple ideology. Haggai insisted that the Temple should be built without delay. Moreover, the clear impression arising from his words

---

<sup>7</sup> Some scholars maintain that the initiative to rebuild the Temple dates back to the Persian king Darius I, and that Haggai and Zachariah embraced this Persian initiative. See C. L. Meyers and E. M. Meyers, *Haggai, Zechariah 1-8*, xxxvii-xliv; J. Weinberg, *The Citizen-Temple Community* (JSOTSup, 151; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1992) 131-132. Others believe that the idea was raised by the Judeans, and received the support of the Persian rulers (cf. the book of Ezra). See P.R. Bedford, *Temple Restoration in Early Achaemenid Judah* (JSJsup, 65; Leiden: Brill, 2001, 230-299). This article does not deal with these matters directly; instead, its aim is to clarify Haggai’s Temple ideology.

<sup>8</sup> There is no need here to digress into the question of why David himself could not build the Temple. On this matter see M. Avioz, *Nathan’s Oracle (2 Samuel 7) and Its Interpreters* (Bible in History; Bern: Peter Lang, 2005) 13–23.

is that Temple building is God's wish. Haggai's position stands, in turn, in sharp contrast with the one advocated in Isaiah 66, which suggests that God has no need for humans to build Him a Temple.<sup>9</sup>

Given the emphasis on the new Temple in Ezekiel, one might have wondered whether Haggai's intention was to implement the plan set forth in detail in Ezekiel 40–47. However, if Haggai had regarded himself as the executor of Ezekiel's plan, one could reasonably expect to find points of contact between the two books. But they share no clear linguistic links. Moreover, Ezekiel makes no mention anywhere of any obligation to build the Temple. There is no actual instruction to build it in Ezekiel, nor a sense that the matter is urgent, as it is in Haggai, which is unique in this regard.<sup>10</sup>

---

<sup>9</sup> On opposition to the building of the Temple in Isa 66:1–2, and the stand against Haggai and Zechariah, see J. Lindblom, *Prophecy in Ancient Israel*, (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1962) 407. See also J. D. Smart, *History and Theology in Second Isaiah: A Commentary on Isaiah 35, 40–66* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1965) 281–287. S. Japhet, "The Temple in the Restoration Period: Reality and Ideology," idem, *From the Rivers of Babylon to the Highlands of Judah: Collected Studies on the Restoration Period* (Winona Lake, In.: Eisenbrauns, 2006) 223–226. However, others believe that the intention of the prophecy is not to condemn the rebuilding of the Temple but rather to protest against a mistaken attitude towards the Temple. See G. A. Smith, *The Book of Isaiah*, vol. 2 (The Expositor's Bible; London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1910) 460. According to Westermann, the verses represent neither a polemic against the Temple nor a spiritual approach to counter a formal perception of it. Nevertheless, he does agree that the prophet opposes Haggai's view that salvation depends of the completion of the rebuilding of the Temple. See C. Westermann, *Isaiah 40–66, A Commentary* (OTL; London: SCM, 1969) 412–413. Haran is of the opinion that Isaiah's prophecy is meant for the time prior to the rebuilding of the Temple. Its purpose is to comfort the people for their failed efforts to build it. See M. Haran, *Between 'Rishonot' (Former Prophecies) and 'Hadasot' (New Prophecies): A Literary Historical study in the Group of Prophecies Isaiah XL–XLVIII*, (Jerusalem: Magnes, 1963) 94–96 (in Hebrew).

