

## INTRODUCTION TO HAGGAI

This part of sacred Scripture is in some Hebrew copies called “Sepher Haggai”, the Book, of Haggai; in the Vulgate Latin version, the Prophecy of Haggai; and, in the Syriac and Arabic versions, the Prophecy of the Prophet Haggai. His name comes from a word<sup>f1</sup> which signifies to keep a feast; and, according to Jerom<sup>f2</sup>, signifies festival or merry; according to Hillerus<sup>f3</sup>, the feasts of the Lord; and, according to Cocceius<sup>f4</sup>, my feasts: and the issue of his prophecy answered to his name; by which the people were encouraged to build the temple, whereby the feasts of the Lord were restored and observed; and a particular feast appointed for the dedication of the temple. The notion entertained by some, that he was not a man, but an angel, founded on (~~<301B>~~Haggai 1:13), deserves no regard; since the character there given of him respects not his nature, but his office. Indeed no account is given of his parentage; very probably he was born in Babylon; and, according to Pseudo-Epiphanius<sup>f5</sup> and Isidore<sup>f6</sup>, he came from thence a youth to Jerusalem, at the return of the Jews from their captivity. The time of his prophecy is fixed in (~~<300B>~~Haggai 1:1) to the second year of Darius, that is, Hystaspis; which, according to Bishop Usher, was in A. M. 3485 or 519 B.C.; and in the sixty fifth Olympiad; about 520 B.C.; and about seventeen or eighteen years after the proclamation of Cyrus for the Jews to return to their own land. Jerom says this was in the twenty seventh year of Tarquinius Superbus, the last of the Roman kings. Haggai was the first of the three prophets, that prophesied after their return; and all his prophecies were within the space of four months, and have their dates variously put to them. Of the authority of this prophecy of Haggai there is no room to question; not only because of the internal evidence of it, but from the testimony of Ezra, (~~<5024>~~Ezra 4:24 5:1,2 6:14) and from a quotation out of (~~<300B>~~Haggai 2:7,8), by the author of the epistle to the Hebrews, (~~<8123>~~Hebrews 12:26). The general design of this book is to reprove the Jews for their negligence in building the temple, after they had liberty granted them by Cyrus to do it, and to encourage them in this work; which he does by the promise of the Messiah, who should come into it, and give it a greater glory than the first temple had. The name of this prophet is wrongly prefixed, with others, to several of the psalms, especially those, called the Hallelujah psalms, in the Septuagint, Vulgate Latin, Syriac, Arabic, and Ethiopic versions, as (~~<4801>~~Psalms 112:1

138:1 146:1 147:1 148:1). Where he died is not certain; very probably in Jerusalem; where, according to Pseudo-Epiphanius and Isidore<sup>f7</sup>, he was buried, by the monuments of the priests; but, according to the Cippi Hebraici<sup>f8</sup>, he was buried in a large cave, in the declivity of the mount of Olives.

# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION TO HAGGAI 1

This chapter contains the first sermon of the Prophet Haggai to the people of the Jews, directed to Zerubbabel the governor, and Joshua the high priest; the date of which is fixed, (<sup><5000></sup>Haggai 1:1). It begins with a charge against that people; saying the time to build the house of the Lord was not come, (<sup><5000></sup>Haggai 1:2) which is refuted by the prophet; arguing, that, if the time to panel their dwelling houses was come, then much more the time to build the Lord's house, (<sup><5000></sup>Haggai 1:3,4). They are urged to consider how unsuccessful they had been in their civil employments and labours, which was owing to their neglect of building the temple; wherefore, if they consulted their own good, and the glory of God, the best way was to set about it in all haste, and with diligence, (<sup><5000></sup>Haggai 1:5-9) yea, even the famine, which they had been afflicted with for some time, and which affected both man and beast, sprung from the same cause, (<sup><5000></sup>Haggai 1:10,11). This discourse had such an effect upon the governor, high priest, and people, that they immediately rose up, and went about the work they were exhorted to; upon which the prophet, by a special message from the Lord, promises his presence with them, (<sup><5000></sup>Haggai 1:12-15).

