

THE BOOK OF HAGGAI

Lesson 1, Introduction

There is no way to properly discuss the Book of Haggai unless we first understand the historical background of the times, and to recognize the context that the Books of Haggai and Zechariah are completely tied together such that where Haggai ends, Zechariah begins both chronologically and historically. In fact, the connection is so close that some Bible scholars have surmised either a direct collaboration between the writers of Haggai and Zechariah, or even that both were written by the same person only under two different names. I really can't comment on that or support any alternative theory because regardless of what any scholar might conclude, it is always mostly speculation and not fact.

Therefore, my position is that no evidence of any concrete nature exists than to recognize the book authors as 2 legitimate Prophets who wrote separately as God directed them to do. Might they have known one another? I think it would be naïve when we see the structure of both and how they approach the matters at hand so similarly, not to think that they probably did know each other. So, as soon as we complete our study of Haggai we will begin the study of Zechariah.

I think most Bible scholars, and most historians that specialize in the ancient Near and Middle East, would say unequivocally that perhaps outside of the Exodus from Egypt, nothing shaped and affected the historical progress of Israel more than the Babylonian Exile of the Judeans of Judah in the early 6th century B.C., and then their subsequent return 70 years later.

As we proceed I'll occasionally introduce some terms to you that you might not have heard so that this history of the Babylonian Exile and what followed when some of Jews returned makes more sense. The first term I want to introduce is Yehud. Yehud is the actual name of what was once called Judah. Yehud is not the Hebrew equivalent of the English-ized Judah. Although in Hebrew they sound close to the same, Yehud is the new name given to the province by the leaders of Persia, which essentially re-named all the territory that formerly was Judah at the time when it was an independent nation; but now it is a Persian province. Once more: Yehud is a renaming of Judah. I'll use the term Yehud quite a bit because I want to constantly keep it in front of you that after their Babylon experience, never again would the Jews (or better and more accurately, Judeans)

have an independent nation with their own native king, until the year 1948 following WWII, even though Herod the Great fancied himself as such. The former Judah no longer belonged to the Jews, it belonged to Persia, then later to the Greeks, then later still to the Romans, then the Muslims, then the British Empire.

Haggai is an interesting name, as it is taken from the Hebrew word **chag**. **Chag** means festival; however, the term also refers more specifically to 3 of the 7 biblical feasts ordained by God in the Torah that required all Israelite males to journey to the Temple in Jerusalem in observance of those 3 festivals. Thus, the sense of **chag** as it was usually used was as a pilgrimage festival. None the less, **chag** is where Haggai gets his name, and it could be properly translated as the "festal one".

Haggai's prophetic book covers a well-defined span of only 4 months, and from there Zechariah takes over. Haggai was probably born in exile up in Babylon, unless he was a very old man at the time of his writings, and I find that unlikely. It is interesting to note that this monumental time period of great transition for Israel that we read of in Haggai overlaps with what we read in Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther, Malachi, and also briefly overlaps with Zechariah. That is to say that we have much information of the goings on for the Jews of the 6th century B.C. that probably provides more historical data than any other Old Testament time period.

Alongside the Persian backdrop it is important that we recognize the intense emotional, spiritual, and intellectual self-examination of the Jews for the causes of the disaster that befell them when Nebuchadnezzar, King of Babylon, determined to conquer Judah about 600 B.C. Already many Israelites from the former Northern Israelite Kingdom of Ephraim had been exiled and dispersed by Assyria throughout many new lands in Asia scores of years earlier, but now their Southern Israelite brethren that belonged to the Kingdom of Judah also joined in that forced, and later somewhat voluntary, dispersal. The reality is that only a small fraction of the descendants of those Jewish families that had been exiled from Judah decided to return.

Although it was Babylon that conquered and exiled Judah, it was Persia that conquered Babylon a few decades later in 539 B.C. So, the last several years the Jews spent in exile was no longer under the thumb of a Babylonian, but rather a Persian, king. It is interesting that King Cyrus of Persia (who led the overthrow of Babylon) had a more progressive and enlightened approach to empire building than did the Babylonians. Rather than conquer a nation and then exile its people, Cyrus sought peaceful co-operation and tended to allow the conquered people to remain intact in their societies. Since the Judeans had already been in Babylon for 50 years by the time Persia took Babylon's empire away from them, most of the Jews had already begun to assimilate into Babylonian culture at varying degrees. Persia, however, flung open the assimilation floodgates by encouraging the Jews to join their society as equals, and even allowed them to migrate to other places of their choice in their empire, which they did in large numbers. Therefore, only a very few Jews had any interest in moving to Yehud, a place where, for the majority of currently living Jews, it had never been their home so in many ways for them it was foreign soil. Up in Babylon they had begun to enjoy some economic successes and so were satisfied to go on living wherever they were, and made the free-will decision to stay put.