Of course, the text in Isa 66:1–2 raises the issue of whether God dwells or can even dwell in the Temple. The perception that the deity dwelled in the temple is reflected in several texts (e.g., Exod 15:17; 2 Sam 7:2; Ezek 43:7). Several other texts indicate that God was not understood as dwelling (only) in the Temple. While the expression "House of God" does indicate that the house belongs to Him, it does not necessarily mean that He is inside it. In fact, in several places it is emphasized that God does not dwell inside the House, but rather that the House is built "for His Name" or in His honor (e.g., 1 Kgs 3:2; 5:17, 19; 8:17, 20). In the prayer that Solomon offers upon completing the construction of the Temple (1 Kings 8), he openly acknowledges the naiveté inherent in the very concept of the "House of God" and explicitly denies its literal intent: "For will God indeed dwell upon the earth? Behold, the heavens and the heaven's heavens cannot contain You; how much less this House which I have built" (1 Kgs 8:26). Elsewhere in this prayer he emphasizes that God resides in the heavens (vv 39, 43), and answers to the payers of the worshippers in the Temple from heaven (vv 30, 34, 35, 39, 43). Isa 66:1–2 similarly presents the heavens, rather than the Temple, as the locus of God's Throne.

<sup>10</sup> For contrasts between the visions of Zachariah and Ezekiel regarding the restoration of the Jerusalem and the Temple, see D. L. Petersen, *Haggai and*

A second innovative aspect of Haggai's prophecy is the assertion that the existence of the Temple assures economic wealth. This point is reiterated several times in the book. In his first prophecy, Haggai attributes the two central economic problems—the drought (1:10–11) and the failing agriculture and economy (1:6)—to the nation's failure to build the Temple. This would seem to suggest that the building of the Temple would solve these two problems. Until now the people have postponed the building out of a need to achieve first economic stability. Haggai takes the opposite view: the harsh economic conditions are the result of the absence of a Temple and, therefore the economic situation cannot be improved without building the Temple. In his third prophecy, Haggai goes so far as to assert that the connection between Temple and economy is direct and immediate: There will be a dramatic improvement from the very day of the laying of the foundations (2:15, 18).

This idea is Haggai's innovation, though a similar idea is found in Zech 1:16–17; 8:9–13. The only other text that shares a similar view is Ps. 132:15, which has a similar historical setting.<sup>11</sup> No other previous biblical source maintains that the existence (or building) of the Temple results material abundance.<sup>12</sup> In contrast, the usual motif is that the *observance of God's*

---

*Zachariah 1–8, A Commentary* (OTL; Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1984) 116–119.

<sup>11</sup> See e.g. H. Kruse, "Psalm CXXXII and the Royal Zion Festival," *VT* 3 (1983) 279–297.

<sup>12</sup> However this concept is well attested in ancient Near Eastern literature, see Gudea Cyl A cols. XI, 1–XII 1–2:

(1-6) When you, O true shepherd Gudea, will effectively start (to build) my House for me, the foremost house of all lands, the right arm of Lagaš, the Thunderbird roaring over the whole sky, my kingly Eninnu, (7-9) then I will call up to heaven for a humid wind so that surely abundance will come to you from above and the land will immediately (or: under your reign) gain in abundance. (10–11) When the foundations of my House will be laid, abundance will surely come at the same time: the great fields will "raise their hands" to you, dykes and canals will "raise their neck" to you, water will ? for your profit ? (even) rise to "hills" where it never reaches (in other years). (16–17) Under your rule more fat (than ever) will be poured, more wool (than ever) will be weighed in Sumer. (18–23) When you will have driven in my foundation pegs and will have effectively started (to build) my House for me, then I will direct my foot to the mountain where the north wind dwells, and the man of the enormous wings, the north wind, will blow favourably in your direction from the mountain, the pure place. (24–25) It will give life to the Land, so that a single person will be able to work as much as two. (26–27) At night moonlight and at noon the sun will send plentiful light for you, (xii 1–2) so that the day will build (the House), the night will make it grow for you. (D.O. Edzard, *Gudea and his Dynasty* (RIME; Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997) 75–76; cf. R.E. Averbeck's translation in *COS*, III, 423-24; for an electronic version of an English translation of this text see also <http://www-etcs1.orient.ox.ac.uk/section2/tr217.htm>

