

*Minor Prophets...*

# THE MINOR PROPHETS

The Book of Haggai

Hag. 1:1

*...Major Message*

## ***Minor Prophets...***

Hag. 1:1 In the second year of Darius the king, in the sixth month, in the first day of the month, came the word of the LORD by Haggai the prophet unto Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and to Joshua the son of Josedech, the high priest, saying,

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## **Minor Prophets...**

Haggai's name apparently means "festal" or possibly "festive one" or even "feast of Jehovah."

Ezra 5:1 Then **the prophets, Haggai the prophet, and Zechariah** the son of Iddo, prophesied unto the Jews that *were* in Judah and Jerusalem in the name of the God of Israel, *even* unto them.

Ezra 6:14 And the elders of the Jews builded, and **they prospered through the prophesying of Haggai the prophet and Zechariah** the son of Iddo. And they builded, and finished *it*, according to the commandment of the God of Israel, and according to the commandment of Cyrus, and Darius, and Artaxerxes king of Persia.

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### **HISTORICAL BACKGROUND**

The Babylonians, led by King Nebuchadnezzar, destroyed the city of Jerusalem, including Solomon's temple, in 586 B.C. and took most of the Jews captive to Babylon.

King Cyrus of Persia allowed the Jewish exiles to return to their land in 538 B.C.

At least three waves of returnees took advantage of this opportunity. The first of these was the group of almost 50,000 Jews that returned under the leadership of Sheshbazzar, and Zerubbabel who replaced him, in 537 B.C. (Ezra 1:2-4).

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Ezra led the second wave of 1,700 men plus women and children (perhaps about 5,000 individuals) back to Jerusalem in 458 B.C., and Nehemiah led the third wave of 42,000 Israelites back in 444 B.C.

Haggai and Zechariah appear to have been two of the returnees who accompanied Sheshbazzar, as was Joshua the high priest, though Haggai's name does not appear in the lists of returnees in the opening chapters of Ezra.

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Ezra 1:8 Even those did Cyrus king of Persia bring forth by the hand of Mithredath the treasurer, and numbered them unto **Sheshbazzar, the prince of Judah**. ...

11 All the vessels of gold and of silver *were* five thousand and four hundred. All *these* did **Sheshbazzar** bring up with *them of* the captivity that were brought up from Babylon unto Jerusalem.

Ezra 5:14 And the vessels also of gold and silver of the house of God, which Nebuchadnezzar took out of the temple that was in Jerusalem, and brought them into the temple of Babylon, those did Cyrus the king take out of the temple of Babylon, and they were delivered unto *one*, whose name was **Sheshbazzar, whom he had made governor**; ...

16 Then came the same **Sheshbazzar, and laid the foundation of the house of God which is in Jerusalem**: and since that time even until now hath it been in building, and yet **it is not finished**.  
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Ezra 5:1 Then **the prophets, Haggai the prophet, and Zechariah** the son of Iddo, prophesied unto the Jews that were in Judah and Jerusalem in the name of the God of Israel, *even* unto them.

2 **Then rose up Zerubbabel** the son of Shealtiel, and Jeshua the son of Jozadak, **and began to build the house of God which is at Jerusalem: and with them were the prophets of God helping them.**

During the year that followed, the first group of returnees rebuilt the brazen altar in Jerusalem, resumed offering sacrifices on it, celebrated the Feast of Tabernacles, and laid the foundation for the reconstruction of the (second) temple.

Opposition to the rebuilding of the temple resulted in the postponement of construction for 16 years.

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During this long period, apathy toward temple reconstruction set in among the residents of Judah and Jerusalem.

In 520 B.C., as a result of changes in the Persian government and the preaching of Haggai, the people resumed rebuilding the temple.

One way to calculate the 70-year captivity is: from the first deportation to Babylon in 605 B.C. to the year temple reconstruction began, 536 B.C. Another way is: to count from the destruction of the temple in 586 B.C. to the completion of temple restoration in 515 B.C.

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### **DATE**

Haggai delivered four messages to the restoration community, and he dated all of them in the second year of King Darius I (Hystaspes) of Persia (i.e., 520 B.C.).

Haggai's ministry, as this book records it, spanned less than four months, from the first day of the sixth month (1:1) to the twenty-fourth day of the ninth month (2:20).

In the modern calendar, these dates would have been between August 29 and December 18, 520 B.C.

### **PLACE OF COMPOSITION**

Haggai obviously preached and evidently wrote in Jerusalem, as is clear from his references to the temple in both chapters.

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### **AUDIENCE AND PURPOSE**

Haggai was as specific about his audience as he was about when he prophesied.