That said, there were several thousand Jews that remained devoted to their Hebrew faith and traditions, did not want to adopt the ways of gentiles and become assimilated into gentile cultures, and so they longed to return to their homeland. What had held the Jews together for so long in their exile was that the Jewish leadership managed to find a way to keep many of the exiles worshipping their God in communal worship and prayer, and by remembering their customs and traditions. In Babylon, they were allowed to meet together in groups, which were led by laymen, not priests... and it was from this ad hoc effort that the Synagogue eventually arose.

There is no evidence that in Babylon, or in others of the provinces where Jews moved to in significant numbers, that the Synagogue had already been officially formed at the time Persia gave its approval for the Jews to return home and rebuild their Temple in Jerusalem. But, the seeds of the Synagogue System were sewn because a pretty clean break had by now occurred between the former Temple priests (who had no place to operate from for the prior 70 years, and no Temple to begin anew, so their authority and position more or less disappeared),

and the various home groups that were led by a better and better organized bunch of group leaders. Therefore, it is not very long after the return of the Jews from Babylon that we first begin to hear of the Synagogue, even though we don't find it mentioned in the Old Testament. By the time we get to the New Testament era, however, the Synagogue had already become an integral part of Jewish culture, and was central to the lives of every Holy Land Jew, as it had slowly evolved into a well-ordered parallel, but separate and distinct, religious organization to the Temple and its Levite priests. Synagogues had even been established throughout the Diaspora by then, which is the undeniable evidence that the Synagogue concept had to have been established for many decades prior to New Testament times. My research says it could have been as early as the late 4th century B.C.

It can be difficult for us as modern Western people to grasp the enormity of being forced not only from our homes, but from our *homeland*, by an enemy. As concerns the Jews, add to that the unique Hebrew culture and religious faith that was unlike anything practiced anywhere else, so it made the Hebrews seem very strange to wherever they were sent. Therefore, before we go any further, I have two more terms I'd like to introduce to you. The first is "exilic". The second is "post exilic". The first term refers to the period at the beginning of and during Judah's exile in Babylon. The second term, post exilic, refers to when the exile was over, and the Jews were free to move about as they wished, including moving back to the area of their former homeland even though it now carried a different name. The Prophet Ezekiel was an exilic Prophet, as was Isaiah in the latter days of his life. In fact, some scholars believe that the second half of the Book of Isaiah was written by a different person than wrote the first half. They call this later writer Second Isaiah. Ezekiel was among the first group of Judeans to be deported from Judah to Babylon, and his prophecies provided assurance and hope that someday they would return and the Temple would be restored to a grandeur even greater than that of Solomon's. On the other hand, Isaiah (Second Isaiah if you accept that scholarly view) helped the Jewish people to understand the source of, and reason for, their suffering and loss, and even the value that was in their pain if they would but be open to allowing such a thought into their minds. And the reason for it was their determined unfaithfulness to Yehoveh, their God, and an intentional watering down or even substitution of their traditions and customs in place of the commandments of the Law of Moses.

This fundamentally meant a manmade change to the moral code God had given to them had occurred and the consequences were more dire than they ever could have imagined. So, even though earlier Prophets had warned Judah to straighten up and fly right (warning they did not heed), once the divine curse of exile fell upon Judah for their disobedience, Isaiah gave meaning to the terrible predicament the Jews suddenly found themselves in, when even their own deep introspection had failed to uncover not only why what happened to them *did* happen, but also that it wouldn't last forever.

So, the exiled Jews now living with a promise of a new Exodus in their hearts, and therefore a hint of optimism for a better future, Cyrus of Anshan (who actually was a Mede) came into power among the Persians around 560 B.C., believing he had a calling to conquer Babylon, which he did 20 years later. The Prophet Isaiah tells of God's approval of Cyrus as His chosen instrument for delivering the Jews from their Babylonian oppressors.

