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Curse, Covenant, and Temple in the Book of Haggai

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Introduction

The book of Haggai opens with a prophetic invective directed against the community in Yehud, set in the early years of the reign of the Persian king, Darius.¹ In vv. 3–11 the prophet declares that the community’s experience of drought, poor harvests, and economically ruinous conditions constitutes evidence of Yahweh’s displeasure at its inattention to the reconstruction of the temple.²

Now therefore thus says the LORD of hosts: Consider how you have fared. You have sown much, and harvested little; you eat, but you never

1. On the dating of the “second year of Darius” see Wolff 1988: 75–76; Kessler 1992; 2002a: 80–85.

2. In the broader ANE tradition, the sins of a land’s populace could arouse the anger of the gods and result in the destruction of its cult sites, the devastation of the land, and the diminution of its fertility. This motif appears certain of the inscriptions of Esarhaddon (see, for example inscriptions 113, lines 8b–15a and 114 [commonly known as Bab. D], lines 1.7–18 in Leichty 2011: 229–30, 236) and that of Arak-din-ili (cited in Ambos 2010: 225). Inversely, in Gudea, Cylinder A 11 (translation in Hurowitz 1992: 322), the temple’s restoration brings renewed fertility. It is important to note that in these texts this infertility did not in itself constitute sufficient ground for the undertaking of a temple’s restoration. It was incumbent on any would-be builder to make absolutely certain of divine approval for the project, lest the divine anger be still unabated, and horrible consequences be unleashed on him (Novotny 2010: 114–15; see also the examples given in Ambos 2010: 224–26, regarding restoration undertaken or performed improperly). Generally, this reassurance was given through astronomical phenomena, dreams, omens, extispicy, or the discovery of the temple’s earlier foundations (see the examples and discussion in Hurowitz, 1992: 143–63; and Novotny 2010: 114–15). In Haggai, by contrast, the evidences of divine anger in 1:3–11 stem from the *neglect* of the work of the temple’s reconstruction and are intended to move the community to undertake it. There is no question of the need for further signs or confirmations. The prophet expects the community to have already realized their obligation, and views their *procrastination* as the cause of the land’s infertility and their economic woes. On this, see also Kessler 1998; 2002b; 2010.

have enough; you drink, but you never have your fill; you clothe yourselves, but no one is warm; and you that earn wages earn wages to put them into a bag with holes. You have looked for much, and, lo, it came to little; and when you brought it home, I blew it away. Why? says the LORD of hosts. Because my house lies in ruins, while all of you hurry off to your own houses. Therefore the heavens above you have withheld the dew, and the earth has withheld its produce. And I have called for a drought on the land and the hills, on the grain, the new wine, the oil, on what the soil produces, on human beings and animals, and on all their labors. (Hag 1:5–6, 9–11, NRSV)³

Readers familiar with biblical texts such as Deuteronomy 28, Leviticus 26, Amos 4: 6–12, and Mic 6:9–16, as well as the treaty texts of Esarhaddon, and the Sefire and Tell-Fekherye inscriptions⁴ will immediately recognize that Haggai's language closely resembles the curses to be meted out for covenant violation in these texts. This similarity, however, raises two closely related questions. First, why does Haggai use this language and what does it reveal regarding the book's view of the status of the Sinai covenant in the early Persian period? Second, on what basis has temple reconstruction, not normally a stock component of Israel's obligations in either the deuteronomic or Priestly covenantal traditions, come to be seen as an *obligation* in Haggai?⁵ This study will address these two significant questions.

3. All biblical citations are from the NRSV except where cited loosely. Similar language appears in 2:15–17 to describe the situation prior to the refoundation ceremony performed on the emerging temple structure. I cannot explore the relationship between the "curse language" in Haggai 2 and that of Haggai 1 in this study. For the position that 2:15–19 concerns the temple's ceremonial refoundation, see Kessler 2002a: 206–11; 2010; Petersen 1985; Meyers and Meyers 1987.

4. In this study, I will use these biblical texts as representative points of comparison to Haggai, because they contain significant concentrations of curse vocabulary. This language does, of course, appear elsewhere in the HB. See the survey of this language in the prophets in Stuart 1987: xxii–xl; *Treaty of Esarhaddon*: ANET 534–41; Wiseman 1958; *Sefire*: Fitzmyer 1967; Lemaire and Durand 1984. See also Morrow 2001. *Tell-Fekherye*: Abou-Assaf et al. 1982; Millard and Bordreuil 1982; Greenfield and Shaffer 1983; Greenfield and Shaffer 1985.

5. For simplicity's sake, I will use the more general term *deuteronomic* to designate the ideology generally associated with the book of Deuteronomy and the other texts and redactions commonly associated with it. For this approach to the terminological issues, see Blenkinsopp 1999.

Regarding Haggai's association of temple building with the Sinai covenant, David Petersen (1985: 50) states, "Such a view represents a significant reformulation of the covenant norms, focusing in the cult center per se, something that is markedly absent from other covenant stipulations preserved in the Hebrew Bible."

*Preliminary Considerations**The Book of Haggai*

In this study, the name *Haggai* refers both to the prophet and to the book that bears his name. Elsewhere, I have argued that it is extremely difficult to make any far-reaching distinctions concerning the perspective of the prophet as opposed to that of his editors based on differences between the oracles and the redactional framework, or between various levels of redactional activity in the book (Kessler 2002: 31–57; Floyd 1995). This is, of course, not to deny that these elements may not be distinguished.⁶ It is simply that the degree of integration between the oracles and redactional material, the distinct subject matter dealt with by each, and most especially, the tight literary structuring to which the oracles have been subjected and into which they have been set, precludes much peering below the surface level.⁷ In this study, therefore, I will not attempt to distinguish between the perspective of the book's oracles and redactional framework. With Wöhrle (2006) and Boda (2003, 2007), and in contrast to many alternative approaches, I view Haggai to have substantially reached its present form independently of Zechariah 1–8 or Malachi, and before its integration into any larger prophetic collection.⁸ And like Boda and Wöhrle, I view Haggai as reflecting an earlier glimpse into Yehudite life and thought than that of much of Zechariah and of Malachi. It thus stands “downstream” from substantial portions of the Priestly and deuteronomic literature and earlier forms of various prophetic books, but “upstream” from Zechariah 1–8 and 9–14, Malachi, and various additions to and redactional links between earlier prophetic works. I date the production of the book to a time not long after (perhaps a few years, at most) the ritual refoundation and reconsecration alluded to in 2:10, 18, 20, usually calculated to December 19, 520 B.C.E.

6. Numerous suggestions have been proposed. See esp. Wolff 1988; Wöhrle 2006.

7. On the literary structure of the book in its present form (notwithstanding some small later *retouches*, see Kessler 2002a: 247–51).

