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**THE MESSAGE OF THE PROPHET HAGGAI:  
A SOCIO-POLITICAL APPROACH**

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**Declaration**

This work has not been previously submitted in whole, or in part, for the award of any degree. It is my own work. Each significant contribution to, and quotation in, this dissertation from the work, or works, of other people has been attributed, and has been cited and referenced.

Signed by candidate

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A C Sherrell

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University of Cape Town

The text of the *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia* : *With Westminster Hebrew Morphology*. 1996, c1925; morphology c1991 (electronic ed.). German Bible Society; Westminster Seminary: Stuttgart; Glenside PA is used throughout in this dissertation.

## ABSTRACT

In this dissertation my study of the Book of Haggai was done by means of historical-critical exegesis. By entering into the sociological and historical world of Haggai I have attempted to reconstruct the political and religious settings operative at that time in order to gain a deeper understanding of the oracles of Haggai.

The dissertation commences with the destruction of the First Temple and the fall of Judah. The elite in Jerusalem are exiled by their Babylonian conquerors. The people who remained behind lived in a state of economic depression, yet they rally together and soon the sacrificial cult is resumed. New leaders come to the fore in both the religious and political arenas.

Meanwhile the exiled people are living in an economic prosperous country and soon the exiled King of Judah is allowed to eat at the table of the Babylonian king.

Some years later the Persians conquer the Babylonians. Cyrus the Persian king adopts an attitude of religious tolerance and provides financial assistance to restore the temples of his subjects for entirely selfish reasons. In this way the Persian rulers gained popularity and the loyalty of their subjects. King Darius needed to ensure stability in Yehud (Judah) so he returns the Davidide scion Zerubbabel together with Jehozadak the high priest in exile, to Jerusalem.

On the basis of Trito-Isaiah a number of biblical scholars have identified two main groups who may be classified as being either pro-Isaiah or pro-Ezekiel both of whom looked forward to gaining control of the Temple cult should it be re-established in Jerusalem.

It was at this time that the prophet Haggai exhorts all the people to support Zerubbabel and Jehozadak and to reconstruct the Temple of the God of Israel. Haggai succeeds with clever rhetoric to gain the cooperation of the people.

In his second major oracle Haggai addresses the priests and by means of analogy condemns the immorality that was taking place.

His third major oracle is directed at Zerubbabel and expresses the hope that with the support and assistance of the God of Israel, Zerubbabel will become a king of Judah. Haggai attempts to re-establish the old order of kingship and temple cult in Jerusalem. He succeeds in re-establishing the temple cult and the Zadokite priesthood is restored giving them control of temple matters once again.

Amongst the duties of Jehozadak would have been the collection of taxes for the Persian government. The taxes were in form of money and provisions that would then be used to provide for the needs of the Persian army on its way to Egypt.

In his endeavour to restore the "king" of Judah Haggai is however unsuccessful. A careful study reveals that an underlying element of opposition had remained in Jerusalem since the fall of Judah. This leads me to conclude that Zerubbabel met a similar fate to that of Gedaliah, the first governor of Yehud. The fear of Persian reprisals became the motive for the silence surrounding the mysterious disappearance of Zerubbabel.

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# THE MESSAGE OF THE PROPHET HAGGAI

## A socio-political approach

### Preface

The purpose of this dissertation is to show how the political background of Yehud played out under Persian rule as well as the major impact the policies of the Persian monarch had on the re-establishment of the temple-cult of Israel. Furthermore it is an attempt to explain how the various religious parties struggled in order to gain the monopoly over the Temple in Jerusalem. This will be done against the backdrop of the prophet Haggai's message to the people in Yehud.

Haggai's oracles had two main objectives. First he calls the people to rebuild the destroyed Temple and then he speaks about God's promise to the scion of David, Zerubbabel. The main undertone of the promise being that Zerubbabel will be the one to rule as monarch.

The dissertation investigates the various political rival groups which functioned in conjunction with the co-political parties in their attempt to gain control of both the leadership in the Temple and of the province Yehud.

I seek to understand why it was that Zerubbabel failed in spite of the great expectations that were entertained about his future as a monarch and conclude the dissertation with a likely explanation for his mysterious disappearance.

## **Introduction**

Chapter 1 provides a description of the fall of Jerusalem at the hands of the Babylonians and the events consequent to this. The arrival of the Persian King, Cyrus was the beginning of a new era as he implemented his policies of tolerance to his subjects encouraging their loyalty and putting an end to the rule of cruelty accompanied by the displacement of subjects such as had been the case with his predecessors the Babylonians.

Chapter 2 takes a brief look at some of the sociological factors that influenced events in Yehud during the Persian period.

Linking with chapter 2, chapter 3 takes a look at the various ideologies, which were practised in Yehud during the period following on the destruction of the First Temple. The development of the various ideologies both political and religious would become the seeds which grow into powerful sub-groups vying for leadership and control of the Temple cult. The moment was ripe for change to come about since the House of David and the Priesthood who had the monopoly of the First Temple had come to an end in Yehud with the fall of Jerusalem. These former leaders could survive in name only since they had become the servants of the Persians exiled to Babylonia. This vacuum allowed for previous minority groups to develop under the tolerant eyes of their Persian rulers.

Chapter 4 delves into at the economic opportunities that existed hand in hand with the temple cults. The gods who were worshipped at the temples were responsible for providing favourable conditions in which agrarian communities could flourish

economically and politically. The temple cults were an important factor in the strategies employed by the Persian kings as they worked towards dominating and controlling the whole of the then known ancient world.

Before analysing the contents of the Book of Haggai, the literary style of the Book as well as the rhetoric employed by the prophet Haggai are discussed in chapters 5 and 6.

The content of the Book of Haggai is discussed in chapters 7 –10. Chapter 7 deals with the oracle that calls the people to rebuild the Temple. The prophet makes his audience aware of the consequences of their disobedience and what the ensuing rewards would be if they heed his words. Haggai concludes his message with words of encouragement to his audience to persevere and complete the task at hand.

Chapter 8 takes a closer look at the audience and the message contained in Haggai 2.1-9. The prophet's message takes on an eschatological tone. Before long the Temple will be restored to her former glory and riches.

The next oracle of Haggai is examined and is dealt with in chapter 9. This oracle takes on a tenor of its own. It is in the form of a dialogue rather than an oracle. A careful analysis is made not so much of the content of the conversation, but rather the underlying message and reason for Haggai asking such obvious questions to the priests.

Chapter 10 discusses the penultimate oracle and comprises of Haggai 2.15-19. Haggai reverts back to a discussion on the drought and again promises abundance. The moment when the foundations of the Temple are completed will be a turning point. The hardships will end and prosperity will ensue.

The eschatological dimensions of Haggai's concluding oracle are explored in chapter 11 while chapter 12 takes a close look at the promise made to Zerubbabel. The confidence that God has in Zerubbabel is expressed and an enquiry is made into what the significance is of Zerubbabel being made "as a signet for God".

Chapter 13 is an investigation into the possible reason as to why the great expectations harboured by many of the contemporaries of Zerubbabel, did not materialise.

## Chapter 1

### Jerusalem under foreign rule

It was during the reign of the King Zedekiah, when Judah was a vassal state of Babylonia, that the Babylonian King Nebuchadnezzar II attacked and captured Jerusalem, the capital of Judah. In the year 586 BCE the Babylonian armies looted the city and destroyed the grand Temple (2 Kings 25; Jeremiah 52.17-34) (Miller & Hayes 1986:408-409):

18 וּבַחֹדֶשׁ הַחֲמִישִׁי בְּשִׁבְעָה לַחֹדֶשׁ הָיָא שְׁנַת הַשְּׁעָרָה שְׁנָה לְמֶלֶךְ נְבֻכַדְנֶאצַּר  
 מֶלֶךְ-בָּבֶל בָּא נְבוּזַרְאֲדָן רַב־טַבָּחִים עֶבֶד מֶלֶךְ-בָּבֶל יְרוּשָׁלַם  
 19 וַיִּשְׂרֹף אֶת־בַּיִת־יְהוָה וְאֶת־בַּיִת הַמֶּלֶךְ וְאֶת כָּל־בְּתֵי יְרוּשָׁלַם וְאֶת־כָּל־בַּיִת גְּדוֹל  
 שָׂרָף בָּאֵשׁ:  
 10 וְאֶת־חֹמֹת יְרוּשָׁלַם סָבִיב נִתְצוּ כָּל־חֵיל כְּשָׂדִים אֲשֶׁר רַב־טַבָּחִים:  
 11 וְאֵת יְתֵר הָעָם הַנִּשְׁאָרִים בְּעִיר וְאֶת־הַנְּפִלִים אֲשֶׁר נָפְלוּ עַל־הַמֶּלֶךְ בָּבֶל וְאֵת  
 יְתֵר הַהַמּוֹן הַגָּלָה נְבוּזַרְאֲדָן רַב־טַבָּחִים:

(2 Kings 25:8-11)

The majority of the aristocracy, the royal officials and the temple priests who constituted the upper class Judeans in Jerusalem, were taken into exile to Babylonia (Miller & Hayes 1986:416-417). This left those who remained in Judah without their top priests and royal officials (Miller & Hayes 1986.416). So it was that in the year 586 BCE following the destruction of the Temple and the capture of the city that Judah was not only without a temple but also without a king in Jerusalem (Hoppe 1992:566).

The Babylonians made a final attempt at allowing the people of Judah a ruler appointed from among their own people. The position went to the son of Ahikam, the grandson of Shaphan, a man by the name of Gedaliah who set up his residence in Mizpah (2 Kings 25.22; Jeremiah 40.7).

22וְהָעָם הַנֹּשָׂאֵר בְּאֶרֶץ יְהוּדָה אֲשֶׁר הִשָּׂאִיר נְבוּכַדְנֶאֱצַר מֶלֶךְ בָּבֶל וַיִּפְקֹד עֲלֵיהֶם  
אֶת־גְּדַלְיָהוּ בֶן־אֲחִיקָם בֶּן־שָׁפָן: פ

(2 Kings 25:22)

However, he was assassinated by his own people because of his pro-Babylonian views (Jagersma 1982:183; Jeremiah 41.2):

2וַיִּקָּם יִשְׁמַעְאֵל בֶּן־נְתַנְיָה וְעֹשֶׂרֶת הָאֲנָשִׁים אֲשֶׁר־הָיוּ אִתּוֹ וַיַּכּוּ אֶת־גְּדַלְיָהוּ  
בֶן־אֲחִיקָם בֶּן־שָׁפָן בַּחֶרֶב וַיָּמָת אִתּוֹ אֲשֶׁר־הִפְקִיד מֶלֶךְ־בָּבֶל בְּאֶרֶץ:  
(Jeremiah 41:2)

At that time Jeremiah, the pro-Babylonian prophet, also resided in Mizpah. The Jews of Mizpah feared reprisals from the Babylonian government for the murder of Gedaliah. Consequently, after consulting with Jeremiah the prophet they fled to Egypt taking Jeremiah against his will with them (Miller & Hayes 1986:424-425; Jeremiah 41.16-18):

16וַיִּקַּח יוֹחָנָן בֶּן־קֶרַח וְכָל־שָׂרֵי הַחַיִּלִּים אֲשֶׁר־אִתּוֹ אֵת כָּל־שְׂאֲרֵי תְּהָמָה אֲשֶׁר  
הָשִׁיב מֵאֵת יִשְׁמַעְאֵל בֶּן־נְתַנְיָה מִן־הַמִּצְפָּה אַחַר הַכָּה אֶת־גְּדַלְיָה בֶן־אֲחִיקָם  
גְּבָרִים אַנְשֵׁי הַמְּלָחָמָה וְנָשִׁים וְטַף וְסָרְסִים אֲשֶׁר הָשִׁיב מִגְּבֻעוֹן:  
17וַיֵּלְכוּ וַיֵּשְׁבוּ בְּגֵרוֹת כְּמָהֶם אֲשֶׁר־אָצֵל בֵּית לָחֶם לָלֶכֶת לְבוֹא מִצְרָיִם:  
18מִפְּנֵי הַכַּשְׂדִּים כִּי יֵרְאוּ מִפְּנֵיהֶם כִּי־הִכָּה יִשְׁמַעְאֵל בֶּן־נְתַנְיָה אֶת־גְּדַלְיָהוּ  
בֶן־אֲחִיקָם אֲשֶׁר־הִפְקִיד מֶלֶךְ־בָּבֶל בְּאֶרֶץ: ס

(Jeremiah 41:16-18)

A series of rulers followed the Babylonian king, Nebuchadnezzar, the last of whom was to be Nabonidus (Miller & Hayes 1986:428).

### **The fall of the Babylonian Empire**

Nabonidus gained control of the Babylonian Empire in 556 BCE. He favoured the moon god Sin, instead of the sun god Marduk. As a result of this, Nabonidus elevated the moon-god's status with the idea of gaining support from Arabs and Arameans in his empire (Miller & Hayes 1986:429). His mother was the high priestess of the god Sin in Haran and his daughter the high priestess of the god Sin in Ur (Miller & Hayes 1986:429).

### **Cyrus**

Cyrus rose to power in 550 BCE when he rebelled against the Median overlord, his grandfather, Astyages (Miller & Hayes 1986:438). This was the beginning of the end of the Babylonian Empire and the rise of the Persian Empire (Tadmor 1969:164).

In the year 547 BCE the dissatisfaction of the priests of Marduk with Nabonidus was evident. The loss of power by being displaced by the priests of the moon god Sin and the consequent economic restrictions that this brought about (Tadmor 1969:164) enticed them to rebellion. The priests of Marduk secretly approached Cyrus, assuring him of their loyalty should he liberate them from Nabonidus (Tadmor 1969:165). Cyrus recognised the advantages of assisting the priests of Marduk who loathed Nabonidus. Consequently, when Cyrus marched on Babylon, the inhabitants who were supporters of Marduk welcomed him with open arms and

he gained control of Babylon without resorting to combat (Tadmor 1969:165; Gitay 1981:55).

Cyrus allowed the Babylonians to restore their god Marduk to his status as the chief god of Babylon. His reputation for tolerance and even support for the gods of the nations, which he had conquered, would assist him in his expansion of the mighty Persian Empire (Miller & Hayes 1986:440).

The scribe of Babylon recorded the support that Cyrus enjoyed in Babylon:

When I [Cyrus] entered [the city] Babylon peaceably and established to jubilation [my] royal seat in the Palace of the Ruler, the great Lord Marduk, [turned] the hearts of the many inhabitants of Babylon [to love me] and I daily sought to worship him....

(Cyrus Cylinder translated by Tadmor 1969:165.)

### **Recognition of Cyrus by the prophet of Israel**

The anonymous prophet responsible for chapters 40-55 of the Book of Isaiah, who is often referred to by the name of Deutero-Isaiah, clearly showed his support for the Persian king, Cyrus (Tadmor 1969:166). Deutero-Isaiah describes Cyrus as “the Lord’s anointed” (Isaiah 45.1), a title usually reserved for the Kings of Judah (Tadmor 1969:166):

כֹּה־אָמַר יְהוָה לְמַשִּׁיחוֹ לְכוֹרֶשׁ אֲשֶׁר־הִחֲזַקְתִּי בְיָמֵינוּ לְרֹד־לְפָנָיו גּוֹיִם וּמְחַנֵּי  
מְלָכִים אֶפְתַּח לְפָתַח לְפָנָיו דְּלָתַיִם וְשַׁעֲרַיִם לֹא יִסְגְּרוּ׃

(Isaiah 45:1)

Deutero-Isaiah proclaims Cyrus as the one who had come to liberate the Jews in exile and who would allow them to return to Judah (Kaufmann 1977:56). He went to great lengths, employing persuasive rhetoric to convince his audience that Cyrus was an agent of the God of the Jews who had come to redeem and save them from their Babylonian oppressors (Isaiah 41.25) (Gitay 1981:178):

הַעִירוֹתִי מִצָּפוֹן וַיָּאֵת מִמִּזְרַח־שָׁמֶשׁ יִקְרָא בְשֵׁמִי וַיָּבֵא סִגְנִים כְּמוֹ-חֶמֶר וְכִמוֹ יוֹצֵר  
יִרְמַס־טִיט:

(Isaiah 41:25)

Deutero-Isaiah prophesied the fall of Babylon (Isaiah 46-47), giving Cyrus the honourable task of restoring Jerusalem and her temple (Isaiah 44.28) (Miller & Hayes 1986:441):

הָאָמַר לְכוּרֶשׁ רְעִי וְכָל-חֶפְצֵי יִשְׁלֵם וְלֵאמֹר יְרוּשָׁלַם תִּבְנֶה וְהִכָּל תִּבְנֶה:  
(Isaiah 44:28)

This oracle of Deutero-Isaiah was intended for a two-fold audience according to Miller and Hayes (1986:44.) The prophet was expressing God's blessing on the hopes of the exilic audience who surely harboured some reservations as to whether or not the enemy king should take charge of building the Temple of the God of Israel. In addition, Deutero-Isaiah sought to encourage King Cyrus in pursuing his "propagandistic" objective of restoring the temples destroyed by the Assyrians and Babylonians (ibid.).

### **The Jews in *galut* long for their temple**

By this time the Judean exiles who were deported at the time of the destruction of the Temple had been living in Babylon for about two generations (Eder 1995:189).

The Judeans continued to practise their religion and observed the Sabbath (Isaiah 58.13-14) (Gitay 1981:51)

13 אִם-תָּשִׁיב מִשְׁבַּת רְגֶלְךָ עֲשׂוֹת חֲפָצֶיךָ בַּיּוֹם קִדְשִׁי וְקִרְאתָ לַשְּׁבַת עֲנֵג לְקִדּוֹשׁ  
 יְהוָה מְכַבֵּד וְכִבְדֹתָו מַעֲשׂוֹת דְּרָכֶיךָ מִמְצוֹא חֲפָצֶיךָ וְדַבֵּר דְּבָר:  
 14 אֲזַן הַתְּעַנֵּנִי עַל-יְהוָה וְהִרְפַּבְתִּיךָ עַל-בְּמִתִּי אֶרֶץ וְהֶאֱכַלְתִּיךָ נַחֲלַת יַעֲקֹב אָבִיךָ  
 כִּי פִי יְהוָה דִּבֶּר: ס

(Isaiah 58:13-14)

Their longing for the Temple of Jerusalem was great and they expressed this in mournful songs such as the one that is preserved in Psalm 137,

עַל נְהָרוֹת בָּבֶל שָׁם יִשְׁבְּנוּ גַם-בְּכִינּוֹ בְּזָכְרֵנוּ אֶת-צִיּוֹן:  
 עַל-עֲרָבִים בְּתוֹכָהּ תִּלְיֵנוּ כַּנְּרוֹתֵינוּ:  
 כִּי שָׁם שְׂאֵלֵנוּ שׁוֹבֵינוּ דְּבַר-יְשִׁיר וְתוֹלְלֵינוּ שְׂמִיחָה שִׁירוּ לָנוּ מִשִּׁיר צִיּוֹן:  
 אֵיךְ נָשִׁיר אֶת-שִׁיר-יְהוָה עַל אֲדָמַת נְכָר:  
 אִם-אֶשְׁכַּחךָ יְרוּחַ לִי הִשְׁכַּח יְמִינִי:  
 תִּדְבַּק-לְשׁוֹנִי לְחִפֵּי אִם-לֹא אֲזַכְּרֶיךָ אִם-לֹא אֶעֱלֶה אֶת-יְרוּשָׁלַם עַל רֹאשׁ  
 שְׂמִיחָתִי:

(Psalm 137:1-6)

It is uncertain whether the prophet known as Deutero-Isaiah lived in Babylon or in Jerusalem, but that he entertained pro-Persian views can be ascertained from Isaiah chapter 44.28-45.4. This oracle describes the mission that the God of Israel gave to Cyrus to fulfil. He will be God's representative who rules and rebuilds Jerusalem and the Temple.

## **Cyrus the protagonist's agenda for reconstructing the temples of the conquered peoples**

In the Ancient Near East, a good ruler was depicted as one who brought back the people who had been dispersed by their enemy and restored their national gods and sanctuaries to them (Miller & Hayes 1986:440). Hammurabi (ANET 164), Esarhaddon (ARAB II,§ 659E) and Ashurbanipal (ANET 563) were depicted as such kings (Miller & Hayes 1986:440). According to the Cyrus Cylinder (ANET 315-316), Cyrus was also described as such a hero of the captives (Miller & Hayes 1986:442-443):

He [Marduk] scanned and looked (through) all the countries, searching for a righteous ruler willing to lead him (in the annual procession). (Then) he pronounced the name of Cyrus, king of Anshan, declared him (literally, pronounced [his] name) to be (come) the ruler of the world. He made the Gutti country and all the Mandahordes bow in submission to his (that is, Cyrus') feet. And he (Cyrus) did always endeavour to treat according to justice the black-headed whom he (Marduk) has made him conquer. Marduk, the great lord, a protector of his people / worshippers, beheld with pleasure his (that is Cyrus') good deeds and his upright mind (literally, his heart) (and therefore) ordered him to march against the city of Babylon. ... He delivered into his (that is Cyrus') hands Nabonidus, the king who did not worship him (that is, Marduk). ... (As to the region) from ... as far as Ashur and Susa, Agade, Eshnunna, the towns Zamban, Me-Turnu, Der as well as the region of the Gutians, I returned to (these) sacred

cities on the other side of the Tigris, the sanctuaries of which have been ruins for a long time, the images which (used) to live therein and established for them permanent sanctuaries. I (also) gathered all their (former) inhabitants and returned (to them) their habitations. Furthermore, I resettled upon the command of Marduk, the great lord, all the gods of Sumer and Akkad whom Nabonidus has brought to Babylon to the anger of the lord of the gods, unharmed, in their (former) chapels, the places which make them happy. (ANET 315-16; translation quoted in Miller & Hayes 1986:442-443).

The following Biblical references refer to Cyrus' declaration:

22 וּבְשָׁנָה אַחַת לְכוֹרֶשׁ מֶלֶךְ פָּרַס לְכָלֹת דְּבַר־יְהוָה בְּפִי יִרְמְיָהוּ הָעֵיר יְהוָה אֶת־  
רוּחַ כּוֹרֶשׁ מֶלֶךְ־פָּרַס וַיַּעֲבֹר־קוֹל בְּכָל־מַלְכוּתוֹ וְגַם־בְּמִכְתָּב לֵאמֹר : ס  
23 כֹּה־אָמַר כּוֹרֶשׁ מֶלֶךְ פָּרַס כָּל־מַמְלָכוֹת הָאָרֶץ נָתַן לִי יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי הַשָּׁמַיִם וְהוֹאֲ־  
פָקַד עָלַי לְבָנוֹת־לוֹ בַּיִת בְּיְרוּשָׁלַם אֲשֶׁר בְּיְהוּדָה מִי־בָכֶם מִכָּל־עַמּוֹ יְהוָה  
אֱלֹהֵי עַמּוֹ וַיַּעַל :

(2 Chronicles 36:22-23)

and

1 וּבְשָׁנָה אַחַת לְכוֹרֶשׁ מֶלֶךְ פָּרַס לְכָלֹת דְּבַר־יְהוָה מִפִּי יִרְמְיָהוּ הָעֵיר יְהוָה  
אֶת־רוּחַ כּוֹרֶשׁ מֶלֶךְ־פָּרַס וַיַּעֲבֹר־קוֹל בְּכָל־מַלְכוּתוֹ וְגַם־בְּמִכְתָּב לֵאמֹר :  
2 כֹּה־אָמַר כּוֹרֶשׁ מֶלֶךְ פָּרַס כָּל־מַמְלָכוֹת הָאָרֶץ נָתַן לִי יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי הַשָּׁמַיִם  
וְהוֹאֲפָקַד עָלַי לְבָנוֹת־לוֹ בַּיִת בְּיְרוּשָׁלַם אֲשֶׁר בְּיְהוּדָה :  
3 מִי־בָכֶם מִכָּל־עַמּוֹ יְהִי אֱלֹהֵי עַמּוֹ וַיַּעַל לְיְרוּשָׁלַם אֲשֶׁר בְּיְהוּדָה וַיִּבֶן אֶת־בַּיִת  
יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל הוּא הָאֱלֹהִים אֲשֶׁר בְּיְרוּשָׁלַם :

וְכָל־הַנְּשָׂאֵר מִכָּל־הַמְּקֹמֹת אֲשֶׁר הוּא גֵר־שָׁם יִנְשְׂאוּהוּ אַנְשֵׁי מְקוֹמוֹ בְּכֶסֶף וּבַזָּהָב  
 וּבְרִכּוּשׁ וּבְבִהֵמָה עִם־הַנְּדָבָה לְבֵית הָאֱלֹהִים אֲשֶׁר בְּיְרוּשָׁלַם :

(Ezra 1:1-4)

### **Cyrus' strategy**

It is clear from the way in which Cyrus won his victory over Nabonidus that he understood the importance of a harmonious relationship between the dominant religious institution and the state. Consequently he became the patron of the many temples with the specific aim of gaining the support of the believers who worshipped at these temples.

Cyrus reinstated the priesthoods of the various nations that he had subjugated including Judah. Among them was Joshua, the son of Jehozadak. Jehozadak had been the last chief priest of Solomon's temple in Jerusalem (Berquist 1995:24). Moreover, he also permitted many of the regional leaders in the various satrapies (provinces of the Persian Empire), who had held leadership positions under Babylonian rule, to continue in their posts as puppet rulers of their local communities (Berquist 1995:27).

Cyrus acknowledged the deities of all the countries he controlled. According to Biblical references the God of Israel was included amongst them. Cyrus sought their favour by having sacrifices made to their God, on his behalf, on a regular basis (Ezra 6.9-10; Horsley 1991:172):

וּמָה חֲשָׁן וּבְנֵי תוֹרִין וְדַכְרִין וְאַמְרִין לְעֵלּוֹן לְאֵלֶּה שְׁמֵיָא חֲנֻשִׁין מֶלַח  
 חָמַר וּמִשַׁח כְּמֵאמַר כְּהֵנָּא דִּי-בִירוּשָׁלַם לְהוּא מִתְיַהֵב לְהֵם יוֹם בְּיוֹם דִּי-לֹא  
 שְׁלוֹ:

דִּי-לְהוֹן מִתְקַרְבִּין גִּיחוּחִין לְאֵלֶּה שְׁמֵיָא וּמְצַלִּין לְחַיִּי מֶלְכָא וּבְנוּהִי:  
 (Ezra 6:9-10)

The Persian King went as far as restoring temple objects captured by the Babylonian armies as well as providing the assistance and the means for the rebuilding of the temples destroyed in Babylonia, Elam and Assyria (Berquist 1995:25).

It was not so much that Cyrus had the religious freedom of his subjects in mind, but rather that he needed to gain the popularity and support of the nations that he ruled (Berquist 1995:25). Once he had the loyalty of the priests and because he was their benefactor, he could use the temple administration to work towards making his dream of building the biggest empire in the world come true, for they would assist in providing the necessary revenue. The temples were responsible for the collection of tributes and taxes in the form of money as well as food provisions. In this way they funded the infrastructure on which the Persian armies depended for their food supplies, accommodation and salaries (Berquist 1995:26).

The Persian government placed people who were loyal to their King in the outlying areas of their Empire to see to the collection of tributes and to be of assistance to the Persian army in the event of border wars. The income received from these subjects throughout the Persian Empire provided the means by which Cyrus could implement his policy of imperial expansion. Developing and populating the border villages and towns improved the army's ability to annex new near-lying territory

(Berquist 1995:26). The settlements on the peripheries of the satrapies allowed the Persian army to stay on the move constantly and at their own pace. It also strengthened the borders against enemy attack (Berquist 1995:26).

### **Cambyses**

Cyrus was killed in battle while fighting in the east in 530 BCE and was succeeded by his son, Cambyses (Miller & Hayes 1986:449).

Cambyses was less tolerant and did not respect his enemies' religious institutions; if they proved to be a stumbling block on his way he destroyed them. He continued the campaign against Egypt, which had been started by Cyrus, and laid to waste some of the Egyptian temples (Ackroyd 1970:165) such as those at Heliopolis and Thebes (Olmstead 1948:92).

Cambyses ruled for eight years during which he gained control over Upper and Lower Egypt (Meyers & Meyers 1987:xxxvii). The Persian Empire now extended from Persia across to Egypt. Cambyses had a reputation for being an arrogant, cruel tyrant (Miller & Hayes 1986:450-451).

There are no clear biblical references to Cambyses. Nevertheless, according to Miller and Hayes, Josephus in his *Antiquities* (XI.20-30) associates the content of Ezra 4.7-24 with Cambyses rather than with Darius his successor (1986:450). In support of this view Miller and Hayes refer to 1 Esdras 2.16-25 which, like Ezra 4.7-24 refers to the letter written by the enemies of the exiles who had returned to Jerusalem (1986:450). This letter which is found in both Ezra 4.7-24 and 1 Esdras

42.16-25 requests Cambyses (Artaxerxes) to stop the returnees from building the Temple in Jerusalem.

During the rule of Cambyses, Judah was securely under the Persian yoke (ibid.). Darius succeeded to the throne of Persia in 522 BCE upon the death of Cambyses.

At the beginning of Darius' era there was an atmosphere of political tension throughout the Empire caused by the unpopularity of Cambyses and non-acceptance by the people of Darius (Miller & Hayes 1986:451).

The Behistun Inscription names the provinces of Persia, Elam, Assyria, Parthia, Margiana, Sattagydia and Scythia and Babylon as areas in which rebellions occurred and which were related to Darius' accession to the throne of Persia (Miller & Hayes 1986:451). With the intention of stabilising the unrest in Babylon, which was led by Nebuchadnezzar IV, in August 521 BCE, Darius invaded Babylon for a second time. He meted out harsh treatment to the population and *impaled about three thousand of the principal citizens* (Herodotus III.159 cited in Miller & Hayes 1986:451).

