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From Ruined House to Ruined Land (Haggai 1:9–11)

Examination of the Impact of Ritual Practices on the Environment

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Abstract

The book of Haggai is among the finest examples of prophetic literature where various issues concerning nature and the environment are thoroughly addressed. Ecologically sensitive interpretations of the book of Haggai are scarce, and those few that are made emphasize two primary causes for the natural disaster of that time. On the one hand, Kessler attributes ecological crisis to socio-political and economic factors, while on the other hand, Meadowcroft and Jieun suggested a close connection between natural calamity and the state of the temple. Even though these scholars established a firm ground on which other ecological readings of Haggai should build, they have not done much on the interconnectedness between ritual activities and ecological well-being, which is clearly emphasized in this book. This paper revisits the ecological crisis delineated in Haggai by focusing on the function of two rituals: the ritual of offering (Hag 2:10–14) and the ritual of laying a foundation (Hag 2:15–19). Utilizing an approach based on ritual studies (Ronald L. Grimes) within the framework of an ecologically sensitive reading of Haggai (Christopher J. H. Wright), this paper demonstrates the crucial role that rituals play in shaping the natural world. On the one hand, infelicitous rituals of offering lead to nature's suffering, while on the other hand, felicitous foundation-laying rituals contribute to its flourishing. While contemporary secular ecologists emphasize the importance of caring for the environment through physical actions, an eco-theological reading of Haggai suggests taking a further step: both our deeds and moral obligations to practice life-affirming rituals directly impact the natural world.

1. Ecology and Ritual in the Book of Haggai

One of the main trends in the ecological research in recent decades has been appropriation of diverse interdisciplinary approaches to address complex environmental issues. This tendency among ecologists necessitated innovative integration of insights from different fields, including psychology, economics, and other social sciences (Kawall 2017, 22). It is therefore not surprising that a growing number of ecological concerns have been also taken up by biblical scholars whose research underscore the relevance of Scripture in addressing contemporary ecological issues.[1] The primary distinction between secular approaches and these "eco-theological"[2] perspectives is that the latter grant religious considerations a significant role within the ethical dialogue surrounding environmental issues.[3]

As part of their eco-theological interpretation of the Hebrew Bible, scholars of the Old Testament have also paid attention to the book of Haggai which is among the finest examples of Old Testament prophetic literature where environmental concerns are thoroughly addressed. In addition to the evident theological concerns with the reconstruction of the temple, Haggai also addresses a series of ecological issues that have been noticed by scholars. These environmental concerns were first identified and observed by Meadowcroft in his article titled "A Desolate Land, People, and Temple" (Meadowcroft 2008) and subsequently explored by Jieun in his recently published dissertation "Jerusalem in the Achaemenid Period" (Jieun 2016). Meadowcroft carefully delineates the interconnections between the people, the land, and the temple that

[1] An explosion of research in the fields of Old Testament studies and contemporary environmental ethics started with the work of McDonagh, Bradley, Murray, and Osborn, and was then continued by Marlow and Davis in the last two decades. See McDonagh 1986; Bradley 1990; Murray 1992; Osborn 1993; Davis 2009.

[2] The term "eco-theology" is used in this paper to refer to studies of environmental topics that take into account the Christian Scriptures. For a more detailed discussion on this, see Marlow 2009, 82–84.

[3] This is not to say that secular ecological ethicists do not recognize the positive influence of religion on environmental ethics. In her ground-breaking work, Marlow 2009, 4, cites the statement made by the World Bank Programme on Faiths and Environment: "[r]eligious organisations and leaders can play a role in influencing peoples' perspectives on [the environment] . . . based upon and rooted in their own understanding of the relationship between humanity and the rest of nature."

are rhetorically and purposefully emphasized by Haggai (Hag 1:6, 9–11). He suggests that Haggai, among other considerations, also establishes connection between dilapidated state of the Yahweh's temple and desolated land on the premise that the sanctuary ought to be perceived as a communal entity (Meadowcroft 2008, 60–62) and a metaphor for the entirety of the created order (ibid., 62–64).

Similarly, Jieun argues that there is a close relationship between temple and agrarian state of affairs. He demonstrates that the temple played the central role in the management of agrarian economy in the ancient Near East by means of collection and distribution of agricultural produce as well as management of other administrative tasks related to agriculture (Hag 1:1, 5–6, 7–8) (Jieun 2016, 47–54; 151–200). Thus, both, Meadowcroft and Jieun, emphasize the relationship between the temple and the ecological state of affairs on the ground of conceptualization of the temple as a communal entity, a metaphor for the entire created order, and an administrative center for the management of the agricultural economy.

Both of these two studies lay a solid ground upon which subsequent ecotheological readings of Haggai should build. However, although Jieun and Meadowcroft emphasize a close relationship between religion – particularly the temple as the locus of religious practices – and ecology, they have not explored the interplay between ritual activities and environmental concerns.[4] This lack of attention to the impact that rituals have on the agricultural land is quite surprising particularly considering their intrinsic connection to the temple, the significant role played by both rituals and environment in the book of Haggai, as well as rituals' efficacy and constructive power. Moreover,

[4] One of the rare studies which explores the interconnectedness between Israel's cult and ecological concern is Morgan's PhD dissertation, which was supervised by Francesca Stavrakopoulou. Morgan there argues that animal sacrifice is a means of cleansing pollution from the human community and the land, that such offerings actual aim to restore the delicate balance between chaos and creation. For more details, see Morgan 2010a, especially chapter 2, pp. 89–142. This chapter has been published as Morgan 2010b. However, scholarly work on the interconnectedness between ritual activities and the natural environment still remains to be done in the prophetic literature of the Old Testament. Even an excellent volume such as *The Oxford Handbook of Ritual and Worship in the Hebrew Bible*, recently published by Oxford University Press, does not address this crucial subject matter. For further details, see Balentine 2020.

the resurgence of interest into interconnectedness between ritual and environment among contemporary ritual theorist coupled with the prevalence of this concept in the ancient Near East underscores the necessity of investigating these two themes in Haggai.[5] The present paper thus seeks to demonstrate the potential for the fruitful work that can be done by employing an interdisciplinary approach which integrates insights from exegesis, environmental ethics, and ritual studies to explore the texts about food, agriculture, and the natural environment as they appear in close relation to themes of the religious rituals in Haggai. The paper aims to demonstrate that attitude towards moral obligations regarding ritual practices and their felicitous or infelicitous nature has a significant impact on the well-being of the environment.