On these matters, see also G.A. Anderson, *Sacrifices and Offerings in Ancient Israel: Studies in their Social and Political Importance* (HSM, 41; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1987) 102–104; V.A. Hurowitz, *I have Built You An Exalted House: Temple Building in the Bible in Light of Mesopotamian and Northwest Semitic Writings* (JSOTS, 115; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1992) 322–323. See also M.J. Boda, "From Dystopia to

*commandments* brings prosperity, while their violation, scarcity (e.g., Lev. 26:3-5; Deut 7:12-16; 11:13-21). Admittedly, Ezekiel 47:12 indicates a link of some kind between the Temple and the fertility of the land. However, Ezekiel's description is devoid of any concrete, tangible connection between the building of the Temple and the divine promise of material prosperity in all its forms.<sup>13</sup>

In sum, there is much innovation in Haggai's Temple ideology. He advanced a new view of the Temple, the innovative obligation to rebuild it, and the original—within the biblical corpus—ideological position that posits a direct dependence between the national economy and the building of the Temple.

The prophets who preceded Haggai proclaimed a different Temple ideology. Jeremiah, for instance, sought to uproot the idea that the Temple itself could protect the nation, regardless of their actions. The people, in Jeremiah's time, clung to the belief that the Temple would prevent any cataclysmic defeat at the hand of their enemies, even if they did not behave in accordance with God's will. Jeremiah sought to dispel this illusion, even going so far as to refer to the Temple as a "den of robbers" (Jer 7:11). It is difficult to imagine that Haggai adopted the position of the people whom Jeremiah had so strongly condemned and assumed that the very existence of the Temple will protect Israel/Yehud.<sup>14</sup>

One might argue that Haggai's message was focused on the importance of ritual in general, and the offering of sacrifices in particular and hence its heavy emphasis on the Temple.<sup>15</sup> However, this hypothesis fails to explain the special status of the Temple in Haggai. Moreover, the book makes no mention of sacrifices at all.<sup>16</sup>

---

Myopia: Utopian (Re)Visions in Haggai and Zachariah 1–8," in E. Ben Zvi (ed.) *Utopia and Dystopia in Prophetic Literature* (PFES, 92; Helsinki/Göttingen: Finnish Exegetical Society/Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2006) 210–248.

<sup>13</sup> Hanson refers to Ezek 34:26–29 to demonstrate the prophet's view of the blessing in the era of restoration, in relation to Haggai's view of material abundance. See P.D. Hanson, *The Dawn of Apocalyptic: The Historical and Sociological Roots of Jewish Apocalyptic Eschatology* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1979) 174–175. However, this source does not link economic well-being with the rebuilding of the Temple as Haggai does.

<sup>14</sup> Based on accounts of temple reconstructions from the ancient Near East, Boda argues that the ideology of the Temple construction in Haggai should be understood as the removal of the present curse and the promise of the future blessing. Although this conception is clearly evident in Haggai, as Boda demonstrates, this paper seeks to explain *why* Haggai adopted an approach so evidently opposed the conception of the pre-exilic prophets. See Boda, "From Dystopia to Myopia," 210–248.

<sup>15</sup> For variations of this approach see, for instance: R. H. Pfeiffer, *Introduction to the Old Testament* (New York: Harper, 1941) 603.

<sup>16</sup> See also D.J.A. Clines, "Haggai's Temple, Constructed, Deconstructed and Reconstructed," D.J.A. Clines *Interested Parties: The Ideology of Writers and Readers of the Hebrew Bible* (JSOTSup, 205; Gender, Culture, Theory, 1; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995) 46–75 (53); originally published in *SJOT* 7 (1993) 19–30.

Schmidt and Verhoef believe that Haggai sought to avoid a situation in which the people might adopt a transcendental theological approach according to which they can practice their religion without a Temple. To their view, Haggai's aim was to emphasize the importance of the institutional cult in combination with spiritual beliefs.<sup>17</sup> However, the text makes only minor reference to the Temple cult (2:14). Had the offering of sacrifices and the Temple service been Haggai's main concern, they would have been given a far more prominent and explicit expression in the text.

