

Haggai Chapter 1

Introduction

Context

The Jewish exiles had finally returned home to Judea. When they got to there, they started rebuilding the temple in 538 B.C. and finished its foundation. However, they stopped because of persecution and opposition. Now in 520 BC, Darius the Great was king of Persia..

Timeline

- 538 BC - Cyrus issues a decree that Jews can go back to Jerusalem and build the temple.
- 536 BC - Second temple starts being constructed under Zerubbabel and Joshua.
- 526 BC - Temple construction stops because of discouragement and opposition.
- 522 BC - A new ruler Darius I (not Darius the Mede nor Darius II) begins to reign over Persia.
- 520 BC - The year Haggai is written.

Who is Haggai?

Haggai's name means festival or feast. It's the same word used in the three main feasts of Judaism where the people have to return to Jerusalem (Feast of Unleavened Bread, Feast of Weeks (Pentecost), and Feast of Tabernacles.)

The Jewish Calendar

The Jewish people have a liturgical calendar that was given to them by God that is structured around the feasts in Leviticus 23. Each holiday season represents an actual time in Israel's history which corresponds to a spiritual message. Additionally, their calendar mimics the ancient Jewish wedding tradition.

Note: The Jews have two calendars-a civil calendar and a religious calendar. The civil calendar starts on Tishri (Rosh Hashanah-Feast of Trumpets). The religious calendar starts on Nisan (Passover). See Exodus 12:2.

Pre-reading

Read Ezra 1-4 for context if necessary.

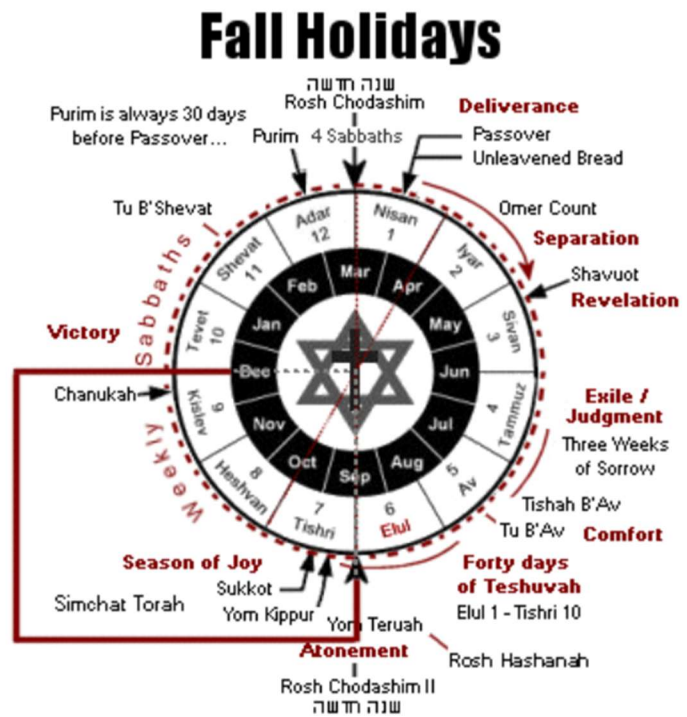


Image from: [Elul 25 and the Date of Creation](#)

Part 1

Haggai 1:1

When did the word of the Lord come to Haggai?

Elul: The Days of Repentance

Elul is time of preparation and repentance. (It's the last month or the 6th month depending if you use the religious or civil calendar.) Traditionally, it's when Moses ascended Mt. Sinai for the third time to receive the new set of commandments after the golden calf. He spent 40 days on the mountain and came down on Tishri 10 (Yom Kippur/The Day of Atonement). Therefore, Elul represents a time of national sin and repentance. During the season of repentance the ram horn is blown four times:

- A long single blast typical of King's coronation
- Three short, wail-like blasts that sound like repentance.
- Several short blasts of alarm to awaken the soul.
- And a long final blast.

Additionally, they also read Psalm 27 twice each day.

Who was Haggai to give the word to?

Who was Zerubbabel related to? See Matthew 1: 6, 12, 16.

Who was Joshua?

Notice that you have a kingly and priestly figure working together.

Zerubbabel

Zerubbabel's name means descended from Babylon, seed of Babylon, or offspring of Babylon. Since Israel was still under foreign rule, it had no king. Therefore Zerubbabel was the ruler. He was officially the governor, but he being a descendant of David functioned as a king theologically not politically. In essence Zerubbabel was a king without a country (at least formally.)