To achieve these objectives, the discussion in this paper unfolds in the following manner: in the next section I will present my interdisciplinary method for studying the interrelationship between ritual practices and the state of nature as described in the book of Haggai. This will provide an important methodological framework for the ecological reading of Haggai that will be presented in the second section of this paper. Once the environmental issues described in Haggai are discussed, this paper will move to an examination of two ritual practices described in Hag 2:10–14 and 2:15–19. Finally, I will present mutual connection between ritual practices and ecological state of affairs as carefully portrayed by Haggai.

2. Standing on Haggai's Soil: The Ground where Ecological Concerns Meet Ritual Matters

In order to examine the question of impact of ritual practices on well-being of the nature through studying selected prophetic texts about nature and ritual from the book of Haggai, a methodology suitable for this task must first be

[5] The intricate relationship between ritual practices and ecological ethics is multifaceted and can be analyzed through the lens of the three principal schools of ethical thought. Firstly, rituals both reflect and shape the moral norms of society (Rappaport 1999, 126), including those related to nature. Secondly, rituals play a significant role in constructing and influencing ecological realities (Lambek 2015, 22). Lastly, rituals contribute to the formation of the character of their participants (MacIntyre 1984, 187), which includes character traits associated with attitudes towards the well-being of nature.

established. This methodology is composed of three different but interconnected and mutually dependent, segments. First, since this study is primarily focused on the question about relationship between natural environment and ritual practices as described in the book of Haggai, the method is in the first place exegetical. An essential characteristic of this exegetical approach is that it is not meant to be exhaustive since it focuses particularly on this specific theme.

Secondly, my investigation of interrelationship between ritual practices and well being of the environment takes into account certain insights from contemporary ecological theories. I use a holistic environmental approach which focuses on the whole ecosystem including its non-living elements such as soil and air, as well as water and other gasses.[6] Furthermore, it must be noted that the approach taken in this paper is slightly different from the method suggested by the Earth Bible Project since it challenges it's principles of voice, mutual custodianship, and the principle of resistance.[7] Rather, my approach is closer to the one developed by Christopher J.H. Wright who delineates ecological concerns addressed in the Old Testament by using a "creation triangle" of God, humanity, and the earth (Wright 1992a, 104–106).[8] This method has been already successfully used in ecological reading of the prophetic literature in the writings of Hilary Marlow (Marlow 2009). Thus, Wright and Marlow's model provides a "relational matrix" for investigating the ethical implications of different interrelationships within this triangle.

Thirdly, having in mind that this paper examines efficacy of ritual practises in relation to the natural environment, it is helpful to take into consideration additional insights from ritual studies. It must be mentioned at the outset that my study of rituals focuses on both their primary elements – such as actions, actors, places, times, and objects – as well as their dynamics (Grimes 2014, 232,

[6] For a brief definition of holistic environmental ethics, see Kawall 2017, 17–19.

[7] My study is also concerned with the authoritative final form of the text as opposed to the reader-response hermeneutic promoted by EBP team. Furthermore, I do not follow the other three principles of EBP: the principle of voice (EBP's second principle); the principle of mutual custodianship (EBP's fifth principle); and the principle of resistance (EBP's sixth principle). For the solid critique of EBP's method, see Marlow 2009, 86–95. See also Horrell 2011, 257–259.

[8] He is followed by Marlow 2009, 110, who renamed the "creation triangle" an "ecological triangle."

294). Following Grimes's framework, this paper builds on hypothesis that rituals not only "are" but they also "change" and "do" (Grimes 2014, 294). Keeping in mind that the purpose of this paper is to examine interrelationship between ritual practises and well-being of nature, I will focus on ecological efficacy of rituals. This task will be accomplished by focusing on the dynamics of felicitous and infelicitous rituals. In his seminal work on rituals, Grimes distinguishes between these two fundamentally different categories and elucidates the "possibility of ritual failure, which is seldom taken account of in theories of ritual" (Grimes 1990, 187). This phenomenon is also evident in the Hebrew Bible, where numerous instances of infelicitous rituals are recorded (notable examples include Exod 32; Lev 10:1–7; 1 Kgs 12:25–33; Isa 1:10–17; Jer 6:20; Amos 4:4–5; Mal 1:6–14), in contrast to rituals that are prescribed and affirmed by Yahweh (e.g., Lev 1–7; Isa 19:19–22; Ezek 40–48; Zech 8:20–23; Mal 3:3–4).[9] Accordingly, the main question in relation to the rituals described in the book of Haggai will be do these rituals affect well-being of natural world.

It is the work of Roy Rappaport that shed an important light on this interrelationship between ritual practices and ecology. In his seminal work *Pigs for the Ancestors*, Rappaport investigates the ritual of pig slaughter by tribes of Papua New Guinea and suggest that one of the functions of this rituals is a regulation of local ecosystem: the pigs are ritually killed in order to balance the population of the land and as a prevention against overgrazing it.[10] An important difference to Rappaport's approach is that I take into consideration not only how rituals biophysically affect nature but also what is a role of Yahweh in that relationship between ritual and nature (Wright 2004, 104–106). It is precisely that issue that is addressed by the book of Haggai.

In summary, the aforementioned methodological frameworks that deal with the question of interrelationship between rituals and ecology in the book

[9] One of the most comprehensive works on the infelicitous nature of rituals in the Hebrew Bible, particularly within its prophetic section, is Eidevall 2012, 77–172. Although Eidevall does not explicitly use the term "infelicitous," he dedicates an entire section of his book to the issue of cult-critical passages in the Hebrew Bible.

[10] Rappaport 2000, 4, says that "particularly in the context of a ritual cycle, [ritual] operates as a regulating mechanism in a system, or set of interlocking systems, in which such variables as the area of available land, necessary lengths of fallow periods, size and composition of both human and pig populations, trophic requirements of pigs and people, energy expended in various activities, and the frequency of misfortunes are included."

of Haggai are united into one coherent method as portrayed in the figure below:

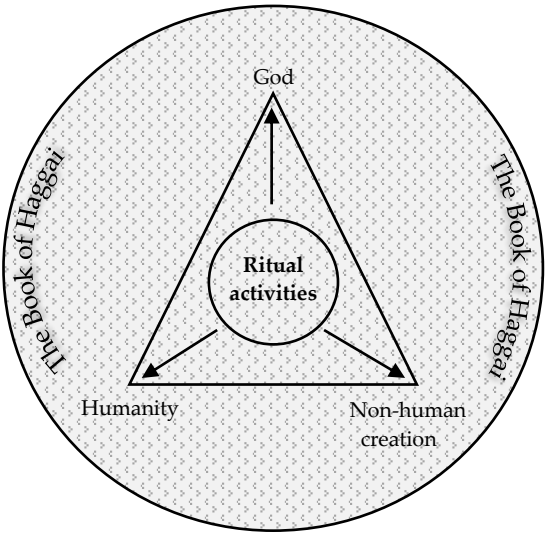

Figure 1: The Impact of Rituals on the Environment

According to this model, the Israelite ritual activities play central role in the ecological matrix between God, humanity, and the non-human creation. In ritual activities all three elements meet: humans are performing rituals, rituals include non-human creation (animals, food, etc.), and religious rituals are always related to God. Consequently, ethical or unethical behaviour[11] in ritual activities affects all three sides of the ecological triangle.