Political unrest in the Persian Empire in the years 522-520 BCE was rife. The effects of this unrest would also have been felt by the inhabitants of Yehud, among whom were the prophets Haggai and Zechariah (Miller & Hayes 1986:452). Nevertheless by 519 BCE, Darius had secured his throne and could concentrate on establishing an effective administrative system (Miller & Hayes 1986:453).

### **Darius' strategy**

Continuous military expansion programmes had marked Cyrus' rule, while he paid very little attention to the administration of his vast empire (Berquist 1995:60-61). In comparison, Darius focused his attention on the administrative and fiscal matters of the empire. He concentrated on production and trade, thereby improving the economy (Berquist 1995:61). With clever propaganda tactics Darius won the support of many of his subjects and re-enforced their co-operation by funding the regions and allowing them a degree of autonomy. The appointment of Zerubbabel, a scion of King David, as governor of Yehud, can be seen as an example of this policy (Berquist 1995:61).

Even though Darius was not primarily bent on war, he needed to expand the empire because conquered territories meant additional income in the form of taxes and tributes.

Thus, Darius' campaign against Egypt in 521-518 BCE would have had a direct impact on Yehud (Berquist 1995:61). Previously, when Judah still had some form of independence, she acted as a buffer for Egypt from any enemy attacking her from the north. Now that Yehud had become one of the Persian satrapies she would be of use to the advancing Persian army on their way to Egypt. Additional funds and supplies were needed to support and provide for the needs of the Persian armies. The tax collected by the Temple priests in the form of money and agricultural produce on behalf of their Persian benefactor, would be used to feed the army as they passed through Yehud on their way to Egypt (Berquist 1995:62,68).

In the years 519-517 BCE Darius mobilised a vast contingent of the Persian army and sent them to Egypt (Widengren 1977:323). Darius needed to show his military power as a way of coercing the Egyptians to surrender to him. His tactic succeeded and he was able to take Egypt without a battle being fought (Berquist 1995:61).

The atmosphere of political tension and unrest in Yehud at the time of the reconstruction of the temple could be ascribed to the presence of the large Persian army in the region which would have deterred any signs of a rebellion (Berquist 1995:62).

Any internal unrest in Yehud in 521 BCE may very well not have been specifically directed against the Persian Empire *per se*, but against their governor Zerubbabel who had replaced whatever local leadership was in place prior to his arrival.

The function of those placed in a leadership position in the regional areas included acting as well-informed advisors of their region. They were the ears of Darius. To encourage such loyalty Darius made use of religious orientated propaganda which including the building of temples and schools. In Egypt this approach of Darius proved to be so successful that many of the loyal citizens revered him on a par with the Pharaoh and other Egyptian gods (Berquist 1995:57-58).

In any event, on his trip to Egypt, Darius would have passed through Judah and he would have gained first hand knowledge of the conditions prevailing there.

Yehud would have had to supply the large Persian army with enormous amounts of food that would have had a significant effect on the available food supply (Berquist

1995:62). When seen in the light of the drought that prevailed and was cause for much concern and anxiety (Haggai 1), the additional demands to feed the army would have been like pouring salt into the wounds of the citizens of Yehud. The authorities who were on the payroll of the Persian government, such as the high priest at the Temple, would have been in charge of the distribution of the agricultural produce taken from the farmers. Any remuneration for such supplies would have been paid to the priests who “danced” to the tune of their Persian overlords (Berquist 1995:64).

The situation in Egypt was different since there were always ongoing tensions because Darius was never fully able to subjugate Egypt. Political control of the fertile Shephelah region, which lay between Yehud and Egypt, alternated between the Persians and Egyptians (Carter 1994:141). The proximity of Persia's enemy to Yehud added to the strategic significance that Yehud had for the Persian ruler.

## Chapter 2

### Yehud during the Persian period

The people who had escaped exile continued with their lives in Yehud. Yehud was the name given by the Persians to the satrapy that was formerly known as Judah. It was one of the provinces that formed part of the greater satrapy known as Eber Nahara (Beyond the River) (Meyers & Meyers 1987:xxxii).

As with most wars, the country was devastated and faced an economic depression.

The prophet Haggai describes the dire economic conditions in 1.5-6:

5 וְעַתָּה כֹּה אָמַר יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת שִׁמוּ לְבַבְכֶם עַל־דַּרְכֵיכֶם:  
 6 זָרְעוּם הַרְבֵּה וְהָבֵא מַעֲט אָכֹל וְאִין־לְשַׁבְּעָה שָׂתוּ וְאִין־לְשַׁכְּרָה לְבוֹשׁ וְאִין־לָחֶם  
 לוֹ וְהִמְשַׁכְּרִי מִשְׁתַּכְּרִי אֶל־צְרוּר נְקוּב: פ

(Haggai 1:5-6)

The farmers remained in Yehud and lived in the rural areas where they continued with their way of life in much the same way as they had done before the destruction of Jerusalem. The elders continued to direct the people in their villages since Cyrus, the Persian ruler, had adopted a policy of non-interference in local matters (Berquist 1995:17).

### Sociological background

As the ruling class, the Persian regime had vested interests in maintaining the existing institutionalised structures, including the religious institutions such as the Temple cult in Jerusalem (Hanson 1979:212). The inhabitants of Yehud were an insignificant minority group in the Persian Empire. They were powerless to change the status quo (Hanson 1979:212).

However, this oppressed minority group resorted to creating a kind of utopian future in which they saw themselves no longer as victims, but fulfilling meaningful positions in society (Hanson 1979:214). Because the prophets generally called for transformation of some sort, they readily found a following among the oppressed minority group (Hanson 1979:214-215).

In describing the elements within society which readily adhere to the prophetic impulse, Weber, like Mannheim, points to the alienated, the disprivileged social groups who gain their identity from a *promise for the future which implies the assignment of some function, mission, or vocation to them. What they cannot claim to be, they replace by the worth of that which they will one day become ...* [M. Weber The sociology of religion, 1963:106, cited in Hanson]. In a world fallen to evil, they long for a worthiness which has been denied them ... (Hanson 1979:214).

The task of the prophet in the Hebrew Bible can readily be seen as one which calls for a charismatic personality to take a strong stand against the established (religious) institutions of his time. According to the prophet these established institutions, although they may support the status quo, have gradually deviated from the "true" path. The task of the prophet is to make the leaders of the majority group aware of their folly.

The minority group could readily identify with the messages of the prophets because they too were of the opinion that the dominant group had deviated from the "true" path. The minority group had lost their status to the newcomers returning

from exile with the blessings of the Persians. These newcomers were taking up positions of authority over the minority group. Together with these newcomers came some of the ideology of the despised Persians.

On the other hand, the ruling class looked to the religious institutions to legitimise their own meaningful positions in society and to preserve the status quo (Hanson 1979:214). This generally called for some sort of compromise between the state and the religious institution whereby both parties would play a role in reinforcing the power structure of the other party. The religious institutions exhibited tolerance towards the secular order because they needed the support of the ruling class to ensure their function and status in the existing social order. Nevertheless the ruling class in turn supported the religious institutions so as to ensure stability and compliance in the social order (Hanson 1979:215).

In spite of being dependent on the ruling class, the religious institutions were capable of gaining superiority over the ruling group, owing to the assumed *divine status* of the former (Hanson 1979:215).

It becomes possible to understand why the Persian regime would have supported the Zadokite party, as it is highly likely that Joshua, the High Priest, and Zerubbabel, the governor of Yehud, had previously served or at least were known to the Persian court (Hanson 1979:219; Berquist 1995:57).

Thus by sanctioning the reconstruction of the Temple, the stability in Yehud could be upheld. The Temple Cult would form part of the many religious institutions of the Persian Empire (Hanson 1979:219).

In sharp contrast to the officially sanctioned religious institutions, the sect-type “unofficial” religious organisation finds support among the poor and oppressed. They foster in their adherents, ideological utopian idealism. These unsanctioned organisations have strict codes of personal holiness based on fundamentalism (Hanson 1979:216). Because of their disempowerment they adopt eschatological views based on their hope for a miraculous *Divine intervention* and look forward to the time when their ideological idealism will become a reality (Hanson 1979:216).

#### **The ideal undermined by opposition (Isaiah 63.7-64.11)**

The sociological environment of the time can be discerned in Isaiah 58.1-59.21 and 63.7 - 64.11 (Hanson 1979:79). The disciples of Second Isaiah looked forward to the return of the exiles and with them the restoration of Israel. Now that the return from exile had occurred the disappointment was significant, since the promise of the restoration of the holy nation did not come about. Instead, these disciples of Second Isaiah became the “oppressed minority” in Judah, while the Zadokite priesthood once again took control of the temple cult (Hanson 1979:130). *Zion had fallen into the firm grasp of the defiled majority* (Hanson 1979:131). This loss of status was to be the momentum that thrust the visionary disciples of Second Isaiah into an apocalyptic eschatological paradigm (Hanson 1979:133).

Isaiah 63.7-64.11 is a communal lament (Hanson 1979:79). Hanson notes that the people cry to God, *not* because they were oppressed by the Babylonians or the Persians, but because their adversaries in Yehud were opposing and oppressing them (Hanson 1979:91).

Hanson traces the schism between the Levite priesthood and the Zadokite priesthood to the days of King Solomon when Zadok the priest sided with Solomon instead of his brother Adonijah to become the successor of King David (1Kings 1.39):

139 וַיִּקַּח צְדוֹק הַכֹּהֵן אֶת־קֶרֶן הַשֶּׁמֶן מִן־הָאֵהָל וַיִּמָּשַׁח אֶת־שְׁלֹמֹה וַיִּתְקַעוּ בַשּׁוֹפָר  
וַיֹּאמְרוּ כָּל־הָעָם יְחִי הַמֶּלֶךְ שְׁלֹמֹה׃

(1 Kings 1:39)

On the other hand the priest Abiathar was banished to Anathoth for siding against Solomon in his quest for the kingship (1Kings 2.26):

26 וַלְאֵבִי־תָר הַכֹּהֵן אָמַר הַמֶּלֶךְ עָנַתָּ לְךָ עַל־שֹׁדֶיךָ כִּי אִישׁ מוֹת אָתָּה וּבַיּוֹם הַזֶּה  
לֹא אָמִיתְךָ כִּי־נִשְׂאֵת אֶת־אֲרוֹן אֲדֹנָי יְהוִה לְפָנַי דָּוִד אָבִי וְכִי הִתְעַנִּיתָ בְּכֹל  
אֲשֶׁר־הִתְעַנָּה אָבִי׃

(1 Kings 2:26)

Consequently this led to the Zadokites gaining superiority in the temple cult while the Levites were somewhat displaced and conducted their priestly functions mainly in the rural areas. The situation worsened for them during the rule of King Josiah of Judah. During King Josiah's extensive religious reforms the Levites lost this function as well since all priestly activities were restricted to Jerusalem and the Temple (2Kings 23.8):

וַיָּבֵא אֶת־כָּל־הַכֹּהֲנִים מִעָרֵי יְהוּדָה וַיִּטְמֵא אֶת־הַבְּמֹת אֲשֶׁר קִטְרוּ־שָׁמָּה הַכֹּהֲנִים  
 מִגִּבֵּעַ עַד־בָּאֵר שִׁבְעַ וַנִּתְּן אֶת־בְּמֹת הַשָּׁעָרִים אֲשֶׁר־פָּתַח שַׁעַר יְהוֹשֻׁעַ שַׁר־הָעִיר  
 אֲשֶׁר־עַל־שְׂמֹאל אִישׁ בְּשַׁעַר הָעִיר׃

(2 Kings 23:8)

After the Babylonians captured Jerusalem the priests together with the aristocrats of Jerusalem were exiled to Babylonia. As a consequence the Zadokite priesthood was removed from their position of dominance in Jerusalem. It would seem that many of the Levites were in fact left behind and were able to re-establish their priestly functions in the rural areas. It is likely that they moved to Jerusalem after she had fallen and worked at re-establishing the temple cult (Hanson 1979:226-227).

Of note is the fact that the list of returnees mentioned in the Book of Ezra (8.1-14) does not include the names of any Levites (Hanson 1979:227). However, the names of the Levites who married foreign wives are amongst the list of men who promised to divorce their foreign wives in Ezra 10.18-44:

וּמִן־הַלְוִיִּם יוֹזָבֵד וְשִׁמְעִי וְקַלְיָה הוּא קְלִיטָא פְּתַח־יָהּ יְהוּדָה וְאַלְיָעָזָר׃  
 (Ezra 10:23)

The tensions within Yehud intensified once the exiles returned and came into direct conflict with the hierarchy that had replaced them and their fathers in their absence.

## Chapter 3

### The communities of Trito-Isaiah and Ezekiel 40-48

In the days of King Darius of Persia, three prophets were active in Yehud, namely Haggai, Zechariah and the anonymous prophet known as Trito-Isaiah (Berquist 1995:80). Each had a message for the people of Yehud. Although each prophet had his own agenda, all three of them dealt to a greater or lesser degree with the temple of Jerusalem (ibid.).

### The community behind Isaiah 56-66

At least two politico-religious parties can be identified in Isaiah 56-66. Various scholars, such as Hanson (1979), Plöger (1968), Achtemeier (1982), Berquist (1995) and Schramm (1995) have assigned different names or titles to these parties. A prevalent view among these scholars is to compare ideals depicted by the prophet Ezekiel (chapters 40-48) with those projected by the prophet Isaiah (chapters 60-62). The Ezekiel school is generally depicted as being an exclusive group with a monopoly on the Temple of Jerusalem; while the Isaianic School is seen as having a more universal approach to those who wish to worship at Zion.

Schramm makes the following comparison which he bases on Hanson's paradigm (1995:94-95):

	<b>Isaiah 60-62</b>	<b>Ezekiel 40-48</b>
1.	Peace and Righteousness are the leaders	The high priest and the prince are the leaders
2.	The whole nation will become priests of God	Only the sons of Zadok may serve in the temple as priests
3.	All the people will be called a "Holy People"	The priests must leave their garments in the holy chambers so that these garments do not communicate holiness to the people

4.	The wood from the trees will come together for the building of the sanctuary	They have a meticulously planned architectural plan for reconstructing the temple
5.	Foreigners will build the walls and kings will serve there	They themselves will build the temple

Since both sides of the table depicted above deal with the same issues, Hanson considers Isaiah 60-62 to be a response to Ezekiel 40-48 (Schramm 1995:95).

### The exiles return from Babylon

Many of the exiles belonged to the Ezekiel school of thought. According to the description given in the Book of Ezekiel, chapters 40-48, Ezekiel had in mind a pragmatic restoration programme for the sacrificial cult of the Jerusalem Temple. Ezekiel provides much attention to the detail and exact measurement and allocation of the Temple building, the buildings surrounding the Temple, the utensils and the altar. So for example, the measurements for the Temple area are given in Ezekiel 42.15-20 and they do not leave room for any guesswork:

15 וְכָל־אֶת־מִדּוֹת הַבַּיִת הַפְּנִימִי וְהוֹצִיאֲנִי דְרֹךְ הַשַּׁעַר אֲשֶׁר פָּנָיו דְרֹךְ הַקְּדָיִם  
וּמָדְדוּ סָבִיב סָבִיב:

16 מָדַד רוּחַ הַקְּדָיִם בְּקִנְיָה הַמִּדָּה חֲמֵשׁ־מֵאוֹת קָנִים בְּקִנְיָה הַמִּדָּה סָבִיב:

17 מָדַד רוּחַ הַצָּפוֹן חֲמֵשׁ־מֵאוֹת קָנִים בְּקִנְיָה הַמִּדָּה סָבִיב:

18 אֵת רוּחַ הַדָּרוֹם מָדַד חֲמֵשׁ־מֵאוֹת קָנִים בְּקִנְיָה הַמִּדָּה:

19 סָבִב אֶל־רוּחַ הַיָּם מָדַד חֲמֵשׁ־מֵאוֹת קָנִים בְּקִנְיָה הַמִּדָּה:

20 לְאַרְבַּע רוּחוֹת מָדְדוּ חוֹמָה לּוֹ סָבִיב סָבִיב אַרְךְ חֲמֵשׁ מֵאוֹת וְרֹחַב חֲמֵשׁ מֵאוֹת  
לְהַבְדִּיל בֵּין הַקֹּדֶשׁ לְחָל:

(Ezekiel 42.15-20)

Ezekiel also provides details concerning who may enter the Temple and who should be excluded, the sacrifices, festivals, and the priests. A point of note is that

the Levites are reduced to being the servants who serve in the Temple because of their idolatry (Ezekiel 44.2, ... 14):

10 כִּי אִם־הַלְוִיִּם אֲשֶׁר רָחֲקוּ מֵעָלַי בְּתַעוֹת יִשְׂרָאֵל אֲשֶׁר תָּעוּ מֵעָלַי אַחֲרַי גְּלוּלֵיהֶם  
וְנִשְׂאוּ עִוְנָם:

(Ezekiel 44:10)

14 וְנִתְּתִי אוֹתָם שְׂמֵרַי מִשְׁמֶרֶת הַבַּיִת לְכָל עֲבֹדָתוֹ וְלְכָל אֲשֶׁר יַעֲשֶׂה בּוֹ: פ  
(Ezekiel 44:14)

The returnees arrived in Jerusalem with much hope of rebuilding their beloved Temple, but whether the local leaders necessarily greeted them with any enthusiasm is a moot point.

The arrival of the returnees from exile would mark the beginning of many changes in Jerusalem. Along with them came changes to the hierarchical structures both in the political sphere and in the religious sector. No longer would a local inhabitant of Jerusalem have the final say in matters pertaining to the way the province was run, for with the arrival of Sheshbazzar, the Persian appointed governor, and those who followed him, came changes in the local leadership in Yehud. The Persian regime selected Jewish leaders on whom they could rely and who were willing to cooperate with them (Berquist 1995:27).

### **The locals do not welcome returnees from Babylon**

In the meantime, subsequent to the destruction of the First Temple, the inhabitants of Yehud who had not been exiled continued to worship without the temple and live in and around Jerusalem for almost 70 years (Berquist 1995:73). The prophets

Haggai and Zechariah gave their support for the Persian king's plans and policies. This is evident in that both these prophets showed their approval of the two Persian appointed leaders, Zerubbabel and Joshua as well as for their endeavours to get the Temple rebuilt. The local inhabitants did not necessarily share the view of the two prophets and this created socio-political tensions among the inhabitants of Yehud. The people who had not been exiled had not developed the same sense of loyalty for the Persians as those who served in the Persian court (Berquist 1995:73). It is also likely that they did not have the same incentive to comply with the conquerors' wishes.

Those who were born and grew up in exile saw the Persian King in a different light. Amongst those who were in exile was the prophet known as Deutero-Isaiah. According to Berquist, Deutero-Isaiah lived and wrote in Babylon (1995:31). Isaiah 40-55 reveals that Deutero-Isaiah placed his hope for the restoration of the Temple and the people of Judah in the Persian king. Of King Cyrus he wrote that God would give Cyrus military success since he was God's anointed one. God chose Cyrus to be the one who would liberate the people of Israel (Isaiah 45.1-5; Berquist 1995:31):

- 1 כֹּה־אָמַר יְהוָה לְמַשִּׁיחוֹ לְכוּרֶשׁ אֲשֶׁר־הִחְזַקְתִּי בִימֵינוּ לְרַד־לְפָנָיו גּוֹיִם וּמְתָנִי  
מְלָכִים אֶפְתַּח לְפָתַח לְפָנָיו דְּלָתִים וְשַׁעֲרִים לֹא יִסְגְּרוּ:  
2 אֲנִי לְפָנֶיךָ אֵלֶיךָ וְהַדּוּרִים אֲיֹשֶׁר דִּלְתוֹת נַחוּשָׁה אֲשַׁבֵּר וּבְרִיחֵי בְרוּזַל אֲגַדֵּעַ:  
3 וְנָתַתִּי לְךָ אוֹצְרוֹת חֶשֶׁךְ וּמִטְמָנִי מִסְתָּרִים לְמַעַן תִּדְרַע כִּי־אֲנִי יְהוָה הַקּוֹרֵא בְשֵׁמְךָ  
אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל:  
4 לְמַעַן עֲבָדִי יַעֲקֹב וְיִשְׂרָאֵל בְּחִירֵי וְאֶקְרָא לְךָ בְשֵׁמְךָ אֲכַנֶּךָ וְלֹא יִדְעֻתָּנִי:  
5 אֲנִי יְהוָה וְאֵין עוֹד זִוְלָתִי אֵין אֱלֹהִים אֲאֹזְרֶךָ וְלֹא יִדְעֻתָּנִי:

(Isaiah 45:1-5)

Deutero-Isaiah was not pro-nationalist or pro-Davidic; he was pro-Persian, with the argument that the fortunes of the Babylonian Jews, if not all Jews, would be best under Persian rule (Berquist 1995:31).

In his anticipation of the Jews returning to Zion, Deutero-Isaiah's message implied that these returnees are the people chosen by God while those who resided in Zion were foreigners. Most likely they were people who had been forcibly removed by the Assyrians and Babylonians and placed in Zion (Isaiah 52.1-2; Berquist 1995:38):

1 עוֹרֵי עוֹרֵי לְבָשִׁי עִיּוֹן לְבָשִׁי בְּגָדֵי תַפְאֲרֹתַי יְרוּשָׁלַם עִיר הַקֹּדֶשׁ כִּי לֹא  
 יוֹסִיף יְבֹאֲבֶךָ עוֹד עָרְל וְטָמֵא:

2 הַחֲנֻעֵרִי מֵעַפְר קוּמִי שְׁבִי יְרוּשָׁלַם הַתְּפֹתָחִי מוֹסְרֵי צוֹאֲרֶךְ שְׁבִיָה בַת־צִיּוֹן:  
 Isaiah 52:1-2

In addition, many of the exiled city-dwellers who lived in Babylon may well have served at the court of the Persian King and mingled with the Babylonian upper class. Their social status in the Persian upper class society would have depended to some extent on their loyalty to the Persian King (Berquist 1995:28).

In return for their loyalty Darius rewarded his subjects by appointing them as the new governors of his far-reaching satrapies (Berquist 1995:38). With frequent signs of unrest that had pertained at the time of his succession to the throne, it is understandable that Darius placed a high premium on loyalty to him.

Darius usually appointed ethnic Persians for governorships as well as for most other important administrative positions. ... [O]nly with evidence of direct personal loyalty to Darius could any leader take any position (Berquist 1995:54).

Certainly government officials were always loyal Persians, the local leadership roles were delegated to local bureaucrats, yet even here the appointment of the lowest in rank and file would have been dependent on their show of loyalty to Darius (Berquist 1995:52).

Berquist sees the deployment of Zerubbabel and Joshua to Jerusalem as a tactic by Darius to make the local inhabitants see the Persians as benefactors assisting them to rebuild their temple (1995:57). The administrative policies of Darius fostered favourable relationships with the people of Yehud that led to stability and also provided food and supplies for the Persian army (Berquist 1995:58).

It is not so that all the people or even the majority of them who had not been exiled but stayed on in Jerusalem and the environs were of necessity non-Jews. Judah after the fall of Jerusalem was not raised to the ground and still had a viable, though depressed economy (Barstad 1996:79). Although the Book of Lamentations depicts Jerusalem as a desert, the imagery has a theological function and *not a historical one* (Thompson 1998:113).

Barstad goes as far as to maintain that life in Judah went on much the same as it did before the Babylonian war (Barstad 1996:79). He implies that the destruction of

the Temple in Jerusalem did not have such a great impact on the lifestyle of those who were left behind.

By removing the officials and leaders of Judah's central administration the Babylonians weakened Judah sufficiently so that it *drastically reduced the chance of any national revolt in Judah*. (Barstad 1996:80).

To some degree those who stayed behind would have to take up the tasks of those who left, and life would go on, obviously under harsh circumstances and under new overlords (ibid.).

In contrast, many of those who found themselves in Babylonia were often living under favourable conditions. The Babylonian Empire was an economic success and her inhabitants could enjoy a high standard of living (Barstad 1996:74). Even the Jewish deportees would have enjoyed some benefit as can be seen by the favourable treatment of Jehoiachin the exiled King of Judah. After his release from prison, King Jehoiachin was given new clothes and was permitted to eat at the table of King Evilmerodach of Babylon for the rest of his life. In addition, Jehoiachin received a regular allowance to provide for his needs (2 Kings 25:27-30):

27 וַיְהִי בְשָׁלְשִׁים וָשֶׁבַע שָׁנָה לְגָלוּת יְהוֹיָכִין מֶלֶךְ־יְהוּדָה בְּשָׁנִים עָשָׂר חֹדֶשׁ  
בְּעָשָׂרִים וָשֶׁבַע לַחֹדֶשׁ נָשָׂא אֹוִיל מֶרֶדֶךְ מֶלֶךְ בָּבֶל בְּשָׁנַת מָלְכוֹ אֶת־רֹאשׁ יְהוֹיָכִין  
מֶלֶךְ־יְהוּדָה מִבַּיִת כְּלָא:

28 וַיַּדְבֵּר אֹתוֹ טָבוֹת וַיִּתֵּן אֶת־כֶּסֶּאֱוֹ מֵעַל כֶּסֶּא הַמְּלָכִים אֲשֶׁר אֹתוֹ בְּבָבֶל:

29 וַשֵּׂנֵא אֶת בְּגָדֵי כְלָאוֹ וְאָכַל לֶחֶם תָּמִיד לְפָנָיו כָּל־יְמֵי חַיָּו:

30 וַאֲרָחְתּוֹ אֲרָחַת תָּמִיד נִתְּנָה־לּוֹ מֵאֵת הַמֶּלֶךְ דְּבַר־יוֹם בְּיוֹמוֹ כָּל יְמֵי חַיָּו:

(2 Kings 25:27-30)

In contrast with this, the economic conditions for those who lived in Yehud were not only poor but often harsh (Barstad 1996:74). Therefore it is feasible that the local inhabitants despised their Persian conquerors together with those who had the blessing of the Persian regime. Consequently, they were unwilling to work on the construction of the Temple (Haggai 1.2) if it meant cooperation with policy of the Persian government. A Temple under the patronage of the Persian King was not high on their list of priorities because they had little to gain by it. Until then the Temple in Jerusalem had always been associated with the Kings of Judah.

For a brief time during the exilic period, the local priests, who were mainly Levites, had control of the Temple area (Hanson 1979:96). On their return from Babylon the Zadokite priests once more took control of the Temple area (Hanson 1979:96). The take-over was almost automatic since the Zadokites, under the leadership of Joshua, son of Jehozadak, came with the official blessing of the Persian king (Hanson 1979:97).

**Berquist identifies two cults: the natives (or locals) and the immigrant groups**

Berquist identifies in Trito-Isaiah three main groups competing against each other, each speaking with a different voice. He concludes that ultimately two of the groups merged into one and rejected the view of the third group (Berquist 1995:74).

Berquist gives names to the two groups. One group is called the 'natives' (non-exiled people) and they will be referred to as the **locals** in this dissertation. He calls other, the **immigrants** (those returning from exile) (ibid.).

The conflicting views of the two groups are expressed openly in Trito-Isaiah, while the Books of Haggai and Zechariah 1-8 have suppressed the views of the opposing factions (ibid.).

Because the immigrants had the support of the Persian King, they were able to subdue the locals who were much greater in number and who had already established their own leaders.

Berquist also identifies two sub-groups of people amongst the immigrants namely, those who were priests and those who had secular political interests (ibid.).

### ***The priests***

Berquist assumes that the priests coming from Babylon had received their training in the *Babylonian temple system* since the majority of them were born in exile. It is highly likely that these priests worked for the temples in Babylonia (Berquist 195:74). On their arrival in Yehud the specific aim of these priestly immigrants would be the re-establishment of the temple cult so as to be able to re-institute the "correct" sacrificial system, that is, the one that pertained prior to the destruction of the First Temple (ibid.). For the returning priests the reconstruction of the temple was uppermost in their minds and from it they would derive their livelihood from it (ibid.). It could be that Darius had deliberately selected the Zadokite priests because they would have been keen to re-establish the temple cult with its administrative and fiscal functions.

### ***The political secular group***

The political secular group would have been descendants of the royal court officials of Judah and would have attended the court of the Persian king. Berquist surmises that these political immigrants would have desired to preserve *the political concerns and traditions of the earlier Isaiah traditions* (ibid.). He interprets the function of the politically orientated immigrants as being specifically concerned with the reconstruction of Jerusalem with a view to improving the economic infrastructure and thereby increasing the prosperity and wealth of its inhabitants (ibid.). These political immigrants were in a stronger position to procure important trade agreements with those who were living in Babylonia.

The people who did not go into exile (the natives or locals) were aware that many of the exiles prospered in Babylon as they had opportunity to participate in the success of the Persian economic infrastructure. In the meantime the priorities of the locals were centred on agriculture and the fertility of the land since this was their chief source of income.

Berquist identifies four phases of rhetorical argument between the locals and the two immigrant groups. With each cycle the *rhetorical violence* increases (ibid.). *Each cycle marks its end with an attempt at intermediation, in which short passages integrate the distinctive language of the groups.* The phases are:

[1] Isaiah 56:1-57:21;

[2] 58:1-59:21;

[3] 60:1-65:8;

[4] 65:9-66:24.

In the 4<sup>th</sup> cycle the voices of the two immigrant groups are combined against the locals whom they reject (Berquist 1995:74-77).

### **First phase**

***Is 56.1-57.21 God's people will include all nations; Israel's leaders are condemned; Israel's idolatry is condemned***

56.1-8 the religious immigrants speak:

Isaiah 56.2-3 supports the views of the priestly immigrants who emphasise the keeping of the Sabbath.

אֲשֶׁר־יִאֱנוֹשׁ יַעֲשֶׂה-זֹאת וּבֶן-אָדָם יִחְזִיק בָּהּ שִׁמְרַת שַׁבָּת מִחֻלְלֹי וְשֹׁמְרֵי יְדֹוּ מֵעֲשׂוֹת  
כָּל-רָע: ם

(Isaiah 56:2)

According to these religious immigrants eunuchs are to be included in the temple service since the eunuchs had been serving at the courts and temples in Babylon.