Joshua son of Jehozadak

Joshua's name means "Yahweh saves." It's the Old Testament version of Jesus's name. Joshua son of Jehozadak was a priest in the line of Aaron (1 Chronicles 6:15). His father's name means Yahweh is righteous. Joshua was a priest without a temple.

Haggai 1:2

What name of God is used here?

*The title Lord Almighty is used 14 times here. When anything is used in a multiple of 7 in the Bible that means it's important.

How did God describe the people?

What excuse did the people give?

Lord Almighty

The phrase Lord Almighty in the NIV (tzava or tzsba in Hebrew) is translated as Lord Sabaoth, Lord of Armies, or Lord of Hosts in other translations. The name Lord of Hosts first appears in 1 Samuel 1:3 as Hannah's husband (the father of the prophet Samuel) travels to the tabernacle in Shiloh to worship and offer sacrifices. It is continued to be used through the book of Samuel and into the prophets. The word hosts can mean heavenly beings or earthly armies. It has to do with a large, organized group moving towards a common purpose. The prophets use this title regularly to emphasize God's power and might over both the spiritual and earthly realms.

Haggai 1:3-4

How does God draw contrast between the people's houses and His house?

Note: These were not simple houses but luxurious houses.

Haggai 1: 5-6

The phrase "Give careful thought to your ways" in the NIV is literally "set your heart on your ways." What do you think this means?

How does that compare to Matthew 6:21?

What was the consequence of their actions?

Haggai 1: 7-8

What does God want from them instead?

What will the effect of their obedience bring?

What is God concerned about?

Haggai 1: 9-11

Who caused scarcity for the people? Why?

In 2 Samuel 7: 4-7, God says he doesn't need a house of cedar. If that's true, why do you think that God is so upset?

How do the Israelites' hearts in Haggai compare to David's heart? See 2 Samuel 7: 2.

What was the result of David's heart towards God? See 2 Samuel 7: 9b-17.

Where are the priorities of your heart?

Haggai 1: 12

How did the people respond to Haggai's message? Why?

How do you respond to correction?

Haggai 1: 13

What assurance did God give his people?

How did God identify himself in this verse?

Haggai 1:14

What did God do?

How does this compare to John 6: 44?

Haggai 1: 15

What day did the people start the work?

Conclusion

One Way to Find Themes in Hebrew Scriptures: Chiasms (c-head)

At one time in my life I was a language arts teacher for middle schoolers. When teaching them how to write a paragraph (especially for state testing), we taught them a five paragraph format with an introductory paragraph, three body paragraphs, and a concluding paragraph. Also, we stated that in each body paragraph there should be a main idea (typically but not always in the first sentence) and three supporting sentences. Hebrew is not like that. It uses more of a chiastic structure where the main idea is in the center. It could look something like this, although there are many variations:

A (idea 1)

 B (idea 2)

 C (main idea)

 B' (idea 2)

A' (idea 1)

Chiasm in Haggai (d-head)

Here is one example of the way Haggai 1 can form a chiasm. The theme of the passage is the center of the chiasm. Look closely. What is the theme of the vision?

A: Cause: "Thus says the LORD of hosts: These people say the time has not yet come to rebuild the house of the LORD." (verse 2)

B: "Is it a time for you yourselves to dwell in your paneled houses, while this house lies in ruins?" (verse 4)

C: "Now, therefore, thus says the LORD of hosts: Consider your ways." (verse 5)

D: "You have sown much, and harvested little. You eat, but you never have enough; you drink, but you never have your fill. You clothe yourselves, but no one is warm. And he who earns wages does so to put them into a bag with holes." (verse 6)

E: "Thus says the LORD of hosts: Consider your ways. Go up to the hills and bring wood and build the house, that I may take pleasure in it and that I may be glorified, says the LORD." (verses 7-8)

D': "You looked for much, and behold, it came to little. And when you brought it home, I blew it away. Why?" (verse 9a)

C': "declares the LORD of hosts." (verse 9)

B': "My house lies in ruins, while each of you is busy with his own house." (verse 9b)

A': Effect: "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 ground brings forth, on man and beast, and on all their labors." (verses 10-11)

Based on the chiasm, what do you think the theme of Haggai chapter 1 is?

Reflection Questions

- Do you feel like God takes pleasure or delights in you? Why or why not? How does Zephaniah 3: 17 encourage you?
- Where are your priorities? Do you prioritize God first and everything else second. Or do you prioritize you family, job, sleep, or even material comfort over God? Is God calling you like the people in Haggai to readjust your priorities?
- What is the Holy Spirit rousing you to do in your life?
- How does God's promise of being with us encourage you to obey Him?