8. Meyers and Meyers (1987) view Haggai and Zechariah 1–8 as a single work. Sérandour (1995; 1996), following Bosshard and Kratz (1990) sees Haggai in its present form as a fully integrated part of a Haggai-Zechariah-Malachi corpus. Nogalski (1993: 221–37; 272–73; 278–79) suggests that redactional activity on the book of Haggai in an earlier form served to link it more closely to Zechariah 1–8, creating a literary unity that was subsequently incorporated into the Book of the Twelve. For a survey of various hypotheses regarding the formation of a Haggai-Zechariah-Malachi corpus and its integration into the Book of the Twelve, see Boda 2003, 2007.

The Traditio-historical Rooting of Haggai 1:1–11; 2:15–17

Allusions to national or personal misfortune as judgments or curses, sent as signs of divine displeasure, may be found throughout the HB.⁹ Concentrations of these “curse materials” sometimes appear in passages containing strong intertextual links to Hag 1:1–11 and 2:15–17. These sections include Deuteronomy 28, Leviticus 26, 1 Kgs 8:31–53, Amos 4:6–12, and Mic 6:9–16. These passages are generally considered to have reached their present form at a time previous to or contemporaneous with the production of Haggai. Before beginning our discussion of the use of these traditional materials in Haggai, a brief, noncomprehensive survey of the intertextual allusions within these “cursings” is in order.¹⁰ This will better enable us to ascertain the traditions on which Haggai has drawn and the unique use that has been made of them in the book.

Hag 1:6a states, “You have sown much, and harvested little.” This closely parallels Deut 28:38, “You shall carry much seed into the field but shall gather little in, for the locust shall consume it.” Similarly, Lev 26:16b warns, “You shall sow your seed in vain, for your enemies shall eat it.” Mic 6:15a declares, “You shall sow, but not reap.”¹¹ Hag 1:6b declares, “You eat, but you never have enough.” The phrase “to eat and be satisfied” is a stock deuteronomic idiom for eating all one desires (Deut 6:11; 8:10, 12; 11:15; 14:29; 26:12; 31:20). The concept of eating without satisfaction similarly appears in the judgment formulas in Hos 4:10: “They shall eat, but not be satisfied; they shall play the whore, but not multiply because they have forsaken the LORD”; Mic 6:14: “You shall eat, but not be satisfied, and there shall be a gnawing hunger within you”; and Lev 26:26: “When I break your staff of bread, ten women shall bake your bread in a single oven, and they shall dole out your bread by weight; and though you

9. The limitations and focus of this study preclude comparison of Haggai’s use of covenantal maledictions with that found in other ANE texts. Furthermore, although these comparisons are indeed interesting, it would be extremely difficult to prove any direct influence of these texts on the formulations of the curse material in Haggai, beyond that of general similarity of form.

10. Space precludes the discussion of the various secondary interpretive and translational issues that appear in these passages. I simply make reference to their general themes and ideas.

11. It is difficult to know whether the imperfects in Mic 6:14–16 refer to events that lie entirely in the future, or those which have already begun. Much turns on whether the verb in 6:13 is read, with the LXX, as a form of *הָלַל* (“to begin”), thus Mays 1976: 143; Wolff 1990: 187; or of *הָלַח* (“to be weak, sick”), thus Hillers 1984: 80–81. This in turn raises the question whether repentance might still be possible. If the oracle is read as an announcement of judgment (thus, Ben Zvi 2000: 159–64; Mays 1976: 144–490) this possibility is unlikely.

eat, you shall not be satisfied.” Lack of food also features in the judgments sent to Israel in Amos 4:6: “I gave you cleanness of teeth in all your cities, and lack of bread in all your places.” Hag 1:6c laments having some drink, but not enough.¹² Mic 6:15c similarly warns, “You shall tread grapes, but not drink wine.” Paucity of drink is associated with communal contention or divine judgment (Exod 17:1–7; Num 20:2–13; Deut 28:39), while abundance of food and drink signifies the reverse (Exod 23:25; Deut 11:10–12; 14:26). Hag 1:6d speaks of the lamentable situation of dressing but not being warm. Lack of both water and clothing are set forth in Deut 28:47–48a, “Because you did not serve the LORD your God joyfully and with gladness of heart for the abundance of everything, therefore you shall serve your enemies whom the LORD will send against you, in hunger and thirst, in nakedness and lack of everything.”

Economic privation is similarly an important theme in the curse material. Hag 1:6d declares, “You that earn wages earn wages to put them into a bag with holes.” Concretely, this may refer to life under Persian hegemony, where taxes and other obligations consumed much of the province’s income (cf. Neh 5:4, 14–15). But the curse of penury and loss of wealth are expressed elsewhere in a more generalized way. Deut 28:33 declares, “A people whom you do not know shall eat up the fruit of your ground and of all your labors,” and Deut 28:63a warns, “And just as the LORD took delight in making you prosperous and numerous, so the LORD will take delight in bringing you to ruin and destruction.” Mic 6:14b threatens, “You shall put away, but not save, and what you save, I will hand over to the sword.” In Hag 1:9a, Yahweh takes responsibility for inflicting the hardships on the community: “You have looked for much, and, lo, it came to little; and when you brought it home, I blew it away.” Similar thoughts are expressed in 2:16–17, “When one came to a heap of 20 measures, there were but 10; when one came to the wine vat to draw 50 measures, there were but 20. I struck you and all the products of your toil with blight and mildew and hail.” The imagery of “blight and mildew” recalls the curse language of Deut 28:22, 1 Kgs 8:37, and Amos 4:9. Hail recalls the plague on the Egyptians (Exod 9:18–19, 22–26, 28–29, 33–34).

The imagery of Hag 1:10, “Therefore the heavens above you have withheld the dew, and the earth has withheld its produce,” resonates with that of Lev 26:19, “I will break your proud glory, and I will make your sky like iron and your earth like copper,” Deut 11:17a, “for then the anger of the

12. Scholars are divided as to whether the satisfaction here refers to the quenching of thirst or to the effects of alcohol.

LORD will be kindled against you and he will shut up the heavens, so that there will be no rain and the land will yield no fruit,” and Deut 28:23–24, “The sky over your head shall be bronze, and the earth under you iron. The LORD will change the rain of your land into powder, and only dust shall come down upon you from the sky until you are destroyed.” Lack of rain also features in Amos 4:7, “And I also withheld the rain from you when there were still three months to the harvest; I would send rain on one city, and send no rain on another city; one field would be rained upon, and the field on which it did not rain withered.” 1 Kgs 8:35–36 similarly sees drought as a consequence of sin: “When heaven is shut up and there is no rain because they have sinned against you, and then they pray toward this place, confess your name, and turn from their sin, because you punish them, then hear in heaven, and forgive the sin of your servants, your people Israel, when you teach them the good way in which they should walk; and grant rain on your land, which you have given to your people as an inheritance.”

