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## People's Houses as Competition for God's House in the Book of Haggai

Domy ludzi konkurencją dla domu Boga w Księdze Aggeusza

**ABSTRACT:** The article aims to characterize the expression *people's houses* in the Book of Haggai. This is a novelty against the background of previous publications, which mainly focus on other topics, such as the temple, the figure of the prophet or the background of Haggai's speech. The starting point is the observation that the author of the book more often refers to the temple by the word *bayit* than *hékāl*. This may indicate a deliberate parallel juxtaposition of people's houses and God's house. This parallel juxtaposition creates a wordplay based on the different meanings of the word *bayit* and may allude to 2 Sam 7. The introduction presents the background that provides the context for Haggai's speech. First, the results of archaeological research are analyzed to answer the question of what the construction issue was like in Jerusalem at the time of Haggai. Then the rhetorical situation is briefly presented with special attention to the audience to whom the call to rebuild the temple was addressed. The first part analyzes how people's houses are portrayed in the Book of Haggai itself, without considering references to other books. The second part – how the references in the Book of Haggai to David and Solomon influence the prophet's message and complement the characterization of the people's houses. The book repeatedly uses antithesis to show that the attitude of Haggai's audience is wrong and they should decide to change their behavior. The state of people's houses is contrasted with the state of God's house (the temple). Also, the references to David and Solomon are intended to contrast the exemplary attitude of the kings with the bad attitude of Haggai's audience. All analyses lead to the conclusion that the houses in which people live are in competition with the temple – the house of God.

**KEY WORDS:** house/*bayit*, house of God, temple/*hékāl*, Book of Haggai, wordplay, prophet, antithesis, 2 Sam 7, 1 Kgs 8

**ABSTRAKT:** Celem artykułu jest dokonanie charakterystyki wyrażenia 'domy ludzi' w Księdze Aggeusza. Jest to *novum* na tle dotychczasowych publikacji, które skupiają się głównie na tematach świątyni, postaci proroka czy tła wystąpienia Aggeusza.

Punktem wyjścia jest obserwacja, że autor księgi znacznie częściej określa świątynię słowem *bayit* niż *hékāl*. Może to świadczyć o celowym paralelnym zestawieniu domów ludzi i domu Boga, które tworzy grę słów opartą na różnych znaczeniach słowa *bayit* i może nawiązywać do 2 Sm 7. We wstępie przedstawiono kontekst wystąpienia proroka Aggeusza: przeanalizowano wyniki badań archeologicznych, aby odpowiedzieć na pytanie, jak przedstawiała się kwestia budownictwa w Jerozolimie w czasach Aggeusza, oraz przedstawiono sytuację retoryczną ze szczególnym uwzględnieniem słuchaczy, do których kierowane było wezwanie do odbudowy świątyni. W pierwszej części artykułu przeanalizowano, jak domy ludzi zostały ukazane w samej Księdze Aggeusza, w drugiej zbadano, jak nawiązania w Księdze Aggeusza do postaci Dawida i Salomona wpływają na przekaz proroka i jak uzupełniają charakterystykę domów ludzi. Stwierdzono, że w księdze została wielokrotnie wykorzystana antyteza, aby wykazać, że postawa słuchaczy Aggeusza jest niewłaściwa i powinni podjąć decyzję o zmianie postępowania. W księdze przeciwstawiony został stan, w jakim znajdują się domy ludzi, stanowi, w jakim znajduje się dom Boga (świątynia). Ponadto ustalono, że również nawiązania do Dawida i Salomona mają na celu przeciwstawienie sobie godnej naśladowania postawy królów i złej postawy słuchaczy proroka Aggeusza. Przeprowadzone badania prowadzą do wniosku, że domy, w których mieszkają ludzie, stanowią konkurencję dla świątyni – domu Boga.

SŁOWA KLUCZOWE: dom/*bayit*, dom Boga, świątynia/*hékāl*, Księga Aggeusza, gra słów, prorok, antyteza, 2 Sm 7, 1 Kr1 8

## Introduction

The message of the prophet Haggai revolves around the call to rebuild the temple. The author of the book made use of three words for the temple:<sup>1</sup> *bayit* (with various complements) *hékāl* and *māqôm*. The most frequent term to designate the temple is *bayit*; it was applied eight times (1:2, 4, 8, 9, 14; 2:3, 7, 9).<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> All quotations in Hebrew are taken from *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia*, 5th ed. (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1997). The vocalized transcription follows *The SBL Handbook of Style*, 2nd ed. (Atlanta, GA: SBL Press, 2014).

<sup>2</sup> In Hag 1:9 the word *bayit* appears three times: there is no doubt that in the second instance it means the temple (God says: *ya'an bêtî*), and in the third the houses of the people (*'îš lēbêtô*), while the first occurrence (*wahābē'tem habbayit*) has been debated by scholars. Some believe that it refers to a temple, see e.g. Odil Hannes Steck, "Zu Haggai 1 2–11," *Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* 83, no. 3 (1971), 370, n. 46, <https://doi.org/10.1515/zatw.1971.83.3.355>; Peter R. Ackroyd, *Exile and Restoration: A Study of Hebrew Thought in the Sixth Century B.C.* (Philadelphia, PA: Westminster John Knox Press, 1968), 158; Friedrich Peter, "Zu Haggai 1:9," *Theologische Zeitschrift* 7, no. 2 (1951), 150–51; while others, that about the dwelling place of the people, see David L. Petersen, *Haggai and Zechariah 1–8: A Commentary*, Old Testament Library (Philadelphia, PA: Westminster Press, 1984), 52; Hans Walter Wolff, *Haggai: A Commentary*, trans. Margaret Kohl (Minneapolis,

The term *hékāl* occurred twice (2:15, 18), while *māqôm* only once (2:9).<sup>3</sup> It seems that the author of the Book of Haggai chose the word *bayit* to denote the temple deliberately and used it with greater frequency in the first part of the book.<sup>4</sup> Firstly, this was in order to show more clearly the contrast between the house of God and the houses of the inhabitants of the province of Yehud. He would not have achieved such a clear antithesis if he had referred to God's dwelling place with a different word, e.g. *hékāl*.<sup>5</sup> Secondly, with a wordplay based on different

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MN: Augsburg Publishing House, 1988), 46; John Kessler, *The Book of Haggai: Prophecy and Society in Early Persian Yehud*, Supplements to Vetus Testamentum 91 (Leiden: Brill, 2002), 137; Henning Reventlow, *Aggeo, Zaccaria e Malachia*, trans. Franco Ronchi, Antico Testamento 25 (Brescia: Paideia, 2010), 31; Pieter Adriaan Verhoef, *The Books of Haggai and Malachi*, The New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans, 1987), 71; Vincenzo Moro, *Aggeo: Il coraggio della rinascita*, Studi biblici (Bologna: EDB, 2023), 103. Most of the cited scholars favor the second option because it fits the context, due to the reference to verse 6, see Mark J. Boda, *Haggai, Zechariah*, NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2004), 92. John Robert Barker, however, does not even note this problem, taking it for granted that it refers to the dwelling place of the people, see John Robert Barker, *Disputed Temple: A Rhetorical Analysis of the Book of Haggai*, Emerging Scholars (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2017), 175. This is the interpretation that has been adopted for the purposes of this article. Another solution is given by Jieun Kim, who claims it denotes "an agricultural storage facility", see Jieun Kim, *Jerusalem in the Achaemenid Period: The Relationship between Temple and Agriculture in the Book of Haggai* (Oxford, UK: Peter Lang, 2016), 179. Such an interpretation is not contrary to the belief that *bayit* should be construed as people's houses, since the term can mean a household in a broader sense, not just a residential building.