וְאֵל-יֹאמֶר בֶּן-הַנֶּכֶר הַנִּלְוָה אֶל-יְהוָה לֵאמֹר הַבְּדִיל יַבְדִּילֵנִי יְהוָה מֵעַל עַמּוֹ  
וְאֵל-יֹאמֶר הַסְּרִים הֵן אֲנִי עֵץ יָבֵשׁ:

(Isaiah 56:3)

So for the eunuchs this would have been normal daily occurrence and not a violation of the law (Leviticus 21.17-20 & Deuteronomy 23.1; Berquist 1995:75).

לֹא-יָבֹא פְצוּעֵ-דָבָא וְכָרוֹת שִׁפְכָה בְקֶהֱל יְהוָה:

(Deuteronomy 23:1)

Such practises by the eunuchs would have been rejected by the locals of Yehud as prescribed by the law (Berquist 1995:75).

56.9-57.2 the locals reply:

The locals accuse the priestly immigrants of being like wild animals, their leaders are like false shepherds (v.9).

9 כָּל חֵיתוֹ שָׂדֵי אֲתִיּוֹ לֶאֱכֹל כָּל-חֵיתוֹ בַּיַּעַר:

(Isaiah 56:9)

They do not warn the people when they go astray (v.10).

10 צִפּוּי עוֹרִים כָּלֵם לֹא יִדְעוּ כָּלֵם כָּלְבִים אֱלֹמִים לֹא יוֹכְלוּ לְנַבַּח הַזִּים שֹׁכְבִים  
אֲהִי לָנוּם:

(Isaiah 56:10)

The accusations against the priestly immigrants continue. They are accused of being greedy false shepherds who only look out for themselves (v.11).

11 וְהַכְּלָבִים עֲזִי-נֶפֶשׁ לֹא יִדְעוּ שִׁבְעָה וְהֵמָּה רָעִים לֹא יִדְעוּ הֶבֶן כָּלֵם לְדַרְכָּם  
פָּנוּ אִישׁ לְבָצְעוֹ מִקְצָהוֹ:

(Isaiah 56:11)

The priestly immigrants spend their time consuming liquor and getting drunk while those who are truly pious come to harm (v.12; Berquist 1995:75).

12 אֲתִיּוֹ אֶקְחָה-יַיִן וְנִסְבַּאתָ שִׁכָּר וְהָיָה כֹּזֵה יוֹם מָחָר גְּדוֹל יִתֵּר מְאֹד:

(Isaiah 56:12)

57.3-13 The priestly immigrants respond

The locals are the children of a whore (V.3).

3 וְאַתֶּם קַרְבוֹ-הֵנָּה בְּנֵי עַנְנָה זָרַע מְנַאֲף וַתִּזְנָה:

(Isaiah 57:3)

They are not true descendants of the priestly families (v.4).

4 עַל-מִי תִתְעַנְּנוּ עַל-מִי תִרְחִיבוּ פֹה תִאָּרִיכוּ לְשׁוֹן הַלֹּא-אַתֶּם יְלָדֵי-פִשֶׁע זָרַע  
שָׁקֵר:

(Isaiah 57:4)

They practise fertility rituals, idolatry and child sacrifice (vv.5-9).

5 הַגְּנֻחִים בְּאֵלִים תַּחַת כָּל־עֵץ רַעְנָן שִׁחִי הַיְלָדִים בְּנֻחָלִים תַּחַת סְעֵפֵי הַסְּלָעִים:

6 בַּחֲלָקֵי־נַחַל חָלַקְךָ הֵם הֵם גּוֹרְלֶךָ גַּם־לָהֶם שָׁפַכְתָּ נֶסֶךְ הַעֲלִית מִנְחָה הַעַל אֵלֶּה

אֲנָחֶם:

7 עַל הַר־גְּבוּהָ וְנִשְׂאָ שִׁמְתָּ מִשְׁכַּבְּךָ גַּם־שָׁם עָלִית לְזִבְחַ זִבְחַ:

8 וְאַחַר הַדָּלַת וְהַמְזוּזָה שִׁמְתָּ זְכוֹרֶיךָ כִּי מֵאִתִּי גָלִית וְתַעֲלִי הַרְחַבְתָּ מִשְׁכַּבְּךָ

וְתִכְרַת־לְךָ מֵהֶם אֶהְבֵּת מִשְׁכָּבְּךָ יָד חֲזִית:

9 וְתִשְׂרִי לַמֶּלֶךְ בְּשִׁמְן וְתִרְבִּי רִקְחֶיךָ וְתִלִּי לְחֵי צְרִיךְ עַד־מְרַחֵק וְתִשְׁפִּילִי

עַד־שְׂאוּל:

(Isaiah 57:5-9)

Only the priestly immigrants can provide true religious rituals (Berquist 1995:75).

57.14-21 The narrator combines the two approaches and mediates between the two groups:

The way back to God will be cleared of all obstacles. God is eager to accept all those who are humble and contrite of heart and to dwell amongst His people again.

14 וְאָמַר סִלּוּ־סִלּוּ פְּנוּ־דַרְךְ הָרִימוּ מִכְשׁוֹל מִדַּרְךְ עִמִּי: ס

15 כִּי כֹה אָמַר רָם וְנִשְׂאָ שָׁכֵן עַד וְקָדוֹשׁ שָׁמוֹ מְרוֹם וְקָדוֹשׁ אֲשַׁכֹּן וְאֶת־דַּכָּא

וְשַׁפְּל־רוּחַ לְהַחֲיוֹת רוּחַ שְׁפִלִים וְלְהַחֲיוֹת לֵב נִדְכָּאִים:

(Isaiah 57:14-15)

God had been angry with His people because of their wrongdoings and greed and they had been punished and abandoned by Him but the time has now come for the breach between God and his people to be healed.

16 כִּי לֹא לְעוֹלָם אָרִיב וְלֹא לְנֹצַח אֶקְצוֹף כִּי־רוּחַ מִלְּפָנַי יַעֲטוֹף וְנִשְׁמֹת אָנִי

עֲשִׂיתִי:

17 בַּעֲוֹן בְּצִעוֹ קִצְפֹתִי וְאַכְהוּ הַסֵּתֶר וְאַקְצַף וַיִּלְךְ שׁוֹבֵב בְּדֶרֶךְ לְבוֹ:  
 18 דִּדְרָכָיו רָאִיתִי וְאַרְפָּאֵהוּ וְאַנְחֵהוּ וְאַשְׁלִם נַחְמִים לוֹ וְלֹאֲבָלָיו:  
 19 בּוֹרָא נִיב שְׁפֹתָיִם שְׁלוֹם שְׁלוֹם לְרַחוּק וְלִקְרוֹב אָמַר יְהוָה וּרְפָאתָיו:

(Isaiah 57:16-19)

Those who continue to do evil will never know safety.

20 וְהִרְשָׁעִים כַּיָּם נִגְרָשׁ כִּי הִשְׁקַט לֹא יוֹכֵל וַיִּגְרָשׁוּ מִיָּמִיו רֶפֶשׁ וְטִיט:  
 21 אֵין שְׁלוֹם אָמַר אֱלֹהֵי לְרֹשָׁעִים: ס

(Isaiah 57:20-21)

God dwells in high holy places as well as with those who are contrite and are humble v. 15. It is only the wicked who are rejected by God vv. 19-21. The narrator adopts a universalistic approach and is of the opinion that God is accepting of all people who do not do wicked deeds (Berquist 1995:75).

## Second phase

**Isaiah 58.1-59.21 What God requires is true fasting, the keeping of the Sabbath, while those who disobey the law are condemned**

58.1-14 the priestly immigrants address the political immigrants

Isaiah 58:1-14

The political immigrants are accused of being eager to know and obey the law but they are only paying lip service.

1 קָרָא בְּגֵרוֹן אֶל־תַּחֲשֵׁךְ כַּשׁוֹפֵר הָרֵם קוֹלְךָ וְהִגַּד לְעַמִּי פִשְׁעָם וּלְבֵית יַעֲקֹב  
 חֲטָאתָם:

2 וְאוֹתִי יוֹם יוֹם יִדְרָשׁוּן וְדַעַת דְּרָכַי יַחְפְּצוּן כְּגוֹי אֲשֶׁר־צָדְקָה עָשָׂה וּמִשְׁפַּט אֱלֹהֵיו  
 לֹא עָזַב יִשְׁאַלֹנִי מִשְׁפַּט־צְדָק קִרְבַּת אֱלֹהִים יַחְפְּצוּן:

(Isaiah 58:1-2)

The priestly immigrants take issue with the political immigrants because they disapprove of the latter's understanding of fasting. Fasting is not a means by which God can be swayed or influenced. God requires more than fasting; he demands justice and compassion to the poor (vv. 3-10) (Berquist 1995:75):

3 לָמָּה צִמְמוּ וְלֹא רָאִיתָ עֲנִינוּ נִפְשָׁנוּ וְלֹא תִדַּע הֵן בְּיוֹם צִמְמֶכֶם תִּמְצְאוּ חֶפֶץ  
וְכָל־עֲצָבֵיכֶם תִּנְגְּשׁוּ:  
4 הֵן לְרִיב וּמִצָּה תִצְוֶמוּ וְלִהְכוֹת בְּאֶגְרֵף רָשָׁע לֹא־תִצְוֶמוּ כִּי־יִשְׁמִיעַ בְּפִרְוֹם  
קוֹלְכֶם:  
5 הֲכֹזֶה יִהְיֶה צוֹם אֲבַחְרֶהוּ יוֹם עֲנוּת אָדָם נִפְשׁוֹ הֲלִכְף כְּאִגְמֵן רֹאשׁוֹ וְשָׁק וְאֶפֶר  
יִצִיעַ הֲלֹזָה תִקְרָא־צוֹם וַיּוֹם רָצוֹן לִיהוָה:  
6 הֲלוֹא זֶה צוֹם אֲבַחְרֶהוּ פֶתַח חֲרֻצֹבוֹת רָשָׁע הִתֵּר אֲגִדּוֹת מוֹטָה וְשִׁלַּח רִצּוֹצִים  
חֲפָשִׁים וְכָל־מוֹטָה תִנְתַּקּוּ:  
7 הֲלוֹא פָרֶס לָרֵעַב לַחֲמֶךָ וְעֲנִיִּים מְרוּדִים תָּבִיא בַּיִת כִּי־תִרְאֶה עָרִם וְכִסִּיתוּ  
וּמִבְשֻׂרְךָ לֹא תִחַעְלֶם:  
8 אִזּוֹ יִבְקַע כִּשְׁחַר אוֹרֶךָ וְאֶרְכַּתְךָ מִהֲרָה תִצְמַח וְהִלַּךְ לְפָנֶיךָ צִדְקָךָ כְּבוֹד יִהְיֶה  
יֵאֱסֹפֶךָ:  
9 אִזּוֹ תִקְרָא וַיִּהְיֶה יַעֲנֶה תִשְׁוַע וַיֹּאמֶר הֲנִי אִם־תִּסִּיר מִתּוֹכְךָ מוֹטָה שְׁלַח אֲצַבֵּעַ  
וְדַבֵּר־אֲוֹן:  
10 וְתִפֵּק לָרֵעַב נִפְשְׁךָ וּנְפֶשׁ נַעֲנָה תִשְׁבִיעַ וְזָרַח בַּחֲשֶׁךְ אוֹרֶךָ וְאֶפְלַתְךָ כִּצְהָרִים:  
(Isaiah 58:3-10)

Once the political immigrants help the poor and observe the Sabbath, God will bless them and they will have abundance – they will be known as *the people who rebuild the walls, who restored the ruined houses* (v. 12b) (Berquist 1995:75)

12 וּבִנּוּ מִמֶּךָ חֲרֻבוֹת עוֹלָם מוֹסְדֵי דוֹר־דוֹר תִּקְוֶמֶם וְקָרָא לְךָ גֵּדֵר פְּרִיז מְשֻׁבָּב  
נְתִיבוֹת לְשַׁבָּת:  
(Isaiah 58:12)

### 59.1-15a The locals respond

The locals are of the opinion that it is not that God has chosen to ignore the political immigrants' prayers. Rather it is the sins of the political immigrants that are creating a barrier between them and God. It is because of their violent deeds, lies and acts of murder that God is ignoring them.

1 הֵן לֹא־קִצְצָה יְרֵי־הָהָה מֵהוֹשִׁיעַ וְלֹא־כִבְדָּה אָזְנוֹ מִשְׁמוֹעַ:

2 כִּי אִם־עֲוֹנוֹתֵיכֶם הָיוּ מִבְּדֵלִים בֵּינְכֶם לְבֵין אֱלֹהֵיכֶם וְחַטָּאוֹתֵיכֶם הִסְתִּירוּ פָּנִים מִכֶּם מִשְׁמוֹעַ:

3 כִּי כַפִּיכֶם נִגְאָלוּ בַדָּם וְאֶצְבְּעוֹתֵיכֶם בַּעֲוֹן שִׁפְחוֹתֵיכֶם דְּבָרו־שֶׁקֶר לְשׁוֹנְכֶם עֹלָה תִהְיֶה:

(Isaiah 59:1-3)

In the opinion of the locals it is both the priestly immigrants and political immigrants who are at fault. The courts are corrupt and they win their cases by means of lies. Indeed the deeds of the immigrants are evil and hurt others. As a consequence of their destructive behaviour no one can be safe (vv 4-8; Berquist 1995:75):

4 אִין־קִרָא בְצַדִּיק וְאִין נִשְׁפָּט בְּאִמוּנָה בְטוֹחַ עַל־הָהוּ וְדִבֶּר־שׂוֹא הָרוּ עִמָּל וְהוֹלִיד אָוֶן:

5 בִּיצִי צְפֻעוֹנֵי בְקִעוּ וְקוֹרֵי עֵכָבִישׁ יֶאֱרָגוּ הָאֵכֵל מִבִּיצֵיהֶם יָמוּת וְהַזֹּרָה תִבְקַע אֶפְעָה:

6 קוֹרֵיהֶם לֹא־יְהִיוּ לְבָגֵד וְלֹא יִתְכַסּוּ בְמַעֲשֵׂיהֶם מַעֲשֵׂיהֶם אָוֶן וּפְעֵל חָמָס בְּכִפֵּיהֶם:

7 רִגְלֵיהֶם לָרַע יִרְצוּ וַיִּמְהָרוּ לְשַׁפֵּךְ דָּם נָקִי מִחֲשֻׁבוֹתֵיהֶם מִחֲשֻׁבוֹת אָוֶן שֹׂד וְשֶׁבֶר בְּמַסְלוֹתָם:

8 דִּדְרַךְ שְׁלוֹם לֹא יָדְעוּ וְאִין מִשְׁפָּט בְּמַעֲגֻלוֹתָם נְחִיבוֹתֵיהֶם עֲקָשׁוּ לָהֶם כֹּל דִּרְךָ בָּהּ לֹא יָדַע שְׁלוֹם:

(Isaiah 59:4-8)

Although the priestly immigrants may hope for light to walk by there will only be darkness. Even though they have confessed their crimes because they are guilty of oppressing others and rejecting God's law the priestly immigrants cannot hope for justice (vv 9-14; Berquist 1995:76):

9 עַל־כֵּן רָחַק מִשְׁפָּט מִמֶּנּוּ וְלֹא תִשְׁיִגְנוּ צְדָקָה נִקְוָה לְאֹר וְהִנֵּה־חֹשֶׁךְ לְנִגְהוֹת  
בְּאַפְלוֹת נְהַלְךְ:

10 נִגְשָׁשָׁה כְּעוֹרִים קִיר וְכֵאֵין עֵינַיִם נִגְשָׁשָׁה כְּשִׁלְנוּ בְּצַהָרִים כַּנֶּשֶׁף בְּאַשְׁמֹנִים  
כַּמַּתִּים:

11 נִהְמָה כַּדְבִּים כְּלָנוּ וְכִיּוֹנִים הָגָה נִהְגָה נִקְוָה לְמִשְׁפָּט וְאֵין לִישׁוּעָה רָחֵקָה מִמֶּנּוּ:

12 כִּי־רָבוּ פִשְׁעֵינוּ נִגְדָךְ וְחַטָּאוֹתֵינוּ עָנְתָה בָנוּ כִּי־פִשְׁעֵינוּ אָתָנוּ וְעוֹנֹתֵינוּ יִדְעוּנוּם:

13 פִּשְׁעֵ וְכַחֵשׁ בִּיהוָה וְנִסּוֹג מֵאַחַר אֱלֹהֵינוּ דְבַר־עֶשֶׂק וְסָרָה הָרוּ וְהָגוּ מִלֵּב  
דְּבַר־יִשְׁקָר:

14 וְהִסַּג אַחֹר מִשְׁפָּט וְצְדָקָה מִרְחוֹק תַּעֲמֹד כִּי־כִשְׁלָה בְּרָחוֹב אֶמֶת וְנִכְחָה  
לֹא־תוֹכַל לְבוֹא:

Isaiah 59:9-14

The locals conclude and say to the priestly immigrants that there is no honesty left.

Whoever turns away from doing evil will himself become a victim of crime (v 15;

Berquist 1995:76):

15 וְתִהְיֶה הָאֶמֶת נֶעְדְּרֶת וְסָר מִרַע מִשְׁתוֹלֵל וַיֵּרָא יְהוָה וַיִּרַע בְּעֵינָיו כִּי־אֵין מִשְׁפָּט:  
Isaiah 59:15

The immigrant politicians are guilty of committing iniquities while the priestly immigrants do not observe the correct rituals and are abusive. They (the priestly immigrants,) do not have the truth (Berquist 1995:76).

### 59.15b-20 Then the political immigrants respond to the locals

The political immigrants agree that there is no justice and because of this God will intervene and save them from the enemy. Using the imagery of God dressed ready to do battle with the enemy the political immigrants pronounce that God will punish the enemy even if they are living in distant lands. The scene takes on international dimensions. From east to west everyone will acknowledge the God of Israel (59.15b-19; Berquist 1995:76):

15 וַתְּהִי הָאָמֶת נִעְדָּרָת וְסָר מִרְעַ מִשְׁתּוֹלֵל וַיֵּרָא יְהוָה וַיִּרְעַ בְּעֵינָיו כִּי־אֵין מִשְׁפָּט׃  
 16 וַיֵּרָא כִּי־אֵין אִישׁ וַיִּשְׁתּוֹמֵם כִּי אֵין מִפְּגִיעַ וַתּוֹשַׁע לוֹ זָרְעוֹ וְצָדִיקָתוֹ הִיא  
 סִמְכָתָהּ׃  
 17 וַיִּלְבַּשׁ צְדָקָה כְּשָׂרָיִן וְכוֹבֵעַ יְשׁוּעָה בְּרֹאשׁוֹ וַיִּלְבַּשׁ בְּגָדֵי נָקָם תְּלַבְּשֵׁת וַיַּעֲט  
 כַּמַּעֲיֵל קִנְאָה׃  
 18 כַּעַל גְּמָלוֹת כַּעַל יְשׁוּלָם חֲמָה לְצָרָיו גְּמוּל לְאֹיְבָיו לְאִיִּים גְּמוּל יְשׁוּלָם׃  
 19 וַיֵּרָאוּ מִמַּעַרְבַּ אֶת־שֵׁם יְהוָה וּמִמְזֹרַח־שָׁמֶשׁ אֶת־כְּבוֹדוֹ כִּי־בָּא כִנְהָר צָר רוּחַ  
 יְהוָה נִסְסָה בּוֹ׃

(Isaiah 59:15-19)

God has seen that there is no justice for the political immigrants and he will save them and destroy their enemies of Jerusalem (59.20; Berquist 1995:76):

20 וּבָא לְצִיּוֹן גּוֹאֵל וּלְשִׁבֵי פֹשַׁע בְּיַעֲקֹב נָאֵם יְהוָה׃

(Isaiah 59:20)

### 59.21 Mediation

Berquist interprets 59.21 as a *final intermediation* between the two groups. The political immigrants and the locals meet each other halfway, for it is the God of the political immigrants who is prepared to encompass all people. Berquist sees this as

a turning point, after this the immigrants have the advantage and a sense of alienation sets in among the locals who choose to be exclusivists (59.21; Berquist 1995.76).

וְאֲנִי זֹאת בְּרִיתִי אִתְּכֶם אָמַר יְהוָה רוּחִי אֲשֶׁר עָלֶיךָ וּדְבָרֵי אֲשֶׁר־שִׁמְתִי בְּפִיךָ  
 לֹא־יִמוּשׁוּ מִפִּיךָ וּמִפִּי זֶרַע זֶרַעךָ אָמַר יְהוָה מֵעַתָּה וְעַד־עוֹלָם:  
 (Isaiah 59:21)

Berquist's assumption is that the people of Zion and the children of Jacob represent the two groups (1995:76).

### **Third Phase**

***Isaiah 60:1-65:8 The growing schism between the political immigrants and the priestly immigrants***

60.1-3, 13-15 The *modus operandi* of the priestly immigrants;

and 60.4-12 & 60.16-63.19 the *modus operandi* of the political immigrants

#### **The priestly immigrants**

The priestly immigrants declare that God is in Jerusalem and the light of God shines forth from Jerusalem. The other nations will acknowledge that God is there and they will come to Jerusalem (60.1-3):

1 קוּמִי אוּרִי כִּי בָּא אֹרֶךְ וּכְבוֹד יְהוָה עָלֶיךָ זֶרַח:  
 2 כִּי־הִנֵּה הַחֹשֶׁךְ יִכָּסֶה־אֶרֶץ וְעֶרְפָּל לְאֲמִים וְעָלֶיךָ יִזְרַח יְהוָה וּכְבוֹדוֹ עָלֶיךָ  
 יִרְאָה:  
 3 וְהָלְכוּ גוֹיִם לְאוֹרֶךְ וּמַלְכִים לְנִגְהַ זֶרַחךָ:

(Isaiah 60:1-3)

The people of Jerusalem will be glad and excited when they the people of God returning to Jerusalem (v 4-5):

4 שְׂאֵי־סְבִיב עֵינֶיךָ וּרְאֵי כָּל־מַבְצָרֵי בְּאֵי־לְךָ בְּנֵיךָ מִרְחוֹק יָבֹאוּ וּבְנֹתֶיךָ עַל־צֶדֶד  
תְּאֻמְנָה:

5 אֲזֵי תִרְאֶי וְנִהְרְתָּ וּפָחַד וְרָחַב לְבַבְךָ כִּי־יִהְיֶה עָלֶיךָ הַמּוֹן יָם חֵיל גּוֹיִם יָבֹאוּ לָךְ:  
(Isaiah 60:4-5)

The priestly immigrants describe to the locals the glory and splendour of the future Jerusalem and her Temple in Isaiah 60.13-15 and they are joined with the political immigrants who speak with the same voice in 60.4-12 (Berquist 1995:76).

### The political immigrants

The political immigrants declare that many people bringing great wealth will come to the future Jerusalem (Isaiah 60.4-9, 11, 16-17, 22; Berquist 1995:76). They also speak of the walls of the city being rebuild and a time when all the nations will serve Jerusalem (Isaiah 60.10, 12, 18; 61.4-11; 62.2, 6, 10; 63.1-6; Berquist 1995:76).

In Berquist's opinion the political immigrants have been endowed with the spirit of God because they have been chosen to free the captives from their oppressors. In other words the political immigrants have been sent by God to save the locals (Isaiah 61.1-3; Berquist 1995:76):

1 רוּחַ אֲדֹנָי יְהוִה עָלַי יַעַן מָשַׁח יְהוָה אֹתִי לְבַשֵּׁר עֲנָוִים שְׁלַחֲנִי לְחַבֵּשׁ לְגִשְׁבְּרֵי־לֵב  
לְקַרְא לְשֹׁבוֹתֵי דְרוֹר וְלְאַסּוּרִים פְּקַח־קוֹחַ:  
2 לְקַרְא שְׁנַת־רְצוֹן לַיהוָה וַיּוֹם נָקָם לְאַלְהֵינוּ לְנַחֵם כָּל־אֲבֵלִים:  
3 לְשׁוֹם לְאַבְלֵי צִיּוֹן לְתַת לָהֶם פָּאֵר תַּחַת אֶפְרַיִם שָׁמֵן שִׁשׁוֹן תַּחַת אֲבֵל מַעֲטָה תְהַלֵּךְ  
תַּחַת רוּחַ כְּהֵה וְקָרָא לָהֶם אֵילֵי הַצֶּדֶק מִטֵּעַ יְהוָה לְהַתְּפָאֵר:

(Isaiah 61:1-3)

According to Berquist's understanding of the text both immigrants groups employ clever rhetoric in their endeavour to sway the locals to identify with them (Berquist 1995:76).

#### 64.1-12 The distressed locals respond

The locals speak their mind and call upon God for intervention. Their language becomes apocalyptic as they sense they are losing the battle against the immigrants. The locals confess their wrongdoings and call upon God not to abandon them vv. 5-7 (Berquist 1995:76):

5 וַיִּנְהִי כַטְמָא כְּלָנוּ וּכְבָגַד עֲדִים כָּל־צַדִּיקְתֵּינוּ וַנִּבֵּל כְּעֵלָה כְּלָנוּ וַעֲוֹנוֹנוּ כְּרוּחַ  
יִשְׂאָנוּ:

6 וַיֵּאֵין־קוֹרָא בְּשִׁמְךָ מִתְעוֹרֵר לְהַחְזִיק בְּךָ כִּי־הִסְתַּרְתָּ פָּנֶיךָ מִפָּנֵינוּ וַתְּמוּגֵנוּ  
בְּיַד־עוֹנֵנוּ:

7 וַעֲתָה יְהוָה אָבִינוּ אָתָּה אֲנַחְנוּ הַחֲמֵר וְאָתָּה יִצְרָנוּ וּמַעֲשֵׂה יָדְךָ כְּלָנוּ:  
(Isaiah 64:5-7)

Surely God will not to be indifferent to the deeds of the enemy (vv. 10-12). It would seem as if Berquist identifies this enemy as being the same as the *oppressive* (pro-Persian) *immigrants* (v. 12) (Berquist 1995:77). The locals question God and ask whether He will remain unmoved by the sight of the ruins of the First Temple:

10 בַּיִת קִדְשֵׁנוּ וַתִּפְאַרְתָּנוּ אֲשֶׁר הִלְלוּךָ אֲבֹתֵינוּ הֲיָה לְשִׁרְפֹת אֵשׁ וְכָל־מַחְמְדֵינוּ הֲיָה  
לְחַרְבָּה:

11 הֲעַל־אֵלֶּה תִּתְאַפֵּק יְהוָה תַּחֲשָׁה וַתַּעֲנֵנוּ עַד־מָאֵד: ס

(Isaiah 64:10-12)

### 65:1-7 The priestly immigrants respond to the locals

The priestly immigrants vehemently accuse the locals of rebelling against God and conducting pagan fertility rituals (65.3) (Berquist 1995:77).

הָעַם הַמְּכַעֲסִים אוֹתִי עַל־פְּנֵי תָמִיד זִבְחִים בְּגִנּוֹת וּמִקְטָרִים עַל־הַלְּבָנִים:  
(Isaiah 65:3)

In addition to the above the locals are guilty of defying the law of kashrut and eat pork amongst other things and then they consult the spirits of the dead which is also forbidden by Torah.

הַיֹּשְׁבִים בְּקִבְרֵי וּבִנְצוּרִים יְלִינוּ הָאֹכְלִים בֶּשֶׂר הַחַזִּיר וּמִרְק פְּגָלִים כְּלִיהֶם:  
(Isaiah 65:4)

The locals are nothing less than hypocrites. They think of themselves as being holy, better than the priestly immigrants. The immigrant priests therefore declare that God will punish the locals for their disgusting behaviour (vv 6-7):

הֲנִי כְּתוּבָה לְפָנָי לֹא אֶחְשֶׂה כִּי אִם־שְׁלֵמֹתִי וְשְׁלֵמֹתִי עַל־חִיקָם:  
עֲזַנְתִּיכֶם וְעֲזַנְתִּי אֲבוֹתֵיכֶם יַחְדָּו אָמַר יְהוָה אֲשֶׁר קִטְרוּ עַל־הַהָרִים וְעַל־הַגְּבְעוֹת  
חָרְפוּנִי וּמִדֹּתַי פָּעַלְתֶּם רֵאשֻׁנָה אֶל־חִיקָם: ס  
(Isaiah 65:6-7)

### 65.8 Mediation

God will not destroy the good with the bad. No matter how much in-fighting there is, God will not destroy them. He will save those who serve Him (Berquist 1995:77).

8 כֹּה אָמַר יְהוָה כֹּאֲשֶׁר יִמָּצָא הַתִּירוֹשׁ בְּאֲשְׁכּוֹל וְאָמַר אֶל־תִּשְׁחִיתֶהוּ כִּי בִרְכָה בּוֹ  
כֵּן אַעֲשֶׂה לְמַעַן עֲבַדִּי לְבִלְתִּי הִשְׁחִית הַכֹּל:

(Isaiah 65:8)

Berquist sees the infighting and disagreement amongst the factions as the crux of the matter, but all is not lost. He concludes that:

... it offers a hope for all concerned: destruction is not at stake, no matter how great the disagreement becomes. Unfortunately the debate retreats from this position and devolves into rejection (Berquist 1995:77).