Even this cursory and preliminary survey reveals the close affinity between Haggai’s formulations and the curse language of both deuteronomic and Priestly literature (as evident in Deuteronomy 28 and Leviticus 26, respectively), as well as the traditions in Hosea and Micah, whose tradition-historical rooting is still the object of scholarly debate.¹³ Most important is the fact that in all these traditions these curses are attached to violations of Israel’s covenantal duties as enumerated at Sinai.¹⁴

As noted above, this raises two highly significant and interrelated questions. First, how does Haggai understand the relationship between the

13. Leviticus 26 belongs more properly to that form of Priestly literature produced by the so-called Holiness School. This study, however, does not require a discussion of the relationship between the Priestly Torah and the Holiness School. On this distinction, see Knohl 1995; Wright 1999; Nihan 2007. On the reception of deuteronomic conceptions by the Holiness School see p.241 n. 24. For examples of this scholarly debate, many see evidence of deuteronomic editing of earlier material in Amos and Micah (Wolf 1977: 112–13; 1990: 26–27). However, see also E. Ben Zvi’s words of caution (1999).

14. Although it is likely the Priestly conceptions regarding Yahweh’s covenant with Abraham (Genesis 17) would have been known to Haggai and his editors, there is no explicit reference to this material in the book. These curse materials point rather to Sinai. The question regarding the relationship of the Priestly material to Sinai has continued to elicit critical debate. Numerous scholars see the Priestly materials connected to Sinai as an expansion to the earlier covenant made with Abraham in Genesis 17 (Cazelles 1977). Thus, even when the Sinai legislation has been severely breached, hope may be found in the earlier promises of Genesis 17 of the perdurance of the nation as a whole. These sentiments are clearly expressed in Lev 26:40–45, esp. v. 44.

Jerusalemite temple and the Sinai Covenant? Can it be said that Haggai views the rebuilding of the temple as a covenantal duty, and if so, on what basis is this identification made? Second, does the curse language here indicate that Haggai views the community as having profoundly violated, or even decisively broken the terms of the Sinai Covenant through its neglect of the temple? These two questions are closely connected and must be answered together.

Earlier Approaches to Curse and Covenant in Haggai

The purpose of Haggai's use of this "curse language" (specifically the "futility curse" form, Hillers 1964) has been understood in two primary ways. One group of scholars, noting the close resemblance between Haggai's language and other treaty curses, affirms that Haggai is charging the people with severe covenant violation or even a decisive breaking of covenant through its neglect of the temple. Beuken, for example, states, "The formulaic expressions [of Hag 1:3–11] are derived from a specific type of covenant curse. Thus the difficult circumstances are understood as the result of covenant-breaking" (1967: 33).¹⁵ Petersen echoes Beuken's thought and observes, "reconstruction of the temple is treated as a covenant duty that, because it has not been accomplished, has brought on the futility curses of an abrogated covenant. . . . Not only are the people living an existence cursed because of the 587 disaster; their existence is also cursed because of their reaction to the result of that earlier cursing, the destruction of the temple" (1985: 50).¹⁶ For Beuken and Petersen then, temple reconstruction has been subsumed under covenant, and failure to fulfill this duty has strained Yahweh's relationship with the community to the breaking point (Beuken 1967: 27–34; Petersen 1985: 60).¹⁷ In

15. *Bundesbruch*. Translation mine.

16. Note however that Beuken and Petersen differ on a key point. The former maintains that the covenant is so broken that it has lapsed and must be reinstated. The latter (1985: 60) sees the imposition of its curses as an indication that it is still in force.

17. It is frequently observed that temple building "is markedly absent from other covenant stipulations preserved in the Hebrew Bible" (Petersen 1984: 50). However, some might suggest that this sort of idea is implicit in the concept of cult centralization in Deuteronomy 12–16 and that it is from there that Haggai derived his understanding of temple rebuilding as a covenantal obligation. Thus it might be suggested that, in Haggai's eyes, the community in Yehud was guilty of covenant violation in that, just as the incoming Israelites were called to centralize the worship of Yahweh in a specific location, so the Persian-period Yehudites, due to their inattention to the temple were guilty of a breach of an explicit demand of the Sinai covenant. This sort of approach, however, is unlikely. The demands in Deuteronomy 12–16 concern centralization of

my earlier volume on Haggai, I accepted the form-critical judgment that Haggai's words related to covenant curses imposed for covenant violation, and concurred that Haggai had included temple reconstruction as a covenantal duty (Kessler 2002: 155–57). I suggested that Haggai may have done so on the basis of the sentiments expressed in Deut 28:58–59a, arguing that Haggai viewed neglect of the temple as a manifestation of disdain for Yahweh, and failure of reverence for the Divine Name. However at that time, and in subsequent studies, I nevertheless expressed my profound disagreement with the idea that the prophet's words in 1:3–11 relate to cursings inherited from 587, and with the suggestion that 1:12–14 constitutes a covenant renewal. Rather, I argued that Haggai's use of the curse vocabulary suggested that the Sinai covenant was viewed as still in force (Kessler 2002: 183–84; 2008: 148). This study will reinforce my arguments for the thesis that Haggai presupposes the Sinai covenant to be still in force but will revise my earlier conclusion regarding *why* Haggai associates neglect of temple reconstruction and the curse language frequently used for violation of the Sinai covenant.

A second approach to Haggai's use of traditional curse language moves in the opposite direction. It affirms that Haggai's language is merely *bor-*

worship, not temple building per se (Nelson 2002: 145–61). While Israel is to seek out the place of Yahweh's choosing (Deut 12:5) and the construction of a central altar to Yahweh is assumed (12:6, etc.), no further, explicit building instructions are given. In Haggai, by contrast, the emphasis is clearly on the Jerusalemite temple as Yahweh's house, its former glories and its dilapidated appearance (2:1–3). Furthermore numerous scholars suggest that some kind of altar or cult site may have existed at Jerusalem throughout the Babylonian period (see the discussion in Kessler 2002a: 88–90). Second, Haggai's invective to his hearers is not set within an "exile and return" motif. In contrast to most of the other literature of the period, Haggai makes no explicit mention of the community at Jerusalem or its leaders as having come from somewhere else and having resettled in the land (Coggins 1987: 34–35; see also the discussion of the term *שארית* in Hag 1:12 in Kessler 2002a: 141–42). Thus, the suggestion of a parallel situation to that of the invading Israelites is inconsistent with the rest of the prophet's thought. Third, there is no sense that Haggai's demands regarding the Jerusalemite temple are set in the context of various competing altars, unless one accepts the earlier "Samaritan hypothesis" and sees 2:14 as a reference to the altar in Samaria. However, this sort of approach is contextually improbable and has few contemporary adherents (Kessler 2002a: 207–8; 210–11). Finally and most significantly, as I will argue below, it is the "restorationist impulse" in Haggai that provides the most likely explanation for the prophet's insistence that the people's neglect of temple reconstruction was indeed an offense against Yahweh within Israel's broader relationship to Yahweh (cf. Kessler 2002a: 275–76; 2008). As we shall see on pp. 245–248 below, for Haggai, temple (re)construction was not an obligation because it formed part of the original part of the Sinai legislation but because the Jerusalemite temple had become and still remained an indispensable element of Israelite identity.