Several supplementary remarks concerning the interdisciplinary approach delineated above warrant consideration.[12] Even though I use *contemporary* ecological ethics and ritual theory to study *ancient* biblical passage this does not necessarily mean that contemporary ideas will be imposed upon the book of Haggai that is antecedent to them. Quite contrary. My interdisciplinary ap-

[11] The terms "ethical" and "unethical" ritual behavior correspond to the distinction between felicitous and infelicitous rituals as previously described. See immediately above.

[12] Here I build on the work of Smith-Christopher who developed very similar procedural methodology. For more details see, Smith-Christopher 2012.

proach begins with the prophetic book under investigation which clearly address the theme of interrelationship between ritual activities and the environment (Hag 2:10–19). This naturally leads me, then, to explore what do ecology and ritual theory have to say about this connection between ritual practises and the environment. Once I establish that ecologist and ritual theorists recognize that ritual practises affect the environment, I return to the biblical passages under investigation with the framework of questions which should be examined in the biblical text. It is important to mention that the aforementioned methodological framework is not rigid by means of suggesting "contemporary laws" how different rituals *must* affect natural world and then imposing them to the world of Haggai. Rather my methodological framework suggests that there is *potential* interrelationship between rituals and nature, and that question then deserves to be examined in the prophetic book. This still leaves open a wide plethora of possibilities how this dynamic relationship between ritual activities and the environment function in Haggai.

Finally, once the examination of the book of Haggai is finished, one may wish to return to contemporary ecology and ritual theory to shed a new light on how this issue is addressed in the book under investigation. This integrative approach elicits the exploration of complementary perspectives and enriches the discourse on the particular theme by drawing upon the insights inherent in the biblical books.

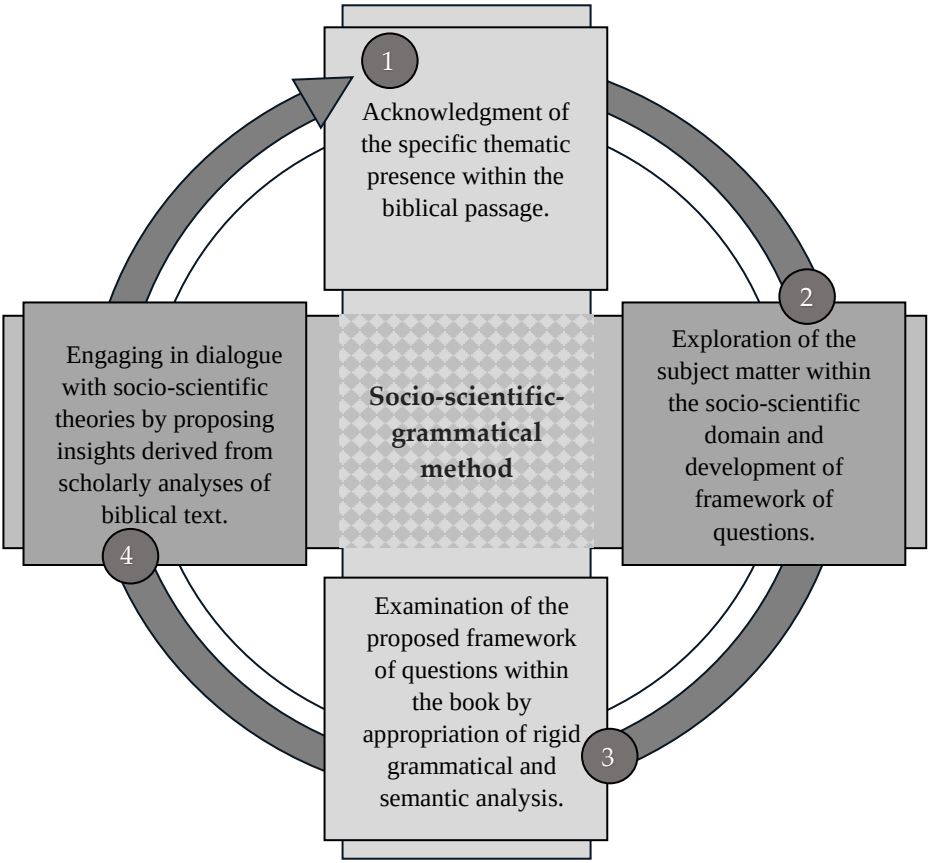

Figure 2: Socio-scientific grammatical method

The graph presented above delineates the entirety of the procedural framework. In sum, the main purpose of appropriation of insights from ritual studies and ecology is to develop the new framework of questions that will be examined in the book of Haggi and not to impose specific dynamics that has been suggested in the context not related to this book. The process augments the ongoing discourse, thereby enriching the scholarly findings of both biblical scholars and social scientists.

3. Environmental Crisis and Flourishing Prospects for Future in the Book of Haggai

This first section that deals with the biblical text of the book of Haggai will focus on examination of a number of passages[13] about food, agriculture, and the environment. The aim is not to be exhaustive in exegesis but rather to focus on the description of non-human creation in the context of prophetic ethics. Haggai's explicit (double underlined) and implicit (single underlined) references to natural world and environmental phenomena are outlined in the table below:

Haggai	Nature's Physical Space
Hag 1:6	זרעתם הרבה והבא מעט you have sown much, but harvested little
Hag 1:8	עלו ההר והבאתם עץ go up to the mountain and bring wood
Hag 1:9	פנה אל־הרבה והנה למעט you looked for much but, behold, it came little
Hag 1:10	כלאו שמים מטל והארץ כלאה יבולה the heavens have withheld the dew and the land has withheld its produce
Hag 1:11	ואקרא חרב על־הארץ ועל־ההרים ועל־הדגן ועל־התירוש ועל־היצהר ועל אשר תוציא האדמה ועל־האדם ועל־הבהמה And I called for a drought upon the field, upon the hills, upon the grain, upon the new wine, upon the unmanufactured oil, upon whatever the arable ground produces, upon people, and upon animal
Hag 2:6	עוד אחת מעט היא ואני מרעיש את־השמים ואת־הארץ ואת־הים ואת־החרבה Once more in a little while, I am going to shake the heavens and the earth, the sea also and the dry land

[13] The English translation of the Hebrew Bible provided in this research was initially prepared for an Intermediate Hebrew course at McMaster Divinity College in the fall of 2016. It was subsequently refined using insights from Kessler 2002a.