<sup>3</sup> Marek Parchem, "Znaczenie i funkcje świątyni w księdze Aggeusza [Meaning and Functions of the Temple in the Book of Haggai]," *Collectanea Theologica* 82, no. 4 (2012), 56–57; he points out that *māqôm* ('place') in the biblical tradition denotes, among other things, various sanctuaries in the stories of the patriarchs, as well as the temple in Jerusalem itself, and thus carries connotations related to the theology of the temple in Jerusalem as the place chosen by God to worship His Name.

<sup>4</sup> It should be noted that referring to a temple with the word 'house' was something natural and common in the ancient Near East, and thus also in the biblical tradition, see Roland de Vaux, *Institutions militaires, Institutions religieuses*, vol. 2 of *Les Institutions de l'Ancien Testament* (Paris: Cerf, 1960), 105; Michael B. Hundley, *Gods in Dwellings: Temples and Divine Presence in the Ancient Near East*, Society of Biblical Literature. Writings from the Ancient World Supplements 3 (Atlanta, GA: Society of Biblical Literature, 2013), 131, 134. Thus, the originality of the author of the Book of Haggai lies not in the mere use of the term *bayit* to designate a temple, but in the fact that he used the term to create rhetorical figures and literary references that were intended to further emphasize the message of the book and thus increase the power of persuasion.

<sup>5</sup> *hékāl*, apart from the meaning 'a temple', it also denotes 'a palace' without the sacred connotations, see Vaux, *Institutions militaires*, 105; Parchem, "Znaczenie i funkcje świątyni," 55–56.

meanings of the word *bayit* – ‘house’ (of God, i.e. temple), ‘house’ (dwelling, residence) – he made a reference to 2 Sam 7 with a similar device.

Additionally, the Book of Haggai contains several references – more and less direct – to the construction of the first temple by Solomon. It seems that the author referred to David and Solomon intentionally in order to make his message complete and more powerful to his audience.

The objective of this paper is to explore the topic of houses inhabited by people and to demonstrate how the rhetorical devices and references to 2 Sam 7 and 1 Kings (especially 1 Kgs 8) affect the literary imagery of houses in 1:4, 9(x2) and the people living in them. However, in order to make the characterization more complete, the background will first be outlined – what archaeology tells us about Jerusalem and the province of Yehud in the early Persian period, and what can be learned from the book itself about the rhetorical situation.<sup>6</sup>

### Jerusalem in the early Persian period

It is likely that Jerusalem remained demolished and uninhabited throughout the whole Babylonian exile. It was only at the beginning of the Persian period that it was settled again.<sup>7</sup> However, archaeological data on Jerusalem from the Persian period are quite scarce. The buildings discovered are limited to the City of David.<sup>8</sup> It is estimated that Jerusalem at that time was inhabited by

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However, the accumulation of this term would not have had the effect of creating a connotation with people's houses that could not be described as ‘palaces’.

<sup>6</sup> Given that the main focus of the analysis is the people's residential houses and not the temple, the side topics will not be explored in depth, leaving room for further research.

<sup>7</sup> Oded Lipschits, “Demographic Changes in Judah between the Seventh and the Fifth Centuries B.C.E.,” in *Judah and the Judeans in the Neo-Babylonian Period*, ed. Oded Lipschits and Joseph Blenkinsopp (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2003), 333–34; Oded Lipschits, “Between Archaeology and Text: A Reevaluation of the Development Process of Jerusalem in the Persian Period: A Reevaluation of the Development Process of Jerusalem in the Persian Period,” in *Congress Volume Helsinki 2010*, ed. Martti Nissinen, Supplements to *Vetus Testamentum* 148 (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 147.

<sup>8</sup> For more on archaeological finds see Kenneth A. Ristau, *Reconstructing Jerusalem: Persian-Period Prophetic Perspectives* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2016), 14–21; Oded Lipschits, “Persian Period Finds from Jerusalem: Facts and Interpretations,” in *Perspectives on Hebrew Scriptures VI: Comprising the Contents of Journal of Hebrew Scriptures, Vol. 9*, ed. Ehud Ben Zvi, Perspectives on Hebrew Scriptures and its Contexts 7 (Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2010), 430–39.

between 400–500<sup>9</sup> or 1000–1250 people.<sup>10</sup> These figures refer to the Persian period in its heyday, but at its beginning, when people were just beginning to settle, there may have been even fewer inhabitants, as Jerusalem was only a small settlement.<sup>11</sup> The whole province of Yehud was also very sparsely populated. It is estimated that barely 15,000–30,000 people lived there, which was 3 or 4 times less than before the exile.<sup>12</sup> So although the Ezra and Nehemiah stories suggest a mass return of exiles to Judea, this is reflected in no significant archaeological developments, so it is more likely that only small groups returned from exile over an extended period of time.<sup>13</sup>

Although the extant remains of the buildings are small, they are accessible and indicate that construction was indeed taking place at that time, so the accusations made by Haggai that people tend to build their own houses and neglect to build the temple sound plausible. Estimates of the population of Jerusalem and the province indicate that the number of people was low, so also the scarcity of workers may have affected the neglect of temple rebuilding.<sup>14</sup>

### Rhetorical situation

The Book of Haggai represents a rare case of a book whose major part is made of oratorical forms. The composition of this book can be divided into the following sections: Hag 1:1–11 – the first speech together with the opening formulas; Hag 1:12–15 – the narrative; Hag 2:1–9 – the second speech; Hag 2:10–19 – the third speech; Hag 2:20–23 – the fourth speech. Particular speeches are

<sup>9</sup> Israel Finkelstein, "Jerusalem in the Persian (and Early Hellenistic) Period and the Wall of Nehemiah," *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 32, no. 4 (2008), 507, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0309089208093928>.

<sup>10</sup> Lipschits, "Persian Period Finds from Jerusalem," 440. Some scholars provide much higher numbers, but these should be rejected, given the sparse archaeological findings. Examples of such inflated estimates are given by Lipschits, "Persian Period Finds from Jerusalem," 423–24.

<sup>11</sup> Lester L. Grabbe, *Yehud: A History of the Persian Province of Judah*, vol. 1 of *A History of the Jews and Judaism in the Second Temple Period*, Library of Second Temple Studies 47 (London: T&T Clark, 2004), 274.

<sup>12</sup> Finkelstein ("Jerusalem in the Persian," 507) supports the lower number (15,000), Lipschits ("Demographic Changes in Judah," 364), the higher (30,000) and Charles E. Carter (*The Emergence of Yehud in the Persian Period: A Social and Demographic Study*, Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement Series 294 [Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998], 202), the middle value (20,000).

<sup>13</sup> Lipschits, "Demographic Changes in Judah," 365.

<sup>14</sup> Grabbe, *Yehud*, 284.

distinguished by formulas that refer to the dates from the reign of Darius I.<sup>15</sup> It can be said that Hag 1:12–15 is an exception because it is not an oratorical form intended to persuade the listeners to change their behavior, but it is a narrative that reports how the prophet's exhortation brought about a change in people's attitudes. Thus, both formulas that specify the time and the narrative section indicate that the prophet was acting at a given time<sup>16</sup> and that his speeches had a noticeable effect on changing the behavior of specific people.

The first speech reveals that the reason why Haggai started prophesying was the neglect in the temple rebuilding. It is solely in this first speech, when the prophet presents the case, that the temple is juxtaposed with the dwelling houses. It is clear from the introductory formula of the first speech (Hag 1:1) that the prophet is addressing the secular leader, Zorobabel, and the religious leader, the high priest Joshua; however, according to Hag 1:12, 14 the actual addressees of Haggai's message were not only the leaders but also the common people. Lloyd F. Bitzer points out that the real recipients of the rhetorical speech are only those who by changing their decisions have a real impact on the change of the situation.<sup>17</sup> The indication that both the leaders and the ordinary people changed their behavior thanks to the prophet's message shows that it was also dependent on them whether the state of the temple would change.