rowed from a covenantal matrix. Thus, Tollington rejects the notion that Haggai views the people's failure as a breach of covenant (1993: 191). Rather she suggests, "it may be that the prophet is using earlier cultic material traditionally associated with covenant concepts but is applying it to his current situation in a new way, somewhat in the style of a modern preacher" (Tollington 1993:190). She affirms, "The prophet makes no reference to any breaches of the covenant relationship by the people. [Haggai] makes his hearers consider their situation; by his choice of words he prompts them to recall the concepts of curses and Yahweh's punishment: and he links this to the fact that the temple still lies in ruins" (1993:191–92). In a similar fashion Wolff (1988), Amsler (1988: 23–24), Verhoef (1987: 60–64; 68–78), and E. M. and C. L. Meyers (1987: 25–34) acknowledge Haggai's use of traditional curse material but treat it primarily as *a vehicle for the expression of divine displeasure*, rather than an indication that for Haggai, temple reconstruction is now seen as an obligation of the Sinai covenant.

It seems to me that there are significant difficulties with both approaches. On the one hand, serious problems arise when one attempts to understand Haggai 1 as indicating a "violated covenant," similar to the use of this language in Leviticus 26, Deuteronomy 28, Amos 4, Micah 6, and the broader ANE treaty materials. Despite the formal similarity and verbal parallels that clearly exist between Haggai 1 and these texts, a clear distinction emerges when one notes the distinctive outlook and function of the curse language in Haggai. It is precisely at this more foundational level that viewing Haggai's "curse language" here as evidence of a severely violated (if not broken) covenant becomes quite problematic.

Many of the biblical "curse materials" we surveyed earlier that bear close resemblance to Haggai (Deuteronomy 28, Leviticus 26, Amos 4, Micah 6) describe instances of profound covenant violation. In these texts, we find a *series* of misfortunes drawn from *various spheres of life* (war, famine, disease, drought), enacted as a result of the violation of the *core demands* of a covenantal commitment, that results in the *ultimate destruction* of the covenant violator. In fact, two patterns emerge in these texts. In the first, the curse material is presented as a single cataclysmic judgment, expressed without reference to how long Israel's offensive behavior has continued, or to any calls for repentance that may have been ignored. Thus, in Deut 28:15–68, the curses serve as *warnings* to the nation of the horrible consequences of disobedience and enjoin absolute fidelity to Yahweh. No mention is made of prophetic warnings or opportunities for repentance as is done in 2 Kgs 17:7–20 and 24:1–4. Similarly, in Mic 6:9–16, the prophet

announces the imposition of curses and the destruction of the city (likely Jerusalem) as a result of its wrongdoing. In the second pattern these maledictions are applied incrementally and intended to produce repentance. If repentance does not occur, complete devastation ensues. Amos 4:6–11 cites numerous kinds of misfortunes (drought, famine, pestilence, military defeat) sent on the people and land, but to no avail. The refrain “and still you did not return to me” concludes each misfortune (vv. 4, 6, 8, 9, 10, 11). Finally, cataclysmic judgment is announced: “Therefore thus I will do to you, O Israel; because I will do this to you, prepare to meet your God, O Israel!” (Amos 4:12). Leviticus 26 contains a similar pattern. Initial disobedience will be met with the imposition of curses (vv. 14–17). But at this early stage, Yahweh’s displeasure may be removed through return and obedience (v. 18a). However, should rebellion persist, further judgment will surely follow (vv. 18b–20). But even at this point, the situation is not irremediable. Israel may either turn back to Yahweh or “continue hostile”¹⁸ to God. Should Israel still not change its ways, further painful consequences will follow (vv. 21b–22). But even at this point, opportunity for averting greater judgment is not withdrawn (v. 23). Should Israel “continue hostile” to God, Yahweh will do so as well (v. 24), sending even greater misfortunes (vv. 24b–26). Even here, judgment need not be final (v. 27). However, should Yahweh’s mercy be once again rejected, at that point the severest judgments will be relentlessly inflicted, with no immediate possibility of relief.¹⁹ It is only after the horrors of siege and exile, the

18. Heb., הִלֵּךְ עִמִּי קָרִי. This is a key term, and one that will appear at several points in the escalation of the hostility between Yahweh and Israel (Lev 26:23, 27, 40).

19. At this point in the unraveling of Yahweh’s relationship with the nation, the destruction of Israel’s cultic centers is mentioned. Lev 26:31–32 states that Israel’s disobedience will provoke Yahweh to destroy Israel’s high places (בְּמִתְיָכֶם, v. 30) and lay waste its sanctuaries (מִקְדָּשֵׁיכֶם, v. 31; cf. the plurals of מִקְדָּשׁ in Ezek 21:2; 28:18; Amos 7:9; Ps 68:35; 73:17). Although the MT contains the plural “sanctuaries,” 53 mss., *Sam.*, and *Syr.* carry the singular. The “high places” of v. 30 are generally understood to be illicit cult sites. The referent in v. 31 is less clear. Some understand the plural as alluding to essentially polytheistic nature of the worship and a multiplicity of sites; cf. Ezek 7:24 (Gerstenberger 1996: 423). Milgrom (2000: 2317–18, 20) suggests that מִקְדָּשׁ here is likely to be associated with legitimate worship, due to the reference to “pleasing odors” in v. 31b. Milgrom suggests that Leviticus 26 largely originates in the 8th century, and presupposes numerous legitimate Yahweh sanctuaries (Milgrom 2000: 2320). Other alternative explanations may be proposed for the plural: a scribal error, a reference to the various parts or elements of the temple or its sancta (cf. Lev 21:23), or a plural of majesty (cf. Ps 73:17). More promising, in my opinion, is the suggestion that the emphasis falls on the pronominal suffix: *your* sanctuaries (not mine; see Hartley 1992: 467–68). Indeed, three out of the five appearances of מִקְדָּשׁ in the plural are denunciations of Israel’s religious hypocrisy (Ezek 21:2; 28:18; Amos 7:9). One might suggest that,

destruction of the cities, and desolation of the land that hopes of renewal can be entertained (vv. 27b–35).²⁰ In any case, all of these texts refer to curses of various kinds, sent in response to the willful rejection of the known and understood core values of a covenant, agreed to by the nation, and leading to its ultimate doom and destruction.