CJB Isaiah 44:28 ***28 I say of Koresh(Cyrus), 'He is my shepherd, he will do everything I want. He will say of Yerushalayim, "You will be rebuilt," and of the temple, "Your foundation will be laid."'"***

CJB Isaiah 45:1 ***Thus says ADONAI to Koresh, his anointed, whose right hand he has grasped, so that he subdues nations before him and strips kings of their robes, so that doors open in front of him, and no gates are barred:***

After Cyrus's formal edict of 538 B.C., in which he decreed that the Jews could go back to their former homeland and rebuild their Temple, it was clear to the Jews that God's favor was finally returning to them after years of His anger, just as Ezekiel and Isaiah had prophesied. Now; the truth is that King Cyrus and the Persians weren't so terribly altruistic as it might seem in their helping the Jews, nor in any way did they think they were established to bring about the God of Israel's will, as much as they were pragmatic in their primary goal of creating a better and more lasting way of running an empire. As we shall see, the Persians hand-picked the High Priest and the Jewish governor that would rule over the Persian province of Yehud. They were very wise in their choices. So, Persian policy was to win the hearts and minds of the conquered people, and to show respect for their native and traditional culture, thus trying to convince them that

co-operation with their Persian masters would bring prosperity and a good life with it. Even so, as we proceed, keep in mind that Persia was a powerful empire with a nearly invincible military, so any seasoned politician at that time knew that it was probably better to work with Persia than to resist them.

Sometime after Cyrus was out of power, Darius I took over and he more or less continued with the established, but recently sidetracked, Persian policy of the least possible disruption of the operation of the conquered nations, provided that nation complied with Persian demands.

Let's take just a moment to discuss how it is that Persia organized its empire, as it does play a role in the words of the Prophets. Their empire was carved up into regions that they called satrapies. These were relatively large in size. Each satrapy consisted of some number of provinces. Naturally each satrapy had a ruler who reported to the King of Persia, and under each satrapy ruler were a number of governors of the provinces within that particular satrapy that reported to him. The satrapy that Yehud was part of was called Eber Nahara, which translated means "Beyond the River" (the river being the Euphrates).

The first governor over Yehud was a Jew named Sheshbazzar; he presided over the first wave of Jewish returnees from Babylon. Some years later, a different governor was installed to preside over the second wave of Jewish returnees. His name was Zerubbabel. The High Priest, fully recognized as such by the Jewish religious leadership, was Joshua and so he and Zerubbabel formed a political/governing team (if you would) on behalf of Persia to rule over Yehud.

Back to the first wave of returnees. The governor and the High Priest of Yehud were beset with serious political problems, and so their goal of restoring the Temple was much in doubt. Very likely this was also because under Cyrus, the satrapy governing system was not yet fully in place, and so Yehud was unable on its own to get the financial help it needed to build the new Temple. So, Sheshbazzar failed in his great hope of restoring God's House.

As a means of application and making what we read more real to us, it is a great time to point out that while technology and communication were primitive in that era as compared to today, the same sorts of peoples' needs and civic dynamics

as we have today still played out. Money was needed for projects, and it had to come from somewhere. The rebuilding of the Temple would have been very expensive. Yehud had been largely depopulated of Jews, the land wasn't producing well as a result, and the economy was poor. So, even if some taxes could be collected they'd be rather meager. Sheshbazzar certainly had sufficient autonomy, but he faced a nearly impossible task to rebuild the Temple and get it back into operation without enough funds. And, perhaps just as important, the Jewish returnees faced the Samaritans, a mix of Israelites and newly arrived pagans, who had centuries earlier inherited a bastardized form of the Hebrew faith as brought about by the first King of the Northern Kingdom following the civil war that tore apart the united kingdom of Israel governed by David and then Solomon. It was King Jeroboam that instituted calf worship, ordained his own priesthood, built his own temple, refused to let his people go to Jerusalem and the official Temple there, and essentially restructured the Torah to suit his agenda and beliefs.

The Samaritans that the Jews faced as they arrived back home did not offer a warm welcome, especially because of these returning Jews' zealous intention of reinstating their brand of the Hebrew faith that they had followed before being exiled. Both sides, of course, saw their own brand as the more authentic, pious and superior, and so nearly immediately there were serious clashes. Sheshbazzar understood that the first thing that had to be accomplished was to find a way to establish better relations between these opposing groups. I mention this because neither Haggai nor Zechariah chapters 1 - 8 deal with this, because their timeframe revolves only around the second return with Zerubbabel then in charge.