## People's dwelling houses in Haggai

*Bayit* as a term for the houses in which people dwell appears only three times and always in contrast to the house of God. Thus, the people's houses are characterized not only by what is mentioned about them directly, but also by their antithetical relation to the house of God.

<sup>15</sup> Richard A. Taylor and E. Ray Clendenen, *Haggai, Malachi*, New American Commentary 21A (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman, 2004), 104.

<sup>16</sup> His speeches are dated 29.08.520, 21.09.520, 17.10.520 and 18.12.520 BC. See Carol L. Meyers and Eric M. Meyers, *Haggai, Zechariah 1–8: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, The Anchor Bible 25B (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1987), xlvi.

<sup>17</sup> "It is clear also that a rhetorical audience must be distinguished from, a body of mere hearers or readers: properly speaking, a rhetorical audience consists only of those persons who are capable of being influenced by discourse and of being mediators of change." (Lloyd F. Bitzer, "The Rhetorical Situation," *Philosophy & Rhetoric* 1, no. 1 [1968], 1–14).

### Bayit in Hag 1:4

The first time the word *bayit* in relation to buildings inhabited by people appears is in Hag 1:4: “Is it time for you to dwell in your paneled houses while this house lies in ruins?”<sup>18</sup> This sentence directly alludes to Hag 1:2, where God reproaches the people for their wrong attitude towards His house: “This people has said: Now is not the time to rebuild the house of the Lord.” The sentence from Hag 1:2 and the first part of Hag 1:4 are thus part of the antithetical parallelism:

[it] is not the time (*lō' 'et-bō'*) – it is time for you (*ha'ēt lākem 'attem*);  
the time to rebuild the house of the LORD (*'et-bêt yhw̄h lēhibbānôt*) – to dwell  
in your houses (*lāšebet bēbāttēkem*).<sup>19</sup>

The time to rebuild the temple is paralleled to the time to start dwelling – in order to occupy the houses, people have to first build them. Likewise, the purpose of building the house of the Lord is to dwell in it. So although two different verbs have been used for the house of God (*bānā*) and the houses of people (*yāšab*), they are closely related.

Verses 2 and 4 are contrasted to show that people have time, but not for what God expects of them; they spend time on their own affairs and not on the affairs of God.<sup>20</sup> Their focus on themselves at the expense of God is further emphasized in verse 4 by the use of a rhetorical question.<sup>21</sup> Barker notes that if, instead of a question, there had been a simple statement here: “You have houses and I do not”, the power of persuasion would be lessened.<sup>22</sup> We might add that also the contrast between the state of the houses and the different attitude of the people towards their houses and the house of God would have been less emphasized. The above contrast is also shown by the redundancy of the suffix corresponding in Indo-European languages to the possessive pronoun of the

<sup>18</sup> Bible quotations in English after the New American Bible, Revised Edition, unless stated otherwise.

<sup>19</sup> Pieter Adriaan Verhoef (*The Books of Haggai and Malachi*, 21) gives more parallels, not only between the verses, but also within them.

<sup>20</sup> Kenneth M. Craig claims: “The issue is not lack of time; priorities are skewed.” (Kenneth M. Craig, *Asking for Rhetoric: The Hebrew Bible's Protean Interrogative*, Biblical Interpretation Series 73 [Boston: Brill, 2005], 193).

<sup>21</sup> See Craig, *Asking for Rhetoric*, 193; Kessler, *The Book of Haggai*, 128; Taylor and Clendenen, *Haggai*, 122; Boda, *Haggai*, 89.

<sup>22</sup> Barker, *Disputed Temple*, 160–61.

second person plural (*lākem, ’attem, bēbāttēkem*), which stands in opposition to the temple (*habbayit hazzeh*).<sup>23</sup>

In verse 4, the contrast between the people’s houses and the house of God is also shown in the epithets used: the houses inhabited by men are defined by the word *šəpūnīm* and the house of God by *hārēb*. The root *spn* means ‘to cover’,<sup>24</sup> but depending on the context it can be translated in two different ways: (1) to roof, to cover with a roof – in this case, God would indicate that the houses of the people have been finished;<sup>25</sup> (2) to panel, to cover with wood – such a translation would indicate that the house is additionally decorated with wood, and therefore luxurious.<sup>26</sup> Scholars disagree which translation is appropriate: on the one hand, the root *spn* proves that the temple and palace (1 Kgs 6:9; 7:3, 7) of both Solomon and Jehoiakim (Jer 22:14) were finished with cedar wood, so in this verse it could also indicate that the houses of the people were lavishly decorated;<sup>27</sup> on the other hand, the prophet speaks of poor harvest (Hag 1:6, 9), which could signal overall poverty and lack of means to richly decorate the buildings.<sup>28</sup> However, whichever translation we adopt, it is clear that this epithet is meant to indicate that the people’s houses are in a much better condition than the house of God.<sup>29</sup>

<sup>23</sup> See Boda, *Haggai*, 89; Kessler, *The Book of Haggai*, 104, n. 8; Taylor and Clendenen, *Haggai*, 122–23; Craig, *Asking for Rhetoric*, 192.

<sup>24</sup> David J.A Clines and John F. Elwolde, eds., *Šin-Tāw*, vol. 8 of *The Dictionary of Classical Hebrew* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2011), s.v. *spn*.

<sup>25</sup> This interpretation is supported by Steck, “Zu Haggai 1 2–11,” 362; Wolff, *Haggai*, 42; Meyers and Meyers, *Haggai*, 23; Kessler, *The Book of Haggai*, 128.

<sup>26</sup> This interpretation is supported by Robert L. Alden, *Daniel and the Minor Prophets*, ed. Frank E. Gabelein, The Expositor’s Bible Commentary 7 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1985), 581; Ackroyd, *Exile and Restoration*, 155; Petersen, *Haggai*, 48; Ralph L. Smith, *Micah-Malachi*, Word Biblical Commentary 32 (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1984), 153; Moro, *Aggeo*, 94; Elie Assis, “Composition, Rhetoric and Theology in Haggai 1:1–11,” in *Perspectives on Hebrew Scriptures IV: Comprising the Contents of Journal of Hebrew Scriptures*, Vol. 7, ed. Ehud Ben Zvi, Perspectives on Hebrew Scriptures and Its Contexts 4 (Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2008), 314–15.

<sup>27</sup> Moro, *Aggeo*, 94.

<sup>28</sup> Kessler, *The Book of Haggai*, 128. A counter-argument to John Kessler’s view might be that in the Book of Haggai, lack of harvest and poverty is a consequence of taking care of one’s houses and neglecting God’s house, so it is possible that the people managed to artfully finish their houses at the expense of building the temple, which led to lack of blessing and poverty.

<sup>29</sup> They take a neutral position, accepting both possibilities: Boda, *Haggai*, 89; Taylor and Clendenen, *Haggai*, 123–24; Verhoef, *The Books of Haggai and Malachi*, 59; Barker, *Disputed Temple*, 160, n. 73.



Various interpretations were also put to the adjective *ḥārēb*. Scholars argue whether the author wanted to emphasize the very state of destruction or rather the associated state of abandonment, of being forgotten by all.<sup>30</sup> Some note that the temple complex was not necessarily completely demolished at the time; it is more likely that *ḥārēb* indicates that the temple (*habbayit hazzeḥ*) is uninhabited both by God,<sup>31</sup> and by humans (they failed to take up rebuilding it). Barker argues in favor of a different interpretation.<sup>32</sup> According to him, *ḥārēb* in this verse indicates destruction, since the destroyed house of God is contrasted with the completed people's houses. It is in verse 9 that the term takes on the nuanced meaning of 'unattended', where it stands in opposition to the 'attended' people's houses. The above distinctions do not seem to have much relevance, since the contrast exists both between being *destroyed* (whether completely or only in part) and being *completed* (whether with luxurious or simple finishing), and between being *unattended* and being *inhabited*, since destruction is associated with the fact that God cannot dwell there, while people dwell (*yāšab*) in their completed houses.