In Hag 1:3–11 however, we find ourselves in a very different ideological context. The prophet points to a *limited number* of misfortunes (there is no reference to war, or national humiliation, as in Amos 4, Leviticus 26, Deuteronomy 28) drawn from the *actual* experience of the community. To this end, Haggai sets forth specific examples of agricultural failure and economic difficulties. Furthermore, these specific misfortunes are not seen as arising from violations of any of the demands of the Sinai Covenant. No crimes against its stipulations are alluded to. The community's only fault is its neglect of the temple's reconstruction. What is more, the maledictions in Haggai 1 are applied *nonincrementally* and *without any threat of further catastrophic judgment*. There is no implication that neglect of the reconstruction, left unchecked, would result in anything other than continued poverty and distress. Surely, these core dissimilarities call for caution before assuming too close an identification between Haggai's words and those texts that describe core violations of the Sinai covenant, leading to complete destruction.

On the other hand, viewing Haggai's language here as only *peripherally* related to the Sinai covenant seems somewhat unlikely in a late 6th-century context. The language of malediction used in Hag 1:3–11 (and 2:15–17) so closely parallels that of the clearly covenantal texts we have been examining that it would appear extremely difficult to use this vocabulary without implying some connection between the fault for which

beginning with Amos 7:9 (where *במה* and *מקדש* both appear in the plural), the plural of *מקדש* came to be anticipated in contexts of judgement, in a similar way that the near demonstrative pronoun is employed in such contexts (Exod 32:9, 21, 31; 33:12; Num 11:11–14; Deut 9:27; 31:16; 1 Kgs 12:6–7, 27; Isa 6:9–10; 8:6; 28:14; 29:13; Jer 5:14; 7:16, 33; Mic 2:11; Hag 1:2; 2:14), whereas elsewhere the simple definite article would be adequate. Thus, the central issue in Lev 26:31 might be better understood as falling on the certainty of the coming judgment, rather than discussions of precisely which sanctuaries might be involved. In any case, it seems clear that, according to virtually any of the above proposals, the destruction of the Jerusalemite temple is foreseen. Priestly thought, to be sure, could accommodate this sort of eventuality through the notion of the departure of Yahweh's glory (Ezekiel 1–11). In Haggai, however, not much is made of the destruction of the temple per se. It is seen as a past event, the evidence of which remains and must be remedied. However, it is noteworthy that Haggai does not appear to make any specific allusion in his curse material to Lev 26:30–31.

20. On this, see Levine 1987.

punishment is sent and concepts of Israel's broader relationship to Yahweh ratified at Sinai. By the late 6th century, covenantal ideologies were a core component of both deuteronomic and Priestly traditions.²¹ Thus, viewing the use of Haggai's curse language as a mere rhetorical device gives too little weight to the importance that such traditional formulations, commonly associated with Sinai, would have held. Similarly, to suppose that Haggai's interests lie exclusively with the Jerusalemite temple and Zion traditions, is highly improbable, because this sort of assumption implies a degree of compartmentalization of traditions that strains against the widely acknowledged merging of traditions current in the period (Ackroyd 1977; Mason 1982:141–42; Kohn 2002).

*Patterns of Covenant Violation
in Priestly and Deuteronomic Traditions*

We have seen that the language of Hag 1:3–11 resists both an interpretive stance that abstracts all covenantal considerations from view, as well as one that implies that temple reconstruction has simply been integrated into the stipulations of the Sinai covenant and taken its place alongside its other requirements. One must therefore ask, is there a way of retaining a broadly covenantal framework for Haggai's words, without assuming that the prophet has made the reconstruction of the temple a covenantal obligation, the neglect of which has severely damaged or even broken the Sinai covenant? It seems to me that the way forward must begin with the recognition that within the broader deuteronomic and Priestly traditions there are two patterns involving offense against covenantal norms, and the consequent judgment of this violation. In the interest of simplicity, I will refer to these two patterns as "violation *of* covenant" on the one hand, and "violation *in* covenant" on the other.

Deuteronomy 28, 2 Kgs 17:1–19, Amos 3:2, 4:1–13, chaps. 7–8, Hosea 1–3, and Mic 6:9–16 manifest the pattern of "violation of covenant." These texts refer to the consistent and wilful violation of various known and agreed-to covenantal obligations lying at the very heart of the relationship between the two parties. This kind of violation brings about the imposition of "covenant curses." As we have seen, these misfortunes

21. The curse list in Leviticus 26 demonstrates how deeply entrenched a full-blown covenantal formulation of this relationship had become in Priestly thought by the late 6th century. For the relationship of Priestly and covenantal ideas, see especially Nihan 2007: 395–575, 616–17; Knohl 1995; Ska 2006:152, esp. n. 88. However, for a differing approach, see Joosten 1996: 196–203. On the relationship of Leviticus 26 to Deuteronomy 28 and Ezekiel, see Hartley 1992: 457–62; Kohn 2002.

punish the offender and escalate as long as disobedience persists. If these warnings are ignored, the full weight of the covenant curses is applied, and cataclysmic judgment ensues, generally involving invasion, exile, death of a significant portion of the population, the cessation of national existence, and the suspension (or termination) of the covenantal relationship. This sort of pattern is generally understood to be a core component of deuteronomic thought. It is a significant component of priestly ideology as well (Boda 2006; 2010: 82–85).²²

The second pattern, “violation *in* covenant” also appears in both deuteronomic and Priestly texts. This pattern involves *specific* sins that are committed within a broader relationship, and the *specific consequences* that result from them. Although serious, these transgressions do not threaten the broader relationship at its core. According to this pattern, when the people of Yahweh, individually or collectively, commit a specific sin, certain very specific judgments are sent. The purpose of these misfortunes is to draw attention to the *specific point of fault* and *demand a specific remedy*. The fault that has been committed essentially “freezes” the relationship between the respective parties. A few examples of this pattern may be cited here. Achan’s violation of the ban in Joshua 7, a text that reflects both deuteronomic and Priestly motifs,²³ portrays a single act with a single consequence demanding a specific resolution. 1 Sam 14:24–46 recounts the withholding of a word from Yahweh arising from Jonathan’s violation of Saul’s ban on consuming food. 2 Sam 21:1–9 describes a drought that has been sent due to Saul’s treatment of the Gibeonites and is not resolved until the problem is addressed. At times prophets are involved in identifying the sin and declaring the way toward resolution (2 Sam 21:1; 2 Sam 12:1–3).

However, the text in which this motif is most extensively developed is Solomon’s prayer in 1 Kgs 8:14–61. This passage is generally assumed to

22. On the fate of the covenant subsequent to such sustained rebellion see, among others, Levine 1987; Olyan 2008; Kessler 2008: 19–24.