A crucial text for understanding Haggai is 1:8. It reports the following divine speech: "Go up to the mountain and bring wood and build the House, and I will take pleasure in it and I will be glorified, says the Lord." Some aspects of this text will be discussed below. For the present purposes, the focus is on the use of the expression "I will take pleasure in it" (וְאֶרְצֶה-בּוֹ) in the context of the building of the Temple is particularly significant. Verbal forms of the root רצה (to want, favour) often appear in the context of God's acceptance (or lack of acceptance) of sacrifices (e.g., Lev 1:4; 7:18; 22:23, 25, 27; 2 Sam 24:23; Ezek 20:49; Hos 8:13; Am 5:22; Mic 6:7; Mal 1:8, 10, 13).<sup>18</sup> Although Haggai used language that brought to mind associations with the sacrificial service in the Temple, what he was in fact talking about was not sacrifices at all, but rather the Temple itself. He asserts that God will take pleasure in, or favour, the Temple that the people build. The prophet employs the terminology of God's acceptance of the ritual service in order to express the importance of building the Temple. This clearly supports the contention that the focus of the prophet's urging to build the Temple is the Temple itself.

Of course, none of this necessarily indicates a fundamentally different view of the Temple's *function* during the Second Temple period. The issue, however, remains the same: Haggai asserted that material prosperity is dependent not on the offering of sacrifices, but rather on the laying of the foundations of the Temple—even before any sacrifices can be brought there, that is "from the day that the foundation of God's Temple was laid" (2:18)? Hence, economic abundance is dependent on the Temple itself, not on any ritual service that is performed in it. In other words, from the perspective of Haggai, there must be something essentially vital about the Temple itself. This vital, fundamental feature of the Temple must make its construction an immediate and urgent obligation for the people.

Although Haggai does not state explicitly the *fundamental* attribute that makes building the Temple so important, an important hint appears in the already mentioned text in 1:8. The result of the building will be that "I will be glorified" (וְאֶכְבְּדָה).<sup>19</sup> This expression calls to mind the use of כְּבוֹד in

<sup>17</sup> See M. Schmidt, *Prophet und Temple: Eine Studie zum Problem der Gottesnähe im Alten Testament* (Zürich: Evangelischer Verlag, 1948) 192–197; Verhoef, *Haggai and Malachi*, 36.

<sup>18</sup> H. M. Barstad, "רצה," *TDOT*, vol. 13 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004) 618–630 (623–624).

<sup>19</sup> וְאֶכְבְּדָה represents the *Qere*; the *Ketib* is וְאֶכְבֵּד.

association with the Sanctuary/Temple (e.g., Exod 16:10; 24:16; 40:34–35; Num 14:10, 21). In every one of these instances, **כְּבוֹד**, a nominal form, points at the Divine Presence.<sup>20</sup> But in Haggai 1:8, there is a verbal (not nominal) form from the root **כבד** and God uses it in reference to His glory, in the sense of giving glory to God and making His Name renown among humankind—Israelites and gentiles alike. Similar instances of verbal forms of **כבד** occur in Exod 14:4; 17:18; Lev 10:3. The relevant expressions carry comparable meanings.<sup>21</sup> In sum, according to Haggai, the purpose of building the Temple is to give glory to God and to make His Name great. Such a position can easily lead to the belief that it is necessary to build the Temple to give glory to God.<sup>22</sup>