We should not judge Sheshbazzar's failure. Those Jews who made the initial efforts to forge a peace between disagreeing factions, and who sought to bring about monumental tasks without the needed manpower, expertise, or money were doomed from the start at no fault to their own. And yet, these initial efforts were critically needed just as the first attempts to set up colonies in North America failed, but the next ones learned from those failures and built upon the structure and efforts of the first, and so achieved a better measure of success as each new wave of colonists arrived. Zerubbabel began his attempt to govern and to rebuild the Temple in 520 B.C. King Darius had been on the Persian throne

about 2 years at that time after he had replaced King Cambyses whose reign was nothing but turmoil because he had reversed many of his predecessors (Cyrus's) policies and it cause much social upheaval. It was under Darius that the Satrapy system of created several governing districts became fully established. This actually benefited Yehud as each Satrapy was required to bring in a certain amount of taxes from their several provinces, and so Yehud could partake in that communal chest of tax revenue even though their own initial contributions were among the smallest. Now that they had a more stable source of money they could start to start to rebuilt the Temple, which they did.

So, with that, let us construct a picture of what Yehud looked like under Zerubbabel because that is the background and context for both Haggai and Zechariah. Zerubbabel was Persia's hand-picked official governor of Yehud, and as such was ultimately responsible to the King of Persia to see to it that the citizens of Yehud paid taxes and tribute to the King. Taxes and tribute were the bottom line for most kings of empires. It's why they invaded and conquered in the first place. To use modern political terms, the reason that kings wanted empires was to extend the tax base, and this would provide more revenue for the ruling power to institute his agenda. Zerubbabel was loyal to Persia and seemed to have little disagreement with the Jews in instituting Persia's imperial power over Yehud. Joshua, as High Priest, was given the resource money to fund the building of the Temple, so this actually added a civil element of authority to his formerly religion-only authority sphere. Therefore, Joshua was very powerful, and he too was loyal to Persia since it was them that installed him as High Priest. Why would the Jews accept a High Priest appointed by the Persians? Because Joshua was of the proper High Priest lineage.

In the first wave of Jewish returnees, the biblical feasts were reinstated and the foundation of the new Temple was laid. But, the work was halted because of serious opposition from locals (mainly the Samaritans) some of whom wanted involvement in the project in order for it to be built the way they saw fit in their vision of it, and others who didn't want it at all. We read of this in the Book of Ezra.

CJB Ezra 4:1-5 *When the enemies of Y'hudah and Binyamin heard that the people from the exile were building a temple to ADONAI the God of Isra'el, ² they*

approached Z'rubavel and the heads of fathers' clans and said to them, "Let us build along with you; for we seek your God, just as you do; and we have been sacrificing to him since the time of Esar-Hadon king of Ashur, who brought us here." ³ But Z'rubavel, Yeshua and the rest of the heads of fathers' clans in Isra'el answered them, "You and we have nothing in common that you should join us in building a house for our God. We will build by ourselves for ADONAI the God of Isra'el, as Koresh king of Persia ordered us to do." ⁴ Then the people of the land began discouraging the people of Y'hudah, in order to make them afraid to build. ⁵ They also bribed officials to frustrate their plan throughout the lifetime of Koresh king of Persia and on into the reign of Daryavesh king of Persia.

After all, for those now living in the former Judah, the returning Jews were unwanted outsiders who came with an agenda to revert the local culture and religious practices back to what it had been before they were exiled. Discouraged, the returning Jews turned from building the Temple and instead to providing for their own necessities. And, as typically happens with human endeavors, when idleness and indifference set in, it would take a new situation and leader to provide the needed inertia start the ball rolling again.

That impelling force occurred when a second wave of Jewish returnees came some years later and under the encouragement of King Darius. It was the prophecies of Haggai and Zechariah that divinely pressured the Jews to set aside their lack of concern for God's House, and to restart the work of rebuilding the Temple regardless of what the Samaritans or anyone else thought. At this point I think it fair to ask why God was so determined that the Temple was reconstructed.

Haggai and Zechariah both brought messages from Yehoveh that offered promises of blessings that were directly attached to the rebuilding of the Temple. From the point of view of these 2 Prophets, the Temple was the needed visible proof of the Jews' zealous dedication to God. Is it really that a grand physical building is what proved their love for God in His own eyes? The point of the Temple being built was that it was commanded in the Covenant of Moses. It was the most tangible, God-ordained symbol of Israel being a special, set-apart people for Yehoveh. It publicly signaled Israel's agreement to their pledge to

have true fellowship with God, and the Temple (and before that, the Tabernacle tent) was where this fellowship was commanded to occur.

