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[ELIE ASSIS, COMPOSITION, RHETORIC AND THEOLOGY IN HAGGAI 1:1-11](#)

COMPOSITION, RHETORIC AND THEOLOGY IN HAGGAI 1:1-11

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1. INTRODUCTION

The importance of Haggai in the history of Yehud at the beginning of the Second Temple period is in sharp contrast to the length of the book. Haggai initiated the construction of the Temple in the second year of Darius' reign, about twenty years after the return from Babylon and the cessation of the construction following disturbances perpetrated by Yehud's neighbors (Ezra 4). This time, the attempt to build the temple succeeded (Ezra 6:14-15).¹

Haggai's instruction to the people to build the temple reflects the people's reluctance to do so (Hag 1:4). Several explanations have been offered to the people's claim that it was not the time to rebuild the temple. Some scholars believe that the economic difficulties were at the heart of the problem.² Others proposed that the people expected a seventy year period to elapse from the destruction.³ Others believe that the situation did not live up to the people's theological and eschatological expectations.⁴

¹ According to the book of Ezra, the role of Haggai, together with Zechariah, was very crucial in the renewed efforts to rebuild the ruined Temple of Jerusalem (Ezra 3:1-2; 6:14).

² J. Bright, *A History of Israel* (2nd ed., London: SCM Press, 1972), p. 366; H. W. Wolff, *Haggai, A Commentary* (trans. M. Kohl, Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1988), p. 41; J. Kessler, *The Book of Haggai: Prophecy and Society in Early Persian Yehud* (VTS, 91; Leiden: E.J. Brill, 2002) p. 126.

³ C. L. Meyers and E. M. Meyers, *Haggai, Zechariah 1-8* (AB, 25B; New York: Doubleday, 1987), p. 20; P. R. Bedford, "Discerning the Time: Haggai, Zechariah

Indeed, the people faced numerous problems. Beside the political and economic difficulties the position of Zerubbabel, a descendant of David, was very weak. Zerubbabel, as governor of the Persian king, represented the lack of political independence of the people and their dependence on the Persian emperor. All these facts caused great disappointment among the people and reality did not fit their expectations that Judea would assume its status prior to its defeat by the Babylonians. This disappointment led the people to raise doubts whether this reality was part of the divine scheme. Therefore, Haggai repeats that God is with them (1:13; 2:4).⁵ It is my contention that the people's refusal to take part in the rebuilding of the Temple was due to their belief that God has not returned to God's people and to God's land, after destroying the Temple and driving the people out of 'their' land. Haggai promised the people that their hopes and aspirations will be fulfilled in the future, but meanwhile they would have to be satisfied with the gradual and slow process of their realization.

Haggai required the people to build the Temple in his first prophetic speech, and in it he put forward his main arguments. To understand fully its meaning and the people's beliefs against which he fought, one has to grasp properly its rhetoric, and the latter requires an understanding of the structure and composition of the speech.

and the 'Delay' in the Rebuilding of the Jerusalem Temple," S. W. Holloway and L. K. Handy (eds.), *The Pitcher is Broken: Memorial Essays for Gösta W. Ahlström* (JSOTS, 190; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995), pp. 78-82; H. Tadmor, "The Appointed Time Has Not Yet Arrived: The Historical Background of Haggai 1:2," R. Chazan, W. W. Hallo, L. H. Schiffman (eds.) *Ki Baruch Hu: Ancient Near Eastern, Biblical, and Judaic Studies in Honor of Baruch A. Levine* (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1999), pp. 401-408. J. Tollinton, "Readings in Haggai: From the Prophet to the Completed Book, a Changing Message in Changing Times," B. Becking and M. C. A. Korpel, *The Crisis of Israelite Religion: Transformation of Religious Tradition in Exilic and Post-Exilic Times* (OtSt, 42; Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1999), p. 197 and n. 11. See also R. Albertz, *Israel in Exile: The History and Literature of the Sixth Century BCE*, (Studies in Biblical Literature, 3; Atlanta: SBL, 2003), p. 128.