Hag 2:16	מהיותם בא אל־ערמת עשרים והיתה עשרה בא אל־היקב לחשף חמשים פורה והיתה עשרים From that time, when one came to a heap of twenty, but there were ten. When one came to the wine vat to draw out fifty measures, but there were twenty
Hag 2:17	הכיתי אתכם בשדפון וביקון ובברד את כל־מעשה ידיכם I struck you and all the works of your hands with blight and mildew and hail
Hag 2:19	העוד הזרע במגורה ועד־הגפן והתאנה והרמון ועץ הזית לא נשא מן־היום הזה אברך Is seed still in the barn? And have even the vine, the fig, pomegranate, and olive tree not yielded (fruit)? From this day on I will bless you.

In the book of Haggai, thirty-two references to the natural world are found, and they encompass both explicit and implicit mentions. Specifically, twenty-five references are explicit, while seven are implicit in their nature. The references can be categorized into one of the following four categories: (1) description of *ecological spaces* such as fields (Hag 1:11), lands (Hag 1:10; 2:6), arable grounds (Hag 1:11); mountains and hills (Hag 1:8, 11), forest (Hag 1:8), and two more general references to the totality of all eco-system (the heavens and the earth, sea, and dry land [Hag 1:10; 2:8]); (2) portrayal of *agricultural produces* or yields by using general term "produce" (Hag 1:10, 11), implicit references to produces by appropriation of verbs "sown" and "harvested" (Hag 1:6) as well as terms "much" and "little" (Hag 1:9); and explicit references such as "grain" (Hag 1:11); wine (Hag 1:11, 2:16, 19), oil, (Hag 1:11), figs, pomegranates, and olive (Hag 2:19); (3) usage of *climate and meteorological* references such as dew (Hag 1:10), draught (Hag 1:11) as well as blight, mildew, and hail (Hag 2:17); (4) and finally, appropriation of references to *animal world* (Hag 1:11).

Initiation of discourse on environmental crisis commences in Hag 1:6. Although the word "land" is not explicitly mentioned in this verse, the phrase "you have sown much" (זרעתם הרבה), implicitly alludes to agricultural fields

and their produce.[14] This assertion is affirmed by Kessler, who correctly noted that this statement about sowing and reaping is just one of five examples of unfulfilled expectations, all of which are related to agricultural activities and land.[15] The land is alluded to in the context of the portrayal of a dysfunctional ecosystem. The expectations of people remain unmet, since they are described with the words "you have sown much but harvested little" (זרעתם הרבה והבא מעט). Thus, by reference to how much produce was received at that time, the verse addresses the harvest with low product values (Jacobs 2017, 49-51). The notion is reaffirmed once again in verse 9 by using the same terms הרבה ("much") and מעט ("little") in the context of the description of a poor harvest.

The next type of nature's space mentioned in Haggai is the hill (ההר) to which people were sent to bring wood (Hag 1:8). Thus, besides agricultural land, Haggai also described the mountain forests ecoregion. Based on Neh 8:15–16, Verhoef argued that there were olive, myrtle, and palm tress available on the hills surrounding Jerusalem and were used among other things for making booths (Verhoef 1987, 65). However, it is debatable whether this exact type of wood was in view in Hag 1:8 since it is questionable whether that specific wood would have been sufficient for the project of rebuilding the Jerusalem temple. The cedar tree, renowned for its better quality, greater density, and elongated dimension in comparison to the trees mentioned in Neh 8 seems much more fitting for the construction of the temple.[16] Furthermore, if

[14] See for instance, Meyers and Meyers 1987, 1–8, 25–27, who explained that the verb זרע is used most of the time for agricultural activities related to field crops and concluded that in the context of this verse, "the introductory clause mentioning sowing must [therefore] have a more extended meaning, with the basic agrarian chore of seeding a field representing all tasks undertaken to secure a food supply." See also Petersen 1984, 49–50; Kessler 2002a, 131–133; Boda 2009a, 90–91; Jacobs 2017, 50–51. They all connected activities described in this verse as agrarian.

[15] Kessler 2002a, 131–132, emphasized the fact that the whole section is composed of five examples of frustrated expectations of which the first one is the example of sowing much seed and reaping little harvest. The next four are related to eating and not being satisfied, drinking and not being filled, putting garments on and not feeling warm, and finally, labouring and not earning.

[16] Meyers and Meyers 1987, 1–8, 27–28, mentioned that the only tree which grew locally and was suitable for building was *ficus sycomorus*, but that this tree was not adequate for building the temple for two reasons: first, the tree had its origins in Africa and flourished only in the lowlands, which is in sharp contrast with the instruction to go to mountains given in Haggai; second, that type of tree was more adequate for the roofs of houses, not for larger buildings, and could not be polished.

the timber mentioned in this verse is actually cedar, the location of those mountains must have been in Lebanon, close to Sidon and Tyre (Meyers and Meyers 1987, 1–8, 27–28). This interpretation can be supported by Ezra 3:7 which states that in the early stages of the restoration, cedar trees were brought specifically from Lebanon. The fact that the definite article ה ("the") in front of the noun הר ("mountain") in the prophet's command "Go up to the mountain" (עלו ההר) indicates that both the speaker and the audience knew exactly which mountain was in view here and may confirm this point of going to Lebanon, which was a well-known location where people acquired cedar in the time of Cyrus.[17]

The subsequent section where references to natural world are prevalent occurs in Hag 1:9–11, the passage which functions as the climax of the unit comprised of Hag 1:2–11. The portrayal of a dysfunctional ecosystem, which started in Hag 1:6, continues in v. 10 with a description of a certain lack of cooperation between heaven and earth: heaven does not provide "dew"[18] (טל), and hence, the earth cannot yield its expected "produce" (יבול).[19] Sérandour astutely observed that this verse reflects the inextricable connection between heaven and earth (Sérandour 1996, 14–16).[20] The impact on the environment is large in scale, and three different types of landscapes are affected by drought: ארץ ("field"), ההרים ("hills"), and אדמה ("arable ground").[21] As a result, the anticipated abundance of produce from this land, including the grain, olive oil, and new wine, was lacking.[22] Haggai's usage of creational imagery (שמים; ארץ; אדמה; אדם; בהמה) alludes to how widespread and severe the environmental crisis was.[23] The same creational imagery is also used in Hag 2:6.

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[17] Contra Kessler 2002a, 133, who referred to Joüon (§137n) and argued that the article used in front of the singular הר indicates "the local object," assuming that author and hearers both knew which mountain was in view and that the mountain was perhaps in sight.