#### **Fourth phase**

##### **Isaiah 65.9-66.24 Retribution**

###### 65.9 – 66.19a The judgement of the nations

The political immigrants paint a picture of the restored Jerusalem and its inhabitants living in conditions of abundance while those who worship foreign gods will starve. They will die violent deaths and be disgraced (65.11-15). The name of the locals will become a curse (v. 15) but the political immigrants will be given a new name and form part of the new creation of God (vv. 11-15) (Berquist 1995:77):

11 וְאַתֶּם עֲזָבִי יְהוָה הַשֹּׁכְחִים אֶת־הַר קְדֹשִׁי הָעֵרֹכִים לְגֹד שְׁלָחַן וְהַמְּמִלָּאִים לְמִנִּי  
מִמְסָךְ:

12 וּמִנִּיתִי אֶתְכֶם לְחָרֵב וְכִלְכֶם לְטַבַּח תִּכְרְעוּ יַעַן קָרָאתִי וְלֹא עָנִיתֶם דִּבַּרְתִּי וְלֹא  
שָׁמַעְתֶּם וַתַּעֲשׂוּ הָרַע בְּעֵינַי וּבְאֲשֶׁר לֹא־חָפְצְתִי בְּחַרְתֶּם: פ

13 לְכֵן כֹּה־אָמַר אֲדֹנָי יְהוָה הִנֵּה עֲבַדִּי יֹאכְלוּ וְאַתֶּם תִּרְעָבוּ הִנֵּה עֲבַדִּי יִשְׂחָו וְאַתֶּם  
תִּצְמָאוּ הִנֵּה עֲבַדִּי יִשְׂמְחוּ וְאַתֶּם תִּבְשׂוּ:

14 הִנֵּה עֲבַדִּי יִרְנוּ מִטּוֹב לֵב וְאַתֶּם תִּצְעַקוּ מִכָּאֵב לֵב וּמִשֹּׁבֵר רוּחַ תִּיגְלִילוּ:

15 וְהִנְחַתְּם שְׂמֹכֶם לְשִׁבוּעָה לְבַחִירֵי וְהִמִּיתֶךָ אֲדֹנָי יְהוִה וְלַעֲבָדָיו יִקְרָא שֵׁם אַחֵר:  
(Isaiah 65:11-15)

The locals are excluded from the new creation, the new earth and new heavens, where all will co-exist in peace. The new Jerusalem will be a place of joy and prosperity (vv. 17-25). (Berquist 1995:77)

Therefore the locals attack those who support the temple project, namely the pro-Persian immigrants (66.1) (Berquist 1995:77):

1 וְכֹה אָמַר יְהוָה הַשָּׁמַיִם כִּסְאֵי וְהָאָרֶץ הַדָּם רַגְלֵי אֵי-זָה בֵּית אֲשֶׁר תִּבְנוּ-לִי וְאֵי-זָה  
מְקוֹם מְנוּחָתִי:  
(Isaiah 66:1)

The locals avow that God has no need for a temple and those who serve there are *perverse and wicked*. The priestly immigrants and political immigrants are in fact God's enemies and are soon to be destroyed (66.5-6) (Berquist 1995:77).

5 שְׁמַעוּ דְבַר-יְהוָה הַחֲרָדִים אֶל-דְּבָרֹו אָמְרוּ אַחֲיֵכֶם שְׂנְאֵיכֶם מְנַדִּיכֶם לְמַעַן שְׁמִי  
יִכְפֹּד יְהוָה וְנִרְאָה בְּשִׂמְחַתְכֶם וְהֵם יִבְשׁוּ:  
6 קוֹל שָׂאוֹן מַעִיר קוֹל מֵהֵיכָל קוֹל יְהוָה מְשַׁלֵּם גְּמוּל לְאֵיבָיו:  
(Isaiah 66:5-6)

No possibility of reconciliation can exist after this declaration by the locals (Berquist 1995:77). The tone of the locals has become altogether apocalyptic as they describe the Divine Warrior's retribution (66.15-16)(Berquist 1995:77):

15 כִּי-הִנֵּה יְהוָה בָּאֵשׁ יָבֹא וְכִסּוּפָה מִרְכַּבְתּוֹ לְהָשִׁיב בְּחֶמָה אַפּוֹ וְגַעַרְתּוֹ  
בְּלִהְבֵי-אֵשׁ:  
16 כִּי בָאֵשׁ יְהוָה נִשְׂפָט וּבְחָרְבוֹ אֶת-כָּל-בָּשָׂר וְרַבּוֹ חָלְלֵי יְהוָה:  
(Isaiah 66:15-16)

The priestly immigrants hit back at the locals (v. 17); the end is near for those who practise pagan fertility rites and eat disgusting food (v.17) (Berquist 1995:77):

הַמִּתְקַדְּשִׁים וְהַמִּטְהַרִּים אֶל-הַגְּנוֹת אַחַר אַחַת בַּתּוֹךְ אֲכָלִי בֶשֶׂר הַחַזִּיר וְהַשֶּׁקֶץ  
וְהַעֲכָבֵר יַחֲדוּ יִסְפוּ נְאֻם-יְהוָה:

(Isaiah 66:17)

At this point Berquist aligns his argument along the same lines as that of Hanson (1995:79). (Hanson's argument is discussed in the following section of this chapter.)

#### 66.19b-24 The final mediation

Berquist recognises a final intermediation in vv. 18-24 in which the two immigrant positions meet and together condemn the locals. All the nations of the world will come to worship God in Jerusalem and they will see the corpses of the rebellious locals (v 24) (Berquist 1995:77-78).

וַיֵּצְאוּ וַרְאוּ בַּפְּגָרֵי הָאֲנָשִׁים הַפְּשָׁעִים בִּי כִי תוֹלְעֵתָם לֹא תָמוּת וְאַשָׁם לֹא תִכָּבֵּה  
וְהָיוּ רַרְאוֹן לְכָל-בֶּשֶׂר:

(Isaiah 66:24)

Berquist surmises that the locals did not need or want a temple and that they were satisfied to continue worshipping in locations that they thought were fitting. In the final analysis *the locals reject the temple, but not the ritual* (Berquist 1995:78).

## The shadow of Persia falls across Judah

### Résumé

Ezekiel 40-48 can be regarded as an alternative ideology to that of Isaiah. The three groups identified by Berquist in Trito-Isaiah are competing for supremacy against each other. The conflict between the groups becomes a *class conflict*: the immigrants versus the locals (Berquist 1995:79).

“In this recognition of class-based conflict, Paul Hanson is right. The group with the possibility of direct access to the Persian imperial resources wins. The immigrants suppress the native voices (ibid.).”

In his unravelling of the text in Trito-Isaiah Berquist finds that the locals *lost the battle to prevent the temple construction* even though they outnumbered the immigrants and had direct control over the food supply and crops (ibid.).

In his conclusion Berquist explains the purpose for the preservation of the tensions between the three groups in Trito-Isaiah, namely:

...perhaps the Persian Empire required a report of the progress toward temple construction in Jerusalem and Isaiah 56-66 was composed as a summary of the differing viewpoints, making concessions to the opposition forces but emphatically stating the government's ability to deal effectively with the dissent Berquist (1995:79).

### Hanson's theory of hierocrats and visionaries

Hanson identifies two parties: the **hierocrats** and the **visionaries**.

In his book The Dawn of the Apocalyptic (1979), Hanson identifies two main groups in Isaiah 56-66 who were active at the time prior to and during the construction of the Second Temple.

The first group consisted of an eschatologically-oriented community who followed the school of Second and Third Isaiah. Hanson refers to this group as the visionaries (1979:42 & 69).

The second group, the uneschatological rival group, were called the hierocrats by Hanson (ibid). They belonged to the school of Ezekiel, and consisted mainly of Zadokite priests who were the descendants of the priest Zadok, the chief priest of King David.

Both groups endeavoured to re-establish the Temple Cult in Jerusalem during the 6<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> centuries (Hanson 1979:71). Ultimately the hierocrats were triumphant and the visionaries were excluded from their dearly-desired goal for the restoration of their cult (Hanson 1979:75).

Two leaders called Peace and Righteousness led the visionaries (Isaiah 60.17b):

17 תַּחַת הַנְּחֻשֶׁת אָבִיא זָהָב וְתַחַת הַבְּרָזֶל אָבִיא כֶּסֶף וְתַחַת הָעֵצִים נְחֻשֶׁת וְתַחַת  
הָאֲבָנִים בְּרָזֶל וְשִׁמְתִי פְקֻדֹתַי שְׁלוֹם וְנִגְשִׁיךְ צְדָקָה׃

Isaiah 60:17

The visionaries looked forward to the day when the whole nation would become *the priests of God* (Hanson 1979:72). On that day all the people of God will be called *הַצְדִּיקִים* (holy and righteous) (Hanson 1979:73). God himself will act directly on behalf of his people (Hanson 1979:75). Even though the visionaries conceded defeat for the time being, they continued to embrace their Warrior God and entered the realm of apocalyptic eschatology that provided the basis for their hope of an ultimate triumph when they would no longer be the underdog (Hanson 1979:79).

The high priest, Joshua ben Jehozadak and the prince, Zerubbabel, led the hierocrats (Hanson 1979:72). The sons of Zadok were the only priests permitted to enter the inner sanctuary according to Ezekiel 44.5 (Hanson 1979:73):

וְהַכֹּהֲנִים הַלְוִיִּם בְּנֵי צְדֹק אֲשֶׁר לְמֵרוֹ אֶת־מִשְׁמֶרֶת מִקְדָּשֵׁי בְּתֻעוֹת בְּנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל  
 מֵעַל־יְהִי יִקְרְבוּ אֵלַי לְשָׁרְתָנִי וְעָמְדוּ לְפָנַי לְהִקְרִיב לִי חֶלֶב וְדָם נְאֻם אֲדֹנָי  
 יְהוָה:

Ezekiel 44:15

This effectively excluded the Levites from serving in the Temple, even more so once the Zadokites returned to Jerusalem.

The hierocrats were re-instated as the official cult with the dedication of the Second Temple built by Zerubbabel the governor prince, and by Jehozadak the high priest (Hanson1979:45).

**Achtemeier distinguishes between the “Levitical-reform-Deuteronomic-prophetic-group” versus the “priestly-exclusivistic-Zadokite party” in the years 538-515 BCE**

In the same vein as Hanson, Achtemeier identifies signs of schism among the Jews in Trito-Isaiah by comparing the audience of Trito-Isaiah with that of Ezekiel.

When the Zadokite priests who served in the Temple were exiled after the destruction of the First Temple, those who remained and continued with the cultic practices of bringing sacrifices to the altar were mainly Levitical priests. So it was that the Levites gained their status in Jerusalem during the exilic period as the removal of the Zadokites by the Babylonians created the opportunity for this (Achtemeier 1982:23).

The Levitical priests had been gradually disenfranchised by the Zadokite priesthood, especially in Jerusalem (Achtemeier 1982:22). Consequently, with the destruction of the First Temple and the ensuing exile, there were very few Zadokites left in Jerusalem by 586 BCE. The impoverished Levites were now free to return to Jerusalem and offer their services where they chose. Achtemeier sees evidence of this in the lists of names of those who returned from exile given in Ezra 2.36-42 and Nehemiah 7.39-45. In these lists very few names of Levites appear.

According to Achtemeier:

Trito-Isaiah is a polemical document, defending the cause of its righteous group and pronouncing judgement on the ways of its unrighteous adversaries (Achtemeier 1982:17).

### The characteristics of Achtemeier's the righteous group

The **righteous** who were loyal to the God of Israel are depicted in Isaiah 56-66 as having the following characteristics: they were an oppressed and outcast community (56.8; 57.1; 63.16) and they felt powerless and insignificant within the larger community (57.15; 66.2) (Achtemeier 1982:17).

Based on 56.1-8, Achtemeier is of opinion that they included בְּנֵי-הַנֹּכַר (sons of foreigners) and סְרִיסִים (eunuchs) (56.3-4) within the righteous community (Achtemeier 1982:17-18).

וְאֵלֵי-יֹאמֵר בֶּן-הַנֹּכַר הַנִּלְוָה אֶל-יְהוָה לֵאמֹר הַבְדִּיל יְבַדִּילֵנִי יְהוָה מֵעַל עַמּוֹ  
 וְאֵלֵי-יֹאמֵר הַסְרִיסִים הֵן אֲנִי עֵץ יְבֵשׁ: ס  
 כִּי-כֹה אָמַר יְהוָה לְסְרִיסִים אֲשֶׁר יִשְׁמְרוּ אֶת-שַׁבְּתוֹתַי וּבָחֲרוּ בְּאֲשֶׁר חָפְצָתִי  
 וּמְחֻזְקִים בְּבְרִיתִי:

(Isaiah 56:3-4)

(Here she is at odds with Hanson who places them into the hierocratic group.)

This loyal community perceived themselves to be the true children of Israel (65.8-

1016) and were portrayed as the הַצְדִּיקִים (57.1) (the righteous) who were

אִם-הַלּוּיִם אֲשֶׁר רָחֲקוּ מֵעָלַי בַּתְּעוֹת יִשְׂרָאֵל אֲשֶׁר תָּעוּ מֵעָלַי אַחֲרַי גְּלוּלֵיהֶם  
 וְנִשְׂאוּ עִוָּנָם:

Ezekiel 44:10

וְנִתַּחְתִּי אוֹתָם שְׁמֵרֵי מִשְׁמֶרֶת הַבַּיִת לְכָל עֲבֹדָתוֹ וּלְכָל אֲשֶׁר יַעֲשֶׂה בּוֹ: פ

Ezekiel 44:14 בחירי (chosen) (65.9,15,22) the true servants of the Lord (65.8,9,13,14).

They are עם קדש (63.18) (a holy people) who had a love for Jerusalem (66.10). The loyal community hear and revere God's word (66.2,5) and take refuge in him (57.13). They observe Shabbat and the necessary fast days (56.2,4,6; 56.6-13) (Achtemeier 1982:18).

Achtemeier places the גוים among the Levites and understands 66.18,21 which talks about God who gathers together all the people from all the nations and then making some of them into priests and Levites, as an event which occurred at that period of time rather than as an eschatological projection (Achtemeier 1982:17,147):

וְאַנְכִי מַעֲשִׂיהֶם וּמַחֲשַׁבְתֵּיהֶם בָּאָה לְקַבֵּץ אֶת־כָּל־הַגּוֹיִם וְהַלְשִׁנוֹת וּבָאוּ וַרְאוּ  
אֶת־כְּבוֹדִי:

(Isaiah 66:18)

וְגַם־מֵהֶם אֶקַּח לְכַהֲנִים לְלוֹיִם אָמַר יְהוָה:

(Isaiah 66:21)

### **Ezekiel's Zadokites reject "the righteous"**

The righteous endured rejection by the majority group because of their religious standpoint (66.5) to the extent in fact where they were not considered to be part of the covenant people (63.16, 18). They were hated and rejected by their "אחיהם" (kinsmen) (66.5)

שָׁמְעוּ דְבַר־יְהוָה הַחֲרָדִים אֶל־דְּבָרוֹ אָמְרוּ אַחֵיכֶם שְׂנֵאֵיכֶם מִנְדִּיכֶם לְמַעַן שְׁמִי  
יִכְבֹּד יְהוָה וְנִרְאָה בְּשִׂמְחַתְכֶם וְהֵם יִבְשׁוּ:

Isaiah 66:5

because they would not participate in the disgusting practice of child sacrifice and the worshipping fertility gods by having sexual intercourse under the sacred trees (57.5):

נְחָמִים בְּאֵלִים תַּחַת כָּל-עֵץ רֵעַנָּן שְׁחֵטִי הַיְלָדִים בַּנְּחָלִים תַּחַת סְעֵפֵי הַסְּלֵעִים:  
Isaiah 57:5

According to Ezekiel, the motive for disenfranchising the Levites was that they had gone astray and worshipped idols. This resulted in their being banned from serving at the altar in Jerusalem (Ezekiel 44.13-14) (Achteemeier 1982:18).

וְלֹא-יִגְשׁוּ אֵלַי לְכַהֵן לִי וְלִגְשַׁת עַל-כָּל-קִדְשֵׁי אֶל-קִדְשֵׁי הַקִּדְשִׁים וְנִשְׂאוּ כָּל־מִצָּחָם  
וְתוֹעֲבוֹתָם אֲשֶׁר עָשׂוּ:

Ezekiel 44:13-4

The signs of a schism in the community in Yehud is further seen when Isaiah 56:1-8 is compared to Ezekiel 40-48. Trito-Isaiah's more universalistic approach did not only include the *goyim* but also eunuchs.

The message of Ezekiel runs contrary to that of Trito-Isaiah 66.17-21 in that Ezekiel forbade foreigners and the uncircumcised from entering the temple area (Ezekiel 44.9) (Achteemeier 1982:19):

כֹּה-אָמַר אֲדֹנָי יְהוִה כָּל-בְּנֵי-נֶכֶד עָרַל לֵב וְעָרַל בָּשָׂר לֹא יָבֹאוּ אֶל-מִקְדָּשִׁי  
לְכָל-בְּנֵי-נֶכֶד אֲשֶׁר בְּתוֹךְ בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל:

Ezekiel 44:9

### Rofé's Judean sects identified in Isaiah 66.1- 4

In his article, Isaiah 66:1-4: Judean sects in the Persian period as viewed by Trito-Isaiah, Rofé provides additional evidence of the existence of diverse political-religious factions present in Trito-Isaiah (1985:206).

In much the same way as the preceding scholars referred to in this chapter, Rofé identifies two factions or groups active in the days of Trito-Isaiah, Zechariah and Haggai.

The **true group** comprises:

- *the servants of the Lord and his chosen ones* (Isaiah 54.17; 65.8-9, 13-15, 22, 66.14),
- *those who take refuge in him* (57.13),
- *those who fear the word of the Lord* (66.2, 5),
- *his people who seek him* (65.10),
- *those of Jacob who have repented of the rebellion* (59.20),
- *the poor* (66.2),
- *the broken, the humble, the humble in spirit* (57.15),
- *the broken of spirit* (66.2),
- *the afflicted, the broken-hearted* (61.1),
- *the mourners of Zion* (57.18; 61.2-3).

The other group is characterised as **wicked** (57.20-21) and displays the following characteristics:

- *those who have forsaken the Lord and have forgotten his holy mountain* (65.11),

- *the enemies of the Lord* (66.14),
- *rebels against the Lord* (66.24).

Rofé's opposing true group and wicked group (65.8-15; 66.5) can be distinguished from each other according to the following traits:

- a sociological element consisting of those which is poor, oppressed and humble; secondly,
- a religious element, described as those who rebel and those who do not; and thirdly
- a political element which consists of those who are the *mourners of Zion* in opposition to those *who have forsaken the Lord and have forgotten Zion* (1985:206).

Rofé has some difficulty in making a clear-cut separation between the two groups since they are intertwined in the text. He finds that in 66.3 there is a clear description of the identity of the members of the **wicked** party (Rofé 1985:207).

As for **those who slaughter oxen** and slay humans,

**Who sacrifice sheep** and immolate dogs,

**Who present as oblation** the blood of swine,

**Who offer incense** and worship false gods—

Just as they have chosen their ways

And take pleasure in their abominations ... (Isaiah 66.3)

שׁוֹחֵט הַשּׂוֹר מִכֶּה-אִישׁ זֹבֵחַ הַשֶּׁה עֲרַף כָּלֵב מַעֲלֵה מִנְחָה דַם-חֲזִיר מִזְכִּיר לְבָנָה  
מְבַרֵךְ אֶזְוֹן גְּסֵהֶמָּה בְּחָרוּ בְּדַרְכֵיהֶם וּבְשִׁקּוּצֵיהֶם נִפְשָׁם חָפְצָה:

Isaiah 66:3

According to Rofé's interpretation of v. 3 they can only be the priests who serve in *the temple* (1985:208). In fact, the first part of the participle acts in each line in v. 3 acts as the subject (in the construct state) and describes the priestly profession. This is a description of the priests, as they **ought** to be. The second part of each line in the verse forms the predicate and object, depicting the abominable deeds of the priests (Rofé 1985:208-209).

Rofé identifies the wicked group as the non-exilic priests in Jerusalem because they formed part of the sacrificial system through which the people brought their sacrifices to the altar (Rofé 1985:212).

Trito-Isaiah then declares that God will select from among those who were returning from exile Levitical priests who are to serve God at the altar in Jerusalem. *The monopoly of the Jerusalem priests will thus be broken* (Rofé 1985:212).

### **Plöger discerns two schools of thought**

P. Plöger (1968) identifies two main schools of thought that influenced the development of post-exilic Judaism. Mason describes Plöger's two schools as follows:

The theocratic view *to be associated with the Priestly writers and the Chronicler*, ruled by the official priesthood with the Temple and its cult as their main frame of reference (Mason 1982:137).

Those who had become disillusioned with the theocratic view and gravitated towards *radical eschatological hopes of a future transformation of the present order* (Mason 1982:138).

In his adaptation of Plöger's model, Hanson undermines the *mythical-eschatological elements* in Ezekiel, Haggai and Zechariah 1-8 seeing them as of little significance (Mason 1982:139). This is necessary for his argument to succeed in depicting the visionaries as being the only ones who make use of fabulous eschatology in the portrayal of their hopes for the future.

### **Conclusion**

From the studies made by the afore mentioned Biblical scholars it becomes apparent that the background and socio-political and religious atmosphere in the days of Trito-Isaiah, Haggai and Zechariah 1-8 was indeed complex. There are clear signs of a struggle for control and leadership in the community of Yehud which was in turn indirectly ruled by the Persian regime. For both Haggai and Zechariah, Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel was the favoured ruler of Yehud. In the contest that follows Zerubbabel gains an almost messianic status and is described in eschatological terms until his untimely mysterious disappearance from the scene.

## Chapter 4

### The economy in Jerusalem after 586 BCE

#### The political-economic function of the Temple for Persia

Building temples formed part of the Persian policy for rebuilding the economic infrastructure. According to Blenkinsopp, the temples had an agrarian, economic and social function in the Ancient Near East in addition to their religious functions (Blenkinsopp 1991:27). The larger temples that existed during the Persian Period were wealthy institutions. They were managed by landowners who had their own labour force. The temples also fulfilled a quasi-banking function and advanced loans to those in need (Blenkinsopp 1991:23). Furthermore they played a dominant role in the market, storing produce that was in excess and then redistributing it when it was needed (Blenkinsopp 1991:23).

The priests of the temple had to report to the Persian officials concerning the collection and payment of the tribute that was owing to the Persian government. They also kept record of the distribution of agricultural produce (Nehemiah 13.13) (Blenkinsopp 1991:23-24). The Persian government also held the priests answerable for the enforcement of the law, stability and peace in their regions (Blenkinsopp 1991:24).

Persia's agenda for the reconstruction of the temples of the conquered nations was not primarily for pious reasons. Blenkinsopp ascribes the success of the Persian Policy to its tolerance for *diverse local systems* within its borders (Blenkinsopp 1991:26).

The first step in the implementation of its administrative policies in the various satrapies was to select a dominant elite core group whose loyalty could not be questioned, and to appoint them to serve in key positions in the local communities. Secondly, they allowed them a reasonable amount of autonomy to execute their administrative duties (Blenkinsopp 1991:26). *Temples served as catalysts of economic exchange and promoters of social cohesion* (Blenkinsopp 1991:26).

### **The political-economical function of the Temple for the elite in Yehud**

Blenkinsopp discusses Joel Weinberg's hypothesis, *The Burger-Temple-Gemeinde* (the civic-temple community) in Weinberg's article Die Agrarverhältnisse in der Bürger-Temple-Gemeinde der Achämenidenzeit, (1976) in which Weinberg elaborates on the economic function of temples. Weinberg's hypothesis, *The Burger-Temple-Gemeinde* (the civic-temple community) states that the temple priests formed a coalition with the landlords and established an autonomous elite class with the aim of providing its members with *the means for self-management and mutual economic assistance* (Blenkinsopp 1991:27). In order to form the "elite class", the Jewish immigrants from Babylon had to reclaim the land their ancestors had lost when they were deported to Babylon. In the meantime the land had been distributed to the peasants who did not own property (2 Kings 25.12) (Blenkinsopp 1991:53)

וּמִדֵּלַת הָאָרֶץ הַשְּׂאִיר רַב־טַבָּחִים לְכֹרְמִים וְלִיְגָבִים׃

(2 Kings 25:12)

Clearly those who had worked and lived on the land as if it were their own since the days of Gedaliah would not be willing to relinquish what they considered to be

theirs. For this purpose the elite needed to rebuild the Temple as the centre around which they could carry out their operations as the so-called *Burger-Temple-Gemeinde* (Blenkinsopp 1991:53).

### The local inhabitants of Yehud.

Prior to the return of the exiles the local inhabitants faced economic hardship and privation (Verhoef 1987:29). There were crop failures due to the unfavourable weather conditions, and their neighbours, the Samaritan “aristocracy” were openly hostile and wrote a letter of complaint to the Persian ruler about the undesirable action of the Jews (Ezra 4.11-12; Verhoef 1987:29).

דָּנָה פֶּרֶשְׁנָן אֲנִרְתָּא דִּי שְׁלַחוּ עֲלוּהִי עַל-אַרְתַּחְשַׁשְׁתָּא מֶלֶכָּא עֲבָדָךְ אָנֹשׁ  
 עֲבַר-נְהַרְהָ וּכְעַנְתָּ: פ  
 יָדִיעַ לְהוּא לְמֶלֶכָּא דִּי יְהוּדָיָא דִּי סִלְקוּ מִן-לְוִתָךְ עֲלִינָא אָתוּ לִירוּשָׁלַם  
 קִרְיָתָא מְרֻדְתָּא וּבִאִישְׁתָּא בְּנִין וְשׁוּרְיָא שְׁכָלְלוּ וְאִשְׂיָא יַחִיטוּ:  
 (Ezra 4:11-12)

In the early years of Darius' reign, when Haggai spoke his first oracle to the people in Jerusalem, Yehud was experiencing *famine, blight, drought and general futility* (Haggai 1.4-6).

הֵי עַת לָכֶם אַתֶּם לְשֹׁבֵת בְּבִתְיֹכֶם סְפוּגִים וְהַבֵּית הַזֶּה חָרֵב:  
 וְעַתָּה כֹּה אָמַר יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת שִׁימוּ לְבַבְכֶם עַל-דַּרְכֵיכֶם:  
 זְרַעְתֶּם הַרְבֵּה וְהָבֵא מְעַט אָכֹל וְאִין-לְשֹׁבְעָה שָׂתוּ וְאִין-לְשֹׁכְרָה לְבוּשׁ וְאִין-לֶחֶם  
 לוֹ וְהַמְשַׁתְּכֶר מְשַׁתְּכֶר אֶל-צְרוּר נְקוּב: פ  
 (Haggai 1:4-6)

With the return of the exiles came instability as the elite laid claim to the land that had belonged to their families before the Babylonian exile and conquest of Judah.

The locals considered the land their own as they had been living and farming in the area since the exile (Verhoef 1987: 29).

Verhoef interprets the reference in Ezekiel 33.24 as a justification for the locals to lay claim to the land. They were somewhat reluctant to hand over the land to the elite whose forefathers had been the landowners prior to the exile (ibid.).

בְּיַדְּכֶם יִשְׁבִּי הַחֲרָבוֹת הָאֵלֶּה עַל־אֲדָמַת יִשְׂרָאֵל אֲמַרְיִם לֵאמֹר אָחֵר הָיָה אֲבֵרְהֶם  
וַיִּירֶשׁ אֶת־הָאָרֶץ וְאֲנַחְנוּ רַבִּים לָנוּ נִתְּנָה הָאָרֶץ לְמוֹרָשָׁה: ם

(Ezekiel 33:24)

The major festivals were still celebrated in Jerusalem and attracted many pilgrims. The sacrifices at these events served as a form of income for the priests, while the many visitors to Jerusalem boosted her economy (Carter 1994:141). The bit of good fortune that the locals experienced as a result of the pilgrims visiting Jerusalem would also come to an end once the Temple had been rebuilt and once again fell under the control of the Zadokite priests.

It was against the backdrop of the conditions described above that the prophet Haggai delivered his oracles in Jerusalem.

## Chapter 5

### The form of the Book of Haggai

The dates in the Book of Haggai place it in the time after the accession of Darius, to the throne of Persia. By that time the civil unrest and rebellious outbreaks against his succession to the throne had been quelled according to Berquist. This was round about the time the Persian army was deployed in Egypt. On the army's way to Egypt it would of necessity pass through Yehud en route (Berquist 1995:66).

Darius needed the people of Yehud to rebuild their temple, as the temple administration would form an important part of his military campaigns. The Temple would serve a political, economic and judicial function in addition to being a cultic institution (Meyers & Meyers 1987:37-38).

The exhortations in Chapter 1 of the Book of Haggai are all entrenched in the condition of the economic situation of the time. They show that the people are in disfavour with God (*ibid*). Meyers & Meyers perceive the rebuilding of the Temple as a sign that the God of Israel had renewed his covenant with them (1987:38).

The use of the date formulae as editorial framework is unique to the Book of Haggai (Floyd 1995:471). The date formulae function as superscriptions and provide information by means of introduction to the oracle, such as the date and political circumstances at that time (Floyd 1995:474). They also indicate the extent to which Judean policies and thinking were influenced by Persian ideas (*ibid.*).

The book demonstrates Haggai's rhetorical skills and ability to engage the people in dialogue. In brief, the Book of Haggai is a *short, apologetic historical narrative* (Petersen 1984:39). The author uses prophetic oracles that are presented as disputation speeches to bring his message to the audience (Petersen 1984:36; Ollenburger 1989:406).

There is also a decidedly chronological ordering of the material and this creates the effect that the Book of Haggai is similar to a chronicle or historical narrative rather than merely a prophetic collection. The narrator discusses the development of events involved in the rebuilding the Temple and not just the prophet's exhortations to have the Temple rebuilt (Petersen 1984:32-33). Moreover, there is an underlying cause-and-effect theme occurring throughout (Petersen 1984:33).

Various scholars such as Hanson, Plöger and Achtemeier (mentioned earlier) refer to the audience of Isaiah, Ezekiel and Haggai by different names such as visionaries and Zadokites. Most of the commentators on the Book of Haggai do not identify the audience and only refer to them as *the people*.