Still, the question remains: Why the urgency to build the Temple? Why so much was dependent upon *laying the foundations* for the Temple, according to Haggai? The answer to these questions is to be found in the particular situation of this period, its geo-political circumstances and their theological ramifications. The return to Zion had not proceeded in accordance with the people's expectations.<sup>23</sup> For instance, the economic hardship, the lack of political independence, the shrunken boundaries of the Judean state, and the inferior status of Zerubbabel—the Davide—caused disappointment. The people were inclined to believe that their situation was not part of any Divine plan and that God was not in their midst.<sup>24</sup> It was this perception that Haggai adamantly opposed. His insistence on building the Temple was an essential part of his message. It was aimed at convincing the people that despite their circumstances, God was with them. The building of the Temple would strengthen their sense of God's presence, and would glorify God's Name – which had not become manifest in its full splendor in the physical reality, as the nation had expected it to.<sup>25</sup> Hence, there was a need to build the Temple. The necessity of giving honor to God by building the

---

<sup>20</sup> M. Weinfeld, “כבוד,” *TDOT*, vol. 7 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995) 22–38 (27).

<sup>21</sup> In 1 Sam 2:30 a similar expression (**אֶכְבֹּד**) appears, but here it refers to the status and renown of a mortal king, David.

<sup>22</sup> This position is somewhat comparable to David's original motivation for building the First Temple. David had sought to build a Temple because, having built his own palace, he felt that it was not proper for the king's house to be more impressive and majestic than the House of God (2 Sam 7:2).

<sup>23</sup> On the rebuilding of the Temple as a counter-solution to the unrealized expectations of the people regarding their restoration in the post-exilic time, see Japhet, “Temple in the Restoration Period,” 218–223.

<sup>24</sup> See also E. Assis, “Haggai: Structure and Meaning,” *Bib* 87 (2006) 531–541; E. Assis, “To Build or Not to Build: A Dispute between Haggai and His People (Hag 1),” *ZAW* 119 (2007) 514–527.

<sup>25</sup> On the Temple as a sign of God's presence in the post-exilic period, see P.R. Ackroyd, *Exile and Restoration: A Study of Hebrew Thought of the Sixth Century BC*, (London: SCM, 1968) 248–249.

Temple arose out of a human need to strengthen the people's faith in God.<sup>26</sup>

Many of the prophets of the monarchic period had castigated the people for their attitude towards the Temple while it existed (see, for example, Isa 1:10–17; Jer 7:3–15; Hos 6:6; Amos 5:21–27; Mic 6:6–8). The attitude reflected in Haggai is altogether different. However, the contrast between them is not the result of differences of approach among the prophets, but rather a reflection of the different circumstances within which the prophets were active. The prophets of the monarchic period (and especially after the 8<sup>th</sup> century B.C.E) sought to condemn the popular perception of the unconditionally guaranteed eternity of God's Temple (for this belief see Isaiah 29; Jeremiah 7; Psalms 46; 48; 71). The prophets had to speak out against this extreme view of the Temple and its rituals. Therefore, these prophets chose to emphasize mainly moral, social messages. They insisted that Temple ritual and moral corruption were mutually incompatible. They declared that the Temple could be destroyed, if the nation failed to conduct itself properly. Haggai was faced with the opposite situation. In his time, the people were mired in despair, feeling that God was not in their midst, and that there was therefore no point in building the Temple. Corresponding to the reversal of the nation's attitude towards the Temple in the wake of the Destruction, Haggai adopts the opposite approach to that of the prophets of previous times: he emphasizes the importance of the Temple and asserts that God is indeed in their midst. To sum, the major problem that Haggai had to contend with was not the moral path of the people—as was the case of the monarchic period prophets, but rather their sense of despair and of loss of national religious identity. Thus he focused mainly on God's Presence in their midst, by emphasizing the importance of the Temple in terms of bringing glory to His Presence, in and of itself, rather than indirectly through the ritual service performed in it. Here one is to find the source and core component of Haggai's innovative Temple ideology.

---

<sup>26</sup> For this reason Haggai repeatedly emphasizes the Divine source of his words, see M.J. Boda, "Haggai: Master Rhetorician," *TyB* 51 (2000) 295–304 esp. 298–299.