I think it fair to say that the Temple is still necessary to this day and into the future, and this is especially proved by the message of the last 8 chapters of the Book of Ezekiel. This is where we read in excruciating detail of the construction, meaning and purpose of the Millennial Temple where Christ will someday reside and rule upon His return. It will be more magnificent and inspiring than any Temple Israel or the Jewish people have ever attempted. But, why, if Believers are supposed to be the literal Temples of God, would a Millennial Temple building be needed, especially when God in the flesh, Yeshua, will be back on earth, ruling from Zion? This seems so contradictory. Despite the teaching of the Constantinian Church since its inception, the truth is that calling Yeshua's followers "temples" is more an analogy and not meant to be fully literal. The issue is that the Temple is a visible reminder that the Mosaic Covenant and the Laws of Moses...God's code of morality...remain in effect from the moment they were given and agreed to 3300 years ago, all the way into the present and then the future, until the present earth and universe pass away to be replaced by a re-Creation.

CJB Matthew 5: 17-18 ***17 "Don't think that I have come to abolish the Torah or the Prophets. I have come not to abolish but to complete. 18 Yes indeed! I tell you that until heaven and earth pass away, not so much as a yud or a stroke will pass from the Torah- not until everything that must happen has happened.***

This clear instruction coupled with a promise comes from the mouth of the very One who has saved us, and who will rule over the world in the not distant future. But, later in the final book of the Bible, we read this:

CJB Revelation 21:1-5 ***Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the old heaven and the old earth had passed away, and the sea was no longer there. 2 Also I saw the holy city, New Yerushalayim, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared like a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. 3 I heard a loud voice from the throne say, "See! God's Sh'khinah is with mankind, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and he himself, God-with-them, will be their God. 4 He will wipe away every tear from their eyes. There will no longer be***

any death; and there will no longer be any mourning, crying or pain; because the old order has passed away." ⁵ Then the One sitting on the throne said, "Look! I am making everything new!" Also he said, "Write, 'These words are true and trustworthy!'"

If the Torah and the Prophets don't pass away until earth and the universe pass away, then neither can the highly visible connecting point between God and man, the Temple, pass away until then. Certainly, there has been, and currently is, times when the Temple is non-existent due to the sins and rebellion of the Israelites. But, the Millennial Kingdom will be established and exist for 1000 years (as the name explains) on this present earth, and therefore a physical Temple must necessarily be part of it... which Ezekiel chapters 40 – 48 shows that it is.

We read of Solomon's Temple being filled with the visible presence of God upon its completion (in the form of a cloud) as God's approval of it, and that He was indeed accessible there. That visible presence of Yehoveh was the sign that the covenant between He and Israel continued unabated. And this is the same monumental sense that we are to understand God's insistence upon the Jewish returnees from Babylon getting serious about building a new Temple to replace the destroyed one. Without it, God's presence was distant and not close. He wanted to be close to His people, and His people needed to be close to Him. Certainly, those exiles taken to Babylon must have sensed God's distance from them, just as we all can sense our own spiritual dryness at times when we have stepped back from Him for one reason or another. Thus, the most zealous and devoted of the Jewish returnees were willing to risk all to accomplish constructing that new Temple. But at first there were too few of them, and too many of the fearful and more self-serving, and so the effort collapsed.

Further, it seems that both Haggai and Zechariah realized that there was no immediate hope for the Jews to restore an Israelite monarchy. All hope for that was pushed out to an undefined, distant future. And, it is most interesting that there was no push-back against the Persian designed, man-ordained co-governing arrangement over Yehud by the provincial governor and the High Priest. It seems that both Prophets had a pretty pragmatic understanding about their situation; Persia was unquestionably in power, and there was not even a

glimpse of hope that could be contemplated that would ever allow for a Hebrew king to sit on the throne of a restored and independent Hebrew kingdom.