### Bayit in Hag 1:9b

The next two occurrences of the word *bayit* in relation to people's houses appear in verse 9: in the first part of it (v. 9a: *wahābē'tem habbayit* – "you brought home") and in the second (v. 9b: *wē'attem rāšim 'iš lēbētō* – "and you run, each to his own house"<sup>33</sup>). There are several parallels in the second part of this verse (v. 9b) to the verse 4 just discussed. Therefore, first we will discuss these similarities, and only then will we return to verse 9a and finally discuss verse 9 as a whole.

Both verse 4 and verse 9b begin with a question (v. 4: *hā'ēt*; v. 9b: *yā'an meḥ*).<sup>34</sup> Besides, in both of them one can notice the co-occurrence of terms *bayit* and

<sup>30</sup> This discussion is presented in Kessler, *The Book of Haggai*, 129; Taylor and Clendenen, *Haggai*, 124–25.

<sup>31</sup> Meyers and Meyers, *Haggai*, 23–24; Kim, *Jerusalem in the Achaemenid Period*, 166.

<sup>32</sup> Barker, *Disputed Temple*, 177.

<sup>33</sup> Own translation.

<sup>34</sup> Assis ("Composition, Rhetoric and Theology," 315) argues that both questions are rhetorical. In contrast, Barker (*Disputed Temple*, 175) insists that the question from verse 9b is not entirely rhetorical, as God immediately answers it, and rhetorical questions do not require an answer. See also Kessler, *The Book of Haggai*, 112. However, in the light of classical rhetorical theory, a question the speakers ask in order to answer it themselves is also a rhetorical question, see Heinrich Lausberg, *Handbook of Literary Rhetoric: A Foundation*

*ḥārēb* and the emphasis on the second person plural (*'attem*).<sup>35</sup> Elie Assis notes that these verses make a chiasm – in verse 4 the houses of the people appear first and then the house of God, and in verse 9b the order is reversed.<sup>36</sup> He presents the chiastic structure of both verses as follows:

a (1) Is it a time for you *yourselves* [*'attem*] to live *in your paneled houses*,  
[*bēbāttēkem*]

b (2) *while this house lies in ruins?* [*wēḥabbayit...ḥārēb*]

b' (1) Why? says the LORD of hosts. Because *my house lies in ruins*, [*bēti...ḥārēb*]

a' (2) *while all of you* [*wē'attem*] hurry off to your own *houses* [*lēbētō*].<sup>37</sup>

Generally speaking, it can be said that in both verses it is shown how people take care, devote time to their own houses and at the same time neglect the house of God.<sup>38</sup> Although the activity of the people towards their houses is shown differently: in verse 4 they are passive, because they sit (*yāšab*) in their houses, and in verse 9b they are active, because they run (*rūs*) to them,<sup>39</sup> both images show that the people focus on their houses and neglect the temple.

Through the similarities discussed above, the verbs in verse 4 and verse 9b form compositional bracketing, thus showing that verses 4–9 constitute a whole.<sup>40</sup> Thus, all verses 4 to 9 should be thematically related, and although verses 5–8 do not explicitly contain a comparison between the houses of men and the

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for *Literary Study*, ed. David E. Orton and R. Dean Anderson, trans. Matthew T. Bliss, Annemiek Jansen, and David E. Orton (Leiden: Brill, 1998), § 766, § 771.

<sup>35</sup> The similarity that results from the same terms is noted by Kessler, *The Book of Haggai*, 112; Craig, *Asking for Rhetoric*, 198, while the emphasis on the second person plural is noted by Meyers and Meyers, *Haggai*, 29–30.

<sup>36</sup> Comparing these verses, Assis (“Composition, Rhetoric and Theology,” 317) refers to verse 4 and verse 9; however, as we have already noted, in this verse *bayit* (house) as the dwelling of the people appears twice, so it is necessary to specify which part of the verse is meant.

<sup>37</sup> Assis, “Composition, Rhetoric and Theology,” 315. The author gives both verses in Hebrew and English, but here only the English version is given, along with the author’s emphasis and, in square brackets, the transcribed Hebrew words that make the chiasm. The letters “a, b, b’, a’” were added to clarify the chiasm structure.

<sup>38</sup> Kessler, *The Book of Haggai*, 112; Wolff, *Haggai*, 47; Craig, *Asking for Rhetoric*, 198.

<sup>39</sup> Assis, “Composition, Rhetoric and Theology,” 317. He also notes that the author of the Book of Haggai draws on the common contrast between *hālak* and *rūs* by exaggerating and substituting walking for running.

<sup>40</sup> Meyers and Meyers, *Haggai*, 30.

house of God, their analysis, as well as the reference to the entire content of the Book of Haggai, should help better understand the message of verses 4 and 9.<sup>41</sup>

### *Bayit* in Hag 1:9a and parallels throughout the whole book

The first part of verse 9 is a summary of what has already been said in verse 6 – the work of the people does not bring about the desired effect.<sup>42</sup> In addition, the verses are linked by the same repeated words: ‘much’ (*harbēh*) – ‘little’ (*mē‘āṭ*).<sup>43</sup> Verse 6 enumerates five actions that people undertake for themselves. This enumeration shows that whatever people do, they do it out of concern for themselves, whereas they do nothing for God. It is noteworthy, however, that their actions are ordinary actions, not differing from the actions taken by other people in their era, which are aimed at sustaining life, rather than living in luxury.<sup>44</sup>

If we consider all occurrences of people's houses from the perspective of verse 6, we can say that *bayit* does not necessarily mean the building alone,

<sup>41</sup> The word *bayit* appears in verse 8 to denote temple, but it is not directly juxtaposed with the houses of people, as it is in verse 4 and verse 9. However, such a comparison exists, but in a wider context.

<sup>42</sup> Wolff, *Haggai*, 47.

<sup>43</sup> Boda, *Haggai*, 92; Wolff, *Haggai*, 47.

<sup>44</sup> There are different interpretations of the third stich (clause): (i) people drink but do not quench their thirst, (ii) people drink but are unable to get intoxicated because they have too little of the alcoholic beverage. The former interpretation can be supported by the fact that previous verses include a reference to food that does not satiate, and the latter by the fact that throughout the Bible *šakar* means ‘to be drunk’, if only in a metaphorical sense, see Clines and Elwolde, *Šin-Tāw*, s.v. *škr*. This can also be seen in places where the verbs *šātāh* and *šakar* occur side by side; they mean ‘to drink’ and ‘to get drunk’, rather than ‘to drink’ and ‘to quench thirst’, e.g. Gen 9:21; 2 Sam 11:13; Cant 5:1; Jer 25:27. Furthermore, the stem *škr* used as a noun (*šēkār*) denotes a fermented drink, not any drink, see Clines and Elwolde, *Šin-Tāw*, s.v. *šēkār*. So more arguments support the interpretation of this antithesis as an inability to get drunk. Nevertheless, many commentators favor an interpretation of *šakar* as ‘quenching thirst’, see Boda, *Haggai*, 90–91; Kessler, *The Book of Haggai*, 105; Kim, *Jerusalem in the Achaemenid Period*, 168; Ferdinando Luciani, “Il verbo ‘šakar’ in ‘Aggeo’ 1,6,” *Aevum* 46, nos. 5/6 (1972), 498–501; Petersen, *Haggai*, 49–50; Taylor and Clendenen, *Haggai*, 126; Verhoef, *The Books of Haggai and Malachi*, 61; Wolff, *Haggai*, 28. In contrast, authors that construe the antithesis as ‘intoxication’ include: Alden, *Daniel and the Minor Prophets*, 581; Barker, *Disputed Temple*, 165; Meyers and Meyers, *Haggai*, 26; Moro, *Aggeo*, 96. Meyers and Meyers, *Haggai*, 26 note that at that time getting drunk did not have such negative overtones as it does today.

but man and his affairs.<sup>45</sup> Similarly, the house of God may denote not only the temple alone, but God himself and his affairs. Verse 6 and 9a show how much people do for themselves and yet their work does not yield the expected results. In verse 9a the reason behind it is clearly given for the first time: God no longer helps them, rather actively hinders their work, blowing away (*nāpah*) their poor harvest.<sup>46</sup> The people try to bring the harvest home, they want to fill their houses with it, but God makes the house remain empty. We can see here an announcement of Hag 2:7, where God says: “I will fill this house with glory” (*millē ’tī ’et-habbayit hazzeh kābôd*). Whether we understand glory (*kābôd*) as material riches or God’s presence,<sup>47</sup> these verses show that it is contingent on God whether the house is empty or full.