⁴ J. Wellhausen, *Die kleinen Propheten übersetzt und erklärt* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1898), p. 173; O. Steck, "Zu Haggai 1:2-11," *ZAW* 83 (1971), pp. 375-376; R. G. Hamerton-Kelly, "The Temple and the Origins of Jewish Apocalyptic," *VT* 20 (1970), pp. 1-15, esp. p. 14. P. D. Hanson, *The Dawn of Apocalyptic: The Historical and Sociological Roots of Jewish Apocalyptic Eschatology*, (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1979), p. 244. Bedford, "Discerning the Time," pp. 71-94.

⁵ It is worth noting that the expression **אֲנִי אֶתְכֶם** occurs in "divine speech" and with this meaning in Hag 1:13 and 2:4, but nowhere else in the HB.

THE FOCUS OF HAG 1:4-11

Following the formal introduction in v 1,⁶ the oracle commences in v 2: **הָעָם הַזֶּה אָמְרוּ לֹא עֲתִיבָא עֲתִיבִית יְהוָה לְהַבְנוֹת** (“These people say the time has not yet come to rebuild the LORD’s house”).⁷ The sentence stands separate not only from the preceding, but also the following text, since v 3 opens with a messenger formula, namely **וַיְהִי דְבַר ה' בְּיַד חֲגִי הַנְּבִיא לֵאמֹר**. The standing alone statement in v 2, which represents the people’s declaration, plays thus the role of a topic marker or thematic focal point of the entire prophetic unit, from 1:4 to 1:11.⁸

2. BACKGROUND: A BRIEF SURVEY OF POSITIONS ON THE COMPOSITION OF HAG 1:4-11

INTRODUCTION

This passage contains several repetitions and a seeming unevenness. This has led many scholars to conclude that it was composed out of separate sayings that were eventually assembled together through a redactional process.⁹ The crucial issue has been the occurrence of repetition between vv 9-11 and vv 4-6. Verses 6 and 9 present, although with different words, the same theme, namely the difference between the people’s expectations of a large crop and the scant produce. The repetition between 5b and 7b and between 4b and 9b, respectively, involves the same words.¹⁰

⁶ This introduction includes information about the date, the name of the prophet and the identity of the addressees of the divine word.

⁷ English translations follow the NRSV.

⁸ Because v 2 is the foundation on which the whole prophecy is based, the suggestion that this verse is a later addition should be abandoned, see e.g. W. A. M. Beuken, *Haggai – Sacharja 1-8: Studien zur Überlieferungsgeschichte der frühnachexilischen Prophetie*, Studia semitica neerlandica, Assen: Van Gorcum, 1967, pp. 29-30).

⁹ Wolff, *Haggai*, pp. 33-34; Beuken, *Haggai – Sacharja 1-8*, pp. 187-189; O. Steck, “Zu Haggai 1:2-11,” *ZAW* 83 (1971), pp. 355-379; K. Koch, “Haggais unreines Volk,” *ZAW* 79 (1967), pp. 52-66.

¹⁰ Wolff (*Haggai*, p. 33) remarked that the repetition of messenger speech formulae (5a, 7a, 8b) and divine oracles (9b) indicates that the passage is not a single, self-contained utterance. I agree with Boda that the messenger formula is characteristic of the Persian Period, and is meant to reinforce the status of the prophet as a deliverer of God’s words in a period of crisis. See M. J. Boda, “Haggai: Master Rhetorician,” *TynB* 51 (2000), pp. 295-304, esp. 298-299. A similar function is at-

ILLUSTRATIVE APPROACHES

According to Wolff, vv 4-11 do not represent a single unit. They were written by a disciple, as a *sketch of a scene*. In this series of oracles written by a disciple, new prophecies were stimulated by remarks of listeners.¹¹ Koch views vv 9-11 as a separate speech from vv 4-8, which appear in an abbreviated form of the preceding verses.¹² Steck sees vv 9-11 as a fragmented parallel unit to vv 2-8. The sayings were addressed to different audiences. (Verses 2-8 were addressed to the Judeans who remained in the land, and vv 9-11 to the exiles who returned from Babylon).¹³ Graffy believes that vv 2-11 are a composite disputation speech made up of two refutations, vv 5-8 and 9-11.¹⁴

Other scholars, however, consider Hag 1:4-11 a unified piece.¹⁵ According to J. W. Whedbee, for instance, the text, in its present form, has at its center the command to rebuild the temple (v 8), and this center is framed

tributed to the term **ה' צבאות**, "Lord of hosts," which was meant to forcefully reassert the sovereignty of God, against the background of an extremely powerful Persian king. P. A. Verhoef, *The Books of Haggai and Malachi* (NICOT, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989), pp. 52-53.