[18] For the significance of "dew" for agricultural life in Israel, see Verhoef 1987, 74; Meyers and Meyers 1987, 1–8, Kessler 2002a, 139.

[19] For the theme of a contrast between expectation and reality (Hag 1:6, 9), see Kessler 2002a, 136–137. See also Petersen 1984, 51–52.

[20] cf. Kessler 2002a, 139.

[21] See Jacobs 2017, 60–61, who listed entities that were affected by drought and that were marked in the text by the preposition ועל/על ("upon"). See, further, Boda 2009a, 94.

[22] For an in-depth exploration of "recycled" fertility language within the Book of Twelve, see Nogalski 2017, 146–151.

[23] See Boda 2009, 93, who also noted that this text alludes to the Genesis creation story.

In Hag 2:16–19, Haggai once again revisited the question of nature's space and further expanded upon the description given in Hag 1:9–11. Haggai invited the people to recall their past once again (Hag 2:15, 18; cf. 1:5, 7) [24] and to remember how their expectations regarding the yields of grain and wine were not met (Hag 2:16; cf. 1:9).[25] Again, as was the case in chapter 1, the prophet revealed that the main cause for the low yield (50% of grain and 40% of wine) was God who struck "all the works of your hands"(כל־מעשה ידיכם) with blight, mildew, and hail (Hag 2:17).[26] It was very likely that the prophet had the agricultural efforts of the community in view when referring to "all the works of your hands."

However, description of natural world in the book of Haggai, culminates with the delineation of the flourishing prospects for its future. This positive description of the well being of the natural world begins in Hag 2:6–9 in which transformation of the world order should be understood as one that includes transformation of nature's space, as well.[27] Thus, additional description of nature in its idyllic state in the second last section of the book (Hag 2:15–19) does not surprise readers. As it has been already mentioned above, similar to Hag 1:9–11, the first part of this section (vv. 16–17) portrays severe agricultural problems. For this reason, Haggai urged the people to look back on their past once more (Hag 2:15, 18; cf. 1:5, 7) and to recognize how their hopes for abundant grain and wine had fallen short (Hag 2:16; cf. 1:9). This call is affirmed in v. 19, where the prophet invited people to consider the past for the last time (Boda 2009, 149).[28] In contrast to chapter 1, however, Haggai contrasted a dark

[24] Kessler 2002a, 207, emphasized the importance of the preposition "before," which is used here to point to the past. See also, Boda 2009, 146, who explained that the phrase, "give careful thought," has a similar function as the one used in chapter 1 (to invite people to reflect on their past), but here, the phrase is used to invite the community to reflect also on their present and future, not just their past.

[25] Contra Petersen, who understood this passage as the miraculous disappearance of food, Petersen 1984, 90. I follow Boda 2009, 147–148, since the parallel with Hag 1:9 is too strong to be ignored.

[26] For the explanation of these terms, see Boda 2009, 148.

[27] For the lexical links between God's, the people's, and nature's space, see Meadowcroft 2008, 55–58.

[28] Contra Kessler 2002a, 209–210, who claimed that this text is actually a promise about an abundant future and not a reflection on a frustrating past. For the importance of these agricultural products in the everyday life of ancient Israelites, see Petersen 1984, 94.

past with a bright future and promised blessings which would replace the curses as the people began the process of rebuilding the temple. This promise of the bright future is accomplished by using the phrase "from this day on" (מן־היום הזה) in Hag 2:19. The idyllic future can become a reality only because of Yahweh's blessing as previously described in Deut 28 (cf. Mal 3:10–11 (Jacobs 2017, 116). Those blessings and prosperity experienced in agricultural endeavors are intricately linked with the rituals associated with the temple, as will be shown in the next section of this essay.

4. Ritual Activities in Haggai

Keeping in mind that the name of the prophet is related to the idea of feast as well as that every speech of Haggai is given on a date that is associated with an important Jewish festival (Petersen 1984, 44, 62–63, 71–72)[29] – and thus inextricably related to a number of different rituals associated with those festivals – it is not surprise that Haggai pays attention to rituals. He specifically refers to two distinct rituals: (1) offering on the altar (Hag 2:10–14) and (2) the foundation-laying ceremony (Hag 2:18). These two rituals will be briefly described in this section of the paper and furthermore examined in the next section in the context of their relationship to the nature's well-being.

4.1 The Rituals of Offering in Hag 2:10–14

Description of the offering rituals in Hag 2:10–14 is part of the larger section in which the prophet Haggai addresses the priests (2:10–14), the people (2:15–

[29] I am aware that there are scholars who would say that these festivals may not have been celebrated at the time of Haggai and were developed in the post-exilic period. See, for example, Wellhausen 1905, 90–98, who was among the first scholars who proposed that the ritual ceremonies presented in the priestly literature, including festivals, were actually created within priestly circles of the Second Temple. According to him, the existence of the first temple does not necessarily mean that ritual ceremonies including the celebration of festivals existed at that time. Wellhausen was critiqued by a number of scholars including Dillmann 1886, 593–690; Delitzsch 1887, 17; and Kittel 1881, 29–62, 147–162, who argued that the priestly source was created before the destruction of the first temple. In this research, I take the view that legislation given in Leviticus antedated the book of Haggai. For a helpful overview of a number of issues related to the date when festivals were created, see Knohl 2007, 1–45.

19), and the royal house (2:20–23).[30] A careful reading of Hag 2:10–14 reveals that the rituals of offering on the alter have all necessary ritual components that are presented in the table below and further analyzed in this section.

Grimes's Ritual Elements	References to Ritual Elements	Haggai 2:10–14
Ritual action	יקריבו they offer	Hag 2:14
Ritual actors	העם־הזה this people	Hag 2:14
Ritual places	שם there (altar)	Hag 2:14
Ritual times	בעשרים וארבעה לתשיעי on the twenty fourth [day] of the ninth [month]	Hag 2:10
Ritual objects	ואשר יקריבו and whatever they offer	Hag 2:14

It is important to notice that the oracle that is recorded in Hag 2:10–14 is associated with the specific date that serves to mark another important ceremonial ritual that is related to the rebuilding of the temple (Petersen 1984, 44,

[30] Joshua, the high priest, who is mentioned in the previous two sections of the book of Haggai (Hag 1:1–15; 2:1–9), is evidently absent from this section. For the purpose behind this absence, see Boda 2011, 19. Cf. Tiemeyer 2006, 223.