For the sake of clarity, the two main groups or factions that were active in Jerusalem when the prophet Haggai delivered his messages will be referred to as ***the locals*** and ***the elite*** in this dissertation. The reference to *locals* will refer in the main to the inhabitants of Jerusalem who were not exiled to Babylon, while the *elite* will refer to the people who had been in exile and who had now returned to Jerusalem.

In order to have a finer understanding of the message the prophet Haggai brought to the people living in Jerusalem in the second year of the reign of the Persian king, Darius, it will be necessary to look at every one of the oracles. The oracles make up the greater part of the book.

Motyer (1998:969) identifies six oracles in the Book of Haggai, namely:

- oracle to Zerubbabel and Joshua: the Lord's house lies in ruins [1.1-2];
- oracle to the people: the neglected house of God is the cause of bane [1.3-11];
- oracle to the builders: the Lord's presence in the present [1.12-15a];
- oracle to the leaders and people: the Lord's presence for the future [1.15b-2.9];
- oracle to the priests and the people: the restored house and the cause of blessing [2.10-19];
- oracle to Zerubbabel: David's house to be built [2.20-23].

## Chapter 6

### The rhetoric of the Book of Haggai

Rhetoric can be defined as *the art of persuasion* (Gitay 1993:136). The prophets of the Tanach presented their messages to their audiences in such a way as to persuade them to rethink the situation and then to follow a different path.

A close reading of prophetic speech shows that condemning the people's deeds is not an end in itself. The prophets also seek persuasion: explaining to their audience the consequence of their deeds and calling them to choose the right way (Gitay 1993:137).

Haggai did not only seek to persuade the people to reassume and complete the building of the Temple, but also to understand the moral and ethical implications of their deeds (Haggai 2.14):

וַיַּעַן חַגַּי וַיֹּאמֶר כִּן הָעִם־הַזֶּה וְכִן־הַגּוֹי הַזֶּה לְפָנַי נִאֲמַרְיָהוּהָ וְכִן כָּל־מַעֲשֵׂה יְדֵיהֶם  
וְאֲשֶׁר יִקְרִיבוּ שָׁם טָמֵא הוּא:

(Haggai 2:14)

Haggai adopts a *quasi-logical rather than scientific* method (Gitay 1993:135). This was the style employed by the classical prophets and is a careful balance between *rational, mathematical proof and emotional appeal* (ibid.). The audience is confronted with the cause of the economic problems they are in and the reason for this divine punishment. In order to escape these futile circumstances they can heed God's call for the reconstruction of the His House and then reap the ensuing blessings (Gitay 1991:5).

In a sense the argument follows along the lines of *cause and effect* which in terms of the biblical prophets is generally found to be embedded in the laws of nature. Natural disasters do not strike for no reason, the cause is not coincidental or *ex nihilo nihil fit* (Haggai 1.10-11) (Gitay 1993:138):

עַל־כֵּן עָלִיכֶם כָּל־אֹ שָׁמַיִם מִטָּל וְהָאָרֶץ כָּל־אֶה יְבוּלָהּ  
וְאֶקְרָא חֶרֶב עַל־הָאָרֶץ וְעַל־הַהָרִים וְעַל־הַדָּגָן וְעַל־הַתִּירוֹשׁ׃ וְעַל־הַיְצֵהָר וְעַל־  
אֲשֶׁר תּוֹצֵיא הָאָדָמָה וְעַל־הָאָדָם וְעַל־הַבְּהֵמָה וְעַל־כָּל־יִגִיעַ כַּפָּיִם׃ ס  
(Haggai 1:10-11)

In order to gain a deeper insight into the message of the prophet it is necessary to understand the literary method he employs. Haggai's style is designated to appeal. There is mutual interaction which takes place between the prophet, his audience and message.

The prophetic style is the language of *oratorical rhetoric*, a communicative discourse which includes various sorts of modes depending on the issue and function of the specific prophetic speech (Gitay 1989:81).

When analysing the text of the Book of Haggai it is important to take into consideration its three dimensional nature. Firstly, there is the audience, their situation, circumstances, feelings and religious and political attitudes. Secondly, the prophet should be seen as a person who needs to establish his credibility as well as how his personality influences the interaction with his audience. Thirdly, it is essential to understand the way in which the prophet has constructed his speech so as to achieve the most optimal effect on his audience (Gitay 1991:6).

According to this we can view Haggai's first speech in the following vein: Haggai (1:2-11) began his address by stating the people's position - that they had stopped the work on the reconstruction of the Temple. After establishing their position in the argument the prophet questions the wisdom of their decision. He then pursues the issue with a powerful appeal targeting their reasoning, emotions and ethical standpoint. With a swoop the prophet zones in on all their primary needs, that is, those that are basic to man's existence. They suffer from hunger, cold and poverty because they neglect their responsibility in providing one of the "primary needs" of God, namely that he does not have a house, while they all have beautifully constructed homes.

הַעֵת לָכֶם אַתֶּם לְשׁוֹבֵת בְּבֵתֵיכֶם סְפוּנִים וְהַבַּיִת הַזֶּה חָרֵב:

(Haggai 1:4)

פָּנֵה אֶל־הַרְבֵּה וְהִנֵּה לְמַעַט וְהִבֵּאתֶם הַבַּיִת וְנִפְחַתִּי בּוֹ יַעַן מָה נֶאֱמַר יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת  
יַעַן בֵּיתִי אֲשֶׁר־הוּא חָרֵב וְאַתֶּם רְצִים אִישׁ לְבֵיתוֹ:

(Haggai 1:9)

This passionate rebuke directed at the people and the rulers evoked feelings of fear and reverence in the people and opened the door for Haggai to respond with words of reassurance:

וַיֹּאמֶר חֲנַי מֵלֶאךָ יְהוָה בְּמַלְאָכוֹת יְהוָה לָעַם לֵאמֹר אֲנִי אֶתְכֶם נֹאמֵי־יְהוָה:

(Haggai 1:13)

The first speech can be classified as *deliberative rhetoric* whereby Haggai succeeded in persuading his audience in making a re-evaluation on their circumstances and roused them to take action (Gitay 1991:7). There is also an underlying element of *judicial rhetoric* (Gitay 1991:7) by means of which the prophet makes his audience aware of their duty to obey their God. This call for obedience to

the law is not stated explicitly but the audience would have been familiar with it, such as the call for obedience mentioned in Leviticus: 26.14-20:

וְאִם-לֹא תִשְׁמְעוּ לִי וְלֹא תַעֲשׂוּ אֶת כָּל-הַמִּצְוֹת הָאֵלֶּה:  
וְאִם-בַּחֲקוֹתֵי הַמָּאֲסוּ וְאִם אֶת-מִשְׁפָּטֵי תִגְעַל נַפְשְׁכֶם לְבַלְתִּי עֲשׂוֹת אֶת-כָּל-מִצְוֹתֵי  
לְהַפְרֹכֶם אֶת-בְּרִיתִי:

אֲף-אֲנִי אֶעֱשֶׂה-זֹאת לָכֶם וְהִפְקַדְתִּי עֲלֵיכֶם בְּהִלָּה אֶת-הַשְּׁחָפֹת וְאֶת-הַקְדַּחַת  
מְכַלּוֹת עֵינַיִם וּמַדִּיבַת נֶפֶשׁ וּזְרַעְתֶּם לָרֵיק זֶרְעְכֶם וְאָכַלְהוּ אֲבֵיכֶם:  
וְנָתַתִּי פָנַי בְּכֶם וּנְגַפְתֶּם לְפָנַי אֲבֵיכֶם וְרָדוּ בְכֶם שְׁנֵאֵיכֶם וְנִסְתֶּם וְאִין-רָדַף  
אֶתְכֶם: ׀

וְאִם-עַד-אֵלֶּה לֹא תִשְׁמְעוּ לִי וְיִסְפְּתִי לְיִסְרָה אֶתְכֶם שְׁבַע עַל-חַטֹּאתֵיכֶם:  
וְשִׁבַרְתִּי אֶת-גְּאוֹן עֲזֹכֶם וְנָתַתִּי אֶת-שְׁמֵיכֶם כַּבְרִזָּל וְאֶת-אֲרָצְכֶם כַּנְחָשָׁה:  
וְחָם לָרֵיק כַּחֲכֶם וְלֹא-תִתֶּן אֲרָצְכֶם אֶת-יְבוּלָהּ וְעֵץ הָאָרֶץ לֹא יִתֵּן פְּרִיו:

(Leviticus 26:14-20)

A close symbiotic relationship is revealed between the narrator of the text and the oracles spoken by the prophet such that Floyd concludes:

The narrative's effectiveness in fulfilling its own rhetorical objectives thus depends upon a common awareness of some proven record relating to Haggai, on which the author's interpretation of events is based (1995:484).

Consequently, because of this interrelationship, it is impossible to detect any external sources used by the narrator and the impression is given that the work underwent very little in the way of redaction. The re-occurrence of themes which occurs in such a way that they do not make the same point twice has the effect of moving the speech rhetorically so that the audience not only hears, then recognises it, but also follows through on it (Floyd 1995:489).

## Chapter 7

### Haggai and his audiences

#### Haggai Chapter One

Haggai's speeches took place during an economic depression. Meyers & Meyers ascribe the associated inflation to various factors. The Babylonian conquest had destroyed much of the commercial infrastructure. While they were deployed in the area the warring armies indulged in the destruction of the crops and looting of fruit trees, vineyards, livestock and other agrarian property. Many of the fields were left unattended and with time became overgrown and unworkable. A consequence of the exile and war was that it took its toll on the manpower (Meyers & Meyers 1987:41).

Yehud is a semi-arid region known to experience periodic drought. The situation became aggravated when whatever food supplies were stockpiled during times of plenty were taken by the overlords as tribute payments by the Persian regime.

The first address by the prophet Haggai occurs in 1:2

כֹּה אָמַר יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת לֵאמֹר הָעַם הַזֶּה אָמְרוּ לֹא עֲתִבָּא עֲתִבֵּית יְהוָה לְהִבְנוֹת:  
(Haggai 1:2)

The message in 1.2 is directed at the governor, Zerubbabel, and the high priest, Joshua. Haggai wants to bring to their attention that the people are not rebuilding the Temple because they consider it to be the wrong time for such an activity. The opinion of the people themselves is not given. They do not provide any details relating to their reluctance to rebuild the Temple. It is God who is accusing them of unwillingness (Petersen 1984:47).

Meyers & Meyers are of the opinion that the people were reluctant to use their scanty resources for the building project. It was harvest time, a labour-intensive and time-consuming undertaking (1987:21).

Haggai approaches Zerubbabel, because as the governor of Yehud he was the official representative of the Persian Empire. In the Ancient Near East the state was responsible for building temples (Van der Woude 1982:21). Haggai would have understood that the reconstruction of the Temple was part of Zerubbabel's agenda as laid down by the Persian authorities (Meyers & Meyers 1987:19-20). Now that Zerubbabel and Joshua had arrived in Jerusalem, and coming as they did with the blessings of the Persian government, Haggai could hope to gain support for the reconstruction of the Temple project (Wolff 1988:41). Zerubbabel symbolised the king in the eyes of Haggai and consequently he would be the one who became responsible for the reconstruction of the Temple (Wolff 1988:40).

The prophet's first address was simultaneously directed to Joshua, the high priest, since he was a key figure and role player in matters pertaining to the reinstatement of the Jerusalem Temple (Van der Woude 1982:21).

The people are not named or identified as addressees in 1.2, but they are simply addressed as **הָעָם הַזֶּה** (these people).

בְּשָׁנָת שְׁתַּיִם לְדַרְיוֹשׁ הַמֶּלֶךְ בַּחֹדֶשׁ הַשְּׁשִׁי בְּיוֹם אֶחָד לַחֹדֶשׁ הָיָה דְבַר־יְהוָה  
 בְּיַד־חַגִּי הַנָּבִיא אֶל־זְרֻבָּבֶל בֶּן־שָׂאֲלֻתַיִאל פַּחַת יְהוּדָה וְאֶל־יְהוֹשֻׁעַ בֶּן־יְהוֹצָדָק  
 הַכֹּהֵן הַגָּדוֹל לֵאמֹר:

כֹּה אָמַר יְהוָה זָבָאוֹת לֵאמֹר הָעַם הַזֶּה אָמְרוּ לֹא עָת־בֹּא עֲת־בֵּית יְהוָה לְהַבְנוֹת:  
(Haggai 1:1-2)

Wolff poses the question whether הָעַם הַזֶּה (these people), are the locals or the elite (1988:40).

### The second speech of the prophet occurs in Haggai 1:3-11.

The narrator continues in verse 3 with the second address of the prophet. Stuhlmüller (1988:15), Meyers (1992:20) and Petersen (1984:33) see verses 1-11 as one continuous speech directed at the leaders, Zerubbabel and Joshua. The leaders will then be responsible for conveying the message they received from the prophet to the entire population of Yehud. In Petersen's view the redactor used a different setting for the oracle in verses 1-11, rather than its original setting (1984:48).

Verhoef (1987:53), Van der Woude (1982:20) and Motyer (1998:968) see verse 3 as the beginning of a separate oracle addressed directly to the עַם (people).

וַיְהִי דְבַר־יְהוָה בְּיַד־חַנְיָי הַנְּבִיא לֵאמֹר:  
הֲעֵת לָכֶם אַתֶּם לְשֹׁבֵת בְּבֵתֵיכֶם סְפוּנִים וְהַבַּיִת הַזֶּה חָרַב:  
(Haggai 1:3-4)

In verse 4, Haggai poses a rhetorical question to the people. He is questioning the fact that the people are living in סְפוּנִים but the house of God lies in ruins.

If, by the סְפוּנִים, the narrator means houses with ordinary *roofs* which were usually made from the local sycamores, then the prophet is addressing both the

locals and the elite. However, if the prophet is using ספן to imply houses panelled with imported cedar wood, then by implication his audience comprised of the locals who have had plenty of time to build luxurious homes (Wolff 1988:42).

וְעַתָּה כֹּה אָמַר יְהוָה זָבָאוֹת שִׁימוּ לְבַבְכֶם עַל־דַּרְכֵיכֶם:  
זְרַעְתֶּם הַרְבֵּה וְהִבֵּא מְעַט אָכֹל וְאִין־לְשַׁבְּעָה שָׂתוּ וְאִין־לְשַׁכְּרָה לְבוֹשׁ וְאִין־לְחַם  
לוֹ וְהַמְשַׁתְּכֵר מִשְׁתַּכֵּר אֶל־צָרוֹר נְקוֹב:

(Haggai 1:5-6)

The prophet continues and tells the people that they suffer drought and economic hardship because they have neglected to rebuild the Temple.

Haggai provides details of the economic slump. He then provides the reason for this depressed state and ascribes it to the unwillingness of the people to rebuild the Temple (verses 7-8). This unwillingness of the people caused God to withhold the rain that resulted in crop failures and produced shortages (verses 9-11).

כֹּה אָמַר יְהוָה זָבָאוֹת שִׁימוּ לְבַבְכֶם עַל־דַּרְכֵיכֶם:  
עָלוּ הָהָר וְהִבֵּאתֶם עֵץ וּבְנוּ הַבַּיִת וְאַרְצָה־בוֹ וְאֶפְכְּדָה אָמַר יְהוָה:  
פָּנָה אֶל־הַרְבֵּה וְהִנֵּה לְמַעַט וְהִבֵּאתֶם הַבַּיִת וְנִפְחַתִּי בוֹ יַעַן מָה נָאִם יְהוָה זָבָאוֹת  
יַעַן בֵּיתִי אֲשֶׁר־הוּא חָרֵב וְאַתֶּם רָצִים אִישׁ לְבֵיתוֹ:  
עַל־כֵּן עָלִיכֶם כָּל־אוֹ שָׁמַיִם מָטָל וְהָאֶרֶץ כָּל־אֶה יְבוֹלָה:  
וְאֶקְרָא חָרֵב עַל־הָאֶרֶץ וְעַל־הַהָרִים וְעַל־הַדָּגָן וְעַל־הַתִּירוֹשׁ וְעַל־הַיְצָהָר וְעַל  
אֲשֶׁר תּוֹצִיא הָאָדָמָה וְעַל־הָאָדָם וְעַל־הַבְּהֵמָה וְעַל כָּל־יִגְיעַ כַּפְּיָם: ס

(Haggai 1:7-11)

The prophet continues in 1.3-11 and addresses the “people” gathered around him (Wolff 1988:40). He exhorts the people, in the presence of Zerubbabel and Joshua,

pointing out to them that if they rebuild the House of God then God will smile upon them and end the drought. By addressing the people in the presence of the two leaders it would seem as if Haggai is expecting the support of Zerubbabel and Joshua.

Verhoef indicates that the way in which the locals now respond to Haggai's exhortation shows that he was well known to the people and that they recognised his authority (1987:3).

It may well be that the locals were fully aware of the reasons for the interest in rebuilding the Temple shown by the Persian government. Once the Temple had been re-established, the distribution of the agricultural produce would be under the supervision of the priests. The priests, in turn, were answerable to the Persian government (Blenkinsopp 1991:23-24).

The inhabitants had a great need for the drought to end. Aside from that, the locals saw that Haggai had the support of Zerubbabel and Joshua who were Jews like themselves and not Persians. They, like Haggai, held certain messianic expectations of the scion of David (Haggai 2.20-22).

וַיְהִי דְבַר־יְהוָה שֵׁנִית אֶל־חַנַּי בְּעֶשְׂרִים וָאַרְבָּעָה לַחֹדֶשׁ לֵאמֹר:  
 אָמַר אֶל־זְרֻבָבֶל פַּחַת־יְהוּדָה לֵאמֹר אֲנִי מְרַעֵשׂ אֶת־הַשָּׁמַיִם וְאֶת־הָאָרֶץ:  
 וְהַפְכֹתִי כֶּסֶא מַמְלָכוֹת וְהוֹ מַדְתִּי חֶזֶק מַמְלָכוֹת הַגּוֹיִם וְהַפְכֹתִי מִרְכָּבָה וּרְכֻבֵיהָ  
 וַיֵּרְדוּ סוּסִים וּרְכֻבֵיהֶם אִישׁ בְּחָרֵב אָחָיו:

(Haggai 2:20-22)

Berquist, on the other hand, interprets Haggai's argument for an increase in grain production to be related to the additional food requirements for the advancing Persian army. This must be seen in addition to the causes given in Haggai 1 (1995:65).

### **The third oracle**

Meyers and Meyers adopt a completely different angle to that of Berquist but also recognise the economic function of the temple (1987:42). Haggai's message centred around the economic conditions and he promised that God would reward the people's efforts to reconstruct the temple with economic prosperity and abundance.

The idea that the national god should be shown the necessary adoration and obedience in exchange for blessing the people and the land *is firmly rooted in Near Eastern temple typology, in which the building of the temple brings about fertility* (ibid). The temple would generate economic resources. The tithes and sacrifices brought to the Temple provided the necessary income to pay the running expenses of the temple administration.

In short, Haggai identified the need for re-establishing the temple infrastructure that would then allow for a centralised management of economic affairs (Meyers & Meyers 1987:42).

The prophet calls them to reflect on their deeds and provides the link between their deeds and the consequences of their deeds. The redactor demonstrates the

causality by using a series of causal particles על-כן - יען - יען מה (because of what – because – therefore) in verses 9-11 (Wolff 1988:48).

Motyer is of the opinion that the use of alliteration על-כן עליכם (therefore, because of that) seen in the Hebrew letters (verse 10), creates the impression that the inflation was not as a result of misguided farming methods or market conditions, but rather that it was caused by the heavens being *locked* (1998:978). The situation was aggravated because the dew did not form. At that time of year (August/September), dew was necessary to prevent the ripening grain from wilting in the heat (verse 10) (Motyer 1998:978).

עַל-כֵּן עֲלֵיכֶם כָּלֵאוּ שָׁמַיִם מִטָּל וְהָאָרֶץ כָּלְאָה יְבוּלָהּ:

Haggai 1:10

*Haggai's scriptural worldview taught him that the forces of nature are but agents in the hands of God* (Motyer 1998:978). The drought was seen as the people's punishment for failing to carrying out God's instruction to rebuild the Temple.

Generally the prophets of the Tanakh called on the people to mend their ways, and if they did not, then they would suffer the consequences. Here, however, the punishment has already been inflicted and the cause for it is given as an explanation in retrospect (Wolff 1988:48). If the general pattern of argumentation used by the prophets in the Tanakh applies, then it is likely that there had been some prior exhortation which the people had not heeded (Wolff 1988:48). The prophet always brings his message to the ruler or people who have the authority to make the necessary changes. It would seem, therefore, that the drought was seen

as a consequence of the locals not carrying out, or continuing with, the work that Sheshbazzar had started eighteen years earlier.<sup>1</sup>

There is no consensus as to who the people were that Haggai addressed that day, and who were the ones that heeded the call to resume the work on the Temple.

וַיִּשְׁמַע זְרֻבָבֶל בֶּן־שִׁלְתַיָּאל וַיְהוֹשֻׁעַ בֶּן־יְהוֹצָדָק הַכֹּהֵן הַגָּדוֹל וְכָל שְׂאֲרֵית הָעָם  
בְּקוֹל יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵיהֶם וְעַל־דִּבְרֵי חֲגִי הַנְּבִיא כַּאֲשֶׁר שָׁלַחוּ יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵיהֶם וַיִּירָאוּ  
הָעָם מִפְּנֵי יְהוָה:

וַיֹּאמֶר חֲגִי מֵלֶאֱדָן יְהוָה בְּמַלְאָכוֹת יְהוָה לָעַם לֵאמֹר אֲנִי אֶתְכֶם נְאֻם־יְהוָה:  
וַיַּעַר יְהוָה אֶת־רוּחַ זְרֻבָבֶל בֶּן־שִׁלְתַיָּאל פָּחַת יְהוּדָה וְאֶת־רוּחַ יְהוֹשֻׁעַ בֶּן־יְהוֹצָדָק  
הַכֹּהֵן הַגָּדוֹל וְאֶת־רוּחַ כָּל שְׂאֲרֵית הָעָם וַיָּבֹאוּ וַיַּעֲשׂוּ מְלָאכָה בְּבֵית־יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת  
אֱלֹהֵיהֶם:

(Haggai 1:12-14)

In verse 13 the prophet is addressing the *עָם*, while in verse 14 the redactor refers to those whose *רוּחַ* was moved by God as *כל שְׂאֲרֵית הָעָם*. Wolff interprets *the people* in verse 13 to refer to the locals, while those who are roused to work on the Temple are *the rest (remnant)*, that is, the elite group (1988:52).

According to Redditt, Haggai addressed *all the remnant of the people* in verse 12.

His assumption is that it included the “entire Judean population” (1995:22).

<sup>1</sup> The first return of exiles to Yehud was under the leadership of Sheshbazzar in 538 BCE eight years before the death of Cyrus (Meyers & Meyers, 1987:xxxi). According to the account related in Ezra 5.11-16, King Cyrus himself gave back the treasures that had been looted from the temple by the Babylonians, to Sheshbazzar and charged him to rebuild the temple in Jerusalem on the same site where Solomon’s temple had stood (Japhet 1991b:214). Verses 14-16 inform the reader that Sheshbazzar had the title of governor and goes on to say that he laid the foundations for the Second Temple but did not succeed in more than that even though the order from King Cyrus required that he complete the work (Japhet 1991b:215).

Verhoef suggests that the people who were so busy building their own houses referred to the people who had returned during the reign of Cyrus in 538 BCE, since their houses would have been completed by 520 BCE (Verhoef 1987:72). According to him, Haggai was addressing the elite.

## Chapter 8

### The oracle on the 21st of Tishri (Haggai 2.1-9)

The oracle in 2:1-9 takes place on the seventh day of Succoth (Wolff 1988:73). This would make the date the 21st of Tishri according to the Jewish calendar (Verhoef 1987:93). Haggai made his address in the vicinity of the Temple ruins. On this day, special sacrifices were brought to the altar at the Temple site (Wolff 1988:73-74). Wolff identifies these as the sacrifices prescribed in the Torah, consisting of bulls, rams lambs, goats and meal offerings:

וּבַיּוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי פָּרִים שִׁבְעָה אֵילִם שְׁנַיִם כִּבְשִׁים בְּנֵי־שָׁנָה אַרְבָּעָה עֶשְׂרֵת תְּמִימִם:  
 וּמִנְחָתָם וְנֹסֶכֶתָם לַפָּרִים לְאֵילִם וְלִכְבָּשִׁים בְּמִסְפָּרָם כְּמֹל פִּטְטָם:  
 וְשֹׁעִיר חֲטָאת אֶחָד מִלֶּבֶד עֲלֵת הַתְּמִיד מִנְחָתָהּ וְנֹסֶכֶתָהּ: פ  
 בַּיּוֹם הַשְּׁמִינִי עֲצֶרֶת תִּהְיֶה לָּכֶם כָּל־מִלְאָכְתָּ עֲבֹדָה לֹא תַעֲשׂוּ:  
 וְהִקְרַבְתֶּם עֲלֶיהָ אִשָּׁה רֵיחַ נִיחֹחַ לַיהוָה פֶּר אֶחָד אֵיל אֶחָד כִּבְשִׁים בְּנֵי־שָׁנָה שִׁבְעָה  
 תְּמִימִם:

(Numbers 29:32-36)

During the seven days of Succoth, *Simhat bet ha-sho-ayvah* (the feast of water-drawing) formed part of the daily services.

On the seventh day of Succoth a special prayer for rain (*Tefillat Geshem*) is recited as part of the prayer service to mark the beginning of the rainy season in Israel. In view of the serious drought that prevailed, it was indeed an apt time for Haggai to address the people (Epstein 1970:31).

The eighth day of Succoth marks the beginning of a new festival known as *Shemini Atzeret* (the eighth day of "solemn assembly") when all the people would attend the

sacrificial service (ibid). The leaders of Yehud, as well as all the people, assembled at the Temple site to attend the sacrificial service (Wolff 1988:77).

In addition to stirring up memories of their forefathers' sojourn through the desert when they resided in Succoth, the eighth day of Succoth was the day on which the Ark of the Covenant was moved to the First Temple, coinciding with the consecration of the First Temple (ibid).

The prophet had timed the delivery of his speech well. Just as the Israelites did not have a fixed abode to live in when they were in the desert, so too the God of Israel was without his בית (Verhoef 1987:94). The flimsy *succah* in the desert is compared to the temple ruins.

Although some Bible commentators, such as Wolff and Petersen, see the pericope 2.1-9 as a distinct unit, Verhoef is of the opinion that there are two independent oracles, namely 2.3-5 and 2.6-9. Both oracles were delivered on the same day (Verhoef 1987:93). Verses 3-5 focus on encouraging the audience to continue with the reconstruction work on the Temple, while verses 6-9 are a projection into the future recognition and glory of the Second Temple.

### **The audience**

Haggai addressed the leaders Zerubbabel and Joshua as well as שְׂאֵרֵיט הָעָם (the remnant of the people) in verses 2- 3 and begins by asking a rhetorical question to establish a rapport with his audience. The prophet enquires of them if there is anyone left who can remember *this House* when it was arrayed in all its splendour.

He then continues with a second rhetorical question and wants to know whether *it must seem like nothing* to them now (at that specific point in time).

Wolff, like Redditt (1995:24) interprets שארית העם as an indication that an elderly audience was being addressed. Both authors are of the opinion that they cannot be too young, since they saw the First Temple before its destruction sixty-six years ago. They are despondent since the sight of the work on the Second Temple cannot compare to the First. For this reason, Haggai now encourages the audience with the threefold הַיְהוָה (verse 4) (Wolff 1988:72).

In Jones's opinion, because the prophet speaks to the *remnant of the people*, it indicates that they had survived the traumatic and catastrophic destruction of Jerusalem. They may or may not also have been exiled (Jones 1962:42). Similarly, in 2.4 *all the people of the land* refers to both the locals and the elite; the descendants of the people who had been brought out of Egypt by the God of Israel (Jones 1962:46).

Motyer adds a "theologically emotive" dimension to the designation שארית העם. No longer were they addressed as *this people*, as they were called previously in the Book of Haggai. They have earned their new designation, *the remnant of the people* because of their willingness to obey God and rebuild the Temple (1998:981).

Verhoef disagrees with Wolff, Meyers and Meyers<sup>2</sup>, Petersen<sup>3</sup> *et alii*, and proposes that Haggai is addressing all the people, the locals and the elite (1987:96).

Haggai asks his audience to recall the *former splendour of "this" house* to the way that *this* house (הַבַּיִת הַזֶּה) looks now. The redactor uses the definite article הַזֶּה. Verhoef points out that the comparison is made between the appearance of Solomon's Temple before its destruction and the way the *same* Temple was after its destruction. The comparison is not between the First and the Second Temples (*ibid.*). The people understood that the Second Temple could never replace the First, since the same promises were not attached to it, nor did they have any of the glorious objects made of gold nor the craftsmanship used in the completion of the First Temple available to them (Verhoef 1987:97). Haggai's message aimed to encourage the leaders and the people. They needed reassurance since God had given them a difficult task (Verhoef 1987:98).

In verse 4 *all the people of the land* are named distinguishing them from *the remnant of the people* in verse 2 (Wolff 1988:72).

וַעֲפָה חֲזֹק זָרְבָבֶל נְאֻם־יְהוָה נְחֹזֵק יְהוֹשֻׁעַ בֶּן־יְהוֹצָדָק הַכֹּהֵן הַגָּדוֹל וְחֲזֹק כָּל־עַם  
הָאָרֶץ נְאֻם־יְהוָה וַעֲשׂוּ כִי־אָנֹכִי אֲחַכְמֶם נְאֻם יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת:

(Haggai 2:4)

<sup>2</sup> *Who is left among you?* (2.3) refers to people who are in their seventies and are capable of making a comparison between the first and the second temple (Meyers and Meyers 1987:49).