- The first oracle was for Zerubbabel and Joshua, who were the Jewish governor of Judah and its high priest (1:1).
- The prophet delivered the second one to those men and the remnant of the people (2:1).
- The third oracle was for the priests (2:11), and
- The fourth one was for Zerubbabel (2:21).

Haggai's purpose was to motivate the Jews to build the temple.

To do this he also fulfilled a secondary purpose: he confronted the people with their misplaced priorities. ***...Major Message***

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### **THEOLOGICAL EMPHASES**

Central to Haggai's emphasis is the temple as God's dwelling place on earth, as a center for worship, and as a symbol of Jehovah's greatness.

Other important themes are as follows:

- holiness as a prerequisite for worship
- the prophetic word as divine revelation
- divine sovereignty
- human responsibility
- a future for the Davidic dynasty

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### **CHARACTERISTIC FEATURES**

Haggai is the second shortest book of the Old Testament, after Obadiah.

The book contains four short messages that Haggai preached to the returned Jews in less than four months of one year, 520 B.C.

Haggai was clearly aware that the messages he preached to the Israelites were from God. He affirmed their divine authority 25 times.

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In contrast to almost all the writing prophets, Haggai was successful in that the people to whom he preached listened to him and obeyed his exhortations.

- He wrote no diatribe against idolatry.
- He said nothing of social ills and abuses of the legal system.
- He did not preach against adultery or syncretism.
- His one theme was rebuilding God's temple.

Haggai book and Hosea are the only inspired prophetic writings in the Old Testament that do not contain one or more oracles against foreign nations.

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### **UNITY AND CANONICITY**

Critics have not seriously challenged either the unity or the canonicity of Haggai. Its place in the canon is chronological, leading the postexilic prophetic books and following the pre-exilic and exilic ones.

### **TEXT**

Most scholars believe that the text of Haggai is well preserved.

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### **MESSAGE**

Haggai is the first in the last group of prophetic Old Testament books.

The historical book of Ezra deals with the same time period and the same group of people.

A remnant of the Israelites was back in the land following the Babylonian Captivity.

They lived in difficult and discouraging times.

Haggai's passion was to motivate the returnees to rebuild their temple so they could resume life in obedience to the Mosaic Law.

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About 18 years before Haggai ministered, in 538 B.C., about 50,000 Jews had returned from captivity under the leadership of **Sheshbazzar and Zerubbabel**. A year later they began to rebuild the temple. They had finished repairing the foundation and were starting on the superstructure when opposition from the native people of the land, the Samaritans, made them stop working. For about 17 years they did no work on the temple. Then the Lord led Haggai to challenge the people to resume temple reconstruction. He delivered four short messages, in 520 B.C., that got the people working again.

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The people went to work after hearing his first message, but then a difficulty arose and they stopped working. He delivered a second message, and the people got back to work. After a while, another difficulty arose and the people stopped working again. Haggai then delivered two messages on the same day, which moved the Jews to resume and finish their project.

The reason God preserved this book for all time and for all humanity is its permanent value, which is twofold.

- The Book of Haggai, first, is a revelation of the perils that often accompany a period of adversity.
- Second, it reveals the duty of people of faith in such a period and God's resources

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Each of Haggai's four messages deals with one of these perils.  
The four perils are as follows:

- misplaced priority
- incorrect perspective
- unrealistic expectation
- unnecessary fear

## **The living message of this book:**

**Whenever God's people face problems involving fulfillment of His will, we should do our duty as the Word of God reveals it, with the assurance that when we do, God Himself will provide all that we need to succeed.**

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Phil. 4:13 **I can do all things through Christ** which strengtheneth me.

We often get our priorities out of order.

Mt. 6:33 But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.

### I. THE CALL TO BUILD, 1:1-15

Hag. 1:1 In the second year of Darius the king, in the sixth month, in the first day of the month, came the word of the LORD by Haggai the prophet unto Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and to Joshua the son of Josedech, the high priest, saying,

2 Thus speaketh the LORD of hosts, saying, This people say, The time is not come, the time that the LORD'S house should be built.

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### A. The Background, 1:1-2

#### 1. The Period, 1:1a

Ezra 2:1 Now these *are* the children of the province that went up out of the captivity, of those which had been carried away, whom Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon had carried away unto Babylon, and came again unto Jerusalem and Judah, every one unto his city;

2 Which came **with Zerubbabel**: Jeshua, Nehemiah, Seraiah, Reelaiah, Mordecai, Bilshan, Mispar, Bigvai, Rehum, Baanah. The number of the men of the people of Israel:

64 The whole congregation together was **forty and two thousand three hundred and threescore**,

65 Beside their servants and their maids, of whom *there were* **seven thousand three hundred thirty and seven**: and *there were* among them two hundred singing men and singing women.