23. Joshua as a whole is widely understood to manifest both Priestly and Deuteronomistic elements (Römer and Brettler 2000). Joshua 7 contains elements of both traditions. Deuteronomistic themes include the חרם, Jos 7:1, 11, 12–13, 15 (cf. Deut 2:34; 3:6; 7:2, 26; 13:18[17]; 20:17; Josh 2:10; 6:17–18) and transgression of Yahweh’s covenant, Josh 7:10–11 (cf. Deut 7:12; Josh 23:16; Judg 2:20). Priestly motifs include breaking faith (מעל) regarding consecrated things or other significant matters, Josh 7:1 (cf. Lev 5:15; 26:40; Num 5:6, 12, 27; 31:16; Josh 22:16, 20, 22, 31; Ezek 14:13; 15:8; 17:20; 18:24; 20:27; 39:26) and confession of sin (Hithpael of ירה), Josh 7:19 (cf. Lev 5:5; 16:21; 26:40; Num 5:7). On the Priestly motifs, see esp. Boda 2010: 129–31.

be deuteronomic, with some evidence of Priestly redaction.²⁴ In it, Solomon assumes that should the community in whole or part sin, Yahweh will afflict it with various misfortunes. These misfortunes are strikingly similar to those found in the curse lists of Deuteronomy 28 and Leviticus 26.²⁵ This likely implies that these unnamed sins are those defined by the broader covenantal framework established at Sinai.²⁶ Talstra notes that in contrast to the long lists of misfortunes sent on people for covenant disobedience in Deuteronomy 28 and Amos 4, 1 Kings 8 describes various “cases” as part of an “affliction-prayer-forgiveness-retribution” schema (Talstra 1993). Thus, the “covenant curses” of the broader tradition are shifted to a more focused “case-by-case” application. They become “afflictions” (to use Talstra’s term) sent to alert the individual or community of a specific fault, requiring a concrete remedy. Thus, in 1 Kgs 8:31–40, 46–53 these misfortunes are not so much covenant curses, per se, but rather indications of divine disapproval regarding some aspect of the *ongoing* life of the individual or the nation, within its covenantal relationship with Yahweh. These do not pose a threat to the covenant as a whole.²⁷ They are violations *in or under covenant* rather than violations *of* covenant. Furthermore, it is highly significant that in 1 Kings 8 few specifics are given regarding the nature of the sins committed. Notice is simply taken of the people’s having “sinned” (יִחַטְאוּ in 1 Kgs 8:33, 35, 46, 50 and פָּשְׁעוּ in v. 50). The parenthetical notice in Solomon’s prayer in 8:46 that “there is no one who does not sin” sets the various cases enumerated in the prayer in a context of human frailty, rather than cold-hearted rebellion.²⁸ The tone here is entirely different from that of the menacing and threatening curse of utter destruction in the deuteronomic traditions²⁹ or, to use

24. Long 1984: 103; Boda 2010: 166; Knoppers 1993: 94–95; Römer and Brettler 2000: 414.

25. See the examples cited on pp. 232–234 above and the linguistic commonalities noted on p. 243 below.

26. Boda concludes, “Its categories of calamities are closely related to the curse materials found in Deuteronomy 28–30 and Leviticus 26 suggesting that the prayer is being conceptualized within the framework of the covenant” (2010: 167). Boda notes the studies of Wolff (1977: 212–28) and Talstra (1993: 118–19, 186) in this regard.

27. Verses 46–51 form something of an exception to the general pattern, in that the sin and consequence seem to imply a core violation of covenant resulting in exile and loss of land. But even here, the covenant is not depicted as “broken.”

28. In this sense they seem to stand closer to the בְּשִׁגְגָה sins (sins of inadvertence or sins of human frailty) in the Priestly tradition (Lev 4:2, 22, 27; 5:15, 18; 22:14; Num 15:24–29; 35:11, 15; cf. also Josh 20:3, 9), contrasted with the “high-handed sins” (רִמְיָה בִּיד) that are not eligible for cultic remediation (cf. Num 15:30–31).

29. Thus, שָׂמַד, Deut 4:26; 6:15; 7:4; 28:20, 24, 45, 48, 51, 61, 63; or אָבַד, Deut 4:26; 8:19; 11:17; 28:20, 22, 51, 63; 30:18.

the Priestly turn of phrase, the “vengeance of the covenant” (Lev 26:25; cf. Deut 32:35, 41, 43).³⁰ Rather, there is a certain “inevitability” about the failures and consequences described in the passage. The basic means through which the various cases of sin and affliction can be remedied are expressed in v. 33 (and repeated, with some variations in vv. 35, 47–48): the guilty must return to Yahweh (שוב), confess (יָדָה Hithpael) the name of Yahweh, pray (פָּלַל Hithpael), and plead (תָּנַן Hithpael) *in* (or *toward*) *this house* (הִזְוֶה בְּבֵית; cf. Hag 1:4).

When set against these two patterns, Haggai’s words clearly bear far greater similarity to violations “*in* covenant” than to violations “*of* covenant.” No earlier warnings have been given and ignored, no further calamities are threatened, no appeal is made to earlier acts of divine beneficence or to the nation’s earlier commitments or obligations. Haggai simply identifies a specific reason for the particular misfortunes that the community is experiencing. Amsler (1981:23) insightfully observes, “the prophet begins by asking those who have resigned themselves to the situation to realize that they are in reality at an impasse from which they can only emerge through a new act of obedience.”³¹ The emphatic use of מִמָּה יֵעַן and יֵעַן in 1:9 and עַל־כֵּן in 1:10 underscores this cause-and-effect relationship between neglect of the temple and the people’s misfortunes.

This similarity of outlook is further reinforced through the numerous verbal parallels that exist between the consequences for sin described in 1 Kgs 8:31–53 and those enumerated in Hag 1:3–11 and 2:15–17. The famine (רָעַב) of 1 Kgs 8:37 is reflected in agricultural paucity in Hag 1:6, 11; 2:16. The term “blight” (שֹׁרְפוֹן) in 1 Kgs 8:37 appears in Hag 2:17 (cf. Deut 28:22; Amos 4:9; 2 Chr 6:28). Similarly, the mildew mentioned in 1 Kgs 8:37 (יִרְקוֹן) recurs in Hag 2:17 (cf. Deut 28:22; Jer 30:6; Amos 4:9; 2 Chr 6:28). The shutting up of the heavens and the failure of rain (1 Kgs 8:35) are echoed in Hag 1:10.³² Even more significantly, the temple plays a decisive role in obtaining relief from the divinely sent afflictions in both texts. As we have noted, in 1 Kings 8 prayer in (v. 33) or toward (v. 35) the temple, accompanied by returning and seeking divine mercy, opens the way for divine forgiveness. In Haggai, the afflictions of drought, crop disease and economic privation can be removed through the act of undertaking the rebuilding of the temple (Hag 1:8) and ritually purifying it (2:15–17). The ideological matrix of Haggai is thus far closer to the

30. נִקְמַת־בְּרִית.