**Ver. 1.** *In the second year of Darius the King*, etc.] That is, of Persia; he is spoken of as if he was the only king in the world; and indeed he was the then greatest king in it; and therefore is emphatically called “the king”. This was not Darius the Mede, as Genebrard; who was contemporary with Cyrus, and partner in the kingdom; nor Darius Nothus, as Scaliger, and those that follow him; since the second year of this Darius was, according to Cocceius, who follows this opinion, one hundred and thirty eight years after the first edict of Cyrus; and so Zerubbabel and Joshua must exercise their office, the one of governor, the other of high priest, such a term of years, and more, which is not credible; and some of the Jews in captivity must have lived upwards of two hundred years; even those who saw the temple in its first glory, before the captivity, and now behold it in Haggai's time, in a very different condition, (<sup><5000></sup>Haggai 2:3). It seems therefore more probable, according to Josephus<sup>f9</sup>, and others, that this was Darius

Hystaspis, who was chosen king by the nobles of Persia, upon his horse's neighing first as Herodotus<sup>f10</sup> relates: the second year of his reign was about seventeen or eighteen years after the proclamation of Cyrus; during whose reign, he being much engaged in affairs abroad, and the reign of his successor Cambyses, the enemies of the Jews, encouraged by the latter, greatly obstructed the building of the temple, and discouraged them from going on with it; but when this king came to the throne, things took another turn, being favoured by him; for Josephus<sup>f11</sup> relates, that, when a private person, he vowed, if ever he became king, whatever of the holy vessels were in Babylon, he would send to the temple at Jerusalem; and upon solicitations made to him, the Jews were encouraged to go on with the building of it:

*in the sixth month*; the month Elul, answering, to part of August, and part of September; which was the sixth, reckoning from the month Nisan:

*in the first day of the month*; which was the feast of the new moon:

*came the word of the Lord by Haggai the prophet*; or, "by the hand of Haggai"<sup>f12</sup>; by his means; he was the instrument by whom the Lord delivered his word; the word was not the prophet's, but the Lord's; and this is observed, to give weight and authority to it:

*unto Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel*: the same who is called Salathiel, (<sup>4012</sup>Matthew 1:12 <sup>4187</sup>Luke 3:27) according to Kimchi and Ben Melech, he was the grandson of Salathiel; though rather Salathiel seems to be his uncle, he being the son of Pedaiiah his brother, (<sup>1187</sup>1 Chronicles 3:17-19) however, he was his heir and successor in the government, and so called his son; (see Gill on "<sup>4012</sup>Matthew 1:12"):

*governor of Judah*; not king; for the country was under the dominion of the king of Persia, and Zerubbabel was a deputy governor under him; so the apocryphal Ezra calls him governor of Judea, "And also he commanded that Sisinnes the governor of Syria and Phenice, and Sathrabuzanes, and their companions, and those which were appointed rulers in Syria and Phenice, should be careful not to meddle with the place, but suffer Zorobabel, the servant of the Lord, and governor of Judea, and the elders of the Jews, to build the house of the Lord in that place." (1 Esdras 6:27)

and, according to Josephus<sup>f13</sup>, he was made governor of the captive Jews, when in Babylon, being in great favour with the king of Babylon; and, with

two more, were his body guards; and he was continued governor by the Persians, when the Jews returned to their land:

*and to Joshua the son of Josedech the high priest*; who is called Jeshua, and his father Jozadak, (<sup><48RD></sup>Ezra 3:2) his father was carried captive by Nebuchadnezzar, (<sup><1365></sup>1 Chronicles 6:15) now, to these two principal persons in the commonwealth of Judea was the word of the Lord sent by the prophet; the one having the chief power in civil things, and the other in things ecclesiastical; and both had an influence upon the people; but very probably were dilatory in the work of building the temple; and therefore have a message sent to them, to stir them up to this service:

*saying*: as follows:

**Ver. 2.** *Thus speaketh the Lord of hosts*, etc.] Of armies above and below; whom all ought to reverence, honour, and obey; who was able to support his people in building his house, and protect them from their enemies, which should have been an encouragement to them; and to punish them for their neglect of it, which might have deterred them from it. This preface is made, to show that what follow were not the words of the prophet, but of the Lord; and therefore to be the more regarded, and the truth of them not to be doubted of:

*saying, This people say*; repeating the words of the people of the Jews to Zerubbabel and Joshua, that they might observe them, and the wickedness and ingratitude in them. “This people”, lately brought out of the captivity of Babylon, and loaded with various blessings and benefits; and not a few of them, but the generality of them, the body of them, expressed themselves after this manner, when pressed to build the temple:

*The time is not come, the time that the Lord’s house should be built*; suggesting that the seventy years of Jerusalem and the temple lying in ruins, reckoning from the destruction of them in the nineteenth year of Nebuchadnezzar, were not yet fulfilled; or rather intimating that it was not the time in Providence, since they had been forbid and hindered in former reigns from going on with the work; or, since it had been a time of famine and distress with them, it was not a time fit and convenient to carry on such a service; and though they did not lay aside all thoughts of it, yet they judged it right and proper to defer it to a more convenient time, when they were better settled, and in a better capacity to engage in it.

**Ver. 3.** *Then came the word of the Lord by Haggai the prophet*, etc.] This is a second prophecy, distinct from the former; that was delivered to the two governors, setting forth the sentiments and language of the people concerning the building of the temple, which was left with them to consider how just it was; but this is sent to the people themselves, expostulating with them about the folly and ingratitude of it:

*saying*; as follows:

**Ver. 4.** [*Is it*] *time for you, O ye, to dwell in your panelled houses*, etc.] They could not only find time, leisure, and convenience to build houses to dwell in; but to wainscot them, and line them with boards of cedar, as the Targum; as bad as the times were complained of; and could sit in them, indulging themselves in luxury, ease, and sloth; and why then was it not a fit and convenient time as well to build the house of the Lord in?

*and this house [lie] waste?* or, “and shall this house lie waste?” or, “when this house lies waste?”<sup>f14</sup> not indeed in its rubbish and ruins, as it was demolished by the Chaldeans, and left; but with a bare foundation, laid some years ago; and ever since neglected; the superstructure not carried on, and much less built up to be fit for service; and therefore might be said with propriety to lie waste and desolate, being unfinished, unfit for use, and no regard had unto it. David was of another mind, (~~1000~~2 Samuel 7:2) and truly religious persons will be more concerned for the house of God than for their own houses.

**Ver. 5.** *Now therefore thus saith the Lord of hosts*, etc.] The Lord God omniscient and omnipotent, that saw all their actions, and could punish for them; since they were so careful of their own houses, and adorning them, and so careless of his house; he would have them now sit down, and seriously think of these things, and of what he should further observe unto them:

*Consider your ways*; their sinful ways, and repent of them, and forsake them, particularly their ingratitude before observed; and their civil ways, their common ways of life; their labour, work, and business, they were continually employed in; and observe the event of them; what success they had, what these issued in; whether there were not some visible tokens of the divine displeasure on them, which rendered all their attempts to support and enrich themselves and families vain, and of no effect: and they would do well to consider to what all this was to be imputed; whether it was not

chiefly owing to this, their neglect of the house of God; and this he would have considered, not in a slight cursory way; but with great earnestness, diligence, and application of mind: “put”, or “set your hearts upon your ways”<sup>f15</sup>; so it may be literally rendered.

**Ver. 6.** *Ye have sown much, and bring in little*, etc.] Contrary to what is usually done; the seed that is sown is but little, in, comparison of what springs up, is reaped, and gathered into the barn; which commonly affords seed again to the sower, and bread to the eater; but here much land was tilled, and a great deal of seed was sown in it; but a thin crop was produced, little was gathered into the barn; a blessing being withheld from the earth, and from their labours, because of their sins, which they would do well to think of, and the cause of it:

*ye eat, but ye have not enough*; what the earth did yield, and which they gathered in, they made food of, and ate of it; yet it was not sufficient to satisfy their hunger; or it was not blessed for their nourishment; or they had a canine appetite in judgment given them, so that they were never satisfied: or, it was “not for fulness”<sup>f16</sup>; they were not filled with it to satisfaction, but still craved more; and yet, it may be, durst not eat more, if they had it, lest they should want the next day:

*ye drink, but ye are not filled with drink*; or, “not to inebriation”<sup>f17</sup>; it was not sufficient to quench their thirst, much less to make them merry and cheerful: the vines produced such a small quantity of grapes, and those so little wine, that they had not enough to drink, at least could not drink freely, but sparingly, lest it should be all spent before another vintage came:

*ye clothe you, but there is none warm*; or, “but” it is “not for heat to him”<sup>f18</sup>; to anyone; so rigorous the season, so extreme the cold, that his clothes will not keep him warm, even though the climate was, naturally and usually hot:

*and he that earneth wages earneth wages [to put it] into a bag with holes*; or, “pierced through”<sup>f19</sup>; if a man is hired as a labourer, and gets much wages, and brings it home, and lays it up; or if he trades and merchandises, and has great gains by it, and thinks to amass great riches; yet, what through losses, and the dreariness of provisions, and the many ways he has for the spending of his money, it is as if he put it into a bag full of holes, and it ran through as fast as put into it; signifying hereby that all his pains and labour were in vain.

**Ver. 7.** *Thus saith the Lord of hosts, Consider your ways.*] What they have been; what has been the consequence of them; and to what the above things are to be ascribed. This exhortation is repeated, to impress it the more upon their minds; and to denote the importance of it, and the necessity of such a conduct; (see Gill on “<sup><3005></sup>Haggai 1:5”).

**Ver. 8.** *Go up to the mountain,* etc.] Or, “that mountain”<sup>f20</sup>; pointing either to Lebanon, to cut down cedars, and bring them from thence for the building of the temple; or Mount Moriah, on which the temple was to be built; and thither carry the wood they fetched from Lebanon, or were brought from thence by the Tyrians:

*and bring wood;* or, “that ye may bring wood”; from Lebanon, or any other mountain on which wood grew, to Mount Moriah:

*and build the house;* the temple, whose foundation was already laid, but the superstructure was neglected: now the Lord would have them go on with it immediately, out of hand, with the utmost diligence, alacrity, and vigour; and not desist till the whole building was completed:

*and I will take pleasure in it;* as a type of Christ, for whose sake he was so desirous of having it built; into which he was to come, and there appear as the promised Saviour. It signifies, moreover, that the Lord would not only take pleasure in the temple built, but in their work in building it; which would be acceptable to him, being according to his mind and will; and that he would take pleasure in, and accept of them, being worshippers therein, when they worshipped him in spirit and in truth in it; and in their services, sacrifices, prayers, and praises, being rightly offered; and that he would forgive their sins, and be propitious to them for his Son’s sake, the antitype of the temple:

*and I will be glorified, saith the Lord;* by his people here, and by the worship and service they should perform: or, “I will show myself glorious”<sup>f21</sup>; that is, show his glory, causing his Shechinah to dwell here in glory, as the Targum is. The Jews observe, that the letter **h** is wanting in the word here used, which numerically signifies “five”; hence they gather that five things were wanting in the second temple, the ark, the Urim and Thummim, the fire from heaven, the Shechinah, or the divine Majesty, and the Holy Ghost.



**Ver. 9.** *Ye looked for much, and, lo, [it came] to little*, etc.] They looked for a large harvest, and very promising it was for a while; but in the end it came to little; it was a very small crop, very little was reaped and gathered in: or, “in looking”, ye looked “to increase”<sup>f22</sup>; your substance; had raised expectations of making themselves and families by their agriculture, and by their plantations of vines and olives, and by their trade and merchandise; and it dwindled away, and came to little or nothing; their riches, instead of being increased, were diminished:

*and when ye brought [it] home, I did blow upon it*; when they brought into their barns or houses the produce of their land, labour, and merchandise, which was but little, the Lord blew a blast upon that little, and brought rottenness and worms into it, as Jarchi; so that it was not a blessing to them, but a curse. So the Targum interprets it,