Further on, in Hag 1:11, God explicitly admits that He is the cause of the people’s material hardship. The author uses a wordplay on the stem *hṛb*. The people allow His house to be *hārēb* (vv. 4 and 9), so He calls for *hōreb* (v. 11) on anything that could give the people any benefit. One may be surprised by the disproportion – one small, limited place is forgotten, and as a consequence God not only affects large areas of land with drought and destruction, but also renders any work of the people fruitless. However, the further parts of this book reveal that this disproportion can also be seen in a reversed situation; when people decided to put some effort into rebuilding the house of God, He came to bless their work (2:15–19).

Verses 1:6, 9; 2:7, 15–19 demonstrate that in order for people’s work to be fruitful and for them to meet their basic needs, God must bless them, and God will bless them when they take care of His house, that is, His affairs and God Himself.

<sup>45</sup> The word *bayit* has a broad meaning. It denotes not only house as a physical structure, but also more broadly as a household, a place of residence in general, e.g. by the dead, i.e. a grave; it also denotes people who are connected by blood ties (family, lineage, ancestry), see David J.A Clines and John F. Elwolde, eds., *Bêt-Wāw*, vol. 2 of *The Dictionary of Classical Hebrew* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995), s.v. *bayit*. Kessler (*Book of Haggai*, 138) interprets it as a synecdoche.

<sup>46</sup> God’s action of blowing (Clines and Elwolde, *Šin-Tāw*, s.v. *nph*) demonstrates the power of God, who does not need to exert any effort to thwart the plans of humans.

<sup>47</sup> Kessler, *The Book of Haggai*, 181.

### Bayit in Hag 1:9

It was already mentioned in the introduction to this article that in verse 9 the word *bayit* occurs three times – twice to denote the people's houses and once to denote the house of God. Taking just this word into consideration, this verse can be rendered as follows:

And what you **brought home**, I blew it away.

Why? – oracle of the Lord of hosts – Because **my house** lies in ruins, while you **run**, each to **his own house**.<sup>48</sup>

*wahābē'tem habbayit* wēnāpaḥtî bô

*yá'an meh ně'ūm yhwš šēbā'ōt yá'an bē'tî 'āšer-hū' ḥārēb*

*wē'attem rāšim 'iš lēbētô*

It is noticeable that the house of God is placed in the center of the text and the houses of the people on the outside, which creates an envelope structure with a central element and its bracketing. This structure shows the actions that people perform in relation to their houses in a parallel way: you brought (*wahābē'tem*) – you run (*'attem rāšim*). Both activities express a movement directed towards each person's home, so again the involvement of people in their own affairs is accentuated.

This bringing and running of people to their houses may allude to verse 5 and verse 7. The phrase appears there: *šimū lēbābkem 'al-darkēkem* – literally, “put your heart in your ways.” The phrase “put your heart” (*šim lēb/lēbāb*) means, among other things, ‘take note of’, ‘take into consideration’.<sup>49</sup> By contrast, ‘way’ (*derek*) means metaphorically a manner of doing things.<sup>50</sup> Scholars wonder whether this refers only to reflection on one's conduct or also to the fruits of this conduct, i.e. the failure to produce crops.<sup>51</sup> Regardless of the exact meaning of the idiom, we can see in the word ‘way’ a reference to the activity of people heading to their own houses – bringing [crops] and running. In this

<sup>48</sup> Own translation.

<sup>49</sup> Barker (*Disputed Temple*, 164) quotes examples of this usage, e.g. Job 1:8; 2:3.

<sup>50</sup> Walking in someone else's ways (or way) means to imitate them in good or bad conduct, e.g. 1 Sam 8:3, 5; 1 Kgs 15:26; 22:53; 2 Kgs 22:2; 2 Chr 11:17; 21:12–13; Prov 1:15; 2:20. Particularly noteworthy is the phrase “walk in the ways of the Lord”, which means to keep His commandments, to do His will, as opposed to walking in one's own ways, e.g. 1 Kgs 8:58; 11:33.

<sup>51</sup> Kessler, *The Book of Haggai*, 131; Barker, *Disputed Temple*, 164.

case, we could express the phrase with the words: “Consider/reflect on how you are proceeding! Where do your paths lead you? To the house of God or to your house?” In verse 5 and verse 7 God, through the prophet, calls on the people to consider where their ways lead them, and in verse 9 he himself says what conclusion the people should come to: their ways lead each of them to their own house, instead of to the house of God.

In verse 9 it is also noticeable that *bayit* is each time in the singular, although in verse 4 the houses of people are expressed in the plural (*bēbāttēkem*), so here too the author may have used the plural. It seems that the use of the singular, as well as the addition of possessive suffixes, is intended to highlight the contrast between the house of God defined as ‘my house’ (*bēti*) and the house of every man defined as ‘his house’ (*lēbētō*). The contrast is stronger than in verse 4, because no longer is one house juxtaposed with many houses, but one house with another one: the house of God is contrasted with a house of a particular person. This stylistic device draws attention to the individual responsibility of each person for the state of the house of God (*hārēb*).

### *Bayit* in Hag 1:4, 9(x2) versus the call to action from 1:8

In the preceding paragraphs, we could see that every time a house of the people appears in the text, it is accompanied by a verb, expressing what the people do in relation to their houses. People:

- live in their houses (v. 4 – *yāšab*),
- bring [crops] to their households (v. 9a – *bō’* in hiphil),
- run, each to his own house (v. 9b – *rūs*).

By contrast, in verse 8, considered by most commentators to be the most important sentence of the entire section,<sup>52</sup> God tells them to:

- ascend, climb up the mountains (*ālā*),
- bring timber (*bō’* in hiphil),
- build [His] house (*bānā*).

<sup>52</sup> Commentators define the boundaries of this section and its structure differently, and some do not discuss the structure at all. However, those who isolate the structure mostly agree that verse 8 is a culmination, e.g., J. William Whedbee, “A Question-Answer Schema in Haggai 1: The Form and Function of Haggai 1:9–11,” in *Biblical and Near Eastern Studies: Essays in Honor of William Sanford Lasor* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1978), 188 and Kessler, *The Book of Haggai*, 108, 111 (vv. 2–11 as a unit); Assis, “Composition, Rhetoric and Theology,” 311 (vv. 4–11 as a unit).

The actions that people perform towards their own houses are parallel to those actions that God expects of them. We noted earlier that dwelling is closely related to building, because one can only dwell in what has been built, and one builds in order to dwell. Bringing (*bô'* in hiphil) is expressed in exactly the same form (*wahăbē'tem*). Running, like ascending, expresses a movement that implies a greater effort than simple walking (*bālak*). So God calls people to undertake the same or similar actions towards His house that they undertook for themselves.