31. Translation mine.

32. The phrase מִטַּל (from “dew”) in Hag 1:10 is close to מָטָר (“rain”) in 1 Kgs 8:35 cf. Targumim.

violation in covenant pattern of 1 Kings 8, than to that found in Deuteronomy 28, Leviticus 26 and the various prophetic texts cited above.

Curse, Covenant, and Temple in Haggai: Implications

The recognition that Haggai stands in close proximity to the pattern of “violation in covenant,” particularly as evidenced in 1 Kgs 8:31–53, has two important implications. The first of these relates to Haggai’s view of the status of the Sinai covenant vis-à-vis the community in Yehud.³³ Nothing in Hag 1:3–11 or 2:15–17 refers to a covenant that has been damaged or shattered and must be restored. Nor are there any warnings that ongoing disobedience runs the risk of total destruction. No covenant renewal is demanded or undertaken. All that is required to remedy the situation is demanded in Hag 1:8: “go up to the mountain, get wood, and build my house” and then narrated in 1:14, “And the LORD stirred up the spirit of Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and the spirit of Joshua son of Jehozadak, the high priest, and the spirit of all the remnant of the people; and they came and worked on the house of the LORD of hosts, their God.”³⁴ Furthermore, Hag 1:8b contains the firm assurance that, should the work be performed, divine acceptance will follow. Yahweh thus declares, “I will be pleased, and glorified” (Hag 1:8b).³⁵ Thus, just as in 1 Kgs 8:31–53, the various instances of sin and restoration should not be construed as a breaking of the covenant followed by covenant renewal, so too in Haggai the demand for obedience in 1:8 and the brief narrative of the community’s obedience to the prophet’s words (1:12–14) and its rededication of the temple (2:15–19) should be seen as transpiring *within* the context of the existing relationship established at Sinai. The use of curse vocabulary drawn from the broader linguistic stock of deuteronomic and Priestly Sinai covenant traditions situates the *particular transgression* causing the relational disruption within this broader covenantal relationship as a whole. However, although neglect of the temple’s reconstruction had brought serious consequences to the Yehudite community, and represented a failure within the divine-human relationship, it did not constitute a wholesale undermining of Israel’s covenant with Yahweh.

33. On the relevance of the textually difficult Hag 2:5a to the question of Haggai’s view of the Sinai covenant, see Kessler 2014.

34. Wöhrle (2006) rightly notes that it is the act of building (Hag 1:8, 12–14) that *constitutes* the community’s obedience to Yahweh’s will. In Zechariah, by contrast, the community must turn away from the disobedience of earlier generations and return (שוב) to Yahweh. On this, see also Boda 2003.

35. On the translation of Hag 1:8b as indicating the assurance of Yahweh’s acceptance of the people’s labor, see Kessler 2002a: 105, 133–36.

The second implication of this identification of Haggai 1 with a “violation in covenant” pattern is relevant for Haggai’s perspective on the relationship between covenant and temple. It is noteworthy that, certain differences notwithstanding, both Haggai 1 and 1 Kings 8 make a close association between the Sinai covenant and the Jerusalemite temple. 1 Kings 8 sets the concepts of covenant, temple, and monarchy in a common overarching structure.³⁶ The narrative in 1 Kgs 8:1–13 focuses on the bond created between temple and covenant. In 8:1, Solomon calls the key representatives of the older tribal and familial structure³⁷ to join in the bringing up of “the ark of the covenant of Yahweh” (vv. 1, 6) from Zion, the city of David. The ark crystallizes and represents the deuteronomic understanding of Israel’s earlier covenant relationship with Yahweh (1 Kgs 8:21). The ark is then deposited in the most holy place, underneath the wings of the cherubim (vv. 6–7). Now the ark is definitively housed in the temple and is no longer “portable.” The divine presence, represented by the cloud³⁸ comes to dwell within the temple, signifying both the divine approval of Solomon’s work, and the fact that the temple has now superseded the the ark and its tent (1 Sam 2:22; 17:54; 2 Sam 6:17; 7:2, 6) as the locus of the divine dwelling. Knoppers has summarized how 1 Kings 8 presents the construction and inauguration of the temple as the culmination of Yahweh’s intention for the ark and for Israelite ritual, and the role of the monarchy with reference to it. He states,

Indeed, it seems that in 1 Kings 8 the Deuteronomist is anxious to project an image of Solomon as a curator and guarantor of his nation’s most sacred traditions. I would argue, however, that this stress upon Solomon’s piety deliberately downplays the innovation involved in establishing the cultus of Solomon’s royal shrine as normative for the whole people . . . the Deuteronomist not only integrates traditional institutions into the temple cultus, he weds these institutions, and the temple itself, to

36. However the redactional history of this section is understood, it is likely to have reached much of its present form by late 6th century. Thus, its general outlook would have been current, at least in certain circles, at the time Haggai was produced. For Römer, 1 Kgs 8:1–6, 12–21, 62, and 63b constitute an earlier core, dating from the 7th century, which was then supplemented in an exilic edition, to more or less its present form (Römer 2007: 100, 149). See also Knoppers 1993:103–12 for a detailed discussion of Solomon’s prayer and a defense of a largely preexilic dating for it.

37. These include the “elders of Israel and all the heads of the tribes, the leaders of the ancestral houses of the Israelites.” The term “elders of Israel” (זקני ישראל) is more general, while the subsequent designations are essentially Priestly (Cogan 2001: 278) and lacking in the LXX-B. Knoppers (1993: 98) sees the Priestly writer as “elaborat[ing] on the view of the Deuteronomist that the temple maintains and fulfills traditional cultic arrangements.”

38. Again, a Priestly representation (Cogan 2001: 280–81).

kingship. In doing so, he transforms older arrangements. Both king and temple are integral to national life. . . . The Deuteronomist authorizes the new by associating it with the old. Yet in presenting the temple as a permanent place for the ark . . . [he] subordinates the ark to the temple.³⁹

Following this transition, the ark is lost from view, and it is not mentioned again. Its loss and its fate in the destructions of the early 6th century are not recounted in Kings (or Jeremiah).⁴⁰

It is important to note, however, that, while the subordination of the ark to the temple and its ultimate “disappearance” indicate a reframing of older, *cultic* arrangements, it does not signal a diminution of the importance of the Sinai covenant, along with its duties and obligations. Obedience to the demands of the covenant is a theme that pervades Deuteronomy–2 Kings.⁴¹ In Deut 31:25–26 Moses commands the Levites to place the book of the Law beside (בְּצֵדָה) the ark of the covenant, which according to Deut 10:1–3, 5 (cf. 1 Kgs 8:9) contained the tablets given to Moses at Sinai. In 1 Sam 12:25, Israel is warned that disobedience to Yahweh will result in the destruction of king and people. Great attention is focused on the “book of the law” (Deut 28:58, 61; 29:20[21]; 30:10; 31:24, 26; Josh 1:8; 8:31, 34; 23:6; 24:26; 2 Kgs 14:6; 22:8, 11) and the “law of Moses” (Deut 31:9, 24; 33:4; Josh 8:31–32; 23:6; 1 Kgs 2:3; 2 Kgs 14:6; 21:8; 23:25; Ezra 3:2; 7:6; Neh 8:1, 14) from Deuteronomy to 2 Kings, and in Ezra and Nehemiah.⁴² Thus, in these texts, the stipulations of the Sinai covenant constitute the means through which the community’s fidelity to Yahweh is to be expressed both *before* the advent of monarchy or temple and *in the absence* of the ark, temple,⁴³ and monarchy. Put another

39. Knoppers 1993: 113–15. This forms an interesting contrast to the view held by Petersen (1985: 50) that Haggai has subordinated temple to covenant.