“behold, I sent a curse upon it:”

or, “I blew it away”<sup>f23</sup>; as any light thing, straw or stubble, or thistle down, are blown away with a wind; so easily can the Lord, and sometimes he does, strip men of that little substance they have; riches by his orders make themselves wings, and flee away; or he, by one providence or another, blows them away like chaff before the wind:

*Why? saith the Lord of hosts*; what was the cause and reason of this? which question is put, not on his own account, who full well knew it; but for their sakes, to whom he speaks, that they might be made sensible of it; and in order to that to introduce what follows, which is an answer to the question:

*because of mine house that [is] waste*; which they suffered to lie waste, and did not concern themselves about the rebuilding of it: this the Lord resented, and for this reason blasted all their labours:

*and ye run every man unto his own house*; were very eager, earnest, and diligent, in building, beautifying, and adorning their own houses; taking care of their own domestic affairs; sparing no cost nor pains to promote their own secular interest; running in all haste to do any thing and everything to increase their worldly substance; but sat still, were idle and slothful, careless and negligent, about the house of God and the affairs of it.

**Ver. 10.** *Therefore the heaven over you is stayed from dew*, etc.] Or, “therefore over”, or “upon you”<sup>f24</sup>; where should be a stop; that is, because, of your neglect of the house of God; therefore upon you, and upon you only, and not upon other nations, the heaven is restrained from letting down the dew: or, “therefore I am against you”<sup>f25</sup>; for the above reason, and which the following things show; and sad it is to have God to be an enemy, and against a people! or, “for your sake”; so the Syriac version, to which sense is the Targum,

“therefore for your sins;”

and so Jarchi, “the heaven is stayed from dew”; none descends from it; the Lord, who has the ordering of it, will not suffer it: to have the dew fall upon the earth in the night season is a great blessing; it makes the earth fruitful, revives the corn, plants, and herbs, and causes them to flourish and increase; and to have it restrained is a judgment:

*and the earth is stayed [from] her fruit*; from bringing forth its increase, which is the consequence of the dew being withheld.

**Ver. 11.** *And I called for a drought upon the land*, etc.] Upon the whole land of Judea; as he withheld the dew and rain from falling on it to moisten it, refresh it, and make it fruitful; so he ordered a vehement heat to dry and parch it; and directed the rays of the sun to strike with great force upon it, and cause the fruits of it to wither; and which is done by a word of his; when he calls, every creature obeys. There is an elegant play on words, which shows the justness of such a proceeding, that it was according to the law of retaliation; they suffered the house of God to lie **brj**, “waste”, and therefore he calls for **brj**, a “wasting” drought, to come upon their land:

*and upon the mountains*; where herbage grew, and herds of cattle and flocks of sheep were fed; but now the grass through the drought was withered away, and so no pasturage for them, and in course must perish:

*and upon the corn, and upon the new wine, and upon the oil*; that is, upon the grain fields, and upon the vines and olive trees; so that they produced but very little grain, wine, and oil, and that not very good, and which was not satisfying and refreshing; at least there were not enough for their support and comfort: now these three things were the principal necessities of life in the country of Judea, and therefore a scarcity of them was very distressing:

*and upon [that] which the ground bringeth forth*; whatever else not mentioned the earth produced, as figs, pomegranates, and other fruit:

*and upon men, and upon cattle*; who not only suffered in this drought, by the above said things it came upon; but by diseases it produced upon them, as the pestilence and fever among men, and murrain upon the cattle:

*and upon all the labour of the hands*: of men; whatsoever fields and gardens, trees and plants of every kind, that were set and cultivated by them. Of this drought, and the famine that came upon it, we nowhere else read; but there is no doubt to be made of it.