People's own houses become a competition with God's home, because at a time when God expects them to take care of His home, they take care of their houses. The problem is not material resources or lack of skills. The juxtaposition of the activities that people undertake in relation to their houses with what God expects them to do shows that God wants people to do for Him what they do for themselves, which is what they are capable of doing. So rebuilding the house for God is within their capacity. On the other hand, as Hag 1:2 shows, it is disputable what people should actually devote their time to: their house and their affairs (that is what people find proper) or God's house and His affairs (that is what God claims is right).

## The Book of Haggai versus 2 Sam 7 and 1 Kings

The Book of Haggai contains numerous references to other books or, more broadly, biblical traditions.<sup>53</sup> For the purposes of this paper, which explores the relationship between the building of a house for God and the houses of the people, the most relevant passages seem to be those in 2 Sam 7 and 1 Kings, which refer to both the building of the first temple and the building of the royal palace. Furthermore, in 2 Sam 7 there is a similar wordplay on *bayit*, as in Haggai. Thus, 2 Sam 7 will first be analyzed for the occurrence of the word *bayit*, and the conclusions will be compared with the above analysis of Haggai. The similarities between 1 Kings, especially 1 Kgs 8, and Haggai will then be discussed. Among these similarities, references to 2 Sam 7 will sometimes be included, as sometimes a given motif appears in all three books.

<sup>53</sup> Michael R. Stead enumerates potential references to covenant-related texts, see Michael R. Stead, *Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi: Return and Restoration: An Introduction and Study Guide*, T&T Clark Study Guides to the Old Testament (London: T&T Clark, 2021), 25–26. In contrast, Rimón Kasher explores references to the Book of Ezekiel, see Rimón Kasher, "Haggai and Ezekiel: The Complicated Relations between the Two Prophets," *Vetus Testamentum* 59, no. 4 (2009), 556–82.

### *Bayit* in 2 Sam 7

In 2 Sam 7, the word *bayit* appears 15 times: twice to denote David's dwelling house (vv. 1, 2), four times to denote God's house – the temple (vv. 5, 6, 7, 13) and nine times to refer to David's family – the lineage from which he descended and to his descendants who will be his successors to the throne (vv. 11, 16, 18, 19, 25, 26, 27, 29[x2]). In the above juxtaposition, it can be seen that the different understandings of the word *bayit* divide the text of 2 Sam 7 into three parts: first *bayit* as the house of David, then as the house of God, and finally as family.<sup>54</sup> The information that the house of David had been built occurs only in the first two verses and then the house of God comes to the fore. The transition from one house to the other is made by means of an antithetical parallelism in verse 2:

I dwell in a house of cedar (*'ānōkî yōšēb bēbêt 'ārāzîm*)  
 but the ark of God dwells within tent curtains<sup>55</sup> (*wa'ārôn hā'ēlōhîm yōšēb bētōk hayrî'ā*).

The juxtaposition of David's and God's dwelling conditions highlights the contrast between the durable solid house of the king and the temporary shelter for God. The contrast also reveals that for the people of antiquity, the temple was first and foremost the dwelling of the deity, which was expressed in the language and the description of the temple as 'house'.<sup>56</sup> Thus, it is natural for David to compare his house with God's house and to see the inappropriateness of the current situation in which he, a man, lives in better conditions than God. Although not expressed explicitly, it is clear from the words of the prophet Natan (verse 3) and God (vv. 5–13) that David decided to build a solid house for God to make up the difference. In response, God reasons that it is not David who will build the temple, but his descendant (vv. 5–13). Thus, the word *bayit* in reference to the temple appears four times, twice as many times as the house of David, and exclusively in God's messages. It might seem that the number of occurrences (4 versus 2) and the fact that the temple is directly mentioned only by God indicates the importance of the temple itself and who will build

<sup>54</sup> It should be noted that this division is not disjunctive, since the middle and last parts overlap. *Bayit* in the sense of a family occurs generally in the third part, but also appears in verse 11, while *bayit* as a temple occurs generally in the second part, but also appears in verse 13.

<sup>55</sup> Translation after New American Standard Bible.

<sup>56</sup> Hundley, *Gods in Dwellings*, 131, 134.



it. However, it appears that the mention of both buildings is the starting point for the promise of blessing to David's family and assuring him of the continuity of the dynasty he will establish. God's words in 2 Sam 7 are considered crucial because they constitute the Davidic dynasty.<sup>57</sup> The element that connects the building of the temple with the promise of blessing to David's lineage is the temple builder, who will be a descendant of David.<sup>58</sup> Considering only the linguistic level, the connecting element is also the use of the word *bayit* once in the sense of a building and another time in the sense of family.<sup>59</sup>

### *Bayit* in 2 Sam 7 versus in the Book of Haggai

In 2 Sam 7 *bayit* appears both as a building and in the sense of family, descendants. In Haggai, on the other hand, *bayit* occurs primarily as a term for a building, a house for people or for God, although a metaphorical meaning can also be discerned, denoting all private affairs.<sup>60</sup> The metaphorical meaning may also mean family, although this is an assumption based more on the occurrence of the word *bayit* in other books than on its use in Haggai. So perhaps in both 2 Sam 7 and Haggai *bayit* occurs in the sense of a building and family. However, in 2 Sam 7, a given occurrence of the word *bayit* carries only one of these meanings, while in Haggai one occurrence can denote both realities.

2 Sam 7:2 can be considered a confirmation that the temple was seen as the house of God, so comparing the houses of the people to the house of God in Haggai seems a natural concept to help change the attitude of the hearers towards the house of God.

In this passage (2 Sam 7:2), the author used antithetical parallelism to highlight the contrast between the dwelling of David and the dwelling of God. Similarly, in Haggai, the author used antithetical parallelism to draw attention to the different state in which the house of God (*hārēb*) and the houses of the people (*sēpūnim*) are found. What is different is the reaction of the people of

<sup>57</sup> R. N. Whybray, *The Succession Narrative: A Study of II Samuel 9–20; I Kings 1 and 2*, Studies in Biblical Theology, Second Series 9 (London: SCM Press, 1968), 100.

<sup>58</sup> P. Kyle McCarter, *II Samuel: A New Translation with Introduction, Notes, and Commentary*, The Anchor Bible 9 (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1984), 222.

<sup>59</sup> In this context, Arnold A. Anderson's opinion, according to whom it is difficult to find a link between the prohibition against building the temple and the promise to build the Davidic dynasty, seems surprising, see Arnold A. Anderson, *2 Samuel*, Word Biblical Commentary 11 (Nashville, TN: Nelson, 2000), 118.

<sup>60</sup> See par. "*Bayit* in Hag 1:9a and parallels throughout the whole book" in this paper.

the houses to such disparity; David sees that it should not be the case that God lives in worse conditions than he does and wants to change this by constructing a house for God, while the people in the Book of Haggai, seeing that the temple is in ruins, do not intend to rebuild it (Hag 1:2).

Finally, 2 Sam 7:5 is also worth noting: “Is it you who would build me a house to dwell in?” (*ha’attâ tibneh-llî bayit lēšibtî*). This sentence clearly demonstrates what was shown earlier in Haggai – the close connection between the activity of building and dwelling – the purpose of building is to dwell, and dwelling is only possible because something has been built.<sup>61</sup>

### The Book of 1 Kings versus the Book of Haggai

Although in 1 Kings, when the construction of the king’s temple and palace is mentioned (1 Kgs 5–8), there is no wordplay on the meanings of *bayit* as it was the case in 2 Sam 7, one can see other motifs applied in the Book of Haggai. The fact that Haggai refers directly to the temple built by Solomon entitles one to look for similarities between the two books. God, through the prophet, asks if there is anyone among the people who has seen this house in its former glory (2:3).<sup>62</sup> Furthermore, these words are spoken in the seventh month of the year (2:1), and it was in this month, many years earlier, that Solomon dedicated the temple (1 Kgs 8:2).<sup>63</sup> It may be that the author Haggai specifically gave the date referring the reader to the temple dedication ceremony in order to indicate that there are also other references in his book to the description of that day in 1 Kgs 8.