40. The oracle of Jer 3:14–18 foresees its complete disappearance. On this text, see Lundbom 1999: 314 and the literature cited there. It is strikingly absent in the texts stemming from the 6th century and later that deal with the temple’s reconstruction (Haggai; Zechariah 1–8; Ezra 1–6;) or “covenantal renewal” (Zech 1:1–6; Ezra 9–10; Nehemiah 5; 9–11, 13). All of these texts portray, in one way or another, a recommitment to the demands of the Sinai covenant. The question to what degree any one of them should be viewed as a renewal of that covenant cannot be discussed here.

41. This motif is often seen as the hallmark of the “nomistic redaction” of the deuteronomistic material. Space precludes a full discussion of the origins and development of the theory of this sort of redaction and scholarly reaction to it. For a survey of the extensive discussion associated with the DH and its redactional history, see Knoppers and Greer 2013. For a shorter survey, see Römer 2007: 29–35; Lipschits 2005: 283–89.

42. On this theme, see Römer 2007: 51, 176. Römer dates these texts to the exilic or early Persian period.

43. See the insightful discussion of the “spatial” aspect of God’s presence in the absence of the temple in Moore and Kohn 2007. See also the discussion of the various

way, for these writers, even in the absence of the temple, or of a ruling Davidide, the relationship established by the Sinai covenant remains.

But what of the future? Questions regarding the ongoing validity and future form of the institutions of covenant, monarchy, and temple were clearly the object of extensive reflection in the literature stemming from the 7th to 4th centuries.⁴⁴ Various traditions gave differing responses to these matters, but the significance and the future of all three institutions elicited lively debate.⁴⁵ Knoppers has suggested that 1–2 Kings implicitly affirms the importance of the reconstruction of the temple. He states (2006: 235), “The standards rejected by Manasseh and the people triumph. . . . The written narrative safeguards the status of the temple as an institution so that, if conditions ever allow, there will be no question about whether and where to rebuild.”⁴⁶ Similarly, 2 Kgs 25:27–30 offers a “glimmer of hope” regarding the future of the Davidic line (Knoppers 2006: 222). The book of Haggai resonates with a similar perspective, but in much bolder tones. Our prophet views covenant, temple, and monarchy as *equally significant*, without subordinating one to the other. Thus, neglect of the temple’s reconstruction merits divine disapproval not because temple building has *become* a stipulation of the covenant but rather because the temple, together with the monarchy, had *come to stand alongside the covenant* in importance, connected to it, but not subsumed under it. This, it seems to me, is why he insists so strongly on the reconstruction of the temple (Hag 1:1–11; 2: 10–19) and hopes so passionately for the restoration of Davidic rule (Hag 2:20–23). For Haggai, all three lie at the core of Israelite identity. But in Haggai’s day, although the Sinai covenant perdured, the temple lay in ruins and national independence under the rule of a Davidic scion remained merely a dream. However, a new era had dawned with the coming of Persian rule, and would soon be brought

issues involved in life without the Jerusalemite temple in Middlemas 2005, 2007. Note especially the comments of Römer (2007: 51) who states, “The cleansing of the temple was indeed of not much use, since it was destroyed a few decades later. But the discovery of the book offered the possibility to *understand* this destruction and to worship Yahweh *without any temple*” (emphasis his).

44. Space precludes a fuller discussion of this here. For the literary history of many of the works in question, see Albertz 2003; Albertz et al. 1996; Römer 2007.

45. On the Priestly perspective on the temple, see Nihan 2007: 388–92; Fretheim 1968. For the ambivalent attitude to the monarchy in Deuteronomy–2 Kings, see Römer 2007: 139–49; McKenzie 1996. For the monarchy in Jeremiah, see Job 2006. On the Sinai covenant, see Olyan 2008. For a survey of the deuteronomistic literature, including a discussion of these matters, see Knoppers and Greer 2013.

46. On debates regarding the reconstruction of the temple, see Bedford 1995, 2001; de Robert 1996; Kessler 2002b. See also the older but still useful survey in Ackroyd 1968.

to fullness through the anticipated “shaking of the heavens and earth” (Hag 2:6–9, 21–22). Haggai eagerly desired that the losses suffered in the course of the 6th century B.C.E. be reversed. For our prophet, covenant, temple, and royal hopes stood together. Temple reconstruction, the community’s responsibility (1:1–14; 2:1–5; 10–19), would begin the process of restoration. Yahweh’s intervention (2:6–9; 20–23) would complete it.

Conclusions

The curse material with which the book of Haggai opens, while bearing a strong formal similarity to texts such as Deuteronomy 28, Leviticus 26, Amos 4, and Micah 6, nevertheless manifests a very different ideology and purpose from them. Rather than indicating that the covenant between Yahweh and Israel has been severely damaged or even ruptured, Haggai’s use of these “futility curse” formulations is intended to indicate the presence of a significant fault, hindering the Yehudite community’s relationship to Yahweh. For Haggai, the Sinai covenant is still operative. Indeed the book as a whole largely ignores the many disruptions caused by the traumatic events of the 6th century and that figure so prominently in numerous other prophetic texts.⁴⁷ The maledictions that are afflicting the community are an indication of difficulties within Israel’s covenantal relationship, not the absence of this sort of union. Furthermore, for Haggai, temple reconstruction is of great significance not because the Jerusalemite temple has come to be seen as a stipulation of the Sinai covenant, but because our prophet viewed the institutions of temple and monarchy as essential constituents of the nation’s identity. The book of Haggai is marked by a desire both to establish continuity between the tiny community in Yehud and the Israel of history and tradition and to promote hope for the future. The rehabilitation of the temple was thus an essential element in both these concerns. Hence, Haggai expresses Yahweh’s disapproval of the community’s neglect of its responsibilities in the most emphatic of terms.

47. Notably, Ezekiel, Jeremiah, and Zechariah. On this, see Kessler 2002a; 2008.

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