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TRADITION, CONTINUITY AND COVENANT IN THE BOOK OF HAGGAI: AN ALTERNATIVE VOICE FROM EARLY PERSIAN YEHUD

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1. *Introduction*

In an article published in 1977, Peter R. Ackroyd explored the dynamics of the use of theological traditions in times of dramatic discontinuity—moments when external circumstances call into question the tenability of existing traditions, and the broader ideological foundations upon which they rest.¹ In it Ackroyd insightfully observes that “the doubts which are raised by major or minor disruptions in life must affect the attitudes of those who experience them and in turn have repercussions upon the way in which they understand the traditions and upon the way in which they express them.”² Ackroyd then suggests that the primary reaction to such breaches is to seek ways to overcome them and to find a means of re-establishing an authentic sense of continuity. He then goes on to illustrate ways in which individuals or communities have sought to do just that, and how this has contributed to the formation of biblical literature.³ Ackroyd pays special attention to the question of how, after a major breach has occurred, the community may know for certain that it indeed has been forgiven by the deity.⁴ He also discusses the matter of the

1. Peter R. Ackroyd, “Continuity and Discontinuity: Rehabilitation and Authentication,” in *Tradition and Theology in the Old Testament* (ed. Douglas A. Knight; London: SPCK, 1977), 215–34.

2. *Ibid.*, 215.

3. In some ways Ackroyd is examining the phenomenon of cognitive dissonance, a concept analyzed in much greater detail in Leon Festinger, *When Prophecy Fails* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1956). Festinger, it should be noted, studies modern sectarian prophecy, rather than biblical prophecy. Festinger’s methodology was subsequently applied to biblical prophecy, however, with only limited success, in Robert P. Carroll, *When Prophecy Failed: Reactions and Responses to Failure in the Old Testament Prophets* (London: SCM, 1979).

4. Ackroyd, “Continuity and Discontinuity,” 233.

various competing claims to authentic continuity which may be advanced by diverse groups after a major breach, such as that of 587 B.C.E.⁵ Especially insightful is Ackroyd's observation that the use of traditional language may often serve to obscure change. He comments, "It is clear that the use of the same language in widely different periods—different not only in time, but in political order and religious organization and outlook—conceals the degree to which there in fact has been change."⁶

Although he does not specifically categorize the types of breaches he discusses, Ackroyd's examples appear to fall into two distinct categories: (1) relational breaches, wherein the relationship between Yahweh and his people has been disrupted by some fault, for example, a moral or cultic failure (Ackroyd cites the violated oath in 1 Sam 14:37); and (2) more external, historical disruptions where the words of the tradition, taken in their basic *sensus literalis*, no longer correspond to the world as it has come to exist (Ackroyd cites the retention of royal hopes and hyperbolic vocabulary long after the monarchy has disappeared). Ackroyd's article constitutes an excellent introduction to the multifaceted way in which communities and their religious traditions must respond to change, as well as representing an interesting *entrée* to a distinctive aspect of the use of tradition in Haggai.

It has long been recognized that the book of Haggai offers us an excellent illustration of the creative reformulation of tradition in a time of national crisis, specifically for the kind of "restorative" purpose noted by Ackroyd. The radically changed circumstances of early Persian Yehud—circumstances which were frequently at great variance with those reflected in the older traditions—constituted just the kind of breach Ackroyd discusses in his article. Both the community's sense of connection to Yahweh and the external circumstances in which it found itself threatened to undermine its own sense of identity and the validity of its earlier religious traditions. Many of the excellent commentaries on Haggai that have appeared over the last twenty years,⁷ as well as several

5. Ibid., 226–34.

6. Ibid., 229.

7. Samuel Amsler, André Lacoque, and René Vuilleumeier, *Aggée-Zacharie 1–8, Zacharie 9–14, Malachi* (CAT 11/C; Geneva: Labor et Fides, 1988); Michael H. Floyd, *Minor Prophets, Part 2* (FOTL 22; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000); Carol L. Meyers and Eric M. Meyers, *Haggai, Zechariah 1–8* (AB; Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1987); David L. Petersen, *Haggai and Zechariah 1–8* (OTL; London: SCM Press, 1985); Hans Walter Wolff, *Haggai: A Commentary* (trans. Margaret Kohl; Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1988); Pieter A. Verhoef, *The Books of Haggai and Malachi* (NICOT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987).

shorter studies,⁸ have devoted significant attention to the various traditions present in Haggai. The use of tradition was also a central feature of my own monograph and several articles on Haggai, where special attention was paid to the general rhetorical, hermeneutical, and ideological stamp with which traditional materials are used in the book.⁹ This approach was also employed by Janet Tollington,¹⁰ who also included Zech 1–8 in her purview, and it continues to be a subject of interest to scholars.¹¹ It would not be an overstatement to say that most scholars would concur that the book of Haggai is a text saturated with earlier traditions, selectively used, hermeneutically reconfigured, and rhetorically shaped, wherein continuity is established with the past, and hope evoked for the future.

There is, however, one aspect of the use of tradition in Haggai which I feel bears further reflection. As noted above, the destructions and deportations of 587 constituted breaches of the highest magnitude in Israel's historical experience and theological expression. However, when closely examined, Haggai and Zech 1–8 appear to take subtle but markedly different approaches to the question of the *current status* of the relationship between Yahweh and the nascent community at Jerusalem, as well as regarding the ongoing significance each attributes to the destructions and dispersions of 587.¹²

8. See the brief but useful survey of the traditions in Haggai in Rex A. Mason, *Preaching the Tradition: Homily and Hermeneutic After the Exile* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 185–95.

9. John Kessler, *The Book of Haggai: Prophecy and Society in Early Persian Yehud* (VTSup 91; Leiden: Brill, 2002); idem, "Building the Second Temple: Questions of Time, Text, and History in Haggai 1.1–15," *JSOT* 27 (2002): 243–56; idem, "Haggai, Zerubbabel, and the Political Status of Yehud: The Signet Ring in Haggai 2:23," in *Prophets, Prophecy, and Prophetic Texts in Second Temple Judaism* (ed. Michael H. Floyd and Robert D. Haak; LHBOTS 427; New York: T&T Clark International, 2006), 102–19; idem, "ʾt (le temps) en Aggée I 2–4: Conflit théologique ou 'sagesse mondaine'?" *VT* 48 (1998): 555–59.

10. Janet A. Tollington, *Tradition and Innovation in Haggai and Zechariah 1–8* (JSOTSup 150; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1993).

11. See recently Willie Wessels, "Bridging the Gap: Haggai's Use of Tradition to Secure the Future," *OTE* 18 (2005): 426–43. Wessels's study draws upon much of the recent scholarship on the use of tradition in Haggai and provides a survey of how temple, exodus/covenant and royal theological traditions form continuity themes in Haggai, and constitute much of the motivational foundation of Haggai's preaching.

12. I am not persuaded, despite several recent proposals, notably that of Meyers and Meyers, that Haggai and Zech 1–8 constitute a single literary unit. For a preliminary defense of the integrity of Haggai as a literary, textual unit, see Kessler, *Book of Haggai*, 56–57. Recently, Boda has also inveighed against a conflated

The perspective evidenced in Zech 1–8 clearly identifies these events as the starting point for the community’s theological reflection in the present moment.¹³ This is evident from Zechariah’s opening salvo to his hearers:

The LORD was very angry with your ancestors. Therefore say to them, Thus says the LORD of hosts, Return to me, says the LORD of hosts, and I will return to you, says the LORD of hosts. Do not be like your ancestors, to whom the former prophets proclaimed, “Thus says the LORD of hosts, Return from your evil ways and your evil deeds.” But they did not hear or heed me, says the LORD. Your ancestors, where are they? And the prophets, do they live forever? But my words and my statutes, which I commanded my servants the prophets, did they not overtake your ancestors? So they repented and said, “The LORD of hosts has dealt with us according to our ways and our deeds, just as he planned to do.” (Zech 1:3–6 NSRV)

It is clear from this passage that for Zechariah the events of 587 constitute a decisive and determining moment in the relationship between Yahweh and his people, and all future theological reflection must proceed from it and be done in light of it. The book begins with the anger (קִצְוִי) of Yahweh against the ancestors.¹⁴ The people are then immediately called to return (שׁוּבוּ) to Yahweh and to differentiate themselves from their forebears who refused to heed (שָׁמַע בְּקוֹל) or hear (קָשַׁב) the word of Yahweh and as a result were overtaken (נִשְׁגַּח) by the judgments of Yahweh uttered by the prophets, and enacted in the disastrous upheavals of the early sixth century. Even the prophets who uttered these judgments are no more and are set off as “former prophets” (הַנְּבִיאִים הָרִאשׁוֹנִים, Zech 1:4; 7:7, 12). Similar sentiments are expressed in Zech 7:7–14 and 8:14. This state of anger and alienation is alleviated in Zech 1:6b where the

reading of the two texts (Mark J. Boda, “Zechariah: Master Mason or Penitential Prophet?,” in *Yahwism After the Exile: Perspectives on Israelite Religion in the Persian Period* [ed. Rainer Albertz and Bob Becking; Studies in Theology and Religion 5; Assen: Royal Van Gorcum, 2003], 49–69). This is a matter I intend to pursue more fully in a future study.

13. It is beyond the scope of the present study to discuss the redactional/literary history of Zech 1–8. However I am in agreement with Boda who asserts that the final shaping of the prose sections or redactional frame (Zech 1:1–6 and 7:1–8:23) represents the latest stage of the book’s formation and is meant to establish the hermeneutical orientation through which the night visions are understood (Boda, “Zechariah: Master Mason,” 55).

14. In the interests of brevity I will not explore the traditional rooting and significance of these various terms here. For a helpful summary, especially with reference to the affinity of this section with the prose sermons of Jeremiah, see *ibid.*, 55–59.

people repent (שוב) and acknowledge that Yahweh's judgments have indeed come upon them.¹⁵ As Boda has noted, such a confession is rooted in two key aspects of penitential prayer, especially as evidenced in Neh 9: (1) the solidarity between generations so that the unresolved anger of Yahweh toward an earlier generation can be laid to rest through the repentance of a later one; and (2) the community's acknowledgment of the justness of Yahweh's judgments as a foundational act of repentance.¹⁶ The community thus repents, and while no explicit statement is made, one must assume that this repentance, in line with Yahweh's call and promise in Zech 1:3, was accepted. This then sets the stage for the visionary-oracular complex in Zech 1:7–6:15.¹⁷ It bears mentioning, however, that the calamities of 597–587 continue to play a significant role in that section via the themes of the desolation and depopulation of Jerusalem (1:7–17; 2:5–9 [Eng. 2:1–5]), the ease of the nations who scattered the people of Yahweh and Yahweh's coming judgment upon them (1:18–21; 6:1–8), the need for God's people to flee Babylon (2:10–15 [Eng. 2:6–12]), the need for a reconstructed and purified temple and priesthood, including the many challenges involved in that endeavor (3:1–10; 4:1–14), and the form of leadership in the new era (6:9–15). The prose conclusion in 7:1–8:23, furthermore, reiterates the theme of the ancestors' sins and their appalling consequences. As in 1:1–6, these failures are evoked in 7:7–14 and 8:13–15 as a reminder to the community of the horrendous cost of neglecting Yahweh's words through his messengers the prophets (7:8–14). As well, the desolation of the land and longing for its future repopulation occupy an important place (7:7, 14). In sum, in Zech 1–8 the destructions and dispersions of the early sixth century loom exceedingly large, both on the level of the relational breakdown between Yahweh and his people, as well as in the realm of the historical and material manifestations of that breakdown.

But what of the book of Haggai? Does it share the perspective of Zech 1–8, a perspective also in evidence in Ezra 9, Neh 9, and Pss 79 and 106? What role do the destructions and deportations of 597–587, the existence of a large Diaspora,¹⁸ and the realities of a destroyed and defiled temple

15. There is significant debate as to the identity of the subject of שׁוּב. Is it Zechariah's contemporaries or an earlier generation? Furthermore, what is the precise nature of this returning/repentance. With Meyers and Meyers (*Haggai, Zechariah 1–8*, 96–97) and Boda ("Zechariah: Master Mason," 55–59) I view it as the response of Zechariah's contemporaries.

16. On this, see Boda, "Zechariah: Master Mason," 61–69.

17. Petersen, *Haggai and Zechariah 1–8*, 134–35.

18. On the geographic distribution and settlements of the inhabitants of the former Southern Kingdom and of their descendants in the late sixth century, see

play in the book?¹⁹ Coggins has correctly pointed out that there is little in Haggai that directly points to the notion of an exile or return and of a new beginning after the exile.²⁰ What is the reason for this perspective? Similarly, questions arise concerning the status of the Sinai covenant in Haggai. Petersen suggests that the misfortunes experienced by the community (Hag 1:3–11) constituted judgments visited upon it as a result of *both* the destructions of 587 *and* the neglect of the temple's reconstruction in the restoration period.²¹ Beuken has suggested that the covenant was ruptured in 587, and that this state continued until the covenant was renewed in Hag 1:12–15.²² Petersen views the covenant as having been “abrogated” by the restoration community's neglect of its reconstruction.²³ By contrast, several commentators take the use of covenantal curse language in 1:2–11 as implying that the covenant was indeed still functioning at some level.²⁴ How does the book of Haggai view the earlier covenant and its current status? Furthermore, how does Haggai view and use the community's earlier history? Is the people's “dubious past” used as a means of enjoining piety in the future? As we have seen, Zech 1:1–6

John Kessler, “Persia's Loyal Yahwists: Power, Identity and Ethnicity in Achaemenid Yehud,” in *Judah and the Judeans in the Persian Period* (ed. Oded Lipschits and Manfred Oeming; Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 2006), 91–121.