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Ezra 4:6 And in the **reign of Ahasuerus**, in the beginning of his reign, wrote they *unto him* an accusation against the inhabitants of Judah and Jerusalem.

Esther 1:1 Now it came to pass **in the days of Ahasuerus**, (this *is* Ahasuerus which reigned, from India even unto Ethiopia, *over* an hundred and seven and twenty provinces:)

Ahasuerus = Persian king, identical with Xerxes -- that both Josephus ("Ant." xi. 6) and the Septuagint refer to Ahasuerus as Artaxerxes -- The Ahasuerus king of Persia, referred to in (Ezra 4:6) must be Cambyses, thought to be Cyrus' successor, and perhaps his son. (B.C. 529.)

<http://jewishencyclopedia.com/articles/967-ahasuerus>

<http://biblehub.com/topical/a/ahasuerus.htm>

Dictionaries - Easton's Bible Dictionary - Ahasuerus

**Ahasuerus**

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There are three kings designated by this name in Scripture.

- The father of Darius the Mede, mentioned in Daniel 9:1. This was probably the Cyaxares I. known by this name in profane history, the king of Media and the conqueror of Nineveh.
- The king mentioned in Ezra 4:6, probably the Cambyses of profane history, the son and successor of Cyrus (B.C. 529).

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•The son of Darius Hystaspes, the king named in the Book of Esther. He ruled over the kingdoms of Persia, Media, and Babylonia, "from India to Ethiopia." This was in all probability the Xerxes of profane history, who succeeded his father Darius (B.C. 485). In the LXX. version of the Book of Esther the name Artaxerxes occurs for Ahasuerus. He reigned for twenty-one years (B.C. 486-465). He invaded Greece with an army, it is said, of more than 2,000,000 soldiers, only 5,000 of whom returned with him. Leonidas, with his famous 300, arrested his progress at the Pass of Thermopylae, and then he was defeated disastrously by Themistocles at Salamis. It was after his return from this invasion that Esther was chosen as his queen.

<http://www.biblestudytools.com/dictionary/ahasuerus/>

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Ezra 4:24 Then ceased the work of the house of God which *is* at Jerusalem. So **it ceased unto the second year of the reign of Darius king of Persia.**

### *Summary*

- They were God's people
- The right people
- The right place
- The right purpose
- The right priorities

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## **Conclusion**

Ezra 6:1 Then **Darius the king made a decree**, and search was made in the house of the rolls, where the treasures were laid up in Babylon.

2 And there was found at Achmetha, in the palace that *is* in the province of the Medes, a roll, and therein was a record thus written:

3 **In the first year of Cyrus the king *the same* Cyrus the king made a decree concerning the house of God at Jerusalem, Let the house be builded**, the place where they offered sacrifices, and let the foundations thereof be strongly laid; the height thereof threescore cubits, *and* the breadth thereof threescore cubits;

4 *With* three rows of great stones, and a row of new timber: and let the expenses be given out of the king's house:

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**5 And also let the golden and silver vessels of the house of God, which Nebuchadnezzar took forth out of the temple which *is* at Jerusalem, and brought unto Babylon, be restored, and brought again unto the temple which *is* at Jerusalem, *every one* to his place, and place *them* in the house of God.**

6 Now *therefore*, Tatnai, governor beyond the river, Shetharboznai, and your companions the Apharsachites, which *are* beyond the river, be ye far from thence:

**7 Let the work of this house of God alone; let the governor of the Jews and the elders of the Jews build this house of God in his place.**

**8 Moreover I make a decree what ye shall do to the elders of these Jews for the building of this house of God: that of the king's goods, *even* of the tribute beyond the river, forthwith expenses be given unto these men, that they be not hindered.**

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9 And that which they have need of, both young bullocks, and rams, and lambs, for the burnt offerings of the God of heaven, wheat, salt, wine, and oil, according to the appointment of the priests which *are* at Jerusalem, let it be given them day by day without fail:

10 That they may offer sacrifices of sweet savours unto the God of heaven, and pray for the life of the king, and of his sons.

11 Also I have made a decree, that whosoever shall alter this word, let timber be pulled down from his house, and being set up, let him be hanged thereon; and let his house be made a dunghill for this.

12 And the God that hath caused his name to dwell there destroy all kings and people, that shall put to their hand to alter *and* to destroy this house of God which *is* at Jerusalem.

**I Darius have made a decree; let it be done with speed.**

**...Major Message**