<sup>3</sup> The mood of Haggai's audience who are gathered for the feast of booths must have indicated that there were some who thought that the temple under reconstruction was going to be "a pale copy of the old one" (Petersen 1984:63).

אָמַרְנָא אֶל־זְרַבְבָּל בֶּן־שִׁלְתַיָּאֵל פִּחַת יְהוּדָה וְאֶל־יְהוֹשֻׁעַ בֶּן־יְהוֹצָדָק הַכֹּהֵן  
הַגָּדוֹל וְאֶל־שְׂאֲרֵית הָעָם לֵאמֹר:

(Haggai 2:2)

In a similar fashion *all the people of the land* in 1:12b-13a are juxtaposed against *all the remnant of the people* in 1:12a, and 14a (Wolff 1988:73).

וַיִּשְׁמַע זְרַבְבָּל בֶּן־שִׁלְתַיָּאֵל וַיְהוֹשֻׁעַ בֶּן־יְהוֹצָדָק הַכֹּהֵן הַגָּדוֹל וְכָל שְׂאֲרֵית הָעָם  
בְּקוֹל יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵיהֶם וְעַל־דִּבְרֵי חֲנִי הַנְּבִיא כַּאֲשֶׁר שָׁלַח יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵיהֶם וַיִּירָאוּ  
הָעָם מִפְּנֵי יְהוָה:

וַיֹּאמֶר חֲנִי מִלְאָךְ יְהוָה בְּמִלְאָכוֹת יְהוָה לָעָם לֵאמֹר אֲנִי אֶתְכֶם נְאֻם־יְהוָה:  
וַיַּעַר יְהוָה אֶת־רוּחַ זְרַבְבָּל בֶּן־שִׁלְתַיָּאֵל פִּחַת יְהוּדָה וְאֶת־רוּחַ יְהוֹשֻׁעַ בֶּן־יְהוֹצָדָק  
הַכֹּהֵן הַגָּדוֹל וְאֶת־רוּחַ כָּל שְׂאֲרֵית הָעָם וַיָּבֵאוּ וַיַּעֲשׂוּ מִלְאָכָה בְּבֵית־יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת  
אֱלֹהֵיהֶם:

(Haggai 1:12-14)

Accordingly, Wolff concludes that the redactor makes a distinction between *the clean* (2.2) acceptable elite and *the unclean* locals mentioned in 2:2 (ibid.).

Consequently, Wolff has difficulty in deciding which parts of the oracle in 2:3-9 were originally addressed specifically to Zerubbabel and Joshua, since they are included here together with the people who had seen the First Temple (according to Wolff's interpretation). This could not have been said of Zerubbabel and Joshua since they were both born in exile (ibid.).

Verhoef disagrees with Wolff that the reference to כָּל־עַם הָאָרֶץ is synonymous to *all the remnant of the people*. (See also Haggai 1.2, 14 and 2.2) (1987:98).

Like Wolff, Meyers and Meyers (1987) have difficulty in establishing the “precise political” connotation of כל־עַם הָאָרֶץ and conclude that it refers to the general populace in Yehud (Meyers & Meyers 1987:50). They are of the opinion that by involving all the citizens who had formerly been subject to the Judean monarchy, it would lend authenticity to the building project. Meyers and Meyers therefore do not take the involvement of the Persian Regime into account. For them, the only people who could gain from the reconstruction of the Temple were the Judeans living in Yehud.

### Shaking heaven and earth and all the nations

כִּי כֹה אָמַר יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת עוֹד אֶחַת מְעַט הִיא וְאֲנִי מִרְעִישׁ אֶת־הַשָּׁמַיִם וְאֶת־הָאָרֶץ  
וְאֶת־הַיָּם וְאֶת־הַחֲרָבָה:  
וְהִרְעִשְׁתִּי אֶת־כָּל־הַגּוֹיִם וּבָאוּ חֲמֻדַּת כָּל־הַגּוֹיִם וּמִלֵּאֲתִי אֶת־הַבַּיִת הַזֶּה כְּבוֹד  
אָמַר יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת:

(Haggai 2:6-7)

The verb רעש (to shake), occurs three times in chapter 2, namely verses 6, 7 and 21. It occurs within an eschatological context, symbolising God’s intervention in the world of man (Meyers & Meyers 1987:52). A sense of urgency and immediacy is created, for God will *shake nature instantly and the nations will be overthrown* (Verhoef 1987:103).

In verse 6, the prophet uses the imagery of an earthquake to depict how God will shake heaven and earth. Meyers and Meyers are of the opinion that Haggai may have had in mind:

... the residue of political instability that accompanied Darius's accession to power in 522 BCE after the death of Cambyses (1987:53).

In support of this, Meyers and Meyers say that Haggai depicts a universal insurrection and not one specifically related to Yehud. The idea of God ruling the world from Jerusalem is not unknown in prophetic works (cf. Isaiah 2.1-4; Micah 4.1-4). Haggai promulgates this notion to the point where he specifies Zerubbabel as the one who serves as the instrument through whom God's universal rule of כל-הגוים will take place (Meyers & Meyers 1987:53).

Wolff interprets the prospect of an imminent upheaval (רעש quake) to signify the onset of a holy war (Wolff 1988:80-81). The consequences of the war will be that the wealth of the nations will be redistributed and the riches will flow to Jerusalem (Wolff 1988:81). The God of Israel himself was going to act and bring about the upheaval among the nations that will bring about the prosperity of Jerusalem (Wolff 1988:82).

Unlike the Persian god, Ahura Mazda, who used individuals as his agents through which to rule the world according to the Behistun Inscription<sup>4</sup> the God of Israel will himself act on the behalf of his people. Haggai does not indicate that he wishes to incite Zerubbabel, the governor, to act as God's agent by means of which the nations will be overthrown (Wolff 1988:85).

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<sup>4</sup> Borger, R & Hinz 1984. Die Behistun-Inschrift Darius' des Grossen, TUAT I/4 pp. 419-450.

Verhoef, in a similar vein as Wolff, says that God will provide for the future needs of the nation and the temple (1987:101). Haggai, like many of the later prophets, uses the concept of “shaking nature and the nations” figuratively in an eschatological sense (cf. Ezekiel 33.19-33; Isaiah 13.13, 24.18-23; Joel 4.15-21). Verhoef also recognises a universal element and the “concept of a holy war” underlying verses 6,7 and 21 (1987:103). This universal dimension is created by the repetition of *all the nations* in verse 7 of Haggai’s eschatological vision (Meyers & Meyers 1987:53).

The word חֲמֵדָה is in the construct state and the pronominal suffix and preposition have been omitted. The function of the unusual grammatical structure is to indicate that the arrival of “riches” (precious items) will be the consequence of the eschatological “shaking”. Riches, gold and silver are associated with tribute paid by a vanquished nation to another nation which is seen as being the dominant regime (Meyers & Meyers 1987:53):

לִּי הַכֶּסֶף וְלִי הַזָּהָב נְאֻם יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת:

(Haggai 2:8)

Petersen also questions the use of חֲמֵדָה in verse 7 because he identifies the חֲמֵדָה with the vessels used in the First Temple and these “were lost to the nations” (1984:67). He does nonetheless allow for the possibility that these treasures eventually fell in the hands of King Cyrus of Persia (Petersen 1984:68; Wolff 1988:81).

For both Haggai and Zechariah, it is God who will restore Jerusalem's glory. This will be achieved through an upheaval of the nations. The conditions of economic deprivation that now exist will be changed to a state of wealth when precious things come streaming in from the other nations.

The oracle concludes with a promise of peace (verse 9). The שלום that will come carries the connotation of both peace and prosperity (Brown, Driver & Briggs electronic ed.).

גְּדוֹל יְהוָה כְּבוֹד הַבַּיִת הַזֶּה הָאֲחֵרֹן מִן־הָרִאשׁוֹן אָמַר יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת וּבִמְקוֹם הַזֶּה  
אָתֶּן שְׁלוֹם נְאֻם יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת:

(Haggai 2:9)

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## Chapter 9

### Moral holiness or ritual holiness?

Is Haggai questioning moral / ethical holiness or ritual holiness in Haggai 2.10-14?

בְּעִשְׂרִים וָאַרְבָּעָה לַחֹשֶׁעַי בְּשָׁנַת שְׁתַּיִם לְדַרְיוֹשׁ הָיָה דְבַר־יְהוָה אֶל־חֲנַי הַנָּבִיא  
לְאמֹר:

כֹּה אָמַר יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת שְׂאֵל־נָא אֶת־הַכֹּהֲנִים הַזֶּה לְאמֹר:

הֲנָן יִשְׂאֵאֵי־שׁ בְּשֵׁר־קֹדֶשׁ בְּכִנּוּף בְּגָדוֹ וְנָגַע בְּכַנָּפוֹ אֶל־הַלֶּחֶם וְאֶל־הַנְּזִיד וְאֶל־הַיַּיִן  
וְאֶל־שֶׁמֶן וְאֶל־כָּל־מֵאֲכָל הַיִּקְדָּשׁ וַיַּעֲנוּ הַכֹּהֲנִים וַיֹּאמְרוּ לֵאמֹר:

וַיֹּאמֶר חֲנַי אִם־יִנַּע טְמֵא־נַפְשׁ בְּכָל־אֵלֶּה הֲיִטְמָא וַיַּעֲנוּ הַכֹּהֲנִים וַיֹּאמְרוּ יִטְמָא:

וַיַּעַן חֲנַי וַיֹּאמֶר כֵּן הָעַם־הַזֶּה וְכֵן־הַגּוֹי הַזֶּה לְפָנַי נְאֻם־יְהוָה וְכֵן כָּל־מַעֲשֵׂה יְדֵיהֶם  
וְאֲשֶׁר יִקְרִיבוּ שָׁם טְמֵא הוּא:

(Haggai 2:10-14)

In this section an attempt will be made to clarify why the prophet, Haggai, found it necessary to ask the above questions of the priests and then to determine whether his conclusion (v.14) was meant to be seen as an issue relating to **moral / ethical uncleanness** or alternatively, **ritual uncleanness**.

Before looking at a number of hypotheses, the connotation of the following words as used in this dissertation need to be clarified:

**ethics** - (1) The philosophical study of the moral value of human conduct and of the rules and principles that ought to govern it; moral philosophy. (2) Social, religious, or civil code of behaviour considered correct, especially that of a particular group, profession, or individual.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Collins English Dictionary. 2000 (electronic ed.). Glasgow: HarperCollins.

טהור **clean, pure** — 1. ceremonially *clean*, of animals; places; things; persons. 2. ethically *pure, clean*; of heart; hands (Brown, Driver & Briggs electronic ed.).

- I. טָמֵא **be or become unclean** — Qal *be or become unclean*: 1. sexually, the land. 2. religiously, with idols; with necromancers; by sacrificing children to idols. 3. ceremonially, by contact with carcasses of unclean animals; any carcass; eating of a carcass; by issues; by contact with an unclean man, or thing; by leprosy; by contact with the dead, or with one unclean by such contact; by contact with creeping things; certain animals were always unclean. Niph. *defile oneself, be defiled*:
- II. II. טָמֵא. **unclean** — *unclean*, 1. ethically and religiously טָמֵא שְׁפֵתַיִם *unclean of lips* טָמֵא הַשֵּׁם *defiled of name, infamous*. 2. ritually: a. of persons, *unclean for a (dead) person*; elsewhere; for various reasons. b. of animals. c. of things in general; food; houses; leprosy; offering. d. persons and things in general; of aliens. 3. specifically: of places: טָמֵא מְקוֹם *unclean place* (place of refuse away from holy place and human habitation) (Brown, Driver & Briggs electronic ed.);
- III. טְמֵאָה **uncleanness** — 1. sexual. 3. ethical and religious ; רִיחַ הַטְּמֵאָה *unclean spirit*, which inspired the prophets to lie. 4. ritual, of men; of women; a time favourable to conception; of meats. 5. local, of the nations; 6. of ethical uncleanness, from wrongdoing (Brown, Driver & Briggs electronic ed.).

### Mason 1982: the unclean builders

Whether Haggai is to be seen not just as a cultic prophet but also as one who addressed ethical issues, depends on the exegesis of 2:10-14. Mason places the exegesis of Haggai 2:10-14 into three categories:

#### *This people refers to the elite*

In the opinion of Wellhausen (1898), Jones (1962) and May (1968) *this people* referred to in Haggai 1.2 consist of the exiles who have returned from Babylonia. They are considered as being “unclean” because they did not heed the call to build the Temple (Mason 1982:143-144):

כֹּה אָמַר יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת לְאֹמֵר הָעַם הַזֶּה אָמְרוּ לֹא עָתִּיבָא עִת־בֵּית יְהוָה לְהַבְנוֹת:  
(Haggai 1:2)

#### *This people refers to the locals*

Rothstein (1908), Elliger (1964) and Rudolph (1976) are convinced that *this people* consist of foreigners or the *half-mixed population* that stayed in Yehud after the fall of Jerusalem. They may even be identified as being the same people who had their offer to help rebuild the Temple, refused in Ezra 4.1-3. (Mason 1982:144):

וַיִּשְׁמְעוּ צָרִי יְהוּדָה וּבְנֵי־מִן כִּי־בָנִי הַגּוֹלָה בּוֹנִים הֵיכַל לַיהוָה אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל:  
וַיִּגְשׁוּ אֶל־זַרְבָּבֶל וְאֶל־רָאשֵׁי הָאָבוֹת וַיֹּאמְרוּ לָהֶם נִבְנָה עִמָּכֶם כִּי כָכֶם נִדְרֹשׁ  
לְאֱלֹהֵיכֶם וְלוֹ אֲנַחְנוּ זִבְחִים מִיָּמֵי אֶסֶר חֹדֶן מֶלֶךְ אֲשׁוּר הַמַּעֲלָה אֲחַנּוּ פֹה:  
וַיֹּאמְרוּ לָהֶם זַרְבָּבֶל וַיִּשׁוּעַ וּשְׂאָר רָאשֵׁי הָאָבוֹת לְיִשְׂרָאֵל לֹא־לָכֶם וְלָנוּ לְבָנוֹת  
בֵּית לַאֱלֹהֵינוּ כִּי אֲנַחְנוּ יַחַד נִבְנָה לַיהוָה אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל כִּאֲשֶׁר צִוּנוּ הַמֶּלֶךְ כּוֹרֶשׁ  
מֶלֶךְ־פָּרְס:

(Ezra 4:1-3)

Coggin's in his work Samaritans and Jews, (1975) is of the opinion that it is a mistake to refer to the locals as 'Samaritans' (Mason 1982:144).

### Undecided

Ackroyd under the impression that it is a mistake to press for an answer as to the identity of *this people* since the Temple in and of itself does not confer holiness or uncleanness on the community (196:166ff cited in Mason 1982:144).

Mason's view is that *the work of their hands* as referring to their building activity in Haggai 2:14:

וַיַּעַן חַגַּי וַיֹּאמֶר כִּן הָעֵם־הַזֶּה וְכִן־הַגּוֹי הַזֶּה לְפָנַי נְאֻם־יְהוָה וְכִן כָּל־מַעֲשֵׂה יְדֵיהֶם  
וְאֲשֶׁר יִקְרִיבוּ שָׁם טָמֵא הוּא:

(Haggai 2:14)

### Meyers and Meyers 1987: An analogy

The prophet Haggai addresses the priests in v. 11 and asks them for a *ruling*. That Haggai intended the question to be answered from the *halakhah* can be seen from the use of the Hebrew *torâ* which occurs here without the definite article. This type of expression is part of a new idiom that emerged from the legal texts of the Pentateuch and can be classified as *proto-rabbinic* and has some resemblance with *midrash halakah* (Meyers & Meyers 1987:55).

Meyers and Meyers consider the debate between the prophet and the priests to be one of *ritual fitness-defilement* and not a question of sin or moral values. They are of the opinion that the pericope is not a debate between the prophet and the

priests, but rather intended to be a message from the prophet to the people. The prophet establishes the scenario of a priestly court and then uses the ruling of the priests as a means of conveying his prophetic message to the people (ibid).

Verse 12 describes a person who is carrying consecrated meat. He is referred to as איש (a man) and does not necessarily have to be a priest. The man could be bringing a זבח תודת שלמים which would be the kind of offering that men who were not priests could eat, for example, Leviticus 7.15-16:

וּבֶשֶׁר זֶבַח תּוֹדַת שְׁלָמִים בְּיוֹם קָרְבָּנוֹ יֵאָכֵל לֹא־יֵנִיחַ מִמֶּנּוּ עַד־בֹּקֶר׃  
וְאִם־נָדַר אִו נִדְבָּה זֶבַח קָרְבָּנוֹ בְּיוֹם הַקָּרִיבוֹ אֶת־זִבְחוֹ יֵאָכֵל וּמִמֶּחֳרָת וְהַנּוֹתָר  
מִמֶּנּוּ יֵאָכֵל׃

(Leviticus 7:15-16)

Consecrated meat which was being offered could either be for a thanksgiving offering, a votive offering or a freewill offering. The purpose of the sacrifice was, amongst others, to request God's blessing for fertility on the land and crops and for the people (Meyers & Meyers 1987:55).

Haggai inquires into the nature or state of a garment that comes into contact with the holy sacrificed meat. He asks the priests whether the holiness from the meat can be transferred to the garment. The priests' answer to this question is *no*. On the basis of the priests' answer, Haggai concludes that sanctity cannot be transferred to another object by coming into contact with it (Meyers & Meyers 1987:56).

Meyers and Meyers point out that Haggai was not primarily interested in the pragmatics of contagious holiness and that v. 12 should be seen as an analogy. In their opinion the point that was being made in v. 12 is that *adherence to the*

*halakah, standards or law, became the only vehicle for achieving "godlike" status – i.e., holiness within orthodox Judaism (1987:56).*

The point Haggai wishes to make in v.13 is that unlike holiness, defilement can indeed be transferred to another object or person. Verse 13 also functions as an analogy which is elaborated on in v.14. The statement on defilement in v. 14 should be understood in the light of the possibility of contagious defilement mentioned in v.13 (Meyers & Meyers 1987:57).

Verse 13 paves the way for Haggai to state that the things that come into contact with *this nation* become impure since they are being contaminated by *this nation* (ibid).

וַיֵּעַן חַגַּי וַיֹּאמֶר כִּן הָעַם־הַזֶּה וְכִן־הַגּוֹי הַזֶּה לְפָנַי נְאֻם־יְהוָה וְכִן כָּל־מַעֲשֵׂה יְדֵיהֶם  
וְאֲשֶׁר יִקְרִיבוּ שָׁם טָמֵא הוּא:

(Haggai 2:14)

Meyers and Meyers consider the reference to *this people ... this nation* refer to the Yehudites (Meyers & Meyers 1987:57).

Their opinion is countered by Ackroyd (1968:167-70) and Kaufmann (1977:258-59) who are of the opinion that *nation* refers to the Samaritans or other non-Yehudites (ibid).

Ultimately Haggai considers the people in question to be *unclean* or *defiled* resulting from the fact that *the temple is not yet completed and because the uncleanness that abounds cannot yet be restrained* (ibid).

Because the Yehudites are impure, *the work of their hands* (v.14) contaminates the agricultural produce that they bring as an offering (ibid).

Ackroyd (1968:166) and Meyers and Meyers agree that the building of the Temple in itself did not confer holiness to the community, but without it the people would remain defiled (Meyers & Meyers 1987:58).

As a result of their disobedience in failing to rebuild the Temple the people were in a state of impurity (ibid). Meyers and Meyers conclude that:

Failure to act in accordance with God's will in one area constitutes disobedience, or defilement, which contaminates all other activities in which the people engage (1987:58).

In the final analysis it is unclear what Meyers and Meyers are in fact saying, since they commence their argument on 2.10-14 by stating that they consider the debate between the prophet and the priests to be one of *ritual fitness-defilement* and not a question of sin or moral values (1987:55); yet the people's failure to act in accordance with the will of God is deemed to be disobedient and explained in terms of unethical behaviour or disobedience rather than as an instance of ritual defilement. The problem of the difference between *unethical* and *unclean* is clarified by Klaus Koch further on in this chapter.

#### **Petersen's approach: 1984**

Petersen raises the following questions concerning pericope 2:10-4 (1984:80):

Who are these people/ this nation?

1. What is impure?

2. Where does the impurity manifest itself?
3. What is the source of the impurity?

The oracle begins in v.11 with Haggai addressing the priests and identifies the prophet as being the spokesperson for God:

11 כֹּה אָמַר יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת שְׂאֵל־נָא אֶת־הַכֹּהֲנִים תּוֹרָה לֵאמֹר:

(Haggai 2:11)

Haggai asks them for a *ruling* relating to the holiness and purity rituals laid down in the Torah (Petersen 1984:72).

The matters raised by Haggai were everyday knowledge to his audience (Petersen 1984:72). The nature of the questions concerned a decision about holiness and purity rituals with no indication of any moral issues being hinted at. In such cases, where a decision had to be made about the acceptability of a sacrifice or any unclean situation or person, the ruling needed the authority of the priest. The priest, in turn, would interpret the laws given to them by Moses, such as Leviticus 10:10-11:

וְלִהְבִּדִּיל בֵּין הַקֹּדֶשׁ וּבֵין הַחֹל וּבֵין הַטָּמֵא וּבֵין הַטְּהוֹר:

וְלִהְיוֹרֵת אֶת־בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל אֵת כָּל־הַחֻקִּים אֲשֶׁר דִּבֶּר יְהוָה אֲלֵיהֶם בְּיַד־מֹשֶׁה: פ  
(Leviticus 10:10-11)

It would have been apparent to the priests that Haggai knew the answers to the questions he asked of them and that Haggai had a higher order question in mind (Simm 1992:28). The real issue was that the priests needed to determine the prophet's agenda (Simm 1992:28).

Haggai couples קדש with טמא rather than adopting the regular word pairs חל - קדש (sacred / profane - impure) or טהור - טמא (and clean - unclean) and Petersen questions whether in fact the question makes any sense because of the irregular use of *conceptual sets* (Petersen 1984:74).

Petersen concludes on the basis of Deuteronomy 14 that *the sets of holy-profane, and clean-unclean, are related, since something that is unclean may clearly affect a person's state of holiness* (Petersen 1984:74). Yet, חל and טמא cannot always be equated. Something which is itself profane does not carry the contagious power of something which is unclean (טמא). It is possible for a person to become impure (חל) as a result of direct contact or even by being in close contact with something which is impure. An indication of the relationship between uncleanness and unholy is illustrated in Leviticus 21:4:

לֹא יִטְמָא בַּעַל בְּעַמִּיו לְהַחֲלוֹ:

(Leviticus 21:4)

Based on Numbers 5:2-4 Petersen recognises that there are three main types of uncleanness namely, leprosy, bodily discharges and corpse defilement (1984:76).

צוֹ אֶת־בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וַיִּשְׁלַחוּ מִן־הַמִּחְנָה כָּל־צָרוּעַ וְכָל־זָב וְכָל טָמֵא לְנַפְשׁוֹ:  
 מִזְכָּר עַד־נִקְבָּה תִּשְׁלַחוּ אֶל־מַחוּץ לַמִּחְנָה תִּשְׁלַחוּם וְלֹא יִטְמְאוּ אֶת־מַחְנֵיהֶם אֲשֶׁר  
 אֲנִי שׂוֹכֵן בְּתוֹכָם:  
 וַיַּעֲשׂוּ־כֵן בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וַיִּשְׁלַחוּ אוֹתָם אֶל־מַחוּץ לַמִּחְנָה כַּאֲשֶׁר דִּבֶּר יְהוָה אֶל־מֹשֶׁה  
 כִּן עָשׂוּ בְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל: פ

(Numbers 5:2-4)

The first question Haggai asks of the priests concerns the transfer of holiness from consecrated meat to the person who is carrying the meat (vv. 11-14) (Petersen

1984:76). There are no known details concerning the condition of the altar after the total destruction of the Temple. It would be proper to accept that the altar was also defiled either during or prior to the destruction of the Temple. If this were the case, then some form of purification, rededication or even reconstruction would be required (Petersen 1984:77). It can be inferred from the dialogue between the prophet and the priests that the altar was in use. Petersen is of the opinion that Haggai's question makes complete sense if it can be accepted that the altar was still in a state of impurity. In this case Petersen needs to make the assumption that it remained in a state of uncleanness when it was desecrated by the Babylonians (Petersen 1984:76).

Haggai's next question to the priests concerns defilement from coming into contact with a corpse. A person who has touched a corpse is טמא for seven days. To remove the condition of uncleanness certain cleansing rituals had to be observed. Petersen concludes that if Haggai's argument reflects the ritual rules of his time,

what the people are doing is *tame`* not because of some morally repugnant action they have performed but because of their having come into contact with something that is *tame`* (Petersen 1984:79).

To overcome the problem of the ritual impurity and uncleanness of the Temple site, including the sacrificial altar, Petersen adopts Halpern's argument of the *kalû* ritual. In this way the unacceptability of *whatever they offer there is defiled* (2.14c) can be rectified.

The audience is asked to consider the significance of *this day*, the twenty-fourth day of the ninth month in the second year of Darius' reign. Its relevance is that it was the day when the foundation stone was laid:

שִׁמוֹנָא לְבַבְכֶם מִן־הַיּוֹם הַזֶּה וּמַעַלָּה מִיּוֹם עֶשְׂרִים וְאַרְבָּעָה לְתַשְׁעֵי לְמִן־הַיּוֹם  
אֲשֶׁר־יִסַּד הֵיכַל־יְהוָה שְׁיִמוּ לְבַבְכֶם:

(Haggai 2:18)

It was also the day on which God will begin blessing his people again: *For from this day on I will send blessings* (Haggai 2:19b) (Petersen 1984: 88).

Petersen makes a distinction between (a) the labour on the foundations of the Temple, and (b) the ceremony accompanying the laying of the foundation stone (Petersen 1984:88). According to Ezra 5.16 the labour involved in the laying of the foundation of the Temple had already been completed by the time Zerubbabel arrived:

אֲדִין שֶׁשֶׁבַצָר הָדָךְ אֶתָּא יְהֵב אֲשֵׁיא דִּי־בֵית אֱלֹהָא דִּי בִירוּשָׁלַם וּמִן־אֲדִין  
וְעַד־כְּעַן מִתְבָּנָא וְלֹא שְׁלָם:

(Ezra 5:16)

אֲשֵׁיא is an Aramaic word meaning *foundation* (Brown, Driver & Briggs electronic ed.) and refers to the work of Sheshbazzar cited above, while in Haggai 2:18, Ezra 3:6,10, 11 and Zechariah 4:9 the Hebrew word יסד is used when referring to the foundation of the Temple (Petersen 1984:88).

Petersen explains that digging and laying the foundation of the temple is not the same as laying the foundation stone that can be associated with a ritual ceremonial procedure.

According to Petersen, the foundation stone ceremony is similar to the *kalû* ceremony of the Babylonians and Seleucids (Petersen 1984:89).

B. Halpern describes the elements of the *kalû* ceremony in The ritual background of Zechariah's temple song (CBQ 40,1978:171-172). The laying of the foundation stone was preceded by *prescribed readings and sacrifices* (Petersen 1984:89). Both Petersen and Halpern find sufficient evidence that an Israelite version of the *kalû* ritual was performed early in the rebuilding process for the Second Temple.

The words used for the *foundation* (יֶסֶד Ezra 3), *the former stone* (אֶבֶן Zechariah 4:7), the *tin tablet* as foundation deposit (אֶבֶן Zechariah 4:10a), together with the phrase *from this day* (לְמִן־הַיּוֹם) (Haggai 2:15) indicate a ceremony *designed to achieve ritual purification and cultic continuity* (Petersen 1984:90). The continuity between the first and the second Temple had to be established and the ceremony of the laying of the foundation stone guaranteed ritual continuity.

In support of his argument, Petersen quotes Zechariah 4:7 where it can be assumed that it is Zerubbabel who has the *excellent stone*:

מִי־אַתָּה הֶרֶה־הַגְדוֹל לְפָנַי זְרֻבָבֶד לְמִישׁוֹר וְהוֹצִיא אֶת־הָאֶבֶן הַרְאֵשׁה תְּשׂאוֹת חֵן חֵן  
לָהּ:

(Zechariah 4:7)

Petersen sees 2.18 as *the chronological axis on which his [Haggai's] activity turns* since it provides the dating and description of the *Israelite version of the kalû*, or

*rededication ritual*. It was also the date that would mark the end of the deity's punitive measures (Petersen 1984:93).

The agricultural activities referred to in 2.16-17 and 19 are epitomised as *all the work of their hands* in v.14 (Petersen 1984:95).

### **Wolff 1988: impurity is contagious**

By using the word כן (so) three times in 2.14 the prophet links *this, people, this nation* and *every work of their hands* to the condition of being in a state of impurity (Wolff 1988: 92):

14 וַיֵּעַן חֲגִי וַיֹּאמֶר כֵּן הָעַם־הַזֶּה וְכֵן־הַגּוֹי הַזֶּה לְפָנַי נְאֻם־יְהוָה וְכֵן כָּל־מַעֲשֵׂה  
יְדֵיהֶם וְאֲשֶׁר יִקְרִיבוּ שָׁם טָמֵא הוּא׃

(Haggai 2:14)

Haggai's interpretation goes a step further than the priestly interpretation:

... since the priests had only talked about the technical, cultic effect of contact with various objects by individual laymen in the context of the cult; whereas now the prophet condemns "this people" and "all the work of their hands" (Wolff 1988:92).

A number of views are held about the identity of *this people*. Wolff points out that the audience of 1:4-11; 2:3-9 and 2:15-19 are grouped together as *this people* by R. Ackroyd (1962), K. Koch (1967), H. G. May (1968), A. S. van der Woude (1982) and D. L. Petersen (1984) (as opposed to being *this nation* (ibid)).