¹¹ Wolff, *Haggai*, p. 33. Beuken holds a similar view, see Beuken, *Haggai – Sacharja 1-8*, pp. 184-189.

¹² Koch, "Haggais unreines Volk," p. 58; For a variation of such an approach see also W. Rudolph, *Haggai – Sacharja 1-8 – Sacharja 9-14 – Maleachi* (KAT, Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus Gerd Mohn, 1976), p. 35; F. Horst, *Die zwölf kleinen Propheten* (HAT, Tübingen: Mohr, 1954), p. 205.

¹³ Steck, "Zu Haggai 1:2-11," pp. 355-379.

¹⁴ A. Graffy, *A Prophet Confronts His People: The Disputation Speech in the Prophets*, (AnBib, 104; Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1984), pp. 98-104.

¹⁵ M. H. Floyd, "The Nature of the Narrative and the Evidence of Redaction in Haggai," *VT* 45 (1995), pp. 470-490; W. S. Prinsloo, "The Cohesion of Haggai 1:4-11," M. Augustin and K. -D. Schunck (eds.) *"Wünschet Jerusalem Frieden": Collected Communications to the XIIth Congress of the International Organization for the Study of the Old Testament*, (BEATAJ, 13; Frankfurt am Main 1988. pp. 337-343; J. W. Whedbee, "A Question-Answer Schema in Haggai 1: The Form and Function of Haggai 1:9-11," G. A. Tuttle (ed.), *Biblical and Near Eastern Studies: Essays in Honor of William Sanford LaSor*, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978), pp. 184-194. Petersen, who accepts the general analysis of his predecessors regarding the framework of the book, believes that it is impossible to reconstruct the different settings of the oracles D. L. Petersen, *Haggai and Zechariah 1-8* (OTL, Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1984), pp. 37-39. For further discussion on the diachronic approach versus a rhetorical approach to Haggai, see: Boda, "Haggai: Master Rhetorician," pp. 295-304. See also: Verhoef, *The Books of Haggai and Malachi*, p. 69.

by the parallel passages vv 2-7 and 9-11.¹⁶ W. S. Prinsloo also considers this pericope a unified piece, but finds a climactic structure in which the climax is v 11.¹⁷ Both positions are problematic.¹⁸ It is difficult to accept Prinsloo's view regarding the centrality of v 11, since v 8 contains the central element of the periscope—it is this verse that instructs the people what they should do, and promises them that God will take pleasure in what they should build and be honored.¹⁹ Whedbee is correct when he considers v 8 the focal point of the unit, but his position that v 8 is also the centre of a concentric structure is not convincing because vv 3-7 and vv 9-11 can not be seen as parallel components that enclose the unit.

The contribution of these scholars is extremely important; they have led us to reevaluate and rethink issues of repetition, inconsistencies and tensions within the text. However, I believe that there is room for further study of the structure, rhetoric and purpose of Hag 1:4-11.

3. A NEW APPROACH: STRUCTURE, RHETORIC AND PURPOSE

STRUCTURAL CONSIDERATIONS AND A NEW PROPOSAL

Whether scholars consider Hag 1:4-11 a composite text or one unit, there is widespread agreement that the passage consists of two sections: (a) vv 4-8 and (b) vv 9-11. This division was rather assumed than argued. I think that it was widely assumed because (a) 1:8 ends with the closing words 'אמר ה', and (b) the repetition between 1:9 and 1:6. Neither argument is conclusive. 'אמר ה' is not necessarily a closing formula, it serve as a quotation formula. Verses 6 and 9 may belong to the same section, since thematic repetitions may fulfill rhetorical functions.

Is there room for alternative structural proposals? A thematic analysis of this text that is supported by a structural marker such as *inclusio* suggests the following division:

- A (vv 4-9) First economic problem: Much work and little produce
- B (vv 10-11) Second economic problem: Drought

Two structural elements support this proposal:

¹⁶ Whedbee, "A Question-Answer Schema in Haggai 1," pp. 189-199. Kessler has adopted a similar structure, Kessler, *The Book of Haggai*, pp. 110-112.