Solomon’s prayer begins with a reference to 2 Sam 7 (1 Kgs 8:15–18) and especially to 2 Sam 7:13 (1 Kgs 8:19), where God promises that a descendant of David will build His temple. Solomon claims that God has fulfilled what he had announced, because he, the son of David, has become king and built the

<sup>61</sup> See par. “*Bayit* in Hag 1:4” in this paper.

<sup>62</sup> Assis (“Composition, Rhetoric and Theology,” 318) quoting Verhoef (*The Books of Haggai and Malachi*, 54) argues that the phrase ‘this house’ (*habbayit hazzeh*) expresses ‘a hint of contempt’. However, Verhoef does not comment here on the expression ‘this house’, but only writes about the expression ‘these people’: “With the expression ‘these people’ the Lord indicates his displeasure with them.”

<sup>63</sup> This analogy is noted by Verhoef, *The Books of Haggai and Malachi*, 94; Kessler, *The Book of Haggai*, 163; Taylor and Clendenen, *Haggai*, 150.

temple (1 Kgs 8:20).<sup>64</sup> Solomon goes on to ask God to fulfil the second part of His promise, that David's descendants should sit on the throne of Israel (1 Kgs 8:24–26).

In Haggai, too, one finds a reference to a descendant of David who would build the temple. Zorobabel, son of Shealtiel, who is addressed by Haggai, according to 1 Chr 3:16–19 was the grandson of King Jehoiachin and therefore descended from the Davidic line.<sup>65</sup> Furthermore, in the final oracle, Zorobabel is called 'my servant' by God (2:23: 'abdi'). Although the term 'my servant' ('abdi') is applied to many people in the Bible, it most often describes David.<sup>66</sup> Thus, referring to Zorobabel in this way also brings to mind King David.<sup>67</sup>

Another theme common to both 1 Kgs 8 and Haggai is the exodus of the Israelites from Egypt. 1 Kgs 8 mentions this explicitly as many as 5 times (1 Kgs 8:9, 16, 21, 51, 53). In addition, there are references to Moses (1 Kgs 8:9, 56), as well as to the Ark of the Covenant (1 Kgs 8:1, 3–7, 9). The occurrence of the Ark of the Covenant is not surprising, given that the temple was built precisely to house the Ark of the Covenant (1 Kgs 6:19), a sign of God's presence.<sup>68</sup> Already David had noted the disparity between the conditions in which he himself dwells and those in which the ark of God dwells (2 Sam 7:2), and so by referring to the ark he was indirectly referring to the exodus from Egypt. However, a more explicit reference to the Exodus from Egypt can be seen in God's words in 2 Sam 7:6–7, a passage reflected in 1 Kgs 8:16.<sup>69</sup> Furthermore, Solomon explicitly recalls the covenant (*bērit*) made after the Exodus from Egypt (1 Kgs 8:21).

The Book of Haggai also includes a reference to the covenant made after the Exodus from Egypt, although *dābār* appears in lieu the term *bērit* (Hag 2:5). Given the parallels between 1 Kgs 8 and 2 Sam 7 discussed above, this reference to the covenant during the journey out of Egypt may be an indirect reference

<sup>64</sup> Walter Brueggemann, *1 & 2 Kings: A Commentary*, Smyth & Helwys Bible Commentary 8 (Macon, GA: Smyth & Helwys, 2000), 107–8.

<sup>65</sup> In 1 Chronicles the name Jeconiah occurs, instead of Jehoiachin, for the same person. Cf. 2 Kgs 24:6. On how to explain that Zorobabel was the son of Pedaiah according to 1 Chr 3:19, but the son of Shealtiel according to Haggai, see Joyce G. Baldwin, *Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi: An Introduction and Commentary*, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries (London: Tyndale Press, 1972), 41.

<sup>66</sup> Meyers and Meyers, *Haggai*, 68; Taylor and Clendenen, *Haggai*, 196–97.

<sup>67</sup> Similarly Parchem, "Znaczenie i funkcje świątyni," 72.

<sup>68</sup> Brueggemann, *1 & 2 Kings*, 91.

<sup>69</sup> Mordechai Cogan, *1 Kings: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, Anchor Bible 10 (New York: Doubleday, 2001), 282.

to Solomon's dedication of the temple and to the covenant made with David.<sup>70</sup> In this way, the author of the Book of Haggai gives another sign showing that the work of rebuilding the temple is a repetition of a similar event from the time of David and Solomon and is a fulfilment of the covenants made by God with the Israelites and with David.

The similarities discussed above are those more distinct; however, other similarities, though of lesser importance, are also worth discussing.

In 1 Kgs 8:30–43, Solomon enumerates five different situations in which he asks God to hear his prayer. Two of these situations are depicted in Haggai. In 1 Kgs 8:35–36, Solomon presents the lack of rain as a punishment for the sins of the people and asks for rain to be sent if the people repent and pray in the temple. In Hag 1:10, the lack of water from heaven is shown as a punishment for not building the temple. Although the vocabulary is different, the punishment is the same: lack of water. In 1 Kgs 8:35 reference is made to the closing (*'āsar*) of the heavens (*šāmayim*) and the absence of rain (*māṭār*), while in Hag 1:10 the heavens (*šāmayim*) withhold (*kālā'*) dew (*tal*).<sup>71</sup> The perceived similarity between dew and rain is confirmed in passages where both phenomena occur side by side, e.g. Deut 33:2; 2 Sam 1:21; 1 Kgs 17:1. 1 Kgs 17:1 in particular presents the absence of dew and rain (*tal ūmāṭār*) as a punishment.

In 1 Kgs 8:37, between the various miseries that can afflict people, there is also a pair of words translated as 'blight' (*šiddāpôn*) and 'mildew' (*yērāqôn*).<sup>72</sup> It is interesting to note that when referring to cereal diseases, the two words always appear together. There are only five such instances in the entire Bible, one of which is Hag 2:17.<sup>73</sup>

Another motif present throughout the Bible is that of the way (*derek*). Solomon refers to the way understood as a manner of behaving five times (1 Kgs 8:25, 32, 36, 39, 58).<sup>74</sup> In 1 Kgs 8:25 he invokes the promise given to David, but

<sup>70</sup> Although the word 'covenant' (*bērit*) is never used in 2 Sam 7, commentators indicate that God's promise has the characteristics of a covenant, see Anderson, *2 Samuel*, 122.

<sup>71</sup> Dew from the heavens as a blessing from God can also be found, among others, in Gen 27:28, 39; Deut 33:28; Zech 8:12.

<sup>72</sup> According to scholars, *šiddāpôn* denotes a cereal disease resulting from hot easterly winds from the desert, while the disease referred to as *yērāqôn* is the result of damp westerly winds from the Mediterranean. See Boda, *Haggai*, 148; Kim, *Jerusalem in the Achaemenid Period*, 140.

<sup>73</sup> The others are Deut 28:22; 2 Chr 6:28; Amos 4:9. *yērāqôn* can also be found in Jer 30:6, but in the sense of a pale skin color, not a grain disease, so it comes as no surprise that it is not accompanied by *šiddāpôn*.