When one reads Christian commentaries and journal articles created prior to WWII, there are mentions of the End Times Apocalypse, but nearly none about the existence of Israel even though biblically the troubles of the world as we near the End Times are said to swirl around Israel like a galaxy swirling around a Black Hole. Why is that when the Holy Scriptures so plainly speak of Israel's prominent role in the End Times that the vast bulk of the Church couldn't see it? It is because Israel did not exist, nor had it existed, since the later part of the 10th century B.C. or the early part of the 6th century B.C. depending on one's definition of Israel. Any thought of a restored unified Israel was so far from the thought processes of the Constantinian Church that it is not that the leadership denied the biblical truth of End-Times Israel as much as it was, and is, that Israel simply wasn't on their radar. Israel was a mystery and far from their thoughts. Obviously it was quite the surprise when Israel suddenly, overnight, re-emerged as a Jewish nation in 1948, but even then most Christian denominations have never been able to find a place for Israel in their doctrines and theology other than to continue with the slanderous falsity that the Constantinian Church had replaced Israel. The point is that when we read Haggai and Zechariah, and when we consider what the general attitude of the Jews was at that time, while there may have been a quiet unspoken hope in the 6th century B.C. for an Israelite leader to suddenly arise and take on the world and win and restore Israel to glory, and next for that leader (theoretically a descendant of David) to install himself as King, neither Haggai nor Zechariah could envision it because it had been more than 70 years since Israel had self-rule and Persia was too dominant a superpower for them to see any hope of such a turn-around on the horizon. Thus, their more immediate and urgent goal was to re-establish the Temple and its services and all the priestly functions that went along with it in order for the Jews to restore their fellowship with God.

In the end, at the urging of Haggai and Zechariah, and at the leadership of Zerubbabel and the High Priest Joshua, and with the help of the Persian King Darius, the work of the Temple was completed in about 4 ½ years. This happened in the 6th year of Darius's reign. Even so, this new Temple was NOT filled with God's glory, and this is because the most important item that was to be

contained within the Temple...the single object that was to rest in the Holy of Holies... the Ark of the Covenant... was not there. It had gone missing and its whereabouts were a mystery and remain a mystery to this day. Since the Ark represented not only the presence of God and of Israel's fellowship with Him, but also contained the Testimony, that is, the original Torah or more likely the original Law of Moses section of the Torah, then how were the people to know the Torah? Did this mean the Torah was gone and would have to be replaced with new and different laws and commands?

The pre-exilic Prophet Jeremiah... pre-exilic meaning he wrote before the Jews were deported to Babylon... actually prophesied about this issue, even though the Ark had not yet gone missing as the Temple still stood.

CJB Jeremiah 31:30-32 ³⁰ *"Here, the days are coming," says ADONAI, "when I will make a new covenant with the house of Isra'el and with the house of Y'hudah. ³¹ It will not be like the covenant I made with their fathers on the day I took them by their hand and brought them out of the land of Egypt; because they, for their part, violated my covenant, even though I, for my part, was a husband to them," says ADONAI. ³² "For this is the covenant I will make with the house of Isra'el after those days," says ADONAI: "I will put my Torah within them and write it on their hearts; I will be their God, and they will be my people.*

While no doubt it is not the only reason for a new covenant that would write the Torah on the hearts of the people, the fact that the Ark containing the physical Torah document would soon go missing was likely part of the reason for it. The reality proved time and again in the Bible is that prophetic fulfillments happen, and then happen again later in a slightly different and usually wider scope. This prophesied new covenant was to be a reassurance that the Covenant of Moses, along with the promise of Yehoveh being Israel's God and His people, would continue even though the original covenant documents would vanish.

Nonetheless, its laws and commands would continue to exist because the value of it was not the scrolls it was written upon but rather in the truth it contained. The reality is that the Torah had always been intended to live within the hearts of the people. And, it needs to mean that same thing to us, as followers of Yeshua.

I want to conclude this introduction to Haggai with a quote Carol and Eric Meyers in their Commentary on Haggai.

“Critics have claimed that the value of the Book of Haggai is to be discerned merely in the modest amount of historical detail preserved in the text. They claim either that the book is devoid of spiritual content and religious significance or that Haggai fostered a narrow and rigid exclusiveness that signaled the decline of Judaism in the Second Commonwealth period. We, however, have found Haggai to stand squarely in the tradition of his prophetic forebears in language, idiom, and point of view. At the same time, Haggai clearly points toward a future that was at first uncertain. He eases his countrymen over the trauma of return, and succeeds in rousing them to work on the Temple. This he does with rhetorical ingenuity and skill, and with a sophisticated, elevated prose style”.

So, fellow Believers, as we begin in chapter 1 next time, we need to view Haggai as God’s spokesman in an era when God’s Word to the Jews was scarce. There would be but a couple more Prophets to follow him before the era of the Prophets came to a close. Haggai, and then Zechariah, charted a pathway for the Jews, and ultimately for all Israel, to transition from their woeful condition at that time coupled with a distance from God’s presence, to a better time when gentiles who loved Yehoveh and His Son Yeshua would join them in their covenants with God, and then finally into a most glorious extended time when God’s presence would live with them more tangibly than ever.