62–63, 71–72. Although Hag 2:10 emphasizes that this speech was given during this important ceremony that was held on the twenty-fourth day of the ninth month, the prophet's address in Hag 2:10–14 is concerned with the rituals from the past and not with the rituals which were actually performed on that very day.[31] Although the temple had not yet been rebuilt, this did not prevent the Yehudites from engaging in ritual activities around a standalone altar, as evidenced in Ezra 3:1–7. In summary, the discussion recorded in Hag 2:10–14, despite taking place on the day of the foundation laying, primarily focuses on rituals that had previously been performed at the temple site. The description of time reference is related to the delineation of the space. In line with the main focus of the book of Haggai, the space where ritual actions described in this section of the book of Haggai took place is the temple site. The adverb שם ("there") is used within the phrase "and whatever they offer there"(ואשר יקריבו שם) and likely refers to the stand-alone altar which was built soon after the first wave of return migration came from Babylon (Ezra 3:1–6) (Jacobs 2017, 104; Boda 2011, 20–21; Kessler 2002a, 208).

Besides ritual time and space, other important ritual elements that are mentioned in the text are actors, actions, and objects. Although Hag 2:11–14 generally focuses on priests, they should be seen here primarily as teachers of ritual issues (Lev 10:10; 22:15–16). The people who participated in the rituals alluded to in Hag 2:10–14 are targeted in Hag 2:14 and are described as "this people" (העם־הזה) and "this nation" (הגוי הזה). Scholars offer different interpretations on the identity of "this people" and "this nation," among which, the most popular are that the people in view are Samaritans[32] or Yehudites (former Judahites).[33] Since both of these two phrases are used in the Old Testament to refer to the people of God and not to Gentiles, the people in view are most likely Yehudites.

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[31] Contra Jacobs 2017, 93–94, who argued that Hag 2:10–23 focuses on the present and future only. However, the phrase "and now" that appears in Hag 2:15 shows that Haggai also has the past in view.

[32] See, for example, Rothstein 1908, 7–11, who suggested that "this people" and "this nation" addressed by Haggai are the Samaritans, mainly based on the usage of the term גוי (here translated by "nation"). His arguments are summarized and critiqued by Tiemeyer 2006, 226–227. Rothstein was followed, among others, by Assis 2006 and Wolff 1988, 93–94.

[33] Among others, see May 1968, 190–197; Koch 1967, 52–66; Tiemeyer 2006, 227–228; Kessler 2002a, 205; and Boda 2011, 20. It must be mentioned that regardless of who the original recipients of

It is ritual actions that are of primary concern here. "All the works of their hands" (כל־מעשה ידיהם) "and whatever they offer" (ואשר יקריבו שם) on the altar are described as "impure" (טמא). The verb יקריבו ("they offer"[34]) is a sacrificial term used regularly in Leviticus and should be understood as a plural transitive referring to the people mentioned in the first part of the sentence, not to the priests. The term is usually used in the context of sacrificial regulations with objects such as different animals and agricultural produce (e.g., Lev 1:13; 2:8) (Boda 2011, 20). The object of the verb in v. 14 – that which is offered – is the phrase "all the work of their hands" (כל־מעשה ידיהם) which, with a minor change of using the second person masculine plural suffix instead of the third person masculine plural suffix, is used again in v. 17 to refer to agricultural produce (Petersen 2003, 82–83).[35] Accordingly, it is likely that the prophet had in view the מנחה offering in this oracle, but the sacrificial activity described by the phrase "and whatever they offer" (ואשר יקריבו) does not exclude the other types of offerings as potential ritual activities referred to by Haggai.

4.2 The Foundation-Laying Rituals in Haggai 2:18

The second ritual activity that is mentioned in the book of Haggai is the foundation-laying ceremony. This ritual plays a crucial role in the Haggai–Zechariah 1–8 corpus, as evidenced by its rhetorical placement at the beginning, middle, and end of this corpus (Hag 2:15, 18; Zech 4:9; Zech 8:9). Although the temple foundation was laid immediately after the decree of Cyrus (539–537 BCE) during the time of Sheshbazzar (Ezra 5:13–16), evidence from Haggai and Zechariah as well as Ezra 3:1–12 indicates that the construction work on the temple foundation needed to recommence under the leadership of Zerubbabel and Joshua in the second year of Darius's reign (Ezra 3:1–12) (Boda 2009, 86). Therefore, it is crucial to acknowledge the distinct stages in the laying of the temple foundation.

Haggai's message were, the identity of those people does not affect the issue of purity and impurity that is discussed in this passage.

[34] The technical term קרב in the Hiphil means "to bring near, offer, present" and is used mostly in Leviticus and Numbers, according to HALOT 1134; DCH §7:308.

[35] The phrase כל־מעשה ידיהם has a variety of usages. Meyers and Meyer 1987, 57, noted that the phrase can indicate "all manner of things produced by human hands (e.g., idols, 2 Kgs 19:18; transgression, Jer 32:30; crafts, Song 7:2), there is a consistent set of occurrences in Deuteronomy which have a clear agricultural intent, Deut 14:29; 16:15; 24:19; 28:12; and 30:9."

The ritual activity is briefly mentioned in Hag 2:15 and 18 but there are other sources of information about this ritual: first, one should keep in mind that this ritual is only one stage in the temple-building project and there are other passages in the book that refer to this project and therefore implicitly shed an important light onto this ritual; (Boda 2006, 231–234)[36] second, some missing elements of this ritual can be reconstructed by making a comparison between this ritual mentioned in Haggai and other ANE traditions related to temple-building projects.[37] As that was case with the rituals of offerings analyzed above, the investigation of the foundation-laying ceremony also commences with the study of its main elements.

Grimes's Ritual Elements	References to Ritual Elements	Haggai 2:10–23
Ritual action	שום־אבן אל־אבן בהיכל יהוה putting stone upon stone in the temple of Yahweh	Hag 2:15
Ritual actors	אקחך זרבבל בן־שאלתיאל עבדי נאם־יהוה I will take you, Zerubbabel, son of Shealtiel, my servant, declares Yahweh	Hag 2:23
Ritual places	בהיכל יהוה In the temple of Yahweh	Hag 2:15
Ritual times	בעשרים וארבעה לתשיעי on the twenty fourth [day] of the ninth [month]	Hag 2:18

[36] Cf. Kessler, 2010.

[37] Richard Ellis and Victor Hurowitz are among the prominent scholars who worked on the ANE practices of temple (re)buildings.