Wolff does not see a distinction between 'this people' and 'this nation'. In both cases they are one and the same audience. Wolff identifies Haggai's audience as comprising the people who were known as the 'Samaritans'. The Samaritans were a *mixed population* who were the former residents of the Northern Kingdom and who had not been exiled. Subsequently they had intermarried with the new settlers who had been brought to what was now known as the Persian province of Samaria (formerly part of the Northern Kingdom of Israel) by the conquering Assyrians (ibid). These *Samaritans* practised a synchronistic religion worshipping both *other gods* and the God of Israel (2 Kings 17:29, 33) (Wolff 1988: 93).

וַיְהִיו עֲשִׂים גּוֹי גּוֹי אֱלֹהֵיו וַיִּזְיְחוּ בְּבַיִת הַבְּמוֹת אֲשֶׁר עָשׂוּ הַשְּׂמֶרְנִים גּוֹי גּוֹי  
בְּעַרְיָהֶם אֲשֶׁר הֵם יֹשְׁבִים שָׁם:

(2 Kings 17:29)

אֶת־יְהוָה הָיוּ יֹרְאִים וְאֶת־אֱלֹהֵיהֶם הָיוּ עֹבְדִים כַּמִּשְׁפָּט הַגּוֹיִם אֲשֶׁר־הִגְלוּ אֹתָם  
מִשָּׁם:

(2 Kings 17:33)

In Wolff's opinion, the Samaritans are the unclean people that Haggai rejected as being unclean in v.14. Wolff has difficulty in interpreting the scene because there is not enough information on the Samaritans in the Book of Haggai for him to make sense of what is happening.

The possibility that the unacceptable may have comprised of the various religious factions mentioned in Trito-Isaiah is not an option for Wolff.

The premise on which Wolff's argument rests is the idea that the terms *הגוי הזה* - *העם הזה* should be seen as being parallel, and because they are demonstrative

pronouns, they point to the people or audience under discussion in v.14. But Wolff has difficulty with his own interpretation since he has to admit that the two substantives *הגוי* and *העם* are not usually used as synonyms since *עם* usually refers to people of a *common ancestry and inner kinship* while *גוי* refers to a *nation, in the political territorial sense* (Wolff 1988:93)

Wolff concludes:

The judgement that the Samaritans are unclean is the prophetic interpretation of the priestly response to the second *torah* question (v.13). ... What is certain, however, is that the community of homecomers will, through the Samaritans, become 'unclean' (Wolff 1988:94).

### **Wolff's implementation of Rothstein's hypothesis**

In order for Wolff's argument to succeed at all, he adopts Rothstein's re-arrangement of the order of the verses in the following sequence:

1:1-14 .....	1 <sup>st</sup> of the 6 <sup>th</sup> month .....	29 August
1:15a & 2:15-19 .....	24 <sup>th</sup> of the 6 <sup>th</sup> month .....	21 September
1:15b –2:9 .....	21 <sup>st</sup> of the 7 <sup>th</sup> month .....	17 October

Wolff argues that:

The present assignment of 2:15-19 to the 24<sup>th</sup> day of the 9<sup>th</sup> month (= December 18, 520; see 2:10 and 18b) is much too remote (by almost four months) from Haggai's first exhortation on the 1<sup>st</sup> day of the 6<sup>th</sup>

month (= August 29, 520). The report in 12a, 14 contradicts all too clearly the date given ... (1988:60).

This re-arrangement results in Haggai's dialogue with the priests (2.10-14) being moved after the oracle on the promise of abundance (2.15-19) since the completion of the Temple is a necessary condition before the abundance can ensue. Wolff supports Elliger's argument that the redactor moved the text to link the end of the economic hardships to the rejection of what he calls *the Samaritans* in 2:14 (Wolff 1988:60).

In further support of his argument Wolff refers to the prophetic scene-sketches used by the redactor to identify those who supported Haggai's appeal to rebuild the Temple as *the whole remnant of the people* (Wolff 1988:61).

Wolff suggest that the withholding of blessing is as a result of the people not rebuilding the Temple, but in 2:14 he provides a second reason for unacceptability of the participants, they are the unclean *Samaritans* (Wolff 1988:67).

The argument of the unacceptable "Samaritans" in Haggai 2.14 has its origin in J. Rothstein's work, Juden und Samaritaner. Die grundlegende Scheidung von Judentum und Heidentum. Eine kritische Studie zum Buche Haggai und zur jüdischen Geschichte im ersten nachexilischen (Jahrhundert, 1910) (1908).

### **Rothstein's approach according to Pfeil (1986)**

Rothstein's interpretation of Haggai's dialogue with the priests in Haggai 2:10-14 is made by considering and comparing it to Ezra 4:1-5.

These changes necessitate a rearrangement of the historical background depicted in Ezra 4:1-5 as described in my discussion on Wolff's commentary above (Pfeil 1986:263).

Rothstein places the arrival of Sheshbazzar, Joshua and Zerubbabel in Jerusalem during the reign of Cyrus c. 538 BCE. After the foundations of the Temple were laid the *enemies of Judah* (Ezra 4.1), and or *people of the land* (Ezra 4.4) stopped the reconstruction work.

וַיִּשְׁמְעוּ צָרֵי יְהוּדָה וּבְנֵימָן כִּי־בָנִי הַגּוֹלָה בּוֹנִים הֵיכָל לַיהוָה אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל:  
(Ezra 4:1)

וַיְהִי עִם־הָאָרֶץ מְרַפִּים יְדֵי עַם־יְהוּדָה וּמְבַהְלִים אוֹתָם לְבָנוֹת:  
(Ezra 4:4)

Work on the Temple recommenced in the second year of the reign of Darius, 520 BCE. At this time Haggai and Zechariah were active in Jerusalem and as a result of their exhortations the people were encouraged to recommence construction work on the Temple (Ezra 5.1-22). Again they encountered opposition to the work (Ezra 5.3-6.12; 6.13-22), but in spite of this the work was completed four years later (Pfeil 1986:263). Throughout his hypothesis Rothstein considers *the enemies of Judah and Benjamin* to be the Samaritans, and he based his argument on Ezra 4.1 (Pfeil 1986:263).

From this Rothstein argues that the people condemned by Haggai in his discourse with the priests in 2.10-14 are in fact *unclean people* who are unfit for *any type of service or worship on Mount Zion* (Pfeil 1986:268). *This nation and this people in*

Haggai 2.14 do not refer to the people of Judah but to the Samaritans. According to Rothstein's view, the words of encouragement spoken to Zerubbabel (Haggai 2.4), when seen in relation to Ezra 4.3 meant that the governor must have the courage to reject the Samaritans (ibid).

וַעֲתָה חֲזַק זְרֻבָבֶל נְאֻם-יְהוָה וְחֲזַק יְהוֹשֻׁעַ בֶּן-יְהוֹצָדָק הַכֹּהֵן הַגָּדוֹל וְחֲזַק כָּל-עַם  
הָאָרֶץ נְאֻם-יְהוָה וַעֲשׂוּ כִי-אֲנִי אֶתְכֶם נְאֻם יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת:

Haggai 2:4

וַיֹּאמֶר לָהֶם זְרֻבָבֶל וַיְשׁוּעַ וּשְׂאָר רְאֵשֵׁי הָאָבוֹת לְיִשְׂרָאֵל לֹא-לָכֶם וְלָנוּ לְבָנוֹת בַּיִת  
לְאֵלֵינוּ כִּי אֲנַחְנוּ יַחַד נִבְנֶה לַיהוָה אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל כֹּאֲשֶׁר צִוְּנוּ הַמֶּלֶךְ כּוֹרֵשׁ  
מֶלֶךְ-פָּרְס:

Ezra 4:3

Following Rothstein's hypothesis, numerous Biblical scholars, such as Sellin (1922), Von Rad (1965), Elliger (1967), Beuken (1967) and Wolff (1988) assume that *this nation and this people* refer to the Samaritans and their 'immoral' cult (Pfeil 1986:268-269).

According to Pfeil, Sellin<sup>2</sup> (1922) is of the opinion that the *foundations of the Temple were not laid on the 24<sup>th</sup> of the 9<sup>th</sup> month (Haggai 2:18) but rather on the date mentioned in Haggai 1.15 namely the 24<sup>th</sup> of the 6<sup>th</sup> month (Pfeil 1986:267).*

שִׁמּוֹנָא לְבַבְכֶם מִן-הַיּוֹם הַזֶּה וּמַעַלָּה מִיּוֹם עֲשָׂרִים וָאַרְבָּעָה לַחֲשִׁיעֵי לְמִן-הַיּוֹם  
אֲשֶׁר-יָסַד הַיְכָל-יְהוָה שִׁמּוּ לְבַבְכֶם:

Haggai 2:18

<sup>2</sup> Sellin, E. *Das Zwölfprophetenbuch, Kommentar zum Alten Testament 12*, Leipzig: Deichert, 1922:412.

בְּיוֹם עֶשְׂרִים וָאַרְבָּעָה לַחֹדֶשׁ בְּשֵׁשִׁי בְּשַׁנַּת שְׁתַּיִם לְדָרְיוֹשׁ הַמֶּלֶךְ׃

Haggai 1:15

The Redactor had excluded the report of Zerubbabel's laying the foundations of the Temple on the 24<sup>th</sup> day of the sixth month to avoid contradicting the Chronicler's account in Ezra 3.18 which dates the laying of the foundation of the Temple to the second year of Cyrus. The problem of the irregularity was wonderfully solved by Rothstein's re-arrangement of the text to the following:

- 1.12-15 The people obey the Lord's command and are given the reassurance from Haggai that God will be with them.
- 2.15-19 Haggai again brings a further message of reassurance and promise of blessings and abundance.
- 2.10-19 Haggai directs his discourse to the priests, concluding with his pronouncement on the uncleanness of the people. (The unclean people and nation in 2.14 refer to the Samaritans.) (Pfeil 1986:267).

According to Beuken (1967), the trend among commentators of the 20th century was to maintain that the *returnees from exile* were rejected because they were in an unclean state as a consequence of the destruction of the Temple. Rothstein's hypothesis changed this view, and by rearranging the text he can conclude that the unclean people must be the Samaritans (Pfeil 1986:270).

Rothstein sees the reference to the former splendour of the Temple in Haggai 2.3 as referring to a comparison between the First Temple and the semi-completed reconstruction of the Second Temple (Pfeil 1986:271):

מִי בְּכֶם הַנְּשָׂאָר אֲשֶׁר רָאָה אֶת־הַבַּיִת הַזֶּה בְּכֹבֶדוֹ הָרִאשׁוֹן וּמָה אַתֶּם רֹאִים אִתּוֹ  
עַתָּה הֲלוֹא כְּמֹהוּ כְּאֵין בְּעֵינֵיכֶם:

(Haggai 2:3)

Rothstein's thesis (based on a circular argument) remained popular until Koch (1967) and May (1968), working independently, successfully repudiated it (Pfeil 1986:272).

Koch's study concludes that 2.10-19 is a unity and so the audience addressed in vv.15-19 are the same people who are addressed in v. 14, namely the people of Judah (ibid).

There has been a certain amount of confusion in the past by scholars who work with the English translation of the Book of Haggai. These interpreters view holiness as synonymous with cleanness and consider sin and profanity to be identical to defilement. Consequently, v.14 is seen to be a moral judgement and the iniquity of the people to be that they stalled in building the Temple. Koch throws some light on the interpretation of v14 and elucidates that:

the phrase 'it is unclean' in verse 14 is a fixed expression of priestly terminology expressing a declaration about the sphere of uncleanness. It does not refer to an ethical quality or religious confession (Koch<sup>3</sup> 1967:62).

Uncleanness or impurity (טמא) is the opposite of purity and not of holiness (קדש). According to the Collins Thesaurus it would be acceptable to use *immoral* as an antonym for both *holy* and *clean*. In applying the Hebrew connotation for *holy*, the

antonym for קדש would be חל (*profane* or *wicked*) (Brown, Driver & Briggs electronic ed.).

Koch can therefore conclude that the uncleanness of the people in v.14 does not necessarily imply immoral behaviour at all (Pfeil 1986:272). Things or people are unclean if they have been contaminated by something that is unclean such as a corpse. Verse 14 has nothing to do with immoral behaviour.

Koch's argument leads Pfeil to conclude that the elite as well as the locals are in fact *unclean because they do not have an unspoiled sanctuary where a complete cleaning would be possible* (ibid).

Arguing against Rothstein's hypothesis regarding his alternative arrangement of the text in the Book of Haggai, Koch and Pfeil refer to the Scroll of the Twelve, c. C.E.135 which was discovered in the caves of Murabba'at and include two fragments of Haggai 1.12 -2.10 and 2.12-23. The Scroll of the Twelve confirms that the text of the Book of Haggai is not at variance with the Massoretic Text or the Septuagint with regard to the order of the verses in the text (Hildebrand 1989:157).

#### **Hildebrand's exposition of 2.14**

Haggai's dialogue with the priests occurred exactly three months after the building operations on the Temple ruins began (Hildebrand 1989:161). Hildebrand mentions this because he needs to indicate that there is no direct link between the building of

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<sup>3</sup> Quoted and translated from K. Koch *Haggais unreines Volk*, ZAW79 1967:62 by Pfeil.

the Temple and the uncleanness of the people. It is not that the two are unrelated; they have an indirect relationship.

***That is how this people and that is how this nation looks***

Verse 14 has evoked much discussion among biblical scholars about the identity of *this people ... this nation* (Hildebrand 1989:161).

Hildebrand sees no indication of any other group than the *Jewish remnant* being addressed in the Book of Haggai and therefore contends that *nation* and *people* both refer to the same group of people (Hildebrand 1989:163). He bases his argument on the assumption that *הָעָם הַזֶּה* referred to in 1.2 are the same as *הָעָם הַזֶּה* referred to in 2.14 (Hildebrand 1989:162).

Rudolph<sup>4</sup> disagrees and considers *בְּכַךְ הַגּוֹי הַזֶּה* to be the Samaritans and not the people in Jerusalem (*הָעָם הַזֶּה*) (Hildebrand 1989:162). Rudolph makes a philological analysis of the text and observes that “*there*” has no antecedent and accordingly translates, “*where they offer*”, i.e., *the temple site, is unclean*.<sup>5</sup>

When the adverb *שָׁם* is preceded by the relative particle *אֲשֶׁר* with one or more words between it, it usually takes the meaning *where*<sup>6</sup>.

<sup>4</sup> W.J. Rudolph, *Chronikbücher* (HAT; Tübingen:J.C.B. Mohr 1955:45-50).

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>6</sup> Brown, F., Driver, S. R., & Briggs, C. A. 1997. *Hebrew-English Lexicon of the Old Testament*. Edited by Richard Whitaker (Princeton Theological Seminary). Text provided by Princeton Theological Seminary. (electronic ed.) . OakHarbor: Logos Research Systems

### ***And so, too, the work of their hands***

The main form of livelihood in and around Jerusalem was farming and a large percentage of the population derived their income from this type of employment. This leads Hildebrand to conclude that *all the work of their hands* refers to the various agrarian activities in addition to the reconstruction work that they were completing on the ruined Temple (ibid).

### ***Whatever they offer there is defiled***

A person who has come into contact with a corpse is unclean and therefore anything he or she touches becomes unclean (Lev 22.4-6):

אִישׁ אִישׁ מִזֶּרַע אֲהָרֹן וְהוּא צָרוּעַ אוֹ זָב בִּקְדָשִׁים לֹא יֹאכַל עַד אֲשֶׁר יִטָּהַר וְהִנְגִיעַ  
בְּכָל־טְמֵא־נֶפֶשׁ אוֹ אִישׁ אֲשֶׁר־תִּצָּא מִמֶּנּוּ שְׂכַבְתָּ־זָרַע׃  
או־אִישׁ אֲשֶׁר יִגַע בְּכָל־שֶׁרֶץ אֲשֶׁר יִטְמָא־לוֹ אוֹ בְּאָדָם אֲשֶׁר יִטְמָא־לוֹ לְכֹל  
טְמֵאָתוֹ׃  
נֶפֶשׁ אֲשֶׁר תִּגַע־בּוֹ וְטְמֵאָה עַד־הָעָרֶב וְלֹא יֹאכַל מִן־הַקְּדָשִׁים כִּי אִם־רָחַץ בַּשֶּׁרֶף  
בַּמַּיִם׃

(Leviticus 22:4-6)

Haggai addressed the priests on the last day of the feast of Succoth, that is, the 21<sup>st</sup> of Tishrei (the seventh month) (2.10). This, according to Rudolph means that all the sacrifices brought during the first six days of Succoth must have been acceptable. His argument is based on the assumption that God was with them as indicated in 1.13-14, which promises the audience God's reassurance of being with them when work began on the Temple on the 24<sup>th</sup> of Elul (Hildebrand 1989:164):

וַיֹּאמֶר חֲגִי מִלְאֲךְ יְהוָה בְּמִלְאָכוֹת יְהוָה לָעַם לֵאמֹר אֲנִי אֶתְכֶם נְאֻם־יְהוָה׃

וַיַּעַר יְהוָה אֶת־רוּחַ זְרָבָבֶל בֶּן־שִׁלְתַיָּאל פַּחַת יְהוּדָה וְאֶת־רוּחַ יְהוֹשֻׁעַ בֶּן־יְהוֹצָדָק  
הַכֹּהֵן הַגָּדוֹל וְאֶת־רוּחַ כָּל שְׂאֵרֵי הָעָם וַיָּבֹאוּ וַיַּעֲשׂוּ מְלָאכָה בְּבֵית־יְהוָה צָבָאוֹת  
אֱלֹהֵיהֶם: פ

(Haggai 1:13-14)

In short, Rudolph's interpretation of verse 14 leads him to conclude that the root of the contamination problem lay with the unclean temple site and not with the people as such (Hildebrand 1989:163). The sacrifices were unacceptable because the altar itself was unclean.

Hildebrand discounts Petersen and Rudolph's argument of the unclean temple site as being the cause of the ritual impurity (uncleanness) that contaminated the sacrifices that were offered there.

If Rudolph's explanation is to be accepted then it would make sense also to adopt Petersen's *kalû* ritual for the purification of the Temple previously described in this chapter.

This does not automatically mean that the altar had not been purified prior to this since we hear of sacrifices being brought to the altar way back in the days of Gedaliah shortly after the destruction of the First Temple:

וַיְהִי בַיּוֹם הַשְּׁנַי לְהִמִּית אֶת־גִּדְלִיָּהוּ וְאִישׁ לֹא יָדָע:  
וַיָּבֹאוּ אַנְשֵׁים מִשְׁכֶּם מִשְׁלוֹ וּמִשְׁמֶרֶן שְׁמֹנִים אִישׁ מִגְּלַחֵי זָקֵן וּקְרָעֵי בְּגָדִים  
וּמִתְגַּדְּדִים וּמְנַחָה וּלְבוּנָה בְּיָדָם לְהַבְיֵא בַּיִת יְהוָה:

(Jeremiah 41:4-5)

The purification of the Temple foundations and the purification of the altar need not be understood as being synonymous. The rite that was performed in the Ancient Near East does not specifically mention the sacrificial *kalû* altar that would usually be outside the Temple building, but most likely on the Temple grounds. The procedure for the purification of the sacrificial altar is set out in Ezekiel 43.18-25<sup>7</sup> (Hildebrand 1989:163).

### Hildebrand's argument for ethical holiness

Hildebrand asserts that it is not altogether obvious from the text that the questions Haggai asked of the priest were about determining ritual holiness (Hildebrand 1989:163). Haggai's motive lies on a deeper level. What the people were failing to do was ethically incorrect rather than being ritualistically at fault.

It is not the altar or temple site that contaminates and requires a ritual, but rather all the works of their hands, that is, everything the people do.

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<sup>7</sup> <sup>18</sup>Then he said to me: O mortal, thus said the Lord GOD: These are the directions for the altar on the day it is erected, so that burnt offerings may be offered up on it and blood dashed against it. <sup>19</sup>You shall give to the levitical priests who are of the stock of Zadok, and so eligible to minister to Me—declares the Lord GOD—a young bull of the herd for a sin offering. <sup>20</sup>You shall take some of its blood and apply it to the four horns [of the altar], to the four corners of the base, and to the surrounding rim; thus you shall purge it and perform purification upon it. <sup>21</sup>Then you shall take the bull of sin offering and burn it in the designated area of the Temple, outside the Sanctuary.

<sup>22</sup>On the following day, you shall offer a goat without blemish as a sin offering; and the altar shall be purged [with it] just as it was purged with the bull. <sup>23</sup>When you have completed the ritual of purging, you shall offer a bull of the herd without blemish and a ram of the flock without blemish. <sup>24</sup>Offer them to the LORD; let the priests throw salt on them and offer them up as a burnt offering to the LORD.

<sup>25</sup>Every day, for seven days, you shall present a goat of sin offering, as well as a bull of the herd and a ram of the flock; you shall present unblemished ones.

The context of Haggai, chapter one, places the people within an agricultural environment, linking their labour to the agricultural offering that they bring (Hildebrand 1989:163). The prophet is not making a value judgement on their farming activities, but on the way in which they conducted their business.

Generally speaking, all the prophets of the Hebrew Bible had a common element in the message they brought. This common element was the call for obedience to the God of Israel. Haggai is no exception.

The prophet's call to obedience occurs in 1.4-8 when the audience is reminded of their obligation to rebuild the ruined Temple. Consequently:

... rather than the uncleanness of an unfinished temple being passed on to the people, the prophet must intend the uncleanness of the people being transmitted to the cult, indeed to all the work of their hands (Hildebrand 1989:164).

In verse 17, the people are again reminded of their disobedience:

הַכִּיתִי אֶתְכֶם בְּשֹׁדָפוֹן וּבִירְקוֹן וּבִבְרָד אֶת כָּל־מַעֲשֵׂה יְדֵיכֶם וְאִין־אַתְּכֶם אֱלִי  
נְאֻם־יְהוָה:

(Haggai 2:17)

Their wrongdoing is named – the prophet calls it *all the works of your hands*. It is what they are doing or fail to be doing with their hands that was being punished.

The accusation is not specified and it is not only levelled at their failure to reconstruct the Temple (v.17).

The bottom line is a call for *repentance* (Hildebrand 1989:165). Haggai follows in the line of all the previous prophets of the Hebrew Bible. So, for example, Zechariah, Haggai's contemporary, exhorts the people in the eighth month 520 BCE, a month after Haggai's oracle (2.1-9) He also calls the people to repentance and exhorts them to stop their wrongful acts (Hildebrand 1989:165):

בְּחֹדֶשׁ הַשְּׁמִינִי בְּשָׁנָה שְׁתַּיִם לְדַרְיֹוֹשׁ הָיָה דְבַר־יְהוָה אֶל־זְכַרְיָה בֶן־בְּרַכְיָה  
 בֶן־עֲדוֹ הַנְּבִיא לֵאמֹר:  
 קִצְף יְהוָה עַל־אַבֹּתֵיכֶם קִצְף:  
 וְאָמַרְתָּ אֲלֵהֶם כֹּה אָמַר יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת שׁוּבוּ אֵלַי נְאֻם יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת וְאָשׁוּב אֲלֵיכֶם  
 אָמַר יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת:  
 אֲלֹתֵהֶיוּ כְּאַבְתֵּיכֶם אֲשֶׁר קָרְאוּ־אֲלֵיהֶם הַנְּבִיאִים הָרִאשׁוֹנִים לֵאמֹר כֹּה אָמַר יְהוָה  
 צְבָאוֹת שׁוּבוּ נָא מִדַּרְכֵיכֶם הָרָעִים וּמַעַלְלֵיכֶם הָרָעִים וְלֹא שָׁמְעוּ וְלֹא־הִקְשִׁיבוּ  
 אֵלַי נְאֻם־יְהוָה:

(Zechariah 1:1-4)

Haggai raised the question of uncleanness because he wanted to make his audience aware of their ethical responsibility to build the Temple (Hildebrand 1989:163).

The rebuilding of the Temple was a necessary requirement for enabling the proper fulfilment of cultic religious rituals. Hildebrand concludes that once this was established, the holiness of God would once again be present in the Temple and the ensuing abundance would follow (Hildebrand 1989:164).

For a better understanding as to why Haggai calls for repentance and obedience, it is necessary to look again at the backdrop of his oracles. Apart from Zechariah, Trito-Isaiah was also a contemporary of the prophet Haggai.

As previously mentioned in this dissertation, Rofé (1985:207) and other biblical scholars identify at least two groups of people who were living and worshipping in Jerusalem. The one group, which Rofé calls **the wicked** (that is the locals), were oppressing the poor and are described in Isaiah 66.3 as “priests” who offer human sacrifices in addition to sacrificing dogs and the blood of swine (ibid).

It is not altogether clear why Haggai does not identify the perpetrators outright, or for that matter why Trito-Isaiah found it necessary to partially conceal their identity. To hazard a guess, it may have been wiser not to provoke the Persian rulers with signs of civil unrest and contention.

## Chapter 10

### The penultimate oracle of the prophet Haggai

There must have been good reason for the prophets Isaiah, Haggai and Zechariah to circumscribe what they had to say about Zerubbabel the ruler of Yehud. Suggested reasons for this will be provided further on in this chapter.

### The 24<sup>th</sup> day of the ninth month of the 2<sup>nd</sup> year of Darius

On the 24<sup>th</sup> day of the ninth month the prophet Haggai spoke three oracles. The first one occurs in 2.10 -14 and was directed at the priests. This oracle was discussed in the previous chapter of this dissertation. The second oracle was directed at the people in general and mainly comprises of promises of abundance which are to ensue. The third oracle will be discussed separately and is directed specifically at Zerubbabel.

### The promises of abundance 2.15-19

וַעֲתָה שִׁימוּנָא לְבַבְכֶם מִן־הַיּוֹם הַזֶּה וּמַעַלָּה מִטָּרָם שׁוּם־אָבֵן אֶל־אָבֵן בְּהִיכַל  
יְהוָה:

מִהַיּוֹתֶם בָּא אֶל־עֲרַמַת עֲשָׂרִים וְהִיתָה עֲשָׂרָה בָּא אֶל־הַיֶּקֶב לַחֲשֵׁף חֲמִשִּׁים פּוּרָה  
וְהִיתָה עֲשָׂרִים:

הַכִּיתִי אֶתְכֶם בַּשֶּׁדָּפוֹן וּבִירְקוֹן וּבִבְרָד אֵת כָּל־מַעֲשֵׂה יְדֵיכֶם וְאִין־אֶתְכֶם אֲלִי  
נְאֻם־יְהוָה:

שִׁימוּנָא לְבַבְכֶם מִן־הַיּוֹם הַזֶּה וּמַעַלָּה מִיּוֹם עֲשָׂרִים וְאַרְבָּעָה לַחֲשֵׁי עֵי לְמִן־הַיּוֹם  
אֲשֶׁר־יָסַד הִיכַל־יְהוָה שִׁימוּ לְבַבְכֶם:

הַעוֹד הַזֶּרַע בְּמַגּוּרָה וְעַד־הַגֶּפֶן וְהַתְּאֵנָה וְהָרְמוֹן וְעֵץ הַזַּיִת לֹא נִשְׂא מִן־הַיּוֹם הַזֶּה  
אַבְרָךְ:

(Haggai 2:15-19)

### Meyers and Meyers: oracle of encouragement

The abundant yield of grain and wine in 2.16 is contrasted with meagre harvest in 1:6 and 1:9.

זָרַעְתֶּם הַרְבֵּה וְהָבֵא מְעַט אֲכֹל וְאֵין-לְשִׁבְעָה שָׂתוּ וְאֵין-לְשִׁכְרָה לְבוֹשׁ וְאֵין-לֶחֶם  
לוֹ וְהַמִּשְׁתַּכֵּר מִשְׁתַּכֵּר אֶל-צָרוֹר נִקְוֵב: פ

(Haggai 1:6 )

פָּנֵה אֶל-הַרְבֵּה וְהִנֵּה לְמַעַט וְהִבֵּאתֶם הַבַּיִת וְנִפְחַתִּי בּוֹ יַעַן מָה נֶאֱמַר יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת  
יַעַן בֵּיתִי אֲשֶׁר-הוּא חָרֵב וְאַתֶּם רֹצִים אִישׁ לְבֵיתוֹ:

(Haggai 1:9)

The return on their produce was 50 to 60 per cent less than what they had anticipated, indicating partial economic collapse rather than total loss (Meyers & Meyers 1987:61). The state of economic depression prior to the beginning of the reconstruction of the Temple is compared with the abundance that will flow once the building operations begin (v.19).

The use of the date, the twenty-fourth of the ninth month, here indicates that it was an important day, and according to Meyers and Meyers its use here marks the day of the *temple re-foundation ceremony* (Meyers & Meyers 1987:63).

יסד is in the Pual form of the verb and connotes that the foundations *are founded*, *are laid* (Brown, Driver & Briggs electronic ed.). Meyers and Meyers reject the idea that יסד should be taken literally to mean that the Temple foundations were founded and prefers a symbolic interpretation because the Temple foundations were already in place. The actual foundations of the Temple would still have been intact since it is usual for a conquering army only to destroy that which stands above the surface of the ground (Meyers & Meyers 1987:64).

The reference to the seed in the granary in v.19 indicates that there is a concern for grain to always be in the storehouse, either for eating or to be used for planting seed in the future. Meyers and Meyers understand this to be a rhetorical question concerning the status of grain in the storehouse (Meyers & Meyers 1987:64). A second rhetorical question follows in v.19 and is also related to agricultural produce. The fact that the vineyards, fig, pomegranate and olive trees are still standing indicates that they had survived the drought even though their produce may have been deficient (Meyers & Meyers 1987:64). Pomegranates are not generally included amongst the basic foodstuff in the hill country surrounding Jerusalem, and this indicates, according to Meyers and Meyers, that there were signs of economic abundance (Meyers & Meyers 1987:65).