¹⁷ Prinsloo, "The Cohesion of Haggai 1:4-11," pp. 338-340.

¹⁸ And so are the positions surveyed above. On them, see below.

¹⁹ Kessler, *The Book of Haggai*, p. 110-111.

(a) Verses 10-11 constitute a thematic unit: Verse 10 refers to the drought and v 11 to its implications.

(b) There is a clear *inclusio* between verses 4 and 9bb.²⁰

Hag 1:4 העת לכם אתם לשבת בבתיכם ספונים והבית הזה חרב ("Is it a time for *you* yourselves to live in *your* paneled *houses*, while *this house lies in ruins?*")

Hag 1:9bb יען ביתי אשר־הוא חרב ואתם רצים איש לביתו ("Because *my house lies in ruins*, while *all of you* hurry off to *your own houses?*")²¹

This proposal has, of course, to address two issues: (a) How are the repetitions in 1:4-9 to be explained? and (b) What is the relation between the reference to the first economic distress (vv 4-9) and the second economic distress, that is, the drought (vv 10-11).

THE REPETITION IN THE FIRST ECONOMIC DISTRESS, vv 4-9

An examination of the repetitions of different elements within this unit points at a subdivision into two parallel sections, A and B, as described below:

A

A1 (v 4) העת לכם אתם לשבת בבתיכם ספונים והבית הזה חרב

Is it a time for you *yourselves* to live in *your* paneled *houses*, while *this house lies in ruins?*

A2 (v 5) ועתה כה אמר ה' צבאות שימו לבבכם על־דרכיכם

Now *therefore thus says the LORD of hosts: Consider how you have fared*

A3 (v 6) זרעתם הרבה והבא מעט אכול ואין־לשבעה שתו ואין־לשכרה

לבוש ואין־לחם לו והמשתכר משתכר אל־צרוֹר נקוב

You have sown *much*, and *harvested* (=הבא) *little*; you eat, but you never have enough; you drink, but you never have your fill; you clothe yourselves, but no one is warm; and you that earn wages earn wages to put them into a bag with holes.

²⁰ This *inclusio* is at the very least as strongly marked as the one between v 4 and 8a, which may seem to support the traditional division.

²¹ The relation between these two verses will be discussed below.

B

B2 (v 7) כה אמר ה' צבאות שימו לבבכם על-דרכיכם

Thus says the LORD of hosts: Consider how you have fared

B4 (v 8) עלו ההר והבאתם עץ ובנו הבית וארצה־בו ואכבדה אמר ה'

Go up to the hills and bring wood and build the house, so that I may take pleasure in it and be honored, says the LORD

B3 (v 9a) פנה אל-הרבה והנה למעט והבאתם הבית ונפחתי בו

You have looked for much, and, lo, it came (= והבאתם) to little; and when you brought it home, I blew it away

B1 (v 9b) יען מה נאם ה' צבאות יען ביתי אשר-הוא חרב ואתם רצים איש לביתו

Why? says the LORD of hosts. Because my house lies in ruins, while all of you hurry off to your own houses

A1 stands in parallel to B1. A 1 opens the first section (A) and B1 closes the second. Thus A1 and B1 form an envelope structure that frames the whole unit (vv 4-9). The connection between A1 and B1 is communicated by a similar style of opening with rhetorical question (v 4) **העת לכם**, (v 9b) **יען מה**. This connection is reinforced through chiasmus:

(1) **העת לכם אתם לשבת בבתיכם ספונים**

(2) **והבית הזה חרב**

(2) **יען מה נאם ה' צבאות יען ביתי אשר הוא חרב**

(1) **ואתם רצים איש לביתו**

(1) Is it a time for you *yourselves* to live *in your* paneled *houses*,

(2) *while* this *house* lies in ruins?

(1) Why? says the LORD of hosts. Because *my house* lies in ruins,

(2) *while* all of you hurry off to your own *houses*

As for A2 and B2, they are almost identical. The addition of the word **ועתה** in A2 shows that it is a direct continuation of A1, and a conclusion deriving from it. The absence of this word in B2 establishes that it opens a literary subunit and a new argument.

