

# Hagai (Haggai) ~ Part 1

## Introduction

**Hagai** challenged the discouraged people in **Yerushalayim** to examine the way they were living and to set new priorities that would please **God**. They must remember that **God** was with them; He controls their future and wants His people to be holy. He was also working with **Zechariah** (which we study next) to finish rebuilding the Temple. Through Hagai, God explains why the people have been facing such economic problems. It is because they have set their own selfish interests as the highest priority rather than totally committing themselves to the construction of the **Temple**. This message comes to Hagai in the summer of 520 BCE. Through his messages, **Hagai** tried to persuade his audience to glorify **God** by rebuilding the **Temple**. He argues that one should not: (a) focus on one's own needs (1:4); (b) be discouraged because the **Temple** was not as glorious as **Solomon's** (2:3); (c) be unclean and unholy (2:10–14); nor (d) feel useless and powerless (2:20–23).

## Priorities Chastised

*1<sup>1</sup> In the second year of Daryavesh (Darius) the king, on the first day of the sixth month, the following word of Adonai came through Hagai the prophet to Z'rubavel the son of Sh'alti'el, governor of Y'hudah, and to Y'hoshua the son of Y'hotzadak, the Cohen HaGadol: 2 "Here is what Adonai-Tzva'ot says: 'This people is saying that now isn't the time - the time hasn't yet arrived for Adonai's house to be rebuilt.' "*

**Adonai-Tzva'ot** highlights the **Lord** as the leader of heavenly or earthly armies. Approximately one-third of all Biblical occurrences of the phrase are found in **Hagai**, **Z'kharyah**, and **Mal'akhi**; it emphasizes the **Lord's** universal rule. *Now isn't the time*. The people claim that the time for **Temple** restoration has not yet arrived: they want to postpone the work until sometime later. On the date of this prophecy, the people can reflect on the disappointing harvest season. They struggle mightily for personal gain at the neglect of the **Lord's** house. **God** evaporates their gain to teach them that building His house will bring Him glory and must be their priority.

*3 Then this word of Adonai came through Hagai the prophet: 4 "So is now the time for you to be living in your own paneled houses, while this house lies in ruins?*

*Your own paneled houses* refer to the upper-income homes of **Zerubbabel** and **Joshua**. Their homes had expensive wood interior paneling to cover the ugly and uneven stones (like **Solomon's** palace in 1 Kings 7:3, 7). Why were these leaders spending lavishly on their own homes and giving no priority to building **God's** house?

*5 Therefore, here is what Adonai-Tzva'ot says: 'Think about your life!*

*"Think about your life"* (lit. "set your heart on your ways") is a call for serious reflection on the decisions people make and what these choices reveal about their priorities. Will they take the easy way out, or will they follow **God's** ways?

*6 You sow much but bring in little; you eat but aren't satisfied; you drink but never have enough; you clothe yourselves, but no one is warm; and he who works for a living earns wages that are put in a bag full of holes."*

You have planted much but harvested little indicates that **God** was not blessing the work of their hands. There must be a theological reason why these people were not receiving what they needed.

<sup>7</sup> "Here is what Adonai-Tzva'ot says: 'Think about your life!<sup>8</sup> Go up into the hills, get wood, and rebuild the house. I will be pleased with that, and then I will be glorified,' says Adonai.

**God's** desire was that the people *rebuild the house* (referring to the **Temple**) and prioritize worshipping **God**. Whatever one does, **God** should always *be pleased with it and be glorified* by it. These are two practical theological criteria that people can use to evaluate their life and set new priorities. **Yeshua** set the example, for everything He did was aimed to please **God** (John 8:29). The reason He came to earth was to glorify the **Father** (John 12:27–28; 17:1, 4).

<sup>9</sup> 'You looked for much, but it came to little; and when you brought it home, I blew it away. Why?' asks Adonai-Tzva'ot. 'Because my house lies in ruins, while everyone of you runs to take care of his own house. <sup>10</sup> This is why the sky above you has withheld the dew, so that there is none, and the land withholds its yield. <sup>11</sup> In fact, I called for a drought on the land and on the hills, on the grain, the wine and the olive oil, on what the ground brings up, on men, animals and on all that hands produce.'"

Thus, these problems were on your account; you caused this to happen to yourselves. *I called for a drought* indicates that **God** was personally responsible for this drought.

### People Respond Positively

<sup>12</sup> Then Z'rubavel the son of Sh'alti'el and Y'hoshua the son of Y'hotzadak, the Cohen HaGadol, with all the rest of the people, paid attention to what Adonai their God had said and to the words of Hagai the prophet; since Adonai their God had sent him; and the people were filled with fear in the presence of Adonai. <sup>13</sup> Hagai the messenger of Adonai conveyed this message of Adonai to the people: "'I am with you,' says Adonai."

In response, the entire remnant of the people obeyed the voice of the **Lord** and feared the **Lord**. When the leaders "obeyed" **God**, the people followed their example. One obeys **God** when one fears or reverences Him; that is the time when a person puts **God** first and determines to glorify Him. Above all other responsibilities, a prophet is fundamentally **God's** spokesman, **God's messenger** who communicates the theological truth that **God** has revealed. *I am with you* is a foundational promise that **God** gives to His people. Things may be tough at times, but **God** is always there to care for the people He loves.

### Work Begun Again

<sup>14</sup> Adonai roused the spirit of Z'rubavel the son of Sh'alti'el, governor of Y'hudah, and the spirit of Y'hoshua the son of Y'hotzadak, the cohen hagadol, and the spirits of all the rest of the people; so that they came and began to work on the house of Adonai-Tzva'ot their God. <sup>15</sup> This was on the twenty-fourth day of the sixth month of the second year of Daryavesh the king. <sup>1</sup>

*Adonai roused the spirit* of the leaders and the people so that they would respond. Spiritual transformation happens when **God** stirs up the winds of change in people's hearts, convicts them of sin, and emboldens them to act in faith.

In our next post, we will finish exploring **Hagai**.

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<sup>1</sup> Hagai 1:1–15. (CJB)