19. Following Norbert Lohfink (“Die Gattung der ‘Historischen Kurzgeschichte’ in den letzten Jahren von Juda und in der Zeit des Babylonischen Exils,” *ZAW* 90 [1978]: 319–47), Petersen characterizes Haggai as a *historische Kurzgeschichte* or “brief apologetic historical narrative” (*Haggai and Zechariah 1–8*, 32–36). Floyd views it as a “prophetic history,” stressing that the book constantly oscillates between the perspectives and insights of both the prophet and the narrator (Floyd, *Minor Prophets, Part 2*, 258–62). I have argued for the term “dramatized prophetic compilation,” stressing that an editor has taken various prophetic discourses and organized them into a loose narrative with a specific polemical purpose. For fuller discussion, see Kessler, *Book of Haggai*, 243–46.

20. Richard J. Coggins, *Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi* (OTG; Sheffield: JSOT, 1987), 30.

21. Petersen states, “Israel is living an existence that is doubly cursed. By failing to restore its cultic center, the people still suffer the effects of the curses engendered in 587 B.C.E., and they are also already suffering under a new curse because they had not acted wisely in response to the possibilities for restoration open to them through the Persian government” (Petersen, *Haggai and Zechariah 1–8*, 54). As I will argue below, I find it difficult to see how the logic of the argument in 1:3–11 can be related to the failures of an earlier generation.

22. Willem A. M. Beuken, *Haggai—Sacharja 1–8: Studien zur Überlieferungsgeschichte der frühnachexilischen Prophetie* (SSN 10; Assen: Van Gorcum, 1967), 42–46.

23. Petersen, *Haggai and Zechariah 1–8*, 50, esp. n. 21.

24. E.g. Amsler, in Amsler, Lacoque, and Vuilleumeier, *Aggée-Zacharie 1–8*, 24.

begins with an explicit invitation to the community to *differentiate and dissociate* itself from the attitudes and choices of earlier generations. A similar outlook may be found in the other Persian-period texts noted above. However, is this the case in Haggai? Does not the book demonstrate a general orientation toward *continuity with the past*²⁵ rather than a call to break with it? In that which follows, I will present an analysis of the text that seeks to demonstrate that the book of Haggai reflects a distinctive perspective within the *pastiche* of Yahwistic theological reflection in the Persian period, specifically one that does not view the catastrophe of 587 as the touchstone for all discussion of the relationship between Yahweh and the community, but which in many ways minimizes it.

2. *Prolegomena*

Before proceeding to the text, a few introductory comments are in order. First, I take the dates in Haggai as legitimate indicators of the approximate time of the delivery of his oracles,²⁶ and I assume the final redaction

25. This was a theme of particular interest to Peter R. Ackroyd, and can be found in several of his works: *Exile and Restoration: A Study of Hebrew Thought of the Sixth Century B.C.* (OTL; Philadelphia: Westminster, 1968); idem, "The Temple Vessels—A Continuity Theme," in *Studies in the Religion of Ancient Israel* (VTSup 22; Leiden: Brill, 1972), 166–81; idem, "Faith and its Reformulation in the Post-exilic Period: Sources," *TD 27* (1979): 323–34; idem, "Faith and its Reformulation in the Post-exilic Period: Prophetic Material," *TD 27* (1979): 335–46.

26. Despite Ackroyd's earlier suggestions ("Studies in the Book of Haggai," *JJS* 2 [1951]: 163–76) that the dates may have been added to the oracles approximately one hundred years after the latter were delivered, the relative authenticity of the dates in Haggai is now accepted by the majority of scholars (e.g. Beuken, Mason, Petersen, Meyers and Meyers, and Redditt). Ackroyd later seemed to attenuate his position stating, "If the dates were obviously schematic, it would be natural to suppose them invented to provide a specific emphasis. But there are no clear indications of such deliberation; the dates themselves are sufficiently haphazard for a majority of scholars to accept them without question" (Peter R. Ackroyd, "Problems in the Handling of Biblical and Related Sources in the Achaemenid Period," in *Achaemenid History III: Method and Theory* [ed. Amélie Kuhrt and Heleen Sancisi-Weerdenburg; Leiden: Nederlands Instituut voor het Nabije Oosten, 1988], 42). For a detailed treatment of the form and function of the dates in Haggai, together with a discussion of the emergence of precision in dating techniques in the sixth-century dates, as well as relevant bibliography, see Kessler, *Book of Haggai*, 41–51. For a recent critical re-appraisal, calling into question the validity of the dates in Haggai and Zech 1–8, cf. Diana Edelman, *The Origins of the "Second" Temple: Persian Imperial Policy and the Rebuilding of Jerusalem* (Bible World; London: Equinox, 2005), 80–150.

to have occurred shortly thereafter.²⁷ Thus, I believe it to be legitimate to examine the book of Haggai with reference to the way the prophet and his editor(s)/redactor(s)²⁸ used tradition²⁹ in responding to the existential

27. At the present time the scholarly consensus favors a late sixth- to early fifth-century redaction. See among many others Petersen, *Haggai and Zechariah 1–8*, 37–38; Meyers and Meyers, *Haggai, Zechariah 1–8*, xlv–lxxii; Tollington, *Tradition and Innovation*, 1–41. The major proponents of a later redaction (mid- to late fifth century, and beyond) are Beuken, *Haggai–Sacharja 1–8*, 331–35; Coggins, *Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi*, 31; and Arnaud Sérandour, “Zacharie et les autorités de son temps,” in *Prophètes et rois: Bible et Proche Orient* (ed. André Lemaire; LD; Paris: Cerf, 2001), 259–98; idem, “Les récits bibliques de la construction du second temple: leurs enjeux,” *Transeu* 11 (1996): 9–32; idem, “Réflexions à propos d’un livre récent sur *Aggée–Zacharie 1–8*,” *Transeu* 10 (1995): 75–84.

28. Despite the earlier work of Beuken and Mason, it has become increasingly common to abandon the attempt to disentangle the perspective of Haggai from that of his editor(s)/redactor(s). Floyd has carefully examined the relationship between source and redactional material in Haggai and concludes that “the kind of analysis that seeks to distinguish redactional material from source material... should be abandoned, along with the historical speculation that has often been based on this practice” (Michael H. Floyd, “The Nature of the Narrative and the Evidence of Redaction in Haggai,” *VT* 45 [1995]: 470–90 [esp. 473]). Floyd similarly points out that in Haggai there is a constant fluctuation between the perspective of the prophet and that of the narrator, thus enabling the book to be read as “an integral whole” (*Minor Prophets*, 159–60). See also my arguments in the same vein rooted in the lack of discontinuity between the oracles and framework, as well as the elements of continuity between the two (Kessler, *Book of Haggai*, 53–55).

29. On the use of religious traditions and the *traditionsgeschichtliche* method of analysis, see Douglas A. Knight, “Tradition History,” *ABD* 6:633–38. Of special importance is Odil Hannes Steck, “Theological Streams of Tradition,” in *Tradition and Theology in the Old Testament* (ed. Douglas A. Knight; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1977), 183–214. Steck’s article is unequalled in its examination of the nature of *traditionsgeschichtliche* investigation and its relationship to *Überlieferungsgeschichte* and to form criticism. It is similarly profoundly insightful in its analysis of what constitutes a religious tradition and how traditions are used in both the composition of the biblical literature and in prophetic preaching.

In Haggai, as elsewhere, tradition is a critical element in prophetic preaching. As Blenkinsopp observes, “This appeal to tradition, mediated or filtered through intense personal experience and brought to bear on the interpretation of contemporary events is of course a crucial aspect of the complex phenomenon of prophecy” (Joseph Blenkinsopp, *A History of Prophecy in Israel* [2d ed.; Louisville, Ky.: Westminster/John Knox, 1996], 136). In point of fact, prophetic proclamation relies heavily on a shared *geistige Welt* between speaker and hearer. On this see further the comments in Steck, “Theological Streams of Tradition,” esp. 187, 190, and 192. There Steck refers to this shared intellectual world, consisting of traditional *Vorstellungen* (conceptions and notions) using words such as “antecedent intellectual world,” “antecedent material,” and “accepted prior notions and patterns.” Tollington, with reference

crisis of the Early Persian Yehudite community. Second, while it would be impossible to determine with absolute certainty specifically which traditions were known to this community,³⁰ it seems entirely legitimate to view the following motifs as representing some of the key constituents of the traditio-religious landscape of Early Persian Yehud: (1) Zion Theology with its close relative, Jerusalem Royal Theology, which would have included concepts regarding the Day of Yahweh, and Holy War; (2) Deuteronomism, which by this period would have included the traditions of the Exodus and Conquest; (3) wisdom traditions; (4) Priestly Theology, as manifested in portions of Exodus, Numbers, and especially Leviticus and Ezekiel; (5) disparate prophetic traditions from the monarchic period, whatever their state of fixedness.³¹ Third, as noted above, I believe it more methodologically sound to consider Haggai and Zech 1–8 as related yet discrete literary units and to consider matters of theme, literary structure, and redactional history in the two books independently. Fourth, I maintain that Haggai was completed in the late sixth century, around the time of the dedication of the temple, but that Zech 1–8 experienced a slightly longer period of literary development.³² Thus Haggai may reflect an earlier perspective among the Yehudite community than Zech 1–8.

3. *Haggai 1:1–2*

The book's opening (vv. 1–2), consisting of a date formula, a *Wortereignisformel* (henceforth Word-Event Formula), and a brief prophetic oracle citing the words of the community immediately sets up a series of

to Haggai and Zechariah, similarly affirms that “in order to gain prophetic credibility [Haggai and Zechariah] drew on the long-established religious traditions of the people, as did their pre-exilic predecessors, to reinforce their authenticity” (*Tradition and Innovation*, 76).

30. For a highly insightful, diachronic and avowedly preliminary attempt, see Steck, “Theological Streams of Tradition,” 183–214.

31. On the formation of the prophetic books representing the prophets of the monarchic period, see Ehud Ben Zvi, “Introduction: Writings, Speeches, and the Prophetic Books: Setting an Agenda,” in *Writings and Speech in Israelite and Ancient Near Eastern Prophecy* (ed. Ehud Ben Zvi and Michael H. Floyd; SBLSymS 10; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2000), 1–29; and Martti Nissinen, “How Prophecy Became Literature,” *SJOT* 10 (2005): 154–72.

32. Kessler, *Book of Haggai*, 31–57. Cf. Amsler, Lacoque, and Vuilleumeier, *Aggée–Zacharie 1–8*, 63; Albert Petitjean, *Les oracles du Proto-Zacharie: Un programme de restauration pour la communauté juive après l'exil* (EBib; Paris: Librairie Lecoffre and J. Gabalda; Louvain: Éditions Imprimerie Orientaliste, 1969), 440.

continuity features at a variety of levels. As Floyd notes, unlike many superscriptions to prophetic books, 1:1–2 forms a complete sentence integrating the date formula with the elements that follow.³³ From the very outset, then, the redactor weaves together the date and setting, the cast of characters, and the initial dramatic conflict and sets them before the readers/hearers. This introduction immediately establishes continuity between the present and past on several levels. First, the use of the date and Word-Event Formula, as well as Haggai's name and his designation as a prophet (נביא) establishes the text's genre as a prophetic book and suggests to the readers/hearers that it be approached with a reading strategy appropriate to such texts.³⁴ Furthermore it implies that Haggai should be seen as having a place among a broader corpus of such works, many of which recounted the activities of prophets active in the past, and that Haggai be construed as one in a long series of intermediaries through whom Yahweh has spoken to his people.³⁵ Thus consistent with many of the books in the prophetic corpus, we begin with Yahweh who speaks his word into a specific situation via a specific, named individual (cf. Jer 1:1–2; Ezek 1:1–3; Hos 1:1; Joel 1:1; Mic 1:1; Zeph 1:1; Zech 1:1). Second, it is especially noteworthy that the Word-Event Formula is dated, not by the regnal year of a Yehudite ruler, but by that of a non-Israelite, imperial monarch. While on one level this conforms to general scribal practice in the West during the Babylonian and Persian periods,³⁶ there is surely a bit of redactional slight of hand at work. Through the inclusion of the title of king (מלך) in the date formula, the redactor avoids creating an anomaly vis-à-vis the prophetic books set in earlier

33. Floyd, "The Nature of the Narrative," 476.

34. On the genre of the prophetic book, see the insightful discussions of Ehud Ben Zvi, "Introduction," 1–29, and idem, "The Prophetic Book: A Key Form of Prophetic Literature," in *The Changing Face of Form Criticism for the Twenty-First Century* (ed. Marvin A. Sweeney and Ehud Ben Zvi; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), 276–97; see also Nissinen, "How Prophecy Became Literature."