<sup>74</sup> The word 'way' (*derek*) appears additionally in 8:44 (x2) and 8:48, but not in the sense of a manner of behaving.

in the version from Ps 132:12, which adds a condition to God's unconditional promise from 2 Sam 7:12–16 – David's dynasty will last if (*'im*) his descendants obey the covenant (*b'ērīt*) and commands of God.<sup>75</sup> However, Solomon, to express obedience to God, evokes the image of the way absent both from Ps 132:12 and 2 Sam 7. Haggai also refers to the motif of the way, as a manner of action, in the idiom “Put your hearts in your ways!” (Hag 1:5, 7). This idiom appears twice, forming a compositional bracketing around the misfortunes that befell the people of the province of Yehud (Hag 1:6). The figure is intended to emphasize that all misfortunes are the result of walking the wrong path, i.e. doing wrong. In Haggai, this inappropriate conduct resulting in punishment is the failure to rebuild the temple. The dependence of failure on wrongdoing also appears in other words of the prophet Haggai, where the motif of the way is not used (Hag 1:9–11; 2:15–17). The principle of retribution and bearing the consequences of wrongdoing also resounds in Solomon's prayer; it is expressed both in the motif of the way (1 Kgs 8:32, 39) and explicitly by naming misfortunes as the result of sin (1 Kgs 8:35, 46).

In addition to the above, a few more parallels can be mentioned. 1 Kgs 8:11 says that “the glory of the Lord had filled the house of the Lord” (*mālē' kēbôd-yhwh 'et-bêt yhwh*). A similar expression occurs a few more times in the Bible (e.g. 2 Chr 5:14; 7:2; Ezek 43:5; 44:4), including in Hag 2:7: “I will fill this house with glory” (*millē'tî 'et-habbayit hazzeh kābôd*).<sup>76</sup> In 1 Kgs 8:57 Solomon expresses the wish: “May the Lord, our God, be with us!” (*yēhî yhwh 'ēlohênû 'immānû*). On the other hand, in Haggai, God twice assures his hearers through the prophet that he is with them (Hag 1:13; 2:4: *'anî 'ittēkem*).

In 1 Kgs 8, Solomon asks that foreigners also recognize Yahweh God and His temple (1 Kgs 8:43, 60). By saying that foreigners will pray at the site he implies that the temple of Yahweh God will become a place of pilgrimage for foreign, non-Jews as well (1 Kgs 8:41–42). A gentle allusion to this might be Hag 2:7: “I will shake all the nations, so that the treasures of all the nations will come in” (*wēhir'aštî 'et-kol-haggôyim ūbā'û hēmdat kol-haggôyim*). The book does not explain how the precious objects will arrive at the temple – as spoils of war,<sup>77</sup> tribute<sup>78</sup> or brought personally as a gift.<sup>79</sup> Commentators point out

<sup>75</sup> Cf. Brueggemann, *1 & 2 Kings*, 108–9.

<sup>76</sup> This similarity is also noted by Boda, *Haggai*, 125; Kim, *Jerusalem in the Achaemenid Period*, 227.

<sup>77</sup> Verhoef, *The Books of Haggai and Malachi*, 103.

<sup>78</sup> Meyers and Meyers, *Haggai*, 53; Ackroyd, *Exile and Restoration*, 161.

<sup>79</sup> Herbert G. May, “This People' and 'This Nation' in Haggai,” *Vetus Testamentum* 18, no. 2 (1968), 196, <https://doi.org/10.2307/1516915>.

that this phrase is echoed in Isa 60–66, where it is mentioned that the wealth of other nations will reach Jerusalem (e.g. Isa 60:5).<sup>80</sup> Although the passage in Isaiah fails to explain the reason why the valuables will be in Jerusalem, it does indicate that they will be brought personally by strangers. In Isa 60:3 it is explicitly stated that “nations will come to your light”,<sup>81</sup> therefore not only valuables (Isa 60:5) but also people. Given this reference, it is possible that the author of the Book of Haggai was referring to the pilgrimage of foreign nations to the temple in Jerusalem, as Solomon did in 1 Kgs 8.

Another potential reference to Solomon’s building activities may be the term *špūnīm* (Hag 1:4) discussed earlier. In Haggai, the author uses it to describe the state in which the houses of the people are.<sup>82</sup> In 1 Kings, on the other hand, words based on the same root (*špn*) refer to the cedar wood finishing of Solomon’s temple and palace (1 Kgs 6:9; 7:3, 7). The stem *špn* appears in the Hebrew Bible, apart from Hag 1:4, still in Deut 33:21; 1 Kgs 6:9, 15; 7:3, 7; Jer 22:14. In 1 Kings and in Jeremiah it occurs in descriptions of buildings, more specifically in images of the royal palace or temple. Perhaps the author of the Book of Haggai purposely used such a rare term, found mainly in 1 Kings, to create another reference to the figure of Solomon and his building activities.

Although many elements from the above parallels do not directly address the issue of antagonism between the houses of men and the house of God in Haggai, yet many references to Solomon and the wordplay on the word *bayit* referring to David indicate that the reference to these kings may have played a significant role in the message of the prophet Haggai. Not only did the prophet make his audience aware that the promises and responsibilities incumbent on David’s descendants also applied to Zorobabel and his contemporaries, but he also indirectly portrayed David and Solomon as examples to follow. Their attitude to God and His temple was diametrically opposed to that of the people of the province of Yehud.

## Conclusions

In the Book of Haggai, the people’s houses never occur independently, but always in antithetical parallelism, in contrast with the house of God. Such a rhetorical device shows the houses of men as a competition to the house of God. According to the book, the obstacle that prevents the rebuilding of the

<sup>80</sup> Boda, *Haggai*, 125; Kessler, *The Book of Haggai*, 180–81.

<sup>81</sup> Translation after New American Standard Bible.

<sup>82</sup> See par. “*Bayit* in Hag 1:4” in this paper.

temple is neither an insufficient number of people nor a lack of time, material resources or skills. The obstacle is only a misjudgment of the situation by the people, who think that their present time should be devoted to their houses and their affairs, and not to the affairs of God. Their selfish priorities, however, makes them unable to take even basic care of themselves because God refrains from blessing their work as a result of the fact that people fail to do what God expected them to do, taking care instead of what they themselves deem necessary. The responsibility for the temple being in ruins lies not only with the leaders of the nation, but also with each individual. The time and strength that each of them should devote to God's affairs, they devote to themselves. Thus, the house of each person takes priority over the house of God, because people are not able to attend to both at the same time, they have to make a choice.

On the other hand, the reference to the situation of David and Solomon shows that it is not wrong on the part of people to have built houses for themselves. Also David first built a house for himself before he thought of building a house for God. In Solomon's case, the order is not entirely clear whether he built the temple and then the palace in succession or simultaneously.<sup>83</sup> What is certain is that he built both a house for himself and the house for God. Some believe that the narrative of the construction of the temple and the palace in 1 Kgs 5–7 was conducted in such a way as to show the two buildings in opposition to each other and to prove that Solomon devoted more resources and time to the construction of his secular buildings than to the construction of the temple.<sup>84</sup> However, it should be noted that the author of 1 Kings never condemns Solomon for such behavior. On the contrary, the king is portrayed in a positive way. Thus, the reference to both kings demonstrates that there is nothing wrong when people build their houses. What is wrong, however, is that they continue to care only for their houses and do not intend to see to God's house. Unlike David, they barely recognize that this is the right time to change their behavior. Through numerous references to David and Solomon, Haggai shows his listeners that it is possible to reconcile their affairs with those of God and that the two need not collide, need not compete. It is enough that his listeners, like David and Solomon, obey God and do what God expects of them, according to His judgement and not their own, and then God will bless their work and their affairs.

<sup>83</sup> Richard D. Nelson, *First and Second Kings*, Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1987), 45.

<sup>84</sup> Paul R. House, *1, 2 Kings*, The New American Commentary 8 (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman, 1995), 130; Iaian W. Provan, *1 and 2 Kings*, New International Biblical Commentary 7 (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1995), 69–70.

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