The thematic connection between A3 and B3 is clear. Both relate the contrast between the extensive work of the people and their expectations for a large crop on the one hand, and the small yield, on the other. Despite

differences in style between A3 and B3, they share three key words, namely *הבאתם/הבא*, *הרבה*, and *מעט*.

The similarities mentioned above highlight two differences between sections A and B: (a) there is no parallel to B4 in A, and (b) the order is different. These differences point at the reason for the duplication of A and B.

The function of the repetition is rhetorical. Section A (1:4-6) is designed to correct a mistaken conception of the people. They thought that they should not build the temple as long as the economic situation was so severe. Haggai admonishes them with a rhetorical question: "Is it a time for you *yourselves* to live *in your* paneled *houses*, while this *house* lies in ruins?" (v 4). The people believe that they should deal first with their basic existence and only afterwards with the major national enterprises, a belief based on a rational and normal view of reality. Haggai, however, points to the deleterious results of their decision, and demands that they consider well their ways: "Thus says the LORD of hosts: Consider how you have fared."²² The fact that they work but with little result, they eat and drink but are not satisfied proves that their attitude is wrong. They should conclude that their order of priorities must not be set according to regular rational human thought that ignores God and God's will.

After showing that the logic behind their order of priorities does not yield positive results, Haggai proposes a correct way of thinking in the second half of his message, which again begins with a request to the people to consider their acts.²³ Now in 1:8 the prophet tells them what they must do: "Go up to the hills and *bring* (= *והבאתם*) wood and build *the house* (= *הבית*), so that I may take pleasure in it and be honored, says the LORD." The instruction to go up to the mountain, to a high place, contrasts with their present action - sitting hidden in their homes (1:4). This element is the only element in the second part that does not appear in the first. In this instruction Haggai uses two words which also appear in the description of their current acts, 1:9: "it came (= *והבאתם*) to little; and when you brought it *home* (= *הבית*), I blew it away." The people bring the little that they derive from their labor to their houses;²⁴ as an alternative, Haggai proposes that they

²² Koch, "Haggai's unreines Volk," pp. 59-60.

²³ Thus it is difficult to maintain that v 7 should be omitted (e.g. BHS) or relocated (e.g. T. Chary, *Aggée, Zacharie, Malachie* [Sources bibliques, Paris: J. Gabalda et Cie, 1969], p. 20). See Graffy, *A Prophet Confronts His People*, p. 100.

²⁴ See: Rudolph, *Haggai – Sacharja 1-8 – Sacharja 9-14 – Maleachi*, p. 29. Contrary to those who hold that "the house" here refers to the Temple: see P. R. Ackroyd, *Exile and Restoration: A Study of Hebrew Thought of the Sixth Century BC* (London: SCM Press, 1968), p. 158. F. Peter, "Haggai 1.9," *TZ* 2 (1951), 150-121.

should rather bring it to the Lord's house. Then it will be pleasing to the Lord: "so that I may take pleasure in it and be honored" (1:8),²⁵ as opposed to the present situation: "I blew it away" (1:9).

After presenting the prescription for correct conduct, Haggai can then turn to the people's current behavior. In 1:9 he once more describes the present situation in which the people work and expect much but obtain little. Because they bring the produce to their own houses instead of to the Lord's house, God disperses this small quantity. The closing verse is also connected to the opening verse. In the opening verse Haggai asked a rhetorical question: "Is it a time for you *yourselves* to live *in your* paneled *houses*?" (v 4). The prophet explicitly answers his rhetorical question using the same language and wording in the closing verse: "Because *my house lies in ruins*, while all of you hurry off to your own *houses*" (v 9).

The closing and opening verses (1:4 and 1:9b) are related in a more complex way. Above I discussed the chiasmic relationship between 1:4 and 1:9b. In 1:4 the homes of the people are mentioned first and then the God's house, in 1:9 the order is reversed.

v 4 Is it a time for you *yourselves* to [live] sit (לשבת) *in your* paneled *houses*, while this *house* lies in ruins?

v 9b Because *my house lies in ruins*, while all of you [hurry] run (רצים) off to your own *houses*

The grave offense to God described in 1:9 is shown by presenting of the people's conduct in a different way in the two verses. In 1:4 the people are passive. They sit in the sheltered houses and neglect the Lord's house: "you *yourselves* to [live] sit (לשבת)." In 1:9, the people are active. They are running, but to their private affairs: "you [hurry] run (רצים)." The text builds on and exaggerates the common contrast between ישב and הלך ("sit – walk") by replacing הלך with רוץ ("walk" with "run").