Ritual objects	שום־אבן אל־אבן putting stone upon stone	Hag 2:15

The time of the (re)building of the temple in the ANE was always matter of great importance and was usually initiated and revealed by God.[38] This is also confirmed in the Chronicler's temple building account as well as in the book of Haggai (Boda 2010, 307, 310–312). The dilemma about the time is stated at the outset of the book in Hag 1:2 where Haggai addresses the people's attitude toward this question: "This people says the time has not come, the time for the house of Yahweh to be rebuilt" (לא עת־בא עת־בית יהוה להבנות) (Jacobs 2017, 38–42).[39] This statement reveals people's neglect of the fact that the time for rebuilding of the temple had already arrived. It must be mentioned, however, that the time of the beginning of the building process is related to, but not the same as, the time of the foundation-laying ceremony. In Haggai, this ritual of foundation-laying is situated within the context of events that happened on the twenty-fourth day of the ninth month (Boda 2006, 226–230). Even though Haggai does not give a detailed description of the ritual preparation of the site, it is certain that the second temple was built at the same site where the former temple was located (Ezra 2:68; 3:3, 12; 5:15; 6:3; 9:9). Furthermore, 1 Chr 3:1 precisely delineates the location of the former temple as Mount Moriah the place where Abraham offered Isaac (Gen 22) and where Yahweh appeared to David (Kalimi 1990, 345–362).

The main actors in this ritual were likely priestly and royal figures as that was the case in ANE accounts about ceremonies of rebuilding temples. This is confirmed in Hag 2:10–23, where priests (Hag 2:10–14) and the governor from the Judean royal elite (Hag 2:20–23) play prominent role.[40] The book of

[38] Kessler, 2010, 359–65, built on Hurowitz 1992, 154–167, and explained in the context of the book of Haggai that the time of commencing the building project was taken very seriously. To start the temple-building process at an inappropriate moment would bring a curse to the nation.

[39] For the list of possible reasons why the people did not want to start the rebuilding process and for the question of time and its importance for the book of Haggai, see Kessler 2002b.

[40] Boda 2006, 233–234, carefully noted that both priestly and royal figures appear as addresses in the third section of the book of Haggai.

Haggai emphasizes the importance of the role of civil leadership, which is evident from the last section of the book in which special accent is placed on Zerubbabel. The Passage in Hag 2:18 notes that one of the major ritual actions was "laying the foundation of the temple of Yahweh" (יסד היכל־יהוה) (Kessler 2010, 373). As that was usually the case in other ANE's temple reconstruction projects as well as with the first temple (2 Chr 3:3; 8:16) after the foundation was laid, the ritual included the ceremony of the beginning of building the temple walls. In a similar way Hag 2:15 states that stone was set upon stone in the temple of Yahweh (שום־אבן אל־אבן בהיכל יהוה). It is likely that this verse refers to the *kalu* rite – the placement of the stone that was part of the former temple which would create a physical link with the first temple.[41]

Now when the main elements of both rituals are described, the paper moves to its last and the most important part which will address the question of the efficacy of these two rituals. Even though the efficacy of rituals of offering and foundation-laying ritual is clearly multifaced, the paper will focus on ritual dynamics as it relates to the well-being of the nature since this is the main question that this essay is dealing with.

5. Eco-(Un)friendly Nature of Rituals Described in Haggai

Although I recognize that ecological disaster described in Haggai is partially related to the economic instability of Yehud at that time, my focus in this paper is on ritual activities and their impact on the environment.[42] Thus, the focus of the following section will be on the analysis of the pertinent passages from Haggai and the evident intertextual connections with significant ritual passages from the Pentateuch.[43] It is important to say at the outset, that at the most general level, Haggai makes clear connections between the state of the

[41] See, especially, Ellis, 1968, 26–29, who listed the three ANE sources that describe temple rebuilding where the placement of the first or former brick played a very important role. Ellis is followed by Averbeck 2010, 22–23, 373–374.

[42] For the impact which the economy has on ecology, see Beaton and Maser 2016. For the relationship between economy and ecology in Haggai, see Kessler 2002a, 59–90, 136–140.

[43] The intertextual interpretation of post-exilic prophetic literature is widely accepted and affirmed among scholars. Moreover, this approach is essential for understanding passages concerning ritual practices in Haggai, as they must be examined within the context of their earlier prescriptions in the Pentateuch.

nature and the temple at which ritual activities that are described above were performed.

First, in Hag 1:9, the prophet directly critiques the community and explains that environmental disaster – described in terms of agricultural produces being blown away by Yahweh – happens "because" (יען v. 9) people are busy with their own houses while God's house lies in ruins. Negligence toward Yahweh's house described in v. 9 is furthermore connected ("therefore," על־כן, v. 10) with the draught described in vv. 10–11. Second, Haggai implicitly links the delay in rebuilding the temple to the consequent infertility of the land (Hag 1:2–7) (Whedbee 1978, 188–189) by critiquing the people's wrong priorities. This is primarily accomplished by the recurrence of the phrase "set your hearts on your ways" (שימו לבבכם על־דרכיכם [Hag 1:5, 7; 2:15, 18]) which is rhetorically used to point to the delay of the rebuilding of the temple as the main reason behind natural disaster. Third, it is the ruined temple site that leads to ruined nature, a contention which is rhetorically reinforced by Haggai's play on the words "desolate" (חרב). The same word חרב ("desolate") is used in v. 9 to describe the state of the temple and in v. 11 to portray the state of the nature (Meyers and Meyers 1987, 32). Fourth, the connection between cult and nature is also potentially present in the instruction to use resources from nature (wood from the mountains) in the reestablishment of the temple, a temple which will in turn help nature to be fruitful.

These general connections between desolated temple and desolated nature leaves open possibility that not only the state of the temple site but also ritual activities that are performed there might be closely connected with the well-being of nature. As suggested in the following section of this paper, a careful examination of the ritual activities delineated in Haggai underscores the pivotal role that these rituals play in creating and sustaining the well-being of the nature. This by no means suggests that the rituals themselves, performed in isolation – and rituals are never practiced in a vacuum but are inherently social phenomena – magically influence nature.[44] Rather, the efficacy of rituals in terms of their influence on nature should be understood within the context

[44] Although I can easily envision how ritual theorists who advocate for a magical understanding of ritual dynamics would not oppose this idea. For a comprehensive review of various theoretical interpretations of the relationship between ritual and magic, see Bell 1997, 46–52.

of the covenantal relationship between God, humans, and non-human creation, as will be explained in more detail below. Thus, emphasizing the role of rituals in the production and maintenance of the well-being of nature does not overlook the fact that the faithfulness (or lack thereof) of the people of Israel plays a crucial role in the flourishing of nature. Instead, it acknowledges that faithfulness to covenant obligations in the Old Testament cannot be envisioned outside the context of ritual practices. Influence of rituals on nature is described in the book of Haggai in two ways: first, the ritual offerings described in Hag 2:10–14 impacted nature negatively, and, second, the foundation-laying ritual portrayed in Hag 2:15–19 influenced well-being of nature positively.