**Ver. 12.** *Then Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, and Joshua the son of Josedech the high priest*, etc.] Here follows an account of the success of Haggai's prophecy; with what power and efficacy the word of the Lord by him was attended; how it at once reached and affected the hearts of princes and people, and brought them to obedience to the will of God. The governor and high priest are mentioned first, as being the principal persons, and who very probably first declared their sense of their former neglect, and their readiness to do as they were directed; which was setting a good example to the people, and doubtless had some influence upon them:

*with all the remnant of the people, obeyed the voice of the Lord their God*; not the two leading men in church and state only; but all the people that came out of the Babylonish captivity, who were but a remnant; a few that were left through various calamities they had been exposed unto; these, one and all, signified how willing and ready they were to do the work of the Lord enjoined them: or, "they heard the voice of the Lord"<sup>f26</sup>; by the prophet, very attentively and seriously; and received and regarded it, not as the word of men, but as the word of God; and determined to act according to it:

*and the words of Haggai the prophet*; or, "and for the words of Haggai the prophet"<sup>f27</sup>; because of them, considering them as coming from the Lord himself:

*as the Lord their God had sent him*; regarding him as having a mission and commission from the Lord to deliver them to them:

*and the people did fear before the Lord*; perceiving that he was displeased with them for the neglect of his house; and that this drought upon them was a chastisement and correction for this sin; and fearing lest his wrath

should continue, and they should be more severely dealt with, on account of their transgressions.

**Ver. 13.** *Then spake Haggai the Lord's messenger*, etc.] Which some render "angel"; hence sprung that notion, imbibed by some, that he was not a man, but an angel; whereas this only respects his office, being sent of God as an ambassador in his name with a message to his people: he now observing what effect his prophecy had upon the people; they being convinced of their sin, and terrified with the judgments of God upon them, and fearing that worse still would attend them; in order to revive their spirits and comfort them, spake the words unto them which follow: and this he did

*in the Lord's message unto the people*; not of his own head, nor out of the pity of his own heart merely; but as a prophet of the Lord, having a fresh message from him to carry a promise to them for their comfort and encouragement:

*saying, I [am] with you, saith the Lord*; to pardon their sins; to accept their persons; to remove his rod from them; to assist them in the work of building the temple, they were now willing to engage in; to protect them from their enemies, and to strengthen them to go on with the work till they had finished it; a short promise, but a very full one: it was saying much in a little, and enough to remove all their fears, to scatter all their doubts, and to bear them up, and through all discouragements.

**Ver. 14.** *And the Lord stirred up the spirit of Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and the spirit of Joshua the son of Josedech, the high priest, and the spirit of all the remnant of the people*, etc.] He roused them up from that sleep and sloth in which they were before, both the governors and common people; he wrought in them both to will and do; or a willing mind to do his work in building his house; he gave them a spirit both of industry and courage; he enabled them to shake off that sluggish disposition they were attended with, and that fear of men which possessed them; he inspired them with zeal and resolution to enter upon the work at once, and pursue it with close application; the Lord only could do this:

*and they came and did work in the house of the Lord of hosts, their God*; the governor and high priest came to direct and oversee, encourage and animate the people by their presence and example; and the people to do the

several parts of service that belonged to them, according to their genius and employment.

**Ver. 15.** *In the four and twentieth day of the sixth month*, etc.] Or, “in the four and twentieth of the month, in the sixth”; in that sixth month before mentioned, (<sup><3000></sup>Haggai 1:1). On this day they came and worked; not the sixth from Tisri, for the Jews had two ways of beginning their years, which would have answered to part of February; and, therefore, chose by some interpreters as being a proper time to begin building; but no regard is had to the fitness of the season, but to the order of the Lord; but the sixth month from Nisan, and answers to part of August; for so the months are reckoned in the prophecy of Zechariah, who began to prophecy the same year as Haggai did; (see <sup><3000></sup>Zechariah 1:1,7) (<sup><3000></sup>Zechariah 7:1) this was three and twenty days after the prophecy was delivered out; during which time they might be employed in cutting of stones, and sawing and hewing of wood, as Jarchi suggests, and preparing for work in the temple:

*in the second year of Darius the king*; (see Gill on “<sup><3000></sup>Haggai 1:1”). Here some begin a new chapter, but wrongly; since, if these words do not belong to the preceding, there would be a contradiction in joining them with the beginning of the next.