35. This is likely the sense of "through" (בִּי) in Haggai, reading the ב as a *beth instrumentalis*. On the broader discussion of the alternation between בִּי and אֵל in Haggai, cf. Kessler, *Book of Haggai*, 116–17.

36. On this see *ibid.*, 359–66; John Kessler, "The Second Year of Darius and the Prophet Haggai," *Transeu* 5 (1992): 63–84; André Lemaire, "Les formules de datation dans Ezéchiel à la lumière de données épigraphiques," in *Ezekiel and His Book: Textual and Literary Criticism and Their Interrelation* (ed. Johan Lust; Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1986), 359–66; idem, "Les formules de datation en Palestine au premier millénaire avant J.-C.," in *Proche-Orient Ancien: Temps vécu, temps pensé* (ed. Françoise Briquel-Chatonnet and Hélène Lozachmeur; Antiquités Sémitiques 3; Paris: J. Maisonneuve, 1998), 53–82; Reuven Yaron, "The Schema of the Aramaic Legal Documents," *JJS* 2 (1957): 33–61.

periods. Like the majority of prophetic texts, Haggai is at work in a community ruled by a king.³⁷ It is noteworthy that the descriptor “Darius the King” includes “king” but excludes any qualification indicating his nationality or kingdom. This stands in contrast to the more common inclusion of such qualifiers with reference to non-Israelite kings,³⁸ or the exclusion of the title “king” altogether.³⁹ The hearer/reader is virtually invited to skip over the issue of foreign domination and somehow see the situation as analogous to earlier periods of the people’s history.⁴⁰ This kind of “theological fiction” wherein the present, although radically different, is seen as standing in unbroken continuity with the past, will appear many times in the book and constitutes an example of Ackroyd’s suggestion of traditional language having the effect of obscuring the degree to which the contemporary situation differed from the world in which the tradition originally functioned.⁴¹

The text’s orientation toward continuity continues with the introduction of Zerubbabel, which follows immediately. Here Zerubbabel is clearly identified as a Davidide via the inclusion of his patronymic⁴² yet

37. As is well known, the institution of the monarchy was frequently the context in which prophecy flourished, and the literature on this is vast. See, e.g., the essays in André Lemaire, ed., *Prophètes et rois: Bible et Proche Orient* (LD; Paris: Cerf, 2001).

38. Cf. Cyrus the King of Persia (כורש מלך פרס), 2 Chr 36:23; Ezra 1:1; Sennacherib, King of Assyria (סנחריב מלך אשור), 2 Kgs 18:13; Nebuchadnezzar, King of Babylon (נבוכדנאצר מלך בבל), 2 Kgs 5:8.

39. Zech 1:1 and 1:7 omit מלך while 7:1 includes it. This constitutes an additional correspondence between the date formulae in Hag 1:1 and Zech 7:1 to those already noted by Meyers and Meyers (*Haggai, Zechariah 1–8*, 381). Note too the absence of מלך in Hag 2:10.

40. With Ben Zvi, I would assert that literary production in Yehud involved the creation of literary pieces (and/or revision and redaction of earlier works) which were intended to be read in light of one another, despite the distinctive emphases of each text. Thus the rhetorical continuity between Haggai and other prophetic texts set in the monarchic period would not likely be missed (Ehud Ben Zvi, “Beginning to Address the Question: Why Were Prophetic Books Produced and ‘Consumed’ in Ancient Yehud?” in *Historie og konstruktion: Festschrift Niels Peter Lemche* [ed. Mogens Müller and Thomas L. Thompson; FBE 14; Copenhagen: Kobenhavens Universitet, 2005], 30–41; Ben Zvi, “The Prophetic Book,” esp. 280–84).

41. Ackroyd, “Continuity and Discontinuity,” 229.

42. Beuken, *Haggai–Sacharja 1–8*, 30; Wilhelm Rudolph, *Haggai, Sacharja 1–8, 9–14, Malachi* (KAT 13/4; Gütersloh: Gütersloher, 1976), 32; Wolff, *Haggai*, 32–33. On the questions surrounding Zerubbabel’s genealogy, see Sara Japhet, “Sheshbazzar and Zerubbabel: Against the Background of the Historical and Religious Tendencies of Ezra–Nehemiah,” *ZAW* 94 (1982): 66–98; idem, “Sheshbazzar

attributed only the role of governor (פֶּהָרָה) of Yehud.⁴³ Once again the anomaly of Judah's domination by a foreign power and Zerubbabel's humble status are deftly camouflaged by their inclusion in a somewhat stereotypical introductory formula. This is not to suggest that the discontinuity between tradition and reality of Yehud's political status quo posed no problem for the book's framers. Such matters would be taken up in 2:20–23. However here at the book's outset, an insistence on continuity was of primary importance.

Next Joshua, the high priest, is introduced.⁴⁴ He is of Zadokite stock (2 Kgs 25:18; 1 Chr 5:40–41 [Eng. 6:14–15]) and likely born in exile.⁴⁵ The introduction of a legitimate priestly figure strengthens the hearers/readers sense of continuity—Yahweh had preserved both the Davidic and Zadokite lines in exile, and both would be involved in the temple's reconstruction.⁴⁶ The symmetrical fashion wherein each member of the book's principal characters is introduced by name and title thus creates the image of an ordered and structured society in which each member has an assigned role and a part to play.

The final member of the text's cast of characters, "this people" (הָעָם הַזֶּה), is introduced in 1:2, where their words are quoted. Despite the objections of scholars who find the citation of the people's words to be

and Zerubbabel: Against the Background of the Historical and Religious Tendencies of Ezra–Nehemiah, Part II," *ZAW* 96 (1984): 218–29.

43. Taking the term פֶּהָרָה to refer to an imperially appointed governor of an independent province. See André Lemaire, "Histoire et Administration de la Palestine à l'époque perse," in *La Palestine à l'époque perse* (ed. Ernest-Marie Laperrousaz and André Lemaire; Paris: Cerf, 1994), 11–53. For an alternative view cf. Francesco Bianchi, "Le rôle de Zorobabel et la dynastie davidique en Judée du VI^e siècle au II^e siècle av. J.-C.," *Transeu* 7 (1994): 153–65; P. Sacchi, "L'esilio e la fine della monarchia davidica," *Hen* 11 (1989): 131–48.

44. For a discussion of the neologism "high priest" (הַכֹּהֵן הַגָּדוֹל), see Amsler, Lacoque, and Vuilleumeier, *Aggée–Zacharie 1–8*, 79–80; Beuken, *Haggai–Sacharja 1–8*, 309–16; Meyers and Meyers, *Haggai, Zechariah 1–8*, 180–81; Deborah W. Rooke, *Zadok's Heirs: The Role and Development of the High Priesthood in Ancient Israel* (Oxford Theological Monographs; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 130; Roland de Vaux, *Ancient Israel* (trans. J. McHugh; 2 vols.; London: Longman, Darton & Todd, 1961), 2:397–403. De Vaux (2:241) Beuken (306–16) and, to a lesser extent, Amsler (79–80) view the term as a post-exilic term that replaced the earlier "chief priest" (הַכֹּהֵן הָרֵאשִׁי). Meyers and Meyers (180–81) view it as an essentially new and distinct office. Rooke takes a similar view (130).

45. Meyers and Meyers (*Haggai, Zechariah 1–8*, 16) note that his grandfather Seriah was put to death in 587. His father Jehozadak was exiled to Babylon where Joshua was likely born. If so, this would make him older than Zerubbabel.

46. On the priesthood in the Persian period, see Rooke, *Zadok's Heirs*.

intrusive here,⁴⁷ v. 2 fulfills two highly important functions. It introduces a major *dramatis persona*, the people, as well as the first of a series of dramatic conflicts, which will serve as vehicles to move the action of the book forward.⁴⁸ The term “this people” (הַעַם הַזֶּה) furthers the hearers’/readers’ sense of the book’s continuity with other prophetic texts. The term is frequently used in prophetic invectives (or in similar contexts in narrative passages) to express disdain for the community’s behavior and to distance Yahweh from the people who are normally identified as his own. It is found extensively in Isaiah (Isa 6:10; 8:6, 11–12; 9:15 [Eng. 9:16]), in the Deuteronomistic tradition (Deut 5:8; 9:13, 27; 31:16; Josh 7:7), in Jeremiah (Jer 5:14; 6:19, 21; 7:16, 33; 15:20; 16:5; 19:11), and in the Exodus–Sinai narratives (Num 11:11–14). The essence of Yahweh’s conflict with his people is expressed through the prophet’s citation of the people’s words: “This is not the time to come, the time for the house of Yahweh to be rebuilt” (v. 2).⁴⁹ The sense of the people’s words as presented in this context is likely the following: “Given current economic conditions, wisdom would clearly dictate that the rebuilding of the temple be put off until a more appropriate time.”⁵⁰ The likely implication of the citation of the people’s words to the leaders, in the present form of the book, is that Yahweh, via Haggai, is calling them to account for the people’s attitude.⁵¹ Beuken, Mason, and Sérandour view the emphasis on the community’s leadership as a defining characteristic of the editorial framework.⁵² However, as noted above, the viability of disentangling the two perspectives has been largely abandoned in the more recent literature, and it is thus preferable to view their presence here as owing to their role in the conflict and its ultimate resolution.

This introduction (1:1–2) establishes the general context, cast of characters, and initial conflict in Haggai, all of which set the drama of the book in motion. Little reveals a distinctly post-exilic setting (cf. Zech 1:1–6). Rather, were we to read 1:1–2 with no knowledge of the historical

47. Beuken, *Haggai–Sacharja 1–8*, 30; Wolff, *Haggai*, 32–33.

48. On the book as a series of dramatic conflicts, see Kessler, *Book of Haggai*, 243–51.

49. For a defense of this translation see *infra*.

50. The ongoing scholarly debate around the people’s motivation will be taken up *infra*.

51. Petersen, *Haggai and Zechariah 1–8*, 47.

52. Beuken, *Haggai–Sacharja 1–8*, esp. 27–63; Rex A. Mason, “The Purpose of the ‘Editorial Framework’ of the Book of Haggai,” *VT* 27 (1977): 413–21; Sérandour, “Les récits bibliques,” 8–32; idem, “Réflexions,” 75–84; idem, “Zacharie et les autorités,” 259–98.

and political background implied, we would simply assume the same dynamics are obtained here as in all of the other prophetic books—Yahweh had a case against his people and called them to repentance. We thus are introduced to a well-known scenario with a well-known cast of characters. Yahweh speaks to his people and their leaders through his prophet about relational matters between them, in the context of a specific situation marked by the regnal years of a king.

4. *Haggai 1:3–11*

The continuity motifs established in 1:1–2 are continued through 1:3–11 by two highly creative techniques: (1) the redactional slant placed upon the conflict with the people over the rebuilding of the temple; and (2) the use of Deuteronomistic and Zion traditions to express that conflict. Let us examine these in turn.

The dramatic conflict introduced in v. 2 turns on the conviction of the people that “it is not the time to come; the time for the house of the Lord to be rebuilt.”⁵³ For at least a half a century scholars have suggested that what is at issue is something of a pious reluctance on the part of the people. The community does not want to risk offending the deity by proceeding with the reconstruction without having first received clear authorization to do so. Peter Bedford has argued at length for this position, but other voices may also be cited.⁵⁴ And indeed, such a supposition is not historically improbable, since such authorization was a very

53. On the various textual and translational options taken in this translation of v. 2, see Amsler, Lacoque, and Vuilleumeier, *Aggée-Zacharie 1–8*, 19; Dominique Barthélemy, ed., *Critique textuelle de l’Ancien Testament. Tome 3 Ezéchiel, Daniel et les 12 prophètes* (Fribourg: Editions Universitaires; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1992), 923–24; Kessler, “Building the Second Temple,” 244–45.

54. Peter R. Bedford, “Discerning the Time: Haggai, Zechariah and the ‘Delay’ in the Rebuilding of the Jerusalem Temple,” in *The Pitcher is Broken: Memorial Essays for G. W. Ahlström* (ed. Steven W. Holloway and Lowell K. Handy; JSOTSup 190; Sheffield: JSOT, 1995), 71–94; idem, *Temple Restoration in Early Achaemenid Judah* (JSJSup 65; Leiden: Brill, 2001); Philippe de Robert, “Pour ou contre le second temple,” in *“Dort ziehen Schiffe dahin...”: Collected Communications to the XIVth Congress of the International Organization for the Study of the Old Testament. Paris, 1992* (ed. Matthias Augustin and Klaus-Dietrich Schunck; BEATAJ 28; Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1996), 179–82; Hayim Tadmor, “‘The Appointed Time Has Not Yet Arrived’: The Historical Background of Haggai 1:2,” in *Ki Baruch Hu: Ancient Near Eastern, Biblical and Judaic Studies in Honor of Baruch A. Levine* (ed. William W. Hallo, Lawrence H. Schiffman, and Robert Chazon; Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 1999), 401–8.

significant element in temple reconstruction.⁵⁵ Reading such a sentiment into the words of Hag 1:2–11, however, is highly improbable. Rather, whatever the historical realities may have been, the redactional presentation in 1:2–11 is unswervingly resolute in its desire to portray the people as lazy, self-centered, and recalcitrant. Not even low crop yields, bad harvests, high taxes, insufficient food and drink, and drought could motivate them to change (1:4–11). However into this blocked scenario comes Haggai, the prophet of Yahweh whose words persuade the people to abandon their fruitless and selfish ways (1:12–14).⁵⁶ He addresses the people in 1:3–11 using “traditional” forms of questions (cf. Hos 6:4; Amos 3:3–8; Jonah 4:11; Mic 3:1–3; 6:3; Zech 1:5–6; 7:5–7; 8:6)⁵⁷ and disputations,⁵⁸ as well as a promise of salvation (v. 8). The dispute hinges on the concept of the appropriate time (תֵּעָרָה), a concept deeply rooted in wisdom traditions.⁵⁹ Haggai’s rhetorical question essentially challenges the people’s conclusion that given the external circumstances, sound wisdom would dictate that the work of reconstruction of the temple be suspended. The prophetic fulmination which follows presupposes that, under the guise of wisdom, the people were using the poor economic conditions in Yehud to justify neglect of a duty they clearly understood to be incumbent upon them.⁶⁰ The key point for our present purposes concerns the rhetorical effect of obfuscating any pious or legitimate

55. On the importance of ascertaining the deity’s approval before undertaking the reconstruction of a destroyed temple, see Bedford, *Temple Restoration*, 174–77. On temple building generally, see recently Lisbeth S. Fried, *The Priest and the Great King: Temple–Palace Relations in the Persian Empire* (Biblical and Judaic Studies from the University of California, San Diego 10; Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 2004), esp. 159–83.