As it was presented in the previous section of this essay, first ritual that is described in the book of Haggai is ritual of offering that is mentioned in Hag 2:10–14. One of the major issues addressed in this passage is the statement from Hag 2:14 that "this people," "all the works of their hands," and "whatever they offered there" were all "impure" (טמא). Since one of the major and ultimate purposes of the ritual offerings described in Leviticus is purification (e.g., rituals of consecration [Exod 29; Lev 8]; rituals performed on the Day of Atonement [Exod 30:10; Lev 16:16, 30]; as well as the red heifer rituals [Num 19]) and the result of the ritual action in Haggai is a state of impurity, the ritual performance described in Hag 2:10–14 should be labeled as infelicitous.[45] One of the key texts concerning *purity* in the Old Testament is found in Lev 10:10–11 (cf. Lev 11:47; 20:25; Ezek 22:26; 44:23) where Aaron and the priests are commanded "to distinguish between the sacred/holy (קדש) and the common (חל), and between the impure (טמא) and the pure (טהור)" (Lev 10:10).[46] Milgrom

[45] Contra Goswell 2014, 363–378, who argued that people's state of impurity should be understood in the past tense. For my arguments against that view, see below.

I build upon the insights from Gane's seminal work, *Cult and Character*, wherein he elucidates that although the purification offering for the outer altar and outer sanctum contaminates the sanctuary (p. 197), the ritual activities performed on the Day of Atonement expunge the ritual impurities and moral transgressions of the people of Israel from the sanctuary (pp. 240–41).

This is by no means to suggest that all rituals resulting in defilement contagion should be deemed infelicitous. The Old Testament describes rituals whose ultimate goal is the deliberate transfer of contamination (see, for instance, Leviticus 6:20–21 [27–28]).

[46] This unique command of Yahweh, found in Lev 10:10–11, is the starting point for the investigation of the concept of purity for many scholars. Ibn Ezra, for example, argued that this clause

explained that the text implies that there are four[47] major cultic categories – sacred, common, pure, and impure (Milgrom 1991, 731–732). These categories are presented in the chart below as holy, pure, impure, and common.

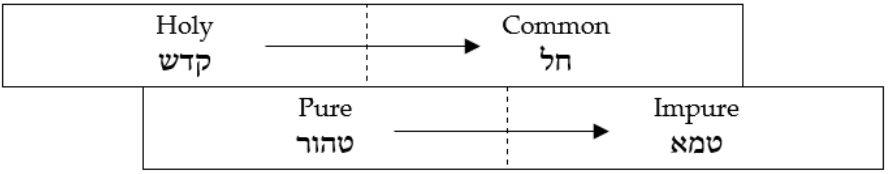

Figure 3. Cultic Categories[48]

According to this spectrum, impurity is on the opposite side of the scale from holiness, and these two categories have nothing to do with each other. Both extremes, impurity and holiness, are contagious in that they tend to influence the state of other people, places, or things. They should be understood as dynamic, as explained below, whereas the categories of "purity" and "common" should be understood as static.[49] It is important to say that these cultic categories are related to, but must not be confused or identified with, the associated ritual activities. The main difference is that holy, common, pure, and

is an introduction to all of Lev 11–15. The first scholars who dealt with this topic in the modern era were Kaufmann 1960, 55–56, 74, 103–105; Milgrom 1976; and Milgrom 1991, 615–617.

[47] Even though I employed Milgrom's classification, it must be mentioned that it is very hard to differentiate between the "common" and the "pure/impure" categories in the rest of the literature. This is why a number of scholars propose a categorization which distinguishes only three instead of four different cultic categories: holy, pure, and impure. See Boda 2009b, 51–52. Boda built on Wenham 2002, 2.379; Jenson 1992, 45–55; Klawans 2006; and Sklar 2005, 105–136. See also, Bibb 2009, 151.

[48] The table is taken from Milgrom 1991, 732, and is slightly modified by the addition of the Hebrew terms.

[49] For a very informative study on the matter of transferable holiness, which covers a wide range of different views, see Friedman, 1993. In that chapter, Friedman outlined a number of significant studies on this topic. A few examples are Haran, 1965; Haran 1977; Milgrom, 1981; Milgrom 1983; and Milgrom, 1992.

impure represent "states" or "conditions," while ritual activity should be understood as a specific social action. It is argued here that cultic[50] categories influence ritual activity and vice versa, as explained below.

The passage that is found in Hag 2:10–14 deals with two questions: (1) the ability of holiness to be transferred from meat via the corner of a garment[51] to other food (בשר־קדש → בכנף בגדו → הלחם) (Hildebrand 1989, 160); and (2) the ability of impurity to be transferred from a dead body via a person to some food (טמא־נפש → יגע (איש) → בכל־אלה). While the priests answered the first question, "Absolutely not"[52] (לא), they gave a positive answer to the second question (יטמא).[53] In this way, the priests confirmed that holiness is not able to pass on to the third degree, whereas impurity can reach that far (Hildebrand 1989, 10–19. Followed by Boda 2009a, 144).

Accordingly, pollution was a threat not only to the tabernacle sanctuary as God's space, but also to the land with all its inhabitants (Morgan 2010b, 38). Leviticus 18:18–24 lists particular sins – all related to sexual offenses – which have the capacity to defile the land. Besides this list, there are some other sins, such as murder (Num 35:33; Deut 32:43) and not removing the body of a hanged person (Deut 21:22–23) which would also defile the land. This ritual and moral defilement should be distinguished from ecological pollution, since

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[50] I intentionally employ the term "cultic" rather than "ritualistic," as it encompasses a broader scope than merely "ritual." For a more comprehensive explanation of the terms "cult," "ritual," and "rite," see Klingbeil 2007, 5.

[51] HALOT lists four possibilities: 1) wing of an eagle (Exod 19:4; Deut 32:11; Jer 48:40; 49:22; Ezek 17:3, 7; Prov 23:5); 2) wing of other creatures (Exod 25:20; 37:9; 1 Kgs 6:24, 27; 8:6; Ezek 3:11–13, 57; 10:5, 8, 12, 16, 19; 11:22); 3) edge, extremity, or corner (Ezek 7:2; 37:3; 38:13); and 4) skirt (hem); the third one is picked as the one which fits the present context the best (HALOT, 486). However, the four corners of the garment could sometimes signify one's status in the ancient world; sometimes "four ritual tassels were attached to the corners of the outer garment" (1 Sam 24:6–7, 12). For a more detailed explanation of this translation, see Bertman, 1961.

[52] The answer is given in the form of an extremely short verbal clause where לא must be understood as "the negative used absolutely