Temples in Near Eastern typology were necessary to ensure affluence because the appeasement of the gods brought about prosperity. Haggai's use of imagery depicting plenitude reflects the typology used in the Ancient Near East (Meyers & Meyers 1987:65).

Temples were seen as the source of agricultural plenty and fertility. They symbolized the presence of the god of the temple in Canaanite mythology as well as in Mesopotamian temple texts. *Such a belief was an integral part of the Ancient Near Eastern worldview in which temple typology played an essential if not determinative role in the organization of society* (Meyers & Meyers 1987:65).

Bewer<sup>1</sup> compared the promise of blessings in the book of Haggai to that of the neo-Sumerian temple hymns of Gudea of Lagash. Bewer translates a portion of the Gudea cylinder as follows:

When the foundations of my temple will be laid, abundance shall come. The great fields shall bring forth for thee (fruit), (the waters of) the ditches and channels shall rise out of the fissures of the ground, whence the water no longer sprang forth, water shall spring forth. In Shumer oil shall be poured forth in abundance (quoted in Meyers & Meyers 1987:65).

Haggai does not suggest that God can only be worshipped or approached in the temple at Jerusalem; *perhaps because of the brevity of his utterances, Haggai has been misunderstood on this critical point* (Meyers & Meyers 1987:66).

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<sup>1</sup> J. A. Bewer, 1919, *Ancient Babylonian Parallels to the Prophecies of Haggai*. *AJSLL* 35:128-133.

## Chapter 11

### The concluding oracle: 2:20-22

#### *The second message to Zerubbabel*

וַיְהִי דְבַר־יְהוָה שֵׁנִית אֶל־חֲנַי בְּעֹשְׂרִים וָאַרְבָּעָה לַחֹדֶשׁ לֵאמֹר:  
 אָמַר אֶל־זְרֻבָבֶל פַּחַת־יְהוּדָה לֵאמֹר אֲנִי מְרַעֵשׂ אֶת־הַשָּׁמַיִם וְאֶת־הָאָרֶץ:  
 וְהַפְכֹתִי כִסֵּא מַמְלָכוֹת וְהַשְׁמַדְתִּי חֹזֵק מַמְלָכוֹת הַגּוֹיִם וְהַפְכֹתִי מִרְכָּבָה וּרְכַבִּיהָ  
 וַיִּרְדּוּ סוּסִים וּרְכַבֵּיהֶם אִישׁ בְּחָרֵב אָחִיו:  
 בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא נָאִם־יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת אֶקְחֶךָ זְרֻבָבֶל בֶּן־שָׁאֲלֻי־אֵל עַבְדִּי נָאִם־יְהוָה  
 וְשִׁמְתִּיךָ כַּחוֹתָם כִּי־בָךְ בָּחַרְתִּי נָאִם יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת:

(Haggai 2:20-23)

#### *Speak to Zerubbabel the governor of Judah*

The oracle opens and is specifically addressed to one individual, namely Zerubbabel, the governor of Yehud.

#### **Zerubbabel the governor**

Ezra (5.3) refers to Tattenai as the one who carries the title of פַּחַת of the satrapy Eber-ha-Nahar (Beyond the river) which included Yehud.

בַּהֲזַמְנָא אֶתְא עֲלֵיהוֹן תַּתְנַי פַּחַת עֲבֵר־נְהַרָה וְשִׁתַּר בּוֹזְנֵי וְכַנְוֹתְהוֹן וְכֵן  
 אָמְרִין לְהֵם מִן־שֵׁם לְכֵם טַעַם בֵּיתְא דְנָה לְבִנְא וְאַשְׁרֵנָא דְנָה לְשַׁכְלָלָה:  
 (Ezra 5:3)

The possibility therefore exists that Zerubbabel may indeed not have been the official governor appointed by the Persians, but was seen as such by the inhabitants of Yehud (Meyers & Meyers 1987:xxxii).

Uffenheimer supports the idea that Zerubbabel was not the officially appointed “governor” of the Persian rulers but was acknowledged as such by the Judeans

because of the position he held in their society and because of what he symbolised for them (1996:223).

However, it is more likely that Tattenai was appointed governor of the satrapy Beyond the River and Zerubbabel of Yehud, a subdivision of the satrapy Beyond the River (Petersen 1984:24-25). There were at least twenty governors appointed by King Darius to govern the twenty satrapies that existed at that time (Meyers & Meyers, 1987:xxxviii).

The role Zerubbabel plays in the Book of Haggai indicates that he was indeed the governor of Yehud and that he was recognized as such by Haggai's audience. The Book of Ezra also recognizes his status as the leader in Yehud, for although Tattenai questions his authority, the reply he receives from Darius indicates clearly that the King also recognised Zerubbabel as the governor:

כָּעַן תִּתְּנִי פֶחַת עֵבֶר־נְהָרָה שְׁתֵּר בּוֹזְנֵי וּכְנֹתֶהוֹן אֶפְרַסְכִּיא דִּי בְעֵבֶר  
 נְהָרָה כִּחְיָקִין הוּוּ מִן־תְּמָה:  
 שְׁבִקוּ לַעֲבִידַת בֵּית־אֱלֹהֵא דְךָ פֶּחַת יְהוּדִיא וּלְשִׁבֵי יְהוּדִיא בֵּית־אֱלֹהֵא דְךָ  
 יִבְנוּן עַל־אַתְרָה:  
 (Ezra 6:6-7)

#### Apocalypse! Haggai 2.21-22

אָמַר אֶל־זְרֻבָּבֶל פַּחַת־יְהוּדָה יֵאמֹר אֲנִי מְרַעֵשׂ אֶת־הַשָּׁמַיִם וְאֶת־הָאָרֶץ:  
 וְהִפְכֹתִי כֶּסֶא מַמְלָכוֹת וְהִשְׁמַדְתִּי חֹזֵק מַמְלָכוֹת הַגּוֹיִם וְהִפְכֹתִי מִרְכָּבָה וּרְכַבֵּיהָ  
 וַיִּרְדּוּ סוּסִים וּרְכַבֵּיהֶם אִישׁ בְּחָרֵב אָחִיו:  
 (Haggai 2:21-22)

### **Berquist's view on the meaning of *Warfare* in 2.21-22**

The military images in the book of Haggai are often interpreted as a sign that God will conquer the Persians and other nations of the world who are the enemies of the people of God. It is also sometimes assumed that Zerubbabel will be the one who will reign as God's signet ring, but Berquist discounts any possibility of a rebellion led by Zerubbabel (Berquist 1995:67).

The armies referred to in Haggai 2:6-9 should rather be seen as the Persian campaign against Egypt. The advancing armies would have made the inhabitants of Yehud nervous, as they would of necessity have gone through her territory (Berquist 1995:66). Berquist summarizes Haggai 2:6-9 as follows:

- 1 God will shake the universe
- 2 God will fill the temple with glory
- 3 the temple's glory will be greater than that of earlier times
- 4 this glory is related to silver and gold
- 5 in the Second Temple God will provide peace (Berquist 1995:66).

In Berquist's opinion it is not the armies of Yehud who will be victorious, for Haggai is referring to the Persian army and the glory the Second Temple will receive from the financial contributions made by the mighty Persian monarchy. Ultimately, according to Berquist, the *Persian military campaign is the reason that the empire paid the community to rebuild the temple* for the resources of the temples would feed her armies on the move (Berquist 1995:66).

The presence of the Second Temple would be the safeguard for the inhabitants of Yehud from being attacked by the Persian armies, because God declared that *in this place I will give peace* (Berquist 1995:66-67).

Berquist continues his argument and states that God himself will shake the world (v. 21). It is not a rebellion by the people that will cause the catastrophe. God will protect his people while the army moves through.

Berquist interprets the destruction of the kingdoms by the hand of God (v. 22) to not specifically refer to the Persian Empire but rather to the *kingdoms of nations* (Berquist 1995:67).

The duplication of the concept *kingdoms* is a repetition of the concept *nations* and should be seen as a redundant *plural* (ibid). More than one nation is implied and not specifically one, namely the Persian Empire. It also does not indicate that Yehud will claim victory over a foreign army (Berquist 1995:68).

The reference to Zerubbabel as the *signet ring* (v. 23) of God is understood by Berquist to imply that the puppet ruler, Zerubbabel, whose integrity and loyalty were above doubt by the Persians, could save Jerusalem from the ill effects of the Persian army moving through her on its way to Egypt (Berquist 1995:68).

### **The theophany**

In his discussion of v.21 Petersen notes the close similarity between this verse and 2.6. The redactor employs *the language used in standard theophanic descriptions*

while the repetition of the content serves to accentuate his rhetorical line of reasoning (Petersen 1984:98).

כִּי כֹה אָמַר יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת עוֹד אֶחַת מְעַט הִיא וְאֲנִי מְרַעֵשׂ אֶת־הַשָּׁמַיִם וְאֶת־הָאָרֶץ  
וְאֶת־הַיָּם וְאֶת־הַחֲרָבָה:

(Haggai 2:6 )

אָמַר אֱלֹהֵי צְבָאוֹת לְאֹמְרֵי הַיְהוּדָה לֵאמֹר אֲנִי מְרַעֵשׂ אֶת־הַשָּׁמַיִם וְאֶת־הָאָרֶץ:  
(Haggai 2:21)

The theophanic description continues in v.7 and v.22

וְהִרְעִשְׁתִּי אֶת־כָּל־הַגּוֹיִם וּבָאוּ חֻמְדַּת כָּל־הַגּוֹיִם וּמִלְאַתִּי אֶת־הַבַּיִת הַזֶּה כְּבוֹד  
אָמַר יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת:

(Haggai 2:7 )

וְהִפַּכְתִּי כִּסֵּא מַמְלָכוֹת וְהִשְׁמַדְתִּי חֹזֶק מַמְלָכוֹת הַגּוֹיִם וְהִפַּכְתִּי מִרְכָּבָה וּרְכַבִּיהָ  
וַיִּרְדּוּ סוֹסִים וּרְכַבֵּיהֶם אִישׁ בְּחָרֵב אָחִיו:

(Haggai 2:22)

In contrast to Berquist, Petersen understands the distinct military slant in verse 22 to refer to an army that will fight against the enemies of Judah; the nations will be overturned (הפך) and destroyed (שמד) (Petersen 1984:99). The redactor has drawn on a variety of images from the ancient Israelite language and traditions in verse 22 such as holy war, the exodus, and prophecies against the other nations. *In using such language, Haggai is able to foster the image of a prophet espousing the religion of an earlier period* (Petersen 1984:101).

### **An eschatological event**

The theophany of Petersen becomes an eschatological event for Meyers and Meyers. They point out that in verses 2:6b, 2:7a and 2:21b רעש takes the Hifil form,

*cause to quake or shake* (Brown, Driver & Briggs electronic ed.) which indicates an eschatological dimension with political overtones (Meyers & Meyers 1987:66).

Verse 22 indicates a direct intervention by God to *overthrow* the established rulers and is enclosed in eschatological terminology. Haggai expresses himself with powerful imagery, indicating his expectation for achieving political independence (Meyers & Meyers 1987:66-67).

Meyers and Meyers continue their exposition of v.22 and translate הפך ... שמד "to overthrow ... to destroy, to annihilate, to overthrow" (Brown, Driver & Briggs electronic ed.). שמד can be used as a synonym for הפך. הפך is repeated in the verse so that the tension mounts with "I will overthrow ... I will cause to be destroyed ... I will overthrow". There are further word pairs in this verse, such as מַמְלָכוֹת ... הַגּוֹיִם (the kingdoms ... the foreign nations) (Brown Driver & Briggs electronic ed.); and מִרְכָּבָה ... רֹכְבֵיהָ (chariot ... charioteer). The image of the chariot is an indication of military dominance (Meyers & Meyers 1987:67).

וְהִפְכֹתִי כִסֵּא מַמְלָכוֹת וְהִשְׁמַדְתִּי חֹזֵק מַמְלָכוֹת הַגּוֹיִם וְהִפְכֹתִי מִרְכָּבָה וְרוֹכְבֵיהָ  
וְיִרְדּוּ סוֹסִים וְרוֹכְבֵיהֶם אִישׁ בְּחֶרֶב אָחִיו׃

(Haggai 2:22)

Wolff on the other hand relates the military upheaval depicted in vv. 21-22 to the severe unrest in the Persian Empire following the death of Cambyses (Wolff 1988:101). The instigation of the civil unrest in Babylon came about when Gaumata impersonated Cyrus' son Smerdis and claimed the throne of Persia for himself (Wolff 1988:101-104). In the wake of the ensuing unrest came one rebellion after

another with one impostor after the other claiming to be Smerdis (Wolff 1988:104). The Behistun Inscriptions describe how Darius I had to contend with various *lying kings* before he was able to establish himself as the King of Persia (ibid).

Wolff suggests that the people in Yehud may have hoped that the unrest would lead to the downfall of the Persian monarchy. Haggai may very well have meant that this would be the toppling of the kingdoms and nations (vv. 21-22) which would open the door for Zerubbabel to become the one who was chosen to rule in the name of God (v.23) (Wolff 1988:103).

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## Chapter 12

### The promise to Zerubbabel

בְּיוֹם הַהוּא נְאֻם־יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת אֶקְחֶךָ זְרֻבְבָל בֶּן־שְׁאֲלִיָּאֵל עַבְדִּי נְאֻם־יְהוָה  
וְשִׁמְתִּיךָ כַּחֲזָתָם כִּי־בְךָ בָחַרְתִּי נְאֻם יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת:

(Haggai 2:23)

#### The servant עבד

The additional title “my servant” is now added to the title of Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel while Haggai omits Zerubbabel’s Persian title פחה. In the Hebrew Bible the title עבדי (my servant) is used to refer to someone who is in a special relationship with God, usually one of the prophets or a king of Israel such as Moses and David (Petersen 1984:103).

The omission of the title, governor, coupled with the reference to Zerubbabel’s Davidic ancestry, implied that Zerubbabel was chosen as the one through whom salvation will come (Wolff 1988:104). However, there are no indications in the biblical text that Zerubbabel was planning, or was expected to be, subversive to King Darius (Wolff 1988:107). Nor did Haggai call for Zerubbabel to be involved in any forms of violence or armed struggle against the Persians, for God himself would act to disempower the other nations (Wolff 1988:108).

According to Wolff’s understanding of the concept “saviour” or “messiah” he concludes that:

It is an open linguistic question whether this new definition of the relationship [of Zerubbabel] to God should be considered as carrying with it messianic features (Wolff 1988:107).

Verhoef, on the other hand, argues that the concept of Zerubbabel becoming *the messianic king* is clearly implied. This will be achieved without Zerubbabel himself being involved in any form of rebellion against the Persian Empire; his success will come because God has selected him for this task (Verhoef 1987:146).

Even though the tense of אֶקַח (I will take you) in v.23 is indicative of the future, Qal imperfect tense, the oracle concludes with בָּחַרְתִּי (I have chosen you) in the (past), Qal perfect tense. The implication of the change in the tense is that God had already chosen Zerubbabel for a task that will come about at some future point in time (Petersen 1984:104).

How should the authority given to Zerubbabel in 2.23 be understood? Rose argues that there are three possible ways to understand this verse that tells about the giving of the signet ring by God to Zerubbabel:

- (a) Zerubbabel is seen as a *royal representative* or as merely acting as God's *representative* (Rose 200:231-232);
- (b) The text alludes to the fact that Zerubbabel will become king (Rose 2000:232);
- (c) Zerubbabel is seen as being a *universal and eschatological ruler, a world ruler* (Rose 2000:233).

All three the above views also include by implication the concept of Zerubbabel being a Messiah (Rose 2000:231).

### The signet הוֹתֵם

In addition, Zerubbabel is also given the title or function of being God' *seal*. In the Ancient Middle East, the seal was used to *authenticate legal enactments, identify property, and authorize proxy*. The only other time this symbol is used in a similar way in the Tanakh is by Jeremiah in his oracle to King Jehoiachin in which it is said that God will remove Jehoiachin from his hand as a signet ring (Wolff 1988:105):

חִי־אֲנִי נֶאֱמַרְיָהוּהָ כִּי אִם־יְהִיָּה כְּנִיָּהוּ בְּיַד־הַיְקִים מֶלֶךְ יְהוּדָה הוֹתֵם עַל־יַד יְמִינִי  
כִּי מִשָּׁם אֶתְקַנְךָ׃

(Jeremiah 22:24)

In doing this, God symbolically removed the kingship from King Jehoiachin (Conaih) and his descendants because of his evil ways.

It is conceivable that Zerubbabel knew his grandfather King Jehoiachin and fully understood the significance of Haggai's oracle to him, namely that the curse on his family was annulled.

There is an additional reference to Zerubbabel being *like a signet on the right hand* in the apocryphal Book of Sirach (Wolff 1988:107):

<sup>11</sup> How shall we magnify Zorobabel? even he was as a signet on the right hand: <sup>12</sup> So was Jesus the son of Josedec: who in their time builded the house, and set up an holy temple to the Lord, which was prepared for everlasting glory (Sirach 49:11-12).

Commenting on the meaning of the signet ring with reference to King Jehoiachin, Rose is cautious about accepting the promise of the signet ring

to Zerubbabel as meaning the re-implementation of the office of kingship (Rose 2000:236). There is no need to *a priori* assume that the seal (סמל) imagery necessarily deals with kingship specifically in Haggai 2.23 even though it was used within this context in Jeremiah 22.24 (Rose 2000:236).

Rose argues that in Haggai, A is not giving a signet ring to B, but A *makes B like* a seal, resulting in B becoming (like) a seal, or being treated like one (Rose 2000:237).

Although Haggai's oracle speaks of drastic and dramatic political changes there is an absence of any explicit reference to Zerubbabel as a descendant of King David or any other similar terminology indicating that Zerubbabel would become a king (Rose 2000:241).

Petersen and Japhet disagree with Rose's assumption. Since the book opens by introducing Darius as the ruling monarch, it would be tantamount to inviting an open confrontation to conclude the book with a call to crown another as king. Hence the redactor is compelled to avoid more political terms such as king or prince, and reserves the title of "servant" for Zerubbabel, which has a special significance in the Israelite tradition (Petersen 1984:106).

While Japhet<sup>2</sup> states that *Haggai does not explain, for what Zerubbabel was chosen*, the context makes things clear:

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<sup>2</sup> S. Japhet. 1982. Sheshbazzar and Zerubbabel: Against the background of the historical and religious tendencies of Ezra-Nehemiah. ZAW 94 pp77-78.

[F]rom what is described in the prophecy – the overthrow of the kingdoms of the nations as the first stage in the choosing of Zerubbabel – we may conclude that Haggai sees Zerubbabel as a king, whose kingdom is made possible by a change in the political structure (cited in Rose 2000:240).

Rose arrives at the following conclusion. The message of 2.23 is that God reminds Zerubbabel that he has chosen him to be his servant, and this choice is the ground for God's intervention to protect Zerubbabel in an impending cosmic upheaval which will have significant political ramifications. Zerubbabel need not fear or be anxious, because he will survive the catastrophe. Zerubbabel will not suffer the same fate as other political powers of the day (Rose 2000:242).

Seal imagery (that is, not signet טבעת), is used in the Hebrew Bible and in the Ancient Near East in various contexts to evoke the idea of special care or protection for a person who has a high personal value for someone. The use of this imagery in a variety of contexts suggests that kingship is not essential to the image. God's promise to Zerubbabel should therefore be interpreted as comprising special protection for God's chosen servant at a time of substantial changes in the political landscape. It leaves no room to call Haggai's final oracle royal or messianic. In the absence of other oracles dealing with the theme of kingship in Haggai, Rose concludes that one cannot tell what Haggai's expectations concerning the restoration, monarchy or messianism were (Rose 2000:249-250).

The least Rose can say is that whatever line one chooses to adopt, the text in v. 23 has definite royal overtones and possibly even that the kingship or leadership role of Zerubbabel is at stake (Rose 2000:239).

The text then tells us that Zerubbabel will be the representative of God and alludes to the fact that he (Zerubbabel) will become the ruler of the world (Rose 2000:230).

Nonetheless, Rose's conclusion does not explain the mysterious disappearance of Zerubbabel.

## **Chapter 13**

### **A supposition**

#### **What did the locals hope for?**

It may be deduced from the writings of Trito-Isaiah that the locals living in Jerusalem after the devastation of the Babylonian conquest slowly picked up their lives and continued in much the same way as they had done before, but without the infrastructure of the monarchy and the temple. People still went up to Jerusalem to offer sacrifices and it can be assumed that they spoke about the First Temple and shared their hopes of rebuilding the Temple.

It is apparent, as in any society, that leaders would have emerged among them and taken up their administrative positions as local community leaders. The Persian government, in fact, was in favour of local leaders continuing with their roles, on condition that they did not display any signs of disloyalty towards the Persian King. And yet, they must have dreamed of the day when they would be free from their oppressors.

#### **Sheshbazzar**

As mentioned previously, the first returnees from exile in Babylon arrived under the leadership of Sheshbazzar. According to the account related in Ezra 5.11-16, King Cyrus himself gave back the treasures that had been looted from the Temple by the Babylonians, to Sheshbazzar and charged him to rebuild the temple in Jerusalem on the same site where Solomon's Temple stood (Japhet 1991b:214). Verses 14-15 inform the reader that Sheshbazzar had the title of governor:

וּכְנָמָא פִּתְגָמָא הִתִּיבּוּנָא לְמַמַּר אֲנַחְנָא הַמּוֹ עֲבָדוּהִי דִּי־אַלְהָה שְׁמִיָּא וְאַרְעָא  
 וּבְנִין בֵּיתָא דִּי־הוּא בְּנֵה מִקְדָּמַת דְּנָה שְׁנִין שְׁגִיָּאן וּמְלִךְ לְיִשְׂרָאֵל רַב  
 בְּנֵהי וְשִׁכְלָלָהּ:

לָהֵן מִן־דִּי הִרְגִּזּוּ אֲבָהֶתְנָא לְאַלְהָה שְׁמִיָּא יְהִב הַמּוֹ פִּיד נְבוּכַדְנֶצַּר מְלִךְ־בָּבֶל  
 פִּסְדָּאָה וּבֵיתָהּ דְּנָה סִתְרָה וְעַמָּה הִגְלִי לְבָבֶל: ס  
 בְּשַׁנַּת חֲדָה לְכוֹרֶשׁ מְלִכָּא דִּי בָבֶל כּוֹרֶשׁ מְלִכָּא שָׁם טַעַם בֵּית־אַלְהָה דְּנָה  
 בְּרַם  
 לְבָנָא:

וְאַף מְאַנִּיא דִּי־בֵית־אַלְהָה דִּי דִּהֲבָה וְכִסְפָּא דִּי נְבוּכַדְנֶצַּר הִנְפִּק מִן־הִיכְלָא  
 דִּי בִירוּשָׁלַם וְהִיבֵל הַמּוֹ לְהִיכְלָא דִּי בָבֶל הִנְפִּק הַמּוֹ כּוֹרֶשׁ מְלִכָּא  
 מִן־הִיכְלָא דִּי בָבֶל וַיְהִיבוּ לְשִׁשְׁבַּצַר שְׁמָה דִּי פָּחָה שְׁמָה:  
 וְאַמְרֵ־לָהּ אֵל מְאַנִּיא שָׂא אֲנִל־אַחַת הַמּוֹ בְּהִיכְלָא דִּי בִירוּשָׁלַם וּבֵית אַלְהָה  
 יִתְבָּנָא עַל־אַתְרָהּ: ס

אַדִּין שִׁשְׁבַּצַר דִּךְ אַתָּא יְהִב אֲשִׁיא דִּי־בֵית אַלְהָה דִּי בִירוּשָׁלַם וּמִן־אַדִּין  
 וְעַד־כַּעַן מִתְבָּנָא וְלֹא שְׁלָם:

(Ezra 5:11-16)

Sheshbazzar was unable to complete his task and no reason is given as to why he failed or to what happened to him (Japhet 1991:218). It could be that someone had stopped him in his tracks or that he mysteriously disappeared. If this was the case, then one can assume that there were other religious parties active in Jerusalem who did not welcome Sheshbazzar's intrusion.

### **The cause of the tensions around the re-building of the Temple**

It would not be unrealistic to think that although the locals looked forward to the day the Temple would be rebuilt, they had something in mind which was similar to the First Temple. What they had hoped for was not necessarily a similarity in the outward appearance of the Temple building. With the arrival of Sheshbazzar, it became apparent that he was intent on instituting a Temple which would serve the purposes of the Persian regime; a temple that would control the food supplies, the

taxes and the trading of produce; such things that Persia needed to supply her mighty armies on the move. That the Temple also fulfilled a religious role was not of much importance to the Persian regime. In fact, they were the benefactors who were liberating the people that had been oppressed by the Assyrians and Babylonians. In the eyes of the locals, Sheshbazzar was not what they had expected and he was not welcome.

There is no record of someone appointed as governor in Sheshbazzar's place until we read of the arrival of Zerubbabel who had also come to rebuild the Temple in Jerusalem. Zerubbabel arrived together with Joshua ben Jehozadak, the high priest. It was not going to be so easy to dismiss Zerubbabel, for he had the support not only of the Persian king but also of the priesthood. Rejecting the political leadership of Zerubbabel, the puppet governor of Persia, was one thing, but to reject the *priests belonging to the tribe of Levi who are descended from Zadok* (Ezekiel 43:19) was an entirely different matter. The priests were not the puppets of the Persians, they were the servants of the God of Israel.

וַנִּתְּחָה אֶל־הַכֹּהֲנִים הַלְוִיִּם אֲשֶׁר הֵם מִזֶּרַע צְדוֹק הַקְּרִבִּים אֵלַי נְאֻם אֲדֹנָי יְהוִה  
לְשָׂרְתָנִי פֶר בֶּן־בְּקָר לְחַטָּאת:

(Ezekiel 43:19)

It is evident from the writings of Trito-Isaiah that there were different religious sub-cults active in and around Jerusalem who were also not too keen to give up their status, but the rejection of the high priest was not something that had happened before. This was not a political matter.

### **The disappearance of Zerubbabel**

Once the Temple reconstruction was complete, the governor Zerubbabel was no longer welcome among the locals. The descendant of David, of whom both Haggai and Zechariah entertained messianic expectations, was proving to be somewhat of a disappointment. Zerubbabel, who had been raised in Babylon, and who had assimilated sufficient of the Persian culture to win the approval of the Persia King was clearly not going to be the messiah they had dreamed of.

It would appear from the account in 1 Esdras, chapter 4, that Zerubbabel was a friend of Darius. If any harm should befall him, the king would surely punish the perpetrators. It would therefore not be unrealistic to surmise that they could not afford to kill Zerubbabel outright. The solution was, in fact, that Zerubbabel had to disappear in such a way as not to arise any suspicions as to what had happened to him. In the final instance, his disappearance still remains a mystery even unto this day.

## Conclusion

Haggai called upon the people of his time to rebuild the Temple of Jerusalem. This reflected not only the hopes of the inhabitants of Yehud but also of those who were still in *galut*. The complexity of the situation, both political and religious, is not immediately evident in the Book of Haggai and an attempt has been made in this dissertation to explain why there was so much tension around the reconstruction of the Temple.

It had become impossible for the people of Yehud to re-create things they way they were before the conquest of Judah. Things would never again be the way they were before the exile. The destruction of the First Temple marked the end of an era in Jewish history. The Second Temple could not function in an identical way as the first had done and the main reason for this was that the Jerusalem Temple was no longer linked or coupled with the descendants of King David. The “dream” of having Zerubbabel the *סֵרָר* assume this role came to naught.

The prophet Haggai was the main link between the people living in Yehud who were anti-Persian, those returning from *galut* who were pro-Persian and the Persian regime. By successful use of rhetoric, Haggai was able to convince all the main role players of the need to rebuild the Temple of the God of Israel in Jerusalem. This was indeed a difficult task during difficult times.

After taking a brief look at the fall of the Judean monarchy and destruction of the Temple cult, I have given a survey of conditions in Judah, which became known as the Persian satrapy or province of Yehud under Persian rule. I gave careful thought

as to reasons as to why a foreign king would want to restore the religious order of the people which he had subjugated. It became clear that this interest in temple restoration was a political ploy used by the Persian rulers in order to gain popularity and especially the loyalty of their subjects.

Aside from the Persian ruler's interest in the temple there were those who were left in Judah who also had a dream of restoring the temple. Now for the first time they could gain the upper hand in the political as well as religious leadership roles after the collapse of the monarchy established by David. With this came the rise of political and religiously orientated factions who came into direct conflict with the returning exiles. The exiles came with the intent of re-establishing the temple cult as well as with the idea of regaining their leadership positions in Yehud be it as servants of the Persian king.

It is to this audience of returned exiles as well as the locals that the prophet Haggai addresses his messages. Haggai recognised that the chance had come for the re-establishment of the Temple of the God of Israel. He addressed the people and especially Zerubbabel the scion of David as well as Joshua the descendant of Zadok since these two men represented the old order as well as having gained the blessings of the Persian king.

Noticeable elements of political and religious strain that are conspicuous in the writings of Trito-Isaiah underlie the background of Haggai's messages.

Once he could see that the reconstruction of the Temple was under the way Haggai turned his hopes to Zerubbabel with the idea that someone from the House of David would be able to also restore the monarchy.

It was possible to discern that Haggai still harboured some displeasure with his audience in his address to the priests.

Just as his audience could hope for a new leadership the book comes to a somewhat sudden end. There is nothing heard or said of the governor of Yehud, Zerubbabel, again.

In this dissertation my underlying argument was that Zerubbabel did in fact mysteriously disappear and that those who knew where they had taken him were too afraid of reprisals from the Persian regime in much the same way as those who had removed Gedaliah as governor of Judah were afraid of reprisals from the Babylonian regime (Jeremiah 40.2).

In his main argument, however Haggai does succeed in winning the support of the people and the Second Temple came into being. Haggai leaves the reader with the promise of the restoration of the House of David still laying in abeyance.

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