There is also a difference in the designation of God's house in the two verses.²⁶ In 1:4 it is called הבית הזה "this house." This can be interpreted as

²⁵ For the idea that the Temple will be welcomed (רצה) by God see, for instance, Isa 56:7. The root רצה is regularly used and with this meaning in the context of the Temple, the priestly garments, and the sacrifices (e.g., Exod 28:38; Lev 22:20, 21; Isa 60:7). The acceptance of the Temple by God leads to glorification (e.g., Hag 1:8; Exod 14:4, 17, 18; Lev 10: 3; Ezek 28:22). The concept of כבוד is further developed later in the book of Haggai (see Hag 2: 3, 7, 9).

²⁶ See also Kessler, *The Book of Haggai*, pp. 112.

a casual expression, or an expression with a hint of contempt.²⁷ In 1:9 'house' bears a possessive suffix. It is **ביתי** ("my [God's] house") to emphasize the direct offense to God.²⁸

The occurrence of the word **אתם** in **לכם אתם**²⁹ (v 4) results in an unusual and unexpected syntax, but can be easily understood as a literary device meant to strengthen the link between vv 4 and 9, and cf. **אתם לשבת** **ואתם רצים איש לביתו בבתיכם**.

The word **בית** - "house" is a *leitwort* in vv 2-9. It appears seven times - verses 2; 4 x2; 8; 9 x3, and refers to the people's houses and the temple. This play on words is particularly prominent in verses 4 and 9. 1:4. Haggai's claim that the people prefer to deal with their private affairs rather than build the temple is rhetorically intensified by his use the same word **בית**. The people sit in their houses or run to them, but neglect God's house

THE SECOND ECONOMIC DISTRESS (VV 10-11)

In 1:10-11 Haggai relates and explains the meaning of another economic misfortune, the drought. The function of the natural disasters described in 1:10-11 can be understood in light of the explanation of the rhetorical function of the repetition in 1:4-9, and the meaning of the description of the economic distress.

There is a link through a play on words between the drought and the command to build the temple. Haggai describes the disaster of the drought with the words **וְאָקְרָא חֶרֶב עַל הָאָרֶץ** ("And I have called for a *drought* on the land," v 11). He uses **חרב** to describe the Temple **וְהַבַּיִת הַזֶּה חֶרֶב** ("while this house lies in *ruins*"). The play on words is designed to create a meaning of measure for measure; the people neglected the house that lies waste (**חֶרֶב**) (1:4, 9), and as punishment God brought a drought (**חֶרֶב**) on the land (vv 10-11).³⁰

²⁷ Verhoef, *The Books of Haggai and Malachi*, p. 54.

²⁸ This nuance between the verses is one of the main arguments for Steck's theory that v 4 is meant for those who remained in Judah while v 9 is addressed to those who returned from the Babylonian exile. See Steck, "Zu Haggai 1:2-11," pp. 370-371.

²⁹ The use of the double pronoun **לכם אתם** is understood by many as a form of emphasis see e.g.: Meyers and Meyers, *Haggai, Zechariah 1-8*, p. 23; Wolff, *Haggai*, p. 30.

³⁰ See Ibn Ezra; Wolff, *Haggai*, p. 49; Kessler, *The Book of Haggai*, p. 139. The principle of measure for measure is very well attested in biblical literature (e.g., Hos 4:6b) and at times plays an important role in narratives. Cf. J. Jacobs, *Measure for Measure in the Storytelling Bible* (Alon-Shvut: Tvunot, 2006). I. Kalimi, *The Reshaping of*

But what is the rhetorical function of the description of the drought following the elaborated reference to the economic difficulty of extensive labor and little produce? The description of the drought here and its interpretation as divine punishment for turning aside from God seems to be based on, principally, Deut 11:17, 14-15:

Haggai 1:10-11	Deuteronomy 11: 17, 14-15
(10) על כן עליכם כלאו שמים מטל והארץ כלאה יבולה (11) ואקרא חרב על הארץ ועל ההרים ועל הדגן ועל התירוש ועל היצהר ועל אשר תוציא האדמה ועל האדם ועל הבהמה ועל כל יגיע כפים	(17) וחרה אף ה' בכם ועצר את השמים ולא יהיה מטר והאדמה לא תתן את יבולה (14-15) ונתתי מטר ארצכם בעתו יורה ומלקוש ואספת דגןך ותירושך ויצהרך... ונתתי עשב בשדך לבהמתך ואכלת ושבעת
Haggai 1:10-11	Deut 11: 17, 14-15
Therefore upon you	¹⁷ for then the anger of the LORD will be kindled against you

Ancient Israelite History in Chronicles (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2005), pp. 186-193; Y. Shemesh, "Measure for Measure in the David Stories", *SJOT* 17 (2003), pp. 89-109; J. A. Berman, *Narrative Analogy in the Hebrew Bible. Battle Stories and Their Equivalent Non-battle Narratives* (VTS, 103; Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2004), pp. 55-77; Y. Shemesh, "Punishment of the Offending Organ in Biblical Literature", *VT* 55 (2005), pp. 343-365.

the <i>heavens</i> have <i>withheld the dew</i>, and the <i>earth</i> has <i>withheld its fruit</i>. ¹¹ <u>And I have called for a drought on the</u> <u>land</u> and the hills, on <i>the grain, the wine, the oil</i>, on what the soil produces, on human beings and <i>animals</i>, and on all their labors.	and he will shut up the <i>heavens</i>, so that there will be <i>no rain and the land will yield</i> <i>no fruit</i>; ¹⁴ then <u>he will give the rain for your</u> <u>land</u> in its season, the early rain and the later rain, and you will gather in <i>your</i> <i>grain, your wine, and your oil</i>; ¹⁵ and he will give grass in your fields for your <i>ani-</i> <i>mals</i>, and you will eat your fill.
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Natural disasters are included among the punishments for transgressions of covenants in the HB and many other ancient near Eastern texts.³¹ This association of disaster with covenant transgression may explain the order in which Haggai presented the two economic disasters and its rhetorical function. The main problem faced by Haggai was the feeling of the people that God has abandoned them. The people did not build the temple because they felt that God had rejected them, and that the present enterprise was not divinely sanctioned.³² Hence, Haggai could not begin explaining their difficult economic reality in terms of the divine covenant theology of Deuteronomy (and other biblical books), because the people thought that their covenantal relation with God was irrelevant at this point in time. Haggai, therefore, began to build his case with the human issue of extensive

³¹ See M. Weinfeld, *Deuteronomy and the Deuteronomistic School* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972), pp. 116-119.

³² E. Assis, "Haggai: Structure and Meaning," *Bib* 87 (2006), pp. 110-124. See also E. Assis, "Why Edom? On the Hostility towards Jacob's Brother in Prophetic Sources," *VT* 55 (2006), pp. 1-20. See also "To Build or Not to Build: A Dispute between Haggai and His People (Hag 1)," *ZAW* (forthcoming). See also the recent work of F. Patrick, *Haggai and the Return of Yabweh* (Ph.D. Diss., Duke University, 2006), pp. 84-104.

labor and little produce. After explaining God's place in the unfolding events, Haggai goes on in 1:10-11 to a realm that does not depend on man, rain. Once the people have realized this abnormal situation derives from a divine response to the failure to build the temple, he can turn the people's attention to the economic problem of the drought, which involves the covenant between the people and God. Only when Haggai convinced the people that God has not rejected them, he could turn to the theological concept of the covenant, as expressed in Deuteronomy and other Pentateuchal texts.

4. CONCLUSION

The present analysis of Haggai 1:4-11 points at a sophisticated structure that differs at some points from those widely accepted. In addition, while some scholars explain the complexity of the passage as a composite process of formation, this paper has shown a well structured sermon designed to influence an adversary audience. The first part of the prophet's words (1: 4-6) is meant to demonstrate to the people their erroneous approach. The second part (1: 7-9) intends to show the people the right way. The last part of Haggai's words (1: 10-11) construes the economic stress in terms of the covenantal relationship between God and Yehud that continues to play a central role, as in the pre-destruction period.³³

³³ I would like to acknowledge the support of "Beit Shalom," Japan, in this research.