56. This understanding of vv. 12–14 will be developed *infra*.

57. J. William Whedbee, “A Question–Answer Schema in Haggai 1: The Form and Function of Haggai 1: 9–11,” in *Biblical and Near Eastern Studies: Festschrift in Honor of William Sanford LaSor* (ed. Gary A. Tuttle; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978), 184–94.

58. Beuken, *Haggai–Sacharja 1–8*, 19. Beuken sees the following forms present: v. 4, *Scheltwort*; vv. 5–6, *Mahnwort*; vv. 7–8, *Auftrag* and *Heilswort*; v. 9, *Disputationswort*; v. 10, *Spruch/Entfaltung*; v. 11, *Eingreifen Gottes*. Odil Hannes Steck (“Zu Haggai 1, 2–11,” *ZAW* [1971]: 367) refers to it as a *Diskussionswort*.

59. Gerhard von Rad, *Wisdom in Israel* (trans. J. D. Martin; London: SPCK, 1972), 138–43.

60. Théophile Chary, *Aggée–Zacharie, Malachie* (SB; Paris: J. Gabalda, 1969), 19. Chary observes, “By repeatedly objecting ‘it is not the right time to build the temple’ the people were admitting that they understood its necessity, but were paralyzed by a lukewarm attitude” (translation mine, here and in all citations from non-English sources).

concerns on the part of the people (should such have existed). Continuity is maintained in that the people do what they have consistently done as depicted in other prophetic texts and Haggai does what prophets traditionally do. Furthermore, attention is diverted from the past and focused on the present. No explanation is given for the temple's sorry state. No mention is made of the sins of the ancestors. Rather, the critical issue becomes what the hitherto negligent community will do *now*, and how that will change the situation for the better. Although not explicitly stated, the logic of Hag 1:2–11 appears to presuppose a community largely comprised of recently arrived returnees which had begun to construct dwellings for its members, while deferring the rebuilding of the temple.⁶¹ This deferral became culpable neglect as the people, adequately housed, failed to turn their attention to Yahweh's dwelling. As a result Yahweh had imposed these negative consequences upon the people as a corrective measure meant to lead to repentance (cf. Amos 4), and he promised to remove them if the people responded appropriately and undertook the work of rebuilding Hag 1:8). It therefore seems to me unlikely that there is any allusion in 1:2–11 to the consequences of the events of 587.⁶² Rather, the focus is placed squarely on the recent past and present, and the prophetic call to the people to amend their ways.

A second area in which continuity is affirmed is the use of Deuteronomistic and Zion traditions in 1:3–11. It has long been noted that Haggai uses the treaty or futility–curse form in his disputation with the people.⁶³ Such usage was highly significant in the Deuteronomistic tradition (Deut 28; Judg 2:11–14), especially in several of the prophetic books (Hos 2:2–9; Amos 4:6–11; 5:11; Mic 6:13–16). Indeed, as has frequently been pointed out, there are numerous verbal and thematic parallels between Hag 1:3–11 and Deut 28; Lev 26, and Mic 6:13–16.⁶⁴ What is significant for our purposes here is the rhetorical effect and underlying implication of the book of Haggai's use of this motif. First, it

61. Alternatively one could view the text as presupposing the existence of a community of non-exiled Judeans who, aware that reconstruction of the temple was now a real possibility, failed to avail themselves of the opportunity to do so. Historically speaking, the community was likely comprised of both groups (the book appears inclusive of both Returnees and Remainees). In any case the text presupposes that the community understood temple rebuilding to be a real possibility and failed to act upon it. See *infra* on the community's awareness of such a possibility.

62. Pace Petersen, *Haggai and Zechariah 1–8*, 54.

63. Delbert R. Hillers, *Treaty Curses and the Old Testament Prophets* (BibOr 16; Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1964). Tollington (*Tradition and Innovation*, 189–98) sees only a general knowledge of the form here. Cf. Meyers and Meyers, *Haggai, Zechariah 1–8*, 24–25; Petersen, *Haggai and Zechariah 1–8*, 50.

64. Hag 1:6//Deut 28:38; Hag 1:6//Lev 26:26; Hag 1:11//Deut 28:18.

casts Haggai in the mold of his pre-exilic forebears who used similar terminology. Second, it implicitly assumes that the covenant is functioning as a contractual basis for the relationship between Yahweh and his people. Beuken and Petersen have suggested that the verbal forms in vv. 4–11 indicate that the misfortunes experienced in the community have occurred in the past and indicate a broken covenant.⁶⁵ However the nine assorted verbal forms in vv. 6–7,⁶⁶ as well as those in vv. 9–11,⁶⁷ would tend to indicate that the passage refers to the recent past and present,⁶⁸ and that these communal misfortunes were an ongoing reproach, rooted in Yahweh's covenant, for the community's refusal to undertake its duty, and that once the community obeyed, these misfortunes would cease.

Scholars have consistently commented upon Haggai's innovative use of the Deuteronomistic tradition at this point. The people are being upbraided for a failure to rebuild the temple despite the fact that temple building, as Petersen puts it, "is markedly absent from other covenant stipulations preserved in the Hebrew Bible."⁶⁹ However, that which is most significant for the present discussion is the subtle fashion in which the concept of the duty of temple reconstruction is introduced in Haggai. In many of the texts of the monarchic and exilic period, the Jerusalem temple was seen as something of an innovation, needing divine approbation (2 Sam 7; 1 Kgs 8), a place where the worship of Yahweh was corrupted by the worship of foreign deities (Ezek 8) or a locus of misplaced faith—a kind of talisman guaranteeing that Jerusalem would never be overthrown no matter what the conduct of its inhabitants may have been (Jer 7). This kind of dissonance within the tradition, coupled with the self-evident reality that Yahweh himself had allowed his house to be destroyed, and the customary practice in the ancient Near East of awaiting instructions from the deity before beginning reconstruction would naturally suggest that before such an undertaking was begun some discussion would take place on the time for the temple's reconstruction,

65. Beuken, *Haggai–Sacharja 1–8*, 190–91; Petersen, *Haggai and Zechariah 1–8*, 50.

66. The sequence is: Perf.; inf. abs.; inf. abs.; inf. const.; inf. abs.; inf const; ptc.

67. The sequence is: Inf. abs.; perf.; perf.; ptc.; perf.; perf.; *waw* consec.+imperf.

68. As argued above. Thus also Meyers and Meyers, *Haggai, Zechariah 1–8*, 25–26; Tollington, *Tradition and Innovation*, 198. Meyers and Meyers stress the durative aspect of the inf. abs. This is certainly brought out by the use of the participle מְשֻׁבְּרִים. See also Ursula Schattner-Rieser, "L'hébreu postexilique," in *La Palestine à l'époque perse* (ed. Ernest-Marie Laperrousaz and André Lemaire; Paris: Cerf, 1994), 199. Schattner-Reiser underlines that in late biblical Hebrew the participle is the normal means of referring to the present.

69. Petersen, *Haggai and Zechariah 1–8*, 50; Beuken, *Haggai–Sacharja 1–8*, 197.

as well as its form and cultic personnel. What is significant for our purposes here is that Haggai will brook no discussion of the matter. The rebuilding of the temple is a covenantal duty, and no explanation is offered as to how, when, or why it came to be one!⁷⁰ The most likely reason for the lack of any clear explanation for this is the strong impulse toward continuity already manifest in the book. This was no time to call into question, to deconstruct, or to reconsider the entire question of the worship of Yahweh and the correct procedures and ordinances related to the temple, not to mention the question of the future role of the Jerusalemite temple in a new situation where Yahwism was evolving into a non-territorial and multi-centric entity.⁷¹ Rather, the emphasis was upon getting things “back to normal” as soon as possible. Thus, by the inclusion of temple reconstruction as a covenantal obligation, the text neatly sidesteps all discussion of this sort, and the book’s dramatic progression can proceed unhindered.

In contrast to the book’s lack of emphasis on the failures of the past, Haggai’s focus on the critical nature of the present moment can be seen in v. 8. There Yahweh promises that if the people obtain the needed materials and undertake the reconstruction, his response will not be in doubt. He will take pleasure⁷² in the structure⁷³ and accept the people’s

70. To be sure, in the present canonical configuration the authorization for rebuilding may be understood as having been given in the decree of Cyrus, cited in 2 Chr 26:33 and Ezra 1:2–4. Petersen (*Haggai and Zechariah 1–8*, 54) assumes that Haggai’s community would have understood this to constitute divine authorization to rebuild the temple. However, it should be noted that (1) Haggai nowhere mentions the decrees and (2) Chronicles and Ezra were likely produced much later; thus knowledge of the decree cannot be demonstrated within the text. Nevertheless, it seems to me that Petersen is likely correct in his underlying assumption that in the logic of the book of Haggai, especially the invective in 1:3–11, the fact that the rebuilding of the temple was permitted (however such permission was granted) constituted divine approval to do so. Clearly, debate concerning the temple continued from the Babylonian into the Persian period (Jer 3:16; Ezek 40–47; Isa 66:1).

71. *Ibid.*, 182.

72. Here, with the majority of commentators, following the Kethib, I read the two verbal forms (וְאֶכְרַתָּה and וְאֶכְרַתָּה) as imperfects, *pace* Meyers and Meyers (*Haggai, Zechariah 1–8*, 3). They read it as a telic clause: “Build the house, so that I may be pleased with it.” A simple sense of temporal succession and promise seems more apposite here: “Build my house and I will indeed be pleased with it.” However, as Meyers and Meyers note (228), at times the sense of the cohortative and the imperfect may be virtually identical.

73. Reading the temple, rather than the act of rebuilding, as the antecedent of בָּ, as in Mic 6:7; Pss 149:4; 147:10; and 1 Chr 28:4, where רָצָה followed by בָּ refers to taking pleasure in a person or an object rather than an act.

labors as an activity glorifying to him.⁷⁴ The significance of this statement for the purposes of this study is that it serves to announce, via a statement of promise, that any uncertainty regarding the future lies entirely with the people's response to Haggai's words. Yahweh has declared how he will react to a positive response on the people's part, and there can be no uncertainty as to what the people are called to do. There need be no fear on their part that their efforts will be rejected.

5. *Haggai 1:12–15*

Haggai 1:12–15 supplies a dramatic epilogue describing the effects of Haggai's message. Its significance with reference to the present discussion lies in what it assumes about the community's status vis-à-vis Yahweh before and after its response to Haggai's preaching. Beuken has viewed this section as a covenant renewal ceremony analogous to those found within the work of the Chronicler, and sees the response of the people in rebuilding the temple as constituting an act of covenant renewal. For him, the disobedience of the people in 1:4–11 constitutes a covenant rupture (*Bundesbruch*) and the obedience of the people and assurance of the divine presence as a covenant renewal (*Bundeserneuerung*). Beuken relies heavily on texts which describe earlier failures to heed Yahweh's word which resulted in the rupturing of the covenant, manifested in the destruction of Jerusalem and the exile (2 Kgs 17:7–23; 2 Chr 36:15–21; Jer 42:21–22). He sees the failure to rebuild the temple as a continuation of the hardening (*Verstocktheit*) which obtained among the people before the exile.⁷⁵ In this sense, his position is analogous to Petersen's suggestion that the misfortunes of the people in 1:3–11 were the result of a "double cursing" of the people for the sins of the ancestors and their own subsequent neglect of the temple. However, is this indeed the case? Is a covenant renewal to be implied here? An analysis of the vocabulary used to describe the response of the people as well as Yahweh's own response casts doubt upon Beuken's suggestion.

Several expressions are used to describe the people's response. The first is *שמע בקול יהוה* ("to obey the voice of Yahweh"), used to describe

74. Here the middle or permissive sense of "getting glory for one's self" or "allowing one's self to be glorified" seems most appropriate, especially when compared with the other, non-participial instances of the Niphal of *כבד* with Yahweh as subject (Exod 14:4, 17, 18; Lev 10:3; Ezek 28:22; 39:13). Ackroyd's translation renders it well: "Then I will accept it and I will let myself be glorified... I will accept the worship due to my honour" (*Exile and Restoration*, 160).

75. Beuken, *Haggai–Sacharja 1–8*, 32–33.

the obedience of the people in v. 12. This is a stock Deuteronomistic expression for the fulfillment of Israel's covenantal obligation (Deut 4:20; 8:20; 9:23, etc.), and follows logically upon the prophet's use of the various formal and thematic expressions of reproach in 1:3–11.⁷⁶ However that which is most important here is the striking contrast between Hag 1:12 and the almost exaggerated use of same expression in Jeremiah (negated, however) to describe the failure of Jeremiah's contemporaries to listen to him. The phrase **לֹא שָׁמַע בְּקוֹל יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵיהֶם** is found in 3:25; 7:28; 9:12 (Eng. 9:13); 18:10; 22:21; 32:23; 42:13, 21; 43:4, 7; and 44:23. Jeremiah 43:4 is especially noteworthy. Whereas in most instances **בְּקוֹל** directly follows **לֹא שָׁמַע**, in both Jer 43:4 and Hag 1:12 a tripartite subject intervenes:

לֹא שָׁמַע יוֹחָנָן בֶּן קָרַח וְכָל שְׂרֵי הַחַיִּים
וְכָל הָעָם בְּקוֹל יְהוָה לִשְׁבֹּת בְּאֶרֶץ יְהוּדָה:

So Johanan son of Kareah and all the commanders of the forces and all the people did not obey the voice of the LORD, to stay in the land of Judah. (Jer 43:4 NSRV)

וַיִּשְׁמַע זְרַבְבָּדָל בֶּן שְׁלֵחִיאֵל וַיְהוֹשֻׁעַ בֶּן יְהוֹצָדָק הַכֹּהֵן הַגָּדוֹל
וְכָל שְׂאֵרֵי הָעָם בְּקוֹל
יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵיהֶם וְעַל דְּבַרֵי חַגִּי הַנְּבִיא כַּאֲשֶׁר שָׁלַח יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵיהֶם
וַיִּירָאוּ הָעָם מִפְּנֵי יְהוָה:

Then Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel, and Joshua son of Jehozadak, the high priest, with all the remnant of the people, obeyed the voice of the LORD their God, and the words of the prophet Haggai, as the LORD their God had sent him; and the people feared the LORD. (Hag 1:12 NSRV)

It is certainly possible that the frequency of this expression in the Jeremianic tradition, and its presence at this critical point in Haggai, and especially the correspondence in the two texts cited above is the fruit of mere chance. I find it more probable, however, that the redactor of Haggai knew of the Jeremianic tradition (this is certainly the case in Hag 2:23//Jer 22:24) and was using it to make a point. Whereas Jeremiah's hearers had refused to hear, Haggai's words had hit home and broken the logjam that had stymied the community's life. The kind of response that was sought (unsuccessfully) by Jeremiah was attained through the preaching of Haggai. Thus, rather than signifying a definitive breaking or

76. Samuel R. Driver, *Deuteronomy* (ICC; New York: Charles Scribners' Sons, 1916), lxxix; Moshe Weinfeld, *Deuteronomy and the Deuteronomistic School* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1972), 83–84, 336–37. Beuken (*Haggai–Sacharja 1–8*, 32–35) notes that this expression is rare in the Chronicler but explains its absence via the hypothesis of several Chronistic circles at work.

renewal of a covenant, the phrase thus simply stresses covenantal obedience.

A second continuity element in describing the people's response is the reference to their fear of Yahweh in v. 12b (וַיִּירָאוּ הָעָם מִפְּנֵי יְהוָה). Once again we have a standard Deuteronomistic expression for obedience to the covenant⁷⁷ despite the rather unusual formulation it takes here.⁷⁸ The expression likely indicates subjective fear,⁷⁹ but such a response is entirely consistent with an allusion to the "fear of God" as understood in Deuteronomistic theology (Exod 20:20; Deut 4:14; 5:5, 28–29; 6:2; 10:20; 2 Kgs 22:8–10). Yahweh's response to the people's fear is expressed through the introduction of the *Beistandformel* (henceforth Formula of Divine Assistance) in 1:13. This formula, whose origins may be found in priestly oracles of salvation,⁸⁰ assures the people of Yahweh's presence. Furthermore, it has the rhetorical effect of associating them with various individuals and groups in Israel's past who have received such words of assurance (Jacob in Gen 28:15; Jeremiah in Jer 1:8, 19; redeemed Israel in Isa 43:2; the community of Jeremiah's day in Jer 42:11, as well as many others). The section concludes with a summary statement⁸¹ affirming that it was through the preaching of Haggai,⁸² Yahweh's duly commissioned messenger, that Yahweh stirred up⁸³ the

77. See especially Louis Derousseaux, *La Crainte de Dieu dans l'Ancien Testament* (LD 63; Paris: Cerf, 1970), 205–57; Driver, *Deuteronomy*, lxxxii; Weinfeld, *Deuteronomy and the Deuteronomistic School*, 83–85, 332–33.

78. The usual Deuteronomistic formula is a form of יָרָא followed by אֱתָ יְהוָה. Here we find מִפְּנֵי יְהוָה, a rare expression found only in Exod 9:30; Hag 1:12; Eccl 3:14; and Ps 33:8 (Derousseaux, *La Crainte de Dieu*, 296).

79. Ibid. See also Verhoef, *Books of Haggai and Malachi*, 83, with bibliography; and Wolff, *Haggai*, 49.

80. Beuken, *Haggai–Sacharja 1–8*, 39–42; Wolff, *Haggai*, 50.

81. The understanding of v. 14 as a summary statement underlies the exegesis of Amsler and Chary (Amsler, Lacoque, and Vuilleumeier, *Aggée–Zacharie 1–8*, 25; Chary, *Aggée–Zacharie*, 21). It is also explicit in Meyers and Meyers and Rudolph (see following footnote).

82. For a defense of this interpretation of v. 14, see Kessler, *Book of Haggai*, 150–51, with bibliography. Rudolph appropriately states, "It is Yahweh the *primus movens* who fulfills his plan. He uses human agents, notably the people and leaders, but in order for them to assume their own responsibilities, there must be the divine word through the prophet, a word that shakes and rebukes, so that the work might be accomplished" (*Haggai, Sacharja 1–8, 9–14, Malachi*, 36). Cf. Meyers and Meyers, *Haggai, Zechariah 1–8*, 4.

83. The Hiphil of עָרָא evokes Yahweh's hidden activity, which touches the inner workings of human volition and decision-making such that his purposes may be attained, cf. Isa 41:2, 21; 45:13; Ezra 1:15; Jer 50:9; 51:1, 11.

hearts of leaders and people with the result that they came (בוא as in v. 2) and did what they had been resisting all along—they set about the work of restoring the temple. The epithet “remnant of the people” (שארית העם) in vv. 12 and 14 provides a further link with other prophetic and Deuteronomistic traditions. Thus “this people”—a common term of reproach and disdain in the same traditions, as noted above—has become worthy of the title “remnant,” evoking traditions such as those found in Zeph 3:12–13; Isa 10:20; 28:5; Jer 31:7–9; and Mic 7:18.⁸⁴

Returning now to the question of a covenant renewal in Hag 1:12–15, it would appear to me that if Haggai is read without the grid of covenant breach and covenant renewal suggested by Beuken, Hag 1:12–15 reads far more like a Deuteronomistic description of faithful response to prophetic preaching.⁸⁵ Put another way, given the consistent use of positive affirmative terminology drawn from Deuteronomistic tradition regarding covenantal obedience, that which is being emphasized is the effectiveness of Haggai’s preaching, rather than any kind of periodization of the people’s history in which the people’s obedience constitutes a renewal of the covenant and repairs the damage done by the ancestors’ failure to heed the warnings of the prophets of the monarchic period. To be sure, Haggai’s use of the covenant curse material suggests that the people’s failure to rebuild the temple has strained their relationship with Yahweh, but I do not think that it invites us to view Haggai’s words as being addressed to a people with whom a decisive breach has occurred—a breach which has continued to the present moment and which has been repaired by the people’s response. Rather, what happens in 1:12–15 is what could have happened had the hearers of Amos, Hosea, Micah, or Jeremiah taken their words to heart and changed their ways and thus ought to be viewed more as a description of a positive response to prophetic preaching, and to the demands of an *existing covenant*, rather than as a covenant renewal ceremony.

What is more, the term “covenant renewal” itself is problematic, not only from an historical⁸⁶ point of view, but also from a linguistic perspective, in that it does not distinguish renewal without lapse (as in the

84. Pace Floyd, I view the redactor as referring to the people as a whole. For a fuller discussion, see Floyd, *Minor Prophets*, 275–77; also Kessler, *Book of Haggai*, 141–42.

85. The prominence of Deuteronomistic vocabulary in Haggai was observed in Mason’s early treatment of the traditions in the book (Mason, “The Purpose of the Editorial Framework,” 413–21).

86. On the whole matter of covenant violation and renewal, see George E. Mendenhall and Gary A. Herion, “Covenant,” *ABD* 1:1179–202.

renewal of a lease or driver's license) from reinstatement of a formerly existing but lapsed arrangement (such as insurance policy which has expired), or even the replacement of an earlier agreement with a newer one with different terms (such as an international trade agreement).⁸⁷ Despite Beuken's arguments, it seems to me to be more likely that Haggai's redactor is construing the people's response as simply a faithful response to Yahweh, or at most a case of renewal without lapse. By means of the various continuity devices discussed above, this section has minimized the destruction of Jerusalem and the exile—the text assumes both but mentions neither. Failure to rebuild the temple, and the consequences thereof, are portrayed as a blemish on an existing relationship, not the evidence of one which had formerly existed and had lapsed. After all, if the text presupposed that the people and Yahweh were in the same state of alienation that, according to the Deuteronomistic tradition, existed on the eve of Jerusalem's destruction, reducing the totality of Israel's obligation to Yahweh to the rebuilding of the temple would be rather surprising.⁸⁸ Furthermore, the standard vocabulary of repentance in the Deuteronomistic or for that matter Chronistic traditions (e.g. *ענה שׁוּב*, *בְּקֶשׁ דָּרַשׁ*) is totally absent both in Haggai's preaching and the people's response. In its place we find a simple command to go and get wood and build Yahweh's house, and the narration of the fulfillment of that command (1:8, 14). All this would appear to indicate that far less than Beuken suggests is at play.

In sum, in 1:12–15 the reader/hearer is invited to view Haggai's words and his hearers' obedience as a challenge and response within an existing relationship rather than a call to renew a lapsed one. Haggai makes no direct allusion to the disobedience of any earlier generation, and only appeals for obedience in the present. The verbal contrast between Haggai's hearers' response and that which met Jeremiah's words simply serves to stress that whereas earlier generations had done the wrong thing, Haggai's hearers had done the right thing (1:12–15). The net effect of this is to deflect attention away from the larger issues of the exile and its results, the state and fate of the nation, and broader issues concerning Yahweh's relationship to his people. Rather, the minimization or even obfuscation of these larger issues enables the book to set Haggai's preaching and his hearers' response in a context which very much resembles

87. It seems to me that Beuken relates 1:12–15 to the second or third of these three categories.

88. The Deuteronomistic tradition generally evokes the worship of other gods as well as various violations of the Decalogue as the cause of Yahweh's judgment (cf. 2 Kgs 17:7–20; 24:4–5; Jer 7:1–15).

prophetic preaching of earlier eras. Unlike Zechariah, who explicitly warns his hearers not to be like their ancestors who ignored the words of the prophets and were overtaken by divine judgment and who explicitly repent (Zech 1:1–6), Haggai thus far is silent regarding the failures of the past and even lacks an explicit call for repentance. He simply enjoins his people to do what they ought. And when they do, he reassures them that Yahweh is among them once again, as he has been in the past at critical moments in the community's history.

6. *Haggai 2:1–9*

In contrast to 1:1–15, this section moves more directly toward encountering the discontinuity between past and present, between the ideals held out in tradition and memory and the grim realities of the present. This discontinuity or dissonance is given voice as the prophet utters aloud (2:2) that which a portion of his audience was thinking inwardly—that the emerging temple was a pale shadow of its earlier self. Yet within this overt admission of discontinuity, the text once again deploys a variety of means through which to demonstrate that the present situation is not to be viewed as cut off from either the fondly remembered past or the greatly anticipated future. In essence, 2:3–9 responds to the discouragement of the present in a twofold manner. First, in vv. 3–5 a variety of traditional idioms and formulae are drawn upon to encourage the builders to persevere in their task. Second, in vv. 6–9 a series of eschatological motifs, largely drawn from Zion theology, are evoked to point to a better future. In both sections numerous continuity motifs are deployed to attenuate the people's perception of discontinuity.

In vv. 3–5 continuity with the past is stressed by four primary means: (1) the specific formulations used to describe the temple (vv. 3 and 9); (2) the *Ermutigungsformel* (henceforth Divine Encouragement Formula) addressed to leaders and people (v. 4); (3) the appeal to the covenant (v. 5a); and (4) the reference to the presence of the Spirit and the traditional formula “fear not” (v. 5b). Each serves to create continuity with the past and to reduce dissonance in the present. Let us examine these in turn.

In speaking of the temple, Haggai is cited as asking his hearers who among them⁸⁹ saw “this house in its former glory” (אֵת־הַבַּיִת הַזֶּה בְּכְבוֹדוֹ (הַרְאִישׁוֹן)). It is significant that, contrary to the customary practice of

89. In the logic of the passage the likely referent is older members of the audience who had seen the pre-587 structure (Meyers and Meyers, *Haggai, Zechariah 1–8*, 49). On the issue of the plausibility of such individuals being present, see Verhoef, *Books of Haggai and Malachi*, 95–96.

referring to the “Second Temple,” Haggai knows no first and second temples. Rather, there is one temple, “this house,” whose splendor or glorious appearance goes through various stages. It was awe-inspiring in an earlier time (בכבודו הראשון) and in a future day will be even more so (האחרון, v. 9). For Haggai, these are various states of the same temple, not a comparison between various edifices. Thus the destructions of 587, which both archaeology⁹⁰ and tradition (e.g. Lamentations; Ps 74) acknowledge as highly significant, do not constitute a major element within Haggai. The Jerusalem temple was, is, and will continue to be Yahweh’s house. In point of fact, for Haggai it was still his house even *before* the people undertook the work of reconstruction, when it lay abandoned (1:4–11, esp. v. 9).⁹¹

Facing the discouragement of disappointing results, Haggai addresses the builders using the classical Divine Encouragement Formula, repeated three times (v. 4), urging leaders and people to be strong and to continue the work. This formula is extensively used in Deuteronomistic literature (Deut 31:6, 7, 23; Josh 1:6, 7, 9, 23; 10:25; 2 Sam 10:12; 13:28) as well as in Chronicles (1 Chr 19:13; 22:13; 28:10, 20; 2 Chr 19:11; 25:8; 32:7). Thus Zerubbabel, Joshua, and the “people of the land”⁹² are invited to see themselves as standing in continuity with figures such as Joshua (Deut 31:7; Josh 1:6–7) or the ancient Israelite armies (2 Sam 10:12), and to be confident of Yahweh’s presence and aid. This is reinforced by an appeal in 2:5 to the covenant: “As for⁹³ the covenant which I made with you⁹⁴

90. Opinions differ here on the extent of the destruction, and the bibliography is multitudinous. Cf. Hans Barstad, *The Myth of the Empty Land: A Study in the History and Archaeology of Judah During the “Exilic” Period* (SO 28; Oslo: Scandinavian University Press, 1996), 51–51; Oded Lipschits, “Nebuchadnezzar’s Policy in ‘Hattu-Land’ and the Fate of the Kingdom of Judah,” *UF* 30 (1998): 155–90; Margreet Steiner, “The Archaeology of Ancient Jerusalem,” *CurBS* 6 (1998): 143–68.

91. Note the marked contrast to the departure of the presence of Yahweh from the temple portrayed in Ezek 8–11. While that text nowhere states that the temple is no longer Yahweh’s house, it implies that only after the destruction of those who remain in Jerusalem, the return of the exiles, and the purification will the house be identified with Yahweh once again (11:17–18).

92. The literature on the identity of this group is voluminous. (See Ernest W. Nicholson, “The Meaning of the Expression עַם הָאָרֶץ in the Old Testament,” *JJS* 10 [1965]: 59–66.) I take “people of the land” to refer to the community as a whole (see Ackroyd, *Exile and Restoration*, 150 nn. 50, 62, and 67). For a different approach, cf. Floyd, *Minor Prophets*, 280–81.

93. On this sense of הַס, see Barthélemy, *Critique textuelle de l’Ancien Testament. Tome 3*, 928.

94. On the textual issue here, see Barthélemy who, noting that the disputed phrase is solidly attested in the Masoretic traditions, states “Whether or not the

when you came out of Egypt, my Spirit abides among you, do not fear.” As has been noted above, Haggai views the Sinai covenant as a foundational constitutive element of the community’s relationship with Yahweh (1:2–11). Here in a similar fashion Haggai draws a straight line between the people of the exodus and the Jerusalemite community of the late sixth century. The rhetorical “you”—“the covenant that I made with *you* when *you* came out of Egypt”—clearly views the latter community as standing in direct continuity with the former. Coupled with the lack of any clear allusion to the breaking or suspension of the covenant in Haggai (cf. Amos 4:12; 8:1–3; 9:1–4; Hos 1:6–9; Jer 31:31–34), this conveys a striking continuity between past and present. The Jerusalemite community is viewed as standing in complete continuity with their forebears. This is reinforced by a reference to the presence of Yahweh’s Spirit, viewed as standing (עֲרַבְתִּי) among his people. This is likely an allusion to the “pillar of cloud” which mediated the divine presence to the community⁹⁵ at the Exodus (Exod 13:21; 14:19, 24; 25:8; 29:45).⁹⁶ This is followed by an exhortation not to fear (אַל־תִּירָאוּ), the traditional formula of Divine Reassurance, a common turn of phrase in Deuteronomistic as well as other Pentateuchal and prophetic traditions. Haggai’s community thus hears the same words as were spoken to the great worthies of the past (Abraham in Gen 15:1; Jacob in Gen 26:24 and 46:3; Rachel in Gen 35:17; Joseph’s brothers in Gen 43:23 and 50:19; the generation of the Exodus in Exod 14:13; 20:20; Deut 1:21; 20:3, and Josh 10:25; Moses in Num 21:34; Joshua in Deut 31:6; Josh 8:1, and 11:6; Gideon in Judg 6:23; David in 1 Sam 23:17; Ahaz in Isa 7:4; Jeremiah in Jer 1:8; and Ezekiel in Ezek 2:6). Significant also is the frequent use of the same formula in prophetic texts relating to the renewed Zion/Israel following the exile (Isa 35:4; 40:9; 41:10; Jer 30:10; 46:27; Zeph 3:16; and Zech 8:13). Drousseau well summarizes the import of the expression as being one that calls the addressees to overcome their

phrase is secondary, its omission would have to be made on literary-critical rather than text-critical grounds” (ibid.).

95. Thus Amsler, Lacoque, and Vuilleumeier, *Aggée-Zacharie 1–8*, 31–32; Kessler, *Book of Haggai*, 170–73; and Verhoef, *Books of Haggai and Malachi*, 100. This stands in contrast to several scholars who see a reference to prophecy here: Beuken, *Haggai–Sacharja 1–8*, 57–58; Chary, *Aggée-Zacharie*, 27; and Wolff, *Haggai*, 59–60.

96. Texts noted by Beuken, *Haggai–Sacharja 1–8*, 57. Despite the book of Haggai’s great interest in prophecy in the restoration period, as well as the Targum’s interpretation here, the context resists an allusion to prophecy here. The community can be strong and unafraid because of Yahweh’s presence with them, which certainly includes, but goes far beyond, the presence of prophets.

fear “before humans and the dangers with which they are faced [because of Yahweh’s] saving presence.”⁹⁷

In 2:6–9 a second reason is given as to why the builders should not be discouraged. Here Haggai draws upon various traditional motifs of Zion theology to describe the ultimate glorification of Zion: the hostile attack of the nations against Zion, the gathering of spoil, the elevation of Zion, the pilgrimage of the nations, and the ultimate age of world peace (cf. Mic 4:1–5, 11–13; Isa 2:1–4; 60:1–22; Joel 3 [Eng. 4]; Zech 14). It is beyond the scope of the present study to assess the various issues connected with these motifs,⁹⁸ and Haggai’s use of them.⁹⁹ Simply put, using highly traditional, eschatological imagery Haggai asserts that the nations’ wealth will flow into Jerusalem. What is of significance here is that Haggai finds relief from the dissonance caused by the existing state of affairs (disappointing temple, especially in comparison with its former state) simply by reaffirming a standard element of earlier hopes attached to Zion and its temple, with little or no modification. The temple will be glorified through the wealth of the nations which will be present there. Furthermore, Haggai deliberately obscures the origin of such wealth (is it the spoil of war, or the offerings of the nations?—both are found in the tradition), and is frustratingly silent regarding the manner in which it comes to Jerusalem. Thus Haggai blurs the broader details of the traditional complex and picks up a single element within the tradition and elevates it to central importance. I judge this to be a distinctive rhetorical/hermeneutical technique within the book, one that I have described elsewhere as generalization/focalization.¹⁰⁰ What is more, in this section there is nothing that the people can do to define the future other than wait for it. It is Yahweh who will intervene and glorify his own abode through

97. Deroousseaux, *La Crainte de Dieu*, 90.

98. The literature here is extensive. See Paul D. Hanson, “Zechariah 9 and the Recapitulation of an Ancient Ritual Pattern,” *JBL* 92 (1973): 37–59; Gerhard von Rad, “The City on the Hill,” in *The Problem of the Hexateuch and Other Essays* (trans. E. W. Trueman Dicken; London: SCM Press, 1984), 232–42; idem, *Old Testament Theology* (trans. D. M. G. Stalker; 2 vols.; Edinburgh: Oliver & Boyd, 1965), 2:292–97; J. J. M. Roberts, “The Davidic Origin of the Zion Tradition,” *JBL* 92 (1973): 329–44; Moshe Weinfeld, “Zion and Jerusalem as Religious and Political Capital: Ideology and Utopia,” in *The Poet and the Historian* (ed. Richard Elliott Friedman; HSS 26; Chico, Calif.: Scholars Press, 1983), 75–113.

99. I have dealt with this in far greater detail in Kessler, *Book of Haggai*, 173–95; also idem, “The Shaking of the Nations: An Eschatological View,” *JETS* 30 (1987): 159–66.

100. For a fuller discussion, see Kessler, *Book of Haggai*, esp. 190–95, 239–40, 70–75.

the splendor brought to it via the precious treasures of the nations which will adorn it. In sum, then, although 2:1–9 represents a more direct confronting of the failures of the past, numerous devices are deployed to establish continuity with positive aspects of Israel's earlier history, and to nurture hope. The future is thus waiting to be shaped by the intervention of Yahweh and the present is therefore somewhat transitional in nature—life in Yehud is not what it once was, but not yet what it will be. Once again no explanation is proffered as to why the temple was destroyed, nor is there any allusion to the sins of previous generations. What is more, all references to deportation, to the existence of a Diaspora, to a return from exile bearing gifts from the Gentiles—all stock items in Zion Theology and key themes in Isa 40–66 and Zech 1–8—are absent here. All that matters is that the struggling Jerusalemite community—be it in Haggai's day or that of his redactor—not be discouraged and retain hope.

7. *Haggai 2:10–19*

This section has long troubled readers of Haggai due to the numerous questions it raises in the present form of the book. These questions deal principally with how, having noted with approbation the response of leaders and people in 1:12–15, and having further encouraged them in their efforts (2:1–9), Haggai can now upbraid them again, and declare them unclean (2:14). One common response to the problem is (1) to view 1:15a + 2:15–19 as the remnant of an oracle proclaimed on the twenty-first day of the seventh month, just after the rebuilding began,¹⁰¹ and (2) to understand the people who are deemed to be unclean not as the Yehudite community, but the inhabitants of the former northern kingdom who have sought to join in the project (Ezra 4:2).¹⁰² This position, however, has largely been abandoned in recent commentaries.¹⁰³ Rather, following Koch, the majority of interpreters have viewed 2:10–19 as a unit and sought to make sense of it as such.¹⁰⁴ With Meyers and Meyers, Petersen,

101. Thus Amsler (Amsler, Lacoque, and Vuilleumeier, *Aggée–Zacharie 1–8*, 10) following Beuken (*Haggai–Sacharja 1–8*, 208) and Johann Wilhelm 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: J. C. Hinrichs, 1908], 53–73).

102. Thus Beuken, *Haggai–Sacharja 1–8*, 67–70; Rothstein, *Juden und Samaritaner*, passim; and Wolff, *Haggai*, 26–30.

103. Floyd, *Minor Prophets*, 286–96; Meyers and Meyers, *Haggai, Zechariah 1–8*, 57; Petersen, *Haggai and Zechariah 1–8*, 70–96.

104. Klaus Koch, "Haggais unreines Volk," *ZAW* 79 (1967): 52–66.

Amsler, and Floyd, I have argued that the dramatic conflict here is essentially cultic in nature,¹⁰⁵ and that the pericope concerns the radical transformation of the people's fortunes which will follow upon the temple refoundation ceremony (Zech 4:6–7, 8–10; 8:9),¹⁰⁶ a ceremony analogous to the *kalu* rite widely practiced in the ancient Near East.¹⁰⁷ From a tradition-critical perspective, the passage clearly contains allusions to a variety of forms and traditions including Priestly Theology (vv. 11–13), Deuteronomism (vv. 15–17), wisdom reflection (vv. 15, 18–20), prophetic oracles of reproach (v. 14), prophetic symbolic actions (vv. 11–13), and exhortations (vv. 15–19).¹⁰⁸ Following those who view the thrice-repeated date (2:10, 18, 20) as the date of the rededication ceremony, I maintain that the prophetic-symbolic action with its discussion of pure and impure, the declaration of the people's uncleanness, and the subsequent declaration of Yahweh's blessing, may have formed part of the ceremony itself, even constituting a dramatic presentation within it.¹⁰⁹

At issue for our present discussion, however, are three key factors. The first is that here, for the first time in the book, the destruction of the temple and the resultant defilement of the people and their offerings are openly acknowledged. Unlike 1:1–11, where such matters are only hinted at, here they form the central problem. How can the people be made clean again? The second is that here it is ceremony or ritual (supported, to be sure, by appeals to tradition) rather than simply obedience to or trust in the prophetic word, which is needed to reconnect the past and present. Up until now, the problems have lain with the people and their reluctance or discouragement, and tradition has been used as a motivating factor. Here the community marks the ritual consecration of its work, and receives assurance that Yahweh will bring unprecedented

105. In contrast to the "anti-Samaritan" and ethical positions. On the latter see, e.g., David R. Hildebrand, "Temple Ritual: A Paradigm for Moral Holiness in Haggai II 10–19," *VT* 18 (1989): 154–68; Rex A. Mason, "The Prophets of the Restoration," in *Israel's Prophetic Tradition: Essays in Honour of Peter R. Ackroyd* (ed. Richard Coggins, Anthony Philipps, and Michael Knibb; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 137–53.

106. On this text, see Baruch Halpern, "The Ritual Background of Zechariah's Temple Song," *CBQ* 40 (1978): 167–90; Koch, "Haggais unreines Volk," 52–66; Meyers and Meyers, *Haggai, Zechariah 1–8*, 63–64; Petersen, *Haggai and Zechariah 1–8*, 88–96; David L. Petersen, "Zerubbabel and Jerusalem Temple Reconstruction," *CBQ* 36 (1974): 366–72; Petitjean, *Les Oracles du Proto-Zacharie*, 241–51.

107. Richard S. Ellis, *Foundation Deposits in Ancient Mesopotamia* (Yale Near Eastern Researches 2; New Haven: Yale University Press, 1968).

108. On these latter two see Floyd, *Minor Prophets*, 294–95.

109. As I have suggested in Kessler, *Book of Haggai*, 213–18.

blessing. The third and most important feature to be noted is the prophet's certainty, based upon that which has transpired on the twenty-fourth day of the seventh month,¹¹⁰ that the present, transitional moment would ineluctably give way to greater agricultural and economic blessing. Attention is directed away from the past through the lack of any detail regarding how and why the community and its altar and offerings had become unclean¹¹¹ and is directed toward the future which would, without any doubt whatsoever, be defined by the blessing of Yahweh (vv. 15–19). Thus the activity of the people in re-consecrating the temple, and Yahweh's decision to honor their re-consecration, served to ensure future blessedness. With only an oblique reference to the temple's earlier defilement, this emphasis on the assurance of future blessedness constitutes the central focus of the passage. Thus, despite the fact that the critical problem addressed in this pericope is indeed the temple's defilement as a result of the events of the past, these events are not dwelt upon, but simply form the backdrop for the prophet's message. What matters is the certainty of future weal.

8. *Haggai 2:20–22*

In many ways this concluding section of the book marks its most concentrated use of traditional material. Following a standard introductory formula in v. 20, the prophet is instructed to deliver an oracle to Zerubbabel concerning his present and future status. Briefly put, the oracle assures the governor that in the coming, dramatic intervention of Yahweh, wherein the entire cosmos is shaken, and the power of all nations reduced (vv. 21b–22), he himself will be greatly exalted. The specific form of this exaltation and Zerubbabel's precise role in it are left largely unclear.¹¹² As elsewhere in the book, continuity motifs abound. Verse 22 describes the coming intervention of Yahweh in terms drawn from the destruction of the cities of the plain, the Sea of Reeds, the oracles against the nations, and various prophetic-eschatological scenarios,¹¹³ as well as

110. Floyd (*Minor Prophets*, 289–90) takes an alternative view of the chronology of this section.

111. This vagueness has given rise to the great diversity of interpretations in the critical literature. For a convenient summary of these, see Amsler, Lacoque, and Vuilleumeier, *Aggée-Zacharie 1–8*, 36.

112. I have examined this lack of clarity in detail (Kessler, "Haggai, Zerubbabel, and the Political Status of Yehud," 102–19).

113. Note especially the use of דָּבַר in 2:22. Cf. Gen 19:21–25, 29; Deut 29:22 (Eng. 29:23); Jer 49:18; 50:40. On this verb in Haggai, see Petersen, *Haggai and Zechariah 1–8*, 99. Note also the motif of the "going down" (דָּבַר) of hostile forces

motifs of the Divine Warrior and Day of Yahweh.¹¹⁴ All these various traditional formulations and motifs are fused and configured in distinctive ways.¹¹⁵ Further continuity features are found in the specific words addressed to Zerubbabel in v. 23. Similar to the Formula of Divine Assistance in 1:13b, the thrice-repeated Encouragement Formula in 2:4 and the exhortation “fear not” in 2:5, the three verbal and one nominal expressions link the governor to highly significant individuals in the past. Let us examine these expressions in turn.

First Yahweh announces that on that day he will “take” Zerubbabel and “set him as a signet ring.” The term לִקַּח is frequently used for Yahweh’s selection of specific individuals or groups and their appointment to certain tasks. These include Israel as a nation (Exod 6:7; Deut 4:20), the Levites (Num 3:12; Pss 8:16; 68:19 [Eng. 68:18]), Aaron (Lev 8:12), Joshua (Num 27:18, 22), David (2 Sam 7:8; Ps 78:70), and Amos (Amos 7:15).¹¹⁶ Furthermore, Yahweh declares Zerubbabel to be his “servant” (עַבְד). Such language is also used with reference to Abraham (Gen 26:24), Isaac and Jacob (Exod 32:13), Moses (Num 12:7–8; Deut 34:5), Joshua (Josh 1:1, 7; Judg 2:8), and especially David (2 Sam 7:5, 8; 1 Kgs 11:13; 2 Kgs 19:34). It is also used to refer to Israel’s future ruler in Ezek 34:23 and 37:24–25. Furthermore, in declaring to Zerubbabel that he will take him and set him as his signet ring, the prophet reverses the judgment invoked upon Jehoiachin in Jer 22:24–27. There, due to the latter’s unfaithfulness, the prophet declares that were he as precious as a signet ring on Yahweh’s hand¹¹⁷ he would be cast off and abandoned to

(Exod 14:9, 23; 15:1, 19, 21), the annihilation of the opposing troops “each by the hand/sword of his brother” (Judg 7:22, Gideon’s enemies; Isa 19:2 and Jer 14:16, Egypt; and Ezek 38:19–21, Gog and Magog).

114. Cf. the shaking of the cosmos in Isa 13:13; Jer 10:10; 50:46; Ezek 26:10; 27:28; Joel 2:10; 4:16 (Eng. 3:16) and Yahweh’s campaign against the nations in Isa 19:2; Jer 46:16; Ezek 38:19–21 and Zech 14:13.

115. Chary, *Aggée–Zacharie, Malachie*, 34; Kessler, *Book of Haggai*, 223–26; Petersen, *Haggai and Zechariah 1–8*, 101; Rudolph, *Haggai, Sacharja 1–8, 9–14, Malachi*, 53. Chary (p. 34) rightly observes that this text is made up of commonly used traditional images (“*clichés traditionnels*”).

116. For a fuller discussion, cf. Wolter H. Rose, *Zemah and Zerubbabel: Messianic Expectations in the Early Postexilic Period* (JSOTSup 304; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000), 216–18; Tollington, *Tradition and Innovation*, 137. Rose especially highlights the notion of appointment to a new task or responsibility.

117. On the conditional clause here, cf. Rose, *Zemah and Zerubbabel*, 244–45. If the text is understood as a real condition it underlines the divine pathos involved in the rejection of Jehoiachin and the judgment of the nation. If the condition is

his enemies. The text further predicts his death in exile and affirms that none of his progeny shall sit upon the throne of David (vv. 28–30).¹¹⁸ However, Haggai now affirms that, in contrast to Jehoiachin, the Davidide Zerubbabel would experience great exaltation (although the form of that exaltation is largely left undefined). Unlike his predecessor, he had demonstrated faithfulness to Yahweh (presumably in his obedience to the call to support the temple reconstruction, 1:12–14). Yahweh furthermore declares Zerubbabel to be his chosen one. The highly evocative term “to choose” (בָּחַר) connects Zerubbabel with other great worthies who have been chosen by Yahweh. These include the nation as a whole (Deut 7:6; 14:2; 1 Kgs 3:8; Ezek 20:5), specific tribes (1 Chr 15:2; Ps 78:67), and especially David and Jerusalem (Deut 7:6; 12:5, 11, 14, etc; 14:23; 18:6). Especially noteworthy is the use of the language of election to indicate restoration after judgment (e.g., Isa 41:1; Zech 1:17; 2:16 [Eng 2:12]). Albert Petitjean insightfully notes: “In 1:14b–17 Zechariah announces that Yahweh will now show, on Israel’s behalf, the ardent love implied in election. This electing love explains and causes events whose goal is the deliverance of Israel: the return of Yahweh...and new election.”¹¹⁹ Thus Yahweh’s choice of Zerubbabel expressed here likely indicates the renewal of his promises to the Davidic line and to the nation as a whole.¹²⁰

It should be noted, however that these numerous continuity themes in 2:20–23 serve to address a matter of extreme dissonance. This pericope, like 2:1–9 and 2:10–19, faces the tension between the present disappointing reality and the grandiose visions of both past and future contained in the tradition. In 2:1–9 the disappointing appearance of the temple is acknowledged, while in 2:10–19 its defiled state is dealt with. Here the

understood as contrary to fact it expresses disdain and rejection—even if Jehoiachin were as precious as a signet (which he is not), he would still be discarded, but since he is not, there is no doubt as to his doom.

118. Robert P. Carroll (*Jeremiah: A Commentary* [OTL; Philadelphia: Westminster, 1986], 441–43) and Yohanan Goldman (*Prophétie et royauté au retour de l’exil* [OBO 118; Freiburg: Universitätsverlag; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1992], 231–35) have suggested that Jer 22:24–30 reflects a post-exilic debate regarding the authority of Zerubbabel and the Davidic line. Carroll views Jer 22:26–30 as a redactional extension appended to the judgment meted out to Jehoiachin in Jer 22:24–25 so as to exclude his descendants from future political leadership. Goldman, by contrast views these additions as serving to *limit* the judgment upon Jehoiachin and his descendants to those born in Judah, thus legitimizing the tenure of Zerubbabel. See also Kessler, *Book of Haggai*, 236–37.

119. Petitjean, *Les Oracles du Proto-Zacharie*, 81.

120. On the issue of the use of the perfect here, see Kessler, *Book of Haggai*, 226 n. 47, and 233.

political dimension of the community's life is addressed. Yehud is a province, not a nation, and Zerubbabel, albeit a Davidide, is the subaltern governor of a petty province, not a king. How can the present state of affairs be reconciled with Judah's former existence as a kingdom, and Zion theology's ultimate hopes for a world at peace centered around Jerusalem and its temple? Haggai gives a twofold response. First, here as in 2:1–9, the prophet's words indicate both an acceptance of the transitional nature of the present moment—it does not reflect the transformed world that Yahweh will one day bring into being—yet a tenacious clinging to the hope of Yahweh's future intervention. Second, drawing from deeply rooted themes and forms from a variety of traditional matrices, Haggai reassures his hearers that Yahweh's glorious purposes for Israel and its ruler, expressed in earlier traditions (cf. Mic 4:1–4; Isa 2:1–4; Pss 2; 110), and called into question by the realities of Persian hegemony, would still find fulfillment.

Here again we encounter the minimization of the destruction of the temple and of the deportation of a portion of the population, as well as the absence of any mention of the Diaspora. Allusions to the past evoke positive rather than negative themes. The renewal of Yahweh's promise to the Davidic line stresses hope for the future rather than the failures of the past. The rejection of Jehoiachin in Jer 22:24–30 is alluded to only to announce a new promise which turned rejection into renewed election. As in 2:10–19, where the origin and nature of the community's defilement is not described in detail, here the rejection of Jehoiachin is alluded to but not elaborated upon. Emphasis is placed on the hope now restored in Zerubbabel. The community is enjoined provisionally to accept its present context, with all its constraints and disappointments, in light of the coming intervention of Yahweh, when the powers of the Gentile nations would be reduced, and Yahweh's chosen ruler exalted.

9. *Conclusions and Reflections*

The book of Haggai, then, bears witness to a somewhat distinct theological perspective within Early Persian Yehud. In it we have seen a minimization of the themes of the people's disobedience and Yahweh's judgment prominent elsewhere in the literature of the period. Rather, the text focuses upon an optimism regarding the present and future, if indeed the community will seize the moment and stand fast in hope. For ideological and theological reasons the disruptions of the early sixth century thus form the backdrop rather than the foreground of the book. A variety of techniques, especially involving the creative re-use of tradition, are

deployed within the text to set boundaries around matters related to the earlier destructions and deportations, and to focus attention upon the present and future. The book focuses on the hopeful news that the deadlock created by the community's neglect of the temple had now been resolved. Leaders and people had joined together and the reconstruction of Yahweh's house had begun (1:12–14). The people were exhorted to persevere in their task despite discouragement, having the certainty of Yahweh's presence as they labored, as well as the hope of an unimaginably glorious future (2:1–9). All residue and impediments from the past had been removed as the temple had been re-consecrated (2:10–19). And despite Yehud's position as a province within the Empire, and the reduction of its Davidic leader to the status of a mere governor, the future would be glorious, and Yahweh would humble the nations and exalt his people and their ruler (2:20–23).

What might account for this distinctive perspective in Haggai vis-à-vis other Persian-period texts, such as Zech 1–8, Ezra, Nehemiah and several of the Psalms? Three reasons appear to me to be critical to an explanation. The first is the differing foci of Haggai and Zech 1–8. Boda has argued that the two texts have important thematic differences. He maintains that Haggai champions the temple restoration cause, “revealing the fixation of the prophet and his narrator with the rebuilding project... Each of the pericopae in Haggai is connected to the rebuilding project in some fashion and every other topic is introduced in service of the larger theme.”¹²¹ Zechariah's interests, he states, are broader:

Zechariah reformulates the world of Jewish community and addresses the question of identity in a way which...transcends the message of Haggai. [He] expands restoration beyond a rebuilt temple...to include a renewed city and province...and moves beyond physical issues to consider the socio-religious rhythms necessary for life with a new temple and city... [Zechariah] was viewed not merely as a prophetic voice encouraging the rebuilding of the physical temple, but more importantly as a penitential prophet calling for ethical renewal among the people.¹²²

While Boda himself is clearly not expressing disdain for Haggai as a prophet,¹²³ his words, at first glance, are reminiscent of a lively tradition of unwarranted negative evaluation of Haggai, when compared to Zechariah, which exists in the critical literature.¹²⁴ While I fully agree

121. Boda, “Zechariah: Master Mason,” 50, 53.

122. *Ibid.*, 53, 54.

123. Mark J. Boda, “Haggai: Master Rhetorician,” *TynBul* 51 (2000): 295–304.

124. Haggai was held to be a crass materialist, while Zechariah was more spiritually minded. For Robert H. Pfeiffer (*Introduction to the Old Testament* [New

that Haggai and Zech 1–8 are distinct literary compositions which ought to be read separately, and that Zech 1–8 contains social and penitential motifs not found in Haggai, I find a purely temple-focused assessment of Haggai (as a redacted book) inadequate in that it does not distinguish between *plot content* and *ideological purpose*. I would argue that, while the reconstruction of the temple forms the topical and dramatic vehicle for the book's plot, the text's focus is on the success of Haggai as a prophet.¹²⁵ Such a focus serves to stress the need for the Yehudite community of the redactor's day to move forward via obedience to and trust in the prophetic word, as Haggai's hearers had done, and as subsequent generations would need to do, as long as the conditions of life under Persian rule lasted. Thus, central to the book's ideological purpose is an *apologia* for the ongoing relevance of prophecy in the Persian period. In Haggai, Yahweh is portrayed as active and powerful on a variety of levels. He can bring drought, disease, and natural disaster (1:3–11; 2:16–17), or prosperity (2:18). He can destabilize the natural elements, terrestrial and celestial, such that the nations are thrown into panic and brought to their knees and their wealth flows into his temple (2:6–9, 20–23). He has delivered his people from bondage in Egypt (2:5), and his presence dwells in their midst (1:13; 2:4). He appoints and exalts individuals chosen for specific tasks (2:23). Yet, it would seem, that which Yahweh cannot do by his power and might alone is effect change within the

York: Harper & Bros., 1941], 606–7) Haggai had little interest in the welfare of the nations but rather favored their “subjugation and spoliation.” Fleming James (“Thoughts on Haggai and Zechariah,” *JBL* 3 [1934]: 231) maintained that Haggai had “no further interest in the nations than to get hold of their money; for the rest let them kill each other off and be done with it (Hag 2:22).” Haggai is said to have viewed the reconstruction of the temple as a sort of talisman—a guarantor of the future weal of the community. Pfeiffer, for example, states that for Haggai “the present prosperity and future glory of his people depended entirely on the rebuilding of the temple... [Haggai's] great concern was not the moral and religious wickedness of the people, but adherence to rules of Levitical purity and the fulfillment of ritual acts” (*Introduction to the Old Testament*, 602–3). One commentator opined that “Haggai's work was done when the work on the temple was revived. It was otherwise with Zechariah... He devoted himself to the spiritual edification of the community” (W. Emery Barnes, *Haggai and Zechariah* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1917], xlv). I cite these examples to illustrate the fact Haggai has frequently been read as somehow more materialistically orientated than Zechariah. For a fuller discussion see Kessler, *Book of Haggai*, 4–7.

125. Chary (*Aggée-Zacharie, Malachie*, 21) aptly comments: “Prophetic preaching has been effective, an event rarely attested in the history of the people.” Beuken (*Haggai-Sacharja 1–8*, 332) similarly expresses the importance of the theme of prophetic success.

hearts of his people. It was only the prophetic word via Haggai through which Yahweh was able to stir up the spirits of leaders and people, so that the temple could be rebuilt and his relationship with his people could move forward (1:12–15). Furthermore, the prophetic word was needed on an ongoing basis to provide guidance, encouragement, direction, and the nurturance of hope (2:1–22).

Thus the story of the temple's reconstruction in Haggai is far more than a chronicle describing the successful rehabilitation of a building. After all, if such were the case the book's ultimate purpose would simply be to demonstrate how the Yehudite community succeeded in rebuilding the temple, under Haggai's leadership. While it certainly does emphasize that historical reality, it goes far beyond the temple rebuilding itself and presents a rich theology of divine-human interaction. The book thus affirms that Yahweh still intervenes in history and speaks through the prophetic word.¹²⁶ His people may either ignore his words, or respond in obedience and trust. The fate of the community is defined and determined by its ability to engage in this process—and the response of the people to Haggai's preaching would indicate that they were off to a good start. Beyond this the book presents an ideology of hope in Yahweh despite the bleakness and discouragement of the present. Like Zechariah (Zech 4:10), Haggai refuses to countenance the despising of the day of small things. The temple, though unimpressive, the "nation," though a weak province, and its Davidic ruler, though a subaltern governor and not a king, were not to be despised. These were tokens in the present of Yahweh's pledge to do greater things in the future. Wolff is thus highly accurate in viewing Zerubbabel as a *persönlicher Hoffnungsträger*, a person whose very presence embodies hope for the future.¹²⁷ Thus I would maintain that the themes of the disobedience of the ancestors, Yahweh's ongoing anger, and the devastations of 597–587 are downplayed simply because they do not contribute to, but rather distract from, these more central concerns in Haggai.

126. The literature on the question of the cessation of prophecy is voluminous. See provisionally Eric M. Meyers, "The Crisis of the Mid-fifth Century B.C.E. Second Zechariah and the 'End' of Prophecy," in *Pomegranates and Golden Bells: Studies in Biblical, Jewish, and Near Eastern Ritual Law and Literature in Honor of Jacob Milgrom* (ed. David P. Wright, David N. Freedman, and Avi Hurvitz; Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 1995), 712–23; David L. Petersen, "Rethinking the End of Prophecy," in "*Wünchet Jerusalem Frieden*": *Collected Communications to the XIIIth Congress of the International Organization for the Study of the Old Testament* (ed. Matthias Augustin and Klaus-Dietrich Schunck; BEATAJ 13; Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1988), 65–71; and Benjamin D. Sommer, "Did Prophecy Cease? Evaluating a Reevaluation," *JBL* 115 (1996): 31–47.

127. Wolff, *Haggai*, 86 (German edition).

Second, I would suggest that Haggai reflects an alternative, more optimistic vision of life with Yahweh than is reflected in Zech 1–8 and various other Persian-period texts. The very somber side of second temple Israelite spirituality with its emphasis upon Yahweh's justice, the people's sinfulness and consequent misery, and the hope for future deliverance, is indeed the dominant voice within the canon, and has been well-studied in recent years.¹²⁸ It has been suggested that this form of piety arose in part due to the ongoing suffering of the people under Persian rule, and beyond.¹²⁹ Haggai, however, is profoundly optimistic regarding change within Yehud, on the most practical of levels. Thus, the crop failure and disease, low yields, and generally depressing economic circumstances which had recently plagued the community were seen as temporary measures, and the community was assured that a return to better results in all these areas was not far off (1:3–11; 2:15–19). And it should be noted that while this change for the better is sometimes set in a more distant, eschatological context, as in 2:6–9, 20–23, it is also foreseen as transpiring in the ongoing, everyday economic life of the community, as in 1:3–11 and 2:15–19. This distinction between the more proximate future, in which significant yet more realistic and modest change may be expected, and the world situation subsequent to Yahweh's great intervention, is carefully made in the book.¹³⁰ Thus, if indeed this perspective noted in Haggai may be deemed to be an earlier voice than that of Zech 1–8, then we may catch a glimpse of an earlier, somewhat more optimistic perspective than that which developed in the later, penitential tradition. Persian rule was not yet seen as oppressive and odious. Rather, in this earlier moment there was a large measure of congruence between the goals of the restoration community and those of the Persian Crown.¹³¹ This being the case, there is a profound emphasis on renewing and restoring the community to its former situation. In contrast to Zechariah's invitation to *discontinuity and dissociation*, Haggai's words are framed so as to cultivate a perspective of *profound continuity* with the best elements of Israel's remembered past. Thus, faithfulness and obedience to Yahweh in the present will bring modest yet tangible gains in the near future—even amidst the ongoing realities of Persian

128. Cf. Ezra 9; Neh 9; Ps 106. For convenient survey of the key themes involved, with bibliography, see Boda, "Zechariah: Master Mason," 64.

129. *Ibid.*, 63–64.

130. This distinction is not often noted; see André Caquot, "Le Judaïsme depuis la captivité de Babylone jusqu'à la révolte de Bar-Kokheba," in *Encyclopédie de la Pléiade. Histoire des Religions II* (ed. H.-C. Puech; Paris: Gallimard, 1972), 130.

131. Cf. Kessler, *Book of Haggai*, 259–61.

rule (2:15–19). And all of this, as just noted, stood in anticipation of Yahweh's great, coming intervention which would radically reorder heavens and earth, Israel and the nations (2:6–9, 20–23).

Third and finally, Haggai's lack of attention to matters such as the sins of the ancestors and the judgments visited upon them, the existence of the various Diaspora communities, as well as the book's lack of specificity concerning the actual state of the relationship between Yahweh and his people, especially as it relates to the covenant, is likely indicative of the general confusion which reigned at the time regarding (1) which among the many groups within Yahwism could rightly lay claim to be the remnant of promise,¹³² and (2) whether Yahweh's covenant with the nation at an earlier period could still be assumed to be functioning. The canon bears witness to the various struggles over these matters. Jeremiah 24, Ezek 11, and Ezek 33 identify Yahweh's presence with the 597 exiles, while a separate Jeremianic tradition, reflected in Jer 42:7–17, appears to identify divine approval with those who remained in the land,¹³³ and Ezra and Nehemiah specifically exclude such people (Ezra 4 and 9). Jeremiah 42:18–22 expresses disdain for the Egyptian Diaspora whereas Zech 8:7 expresses hope for their re-gathering. Furthermore, the matter of the fate of the covenant and even the nature of how covenant was understood is unclear in the various traditions. Was the first covenant terminated in 587 (2 Kgs 24; Jer 31:31–34)? Did the covenant continue with the exiles in Babylon (Ezek 11:14–21), or did it fall into a lapsed state, awaiting the turning of the remnant which Yahweh had graciously spared (Lev 26:40–45; Hos 11:9; Mic 4:4)? And to what extent had the earlier notion of ברית as a conditional, bilateral covenant been supplanted by the use of the term to refer to a solemn oath or promise.¹³⁴ Given the fluidity which surrounded these matters it is hardly surprising that they are ill-defined within Haggai. Avoiding many of these uncertainties, Haggai's redactor(s) chose to set the book's action in a theological context much like that of one of the prophetic books set in the monarchic period, presupposing a functioning relationship with Yahweh and holding out hope for the community through faithfulness to

132. For a survey of the various groups involved, see Kessler, "Persia's Loyal Yahwists," 91–121.

133. On this see Christopher Seitz, "The Crisis of Interpretation Over the Meaning and Purpose of the Exile: A Redactional Study of Jeremiah xxi–xlili," *VT* 35 (1985): 78–97; idem, *Theology in Conflict: Reactions to the Exile in the Book of Jeremiah* (BZAW 176; Berlin: de Gruyter, 1989).

134. As suggested by S. David Sperling, "Rethinking Covenant in the Late Biblical Books," *Bib* 70 (1989): 50–73.

Yahweh and obedience to the prophetic word. Thus the book manifests a profound restorationist impulse, one which profoundly seeks to minimize the dissonance and uncertainty which confronted the Yehudite community at the beginning of a new era in its experience of life with Yahweh. To this end, via the creative use of traditional forms and vocabulary, numerous links are created between the struggling Jerusalemite community, its leaders and prophets, and the Israel of tradition and memory.

In sum, then, the book of Haggai reflects a distinctive perspective within the *pastiche* of emerging theological and ideological perspectives in Early Persian Yehud. While its voice did not become a dominant one, its witness may have captured for us a distinct moment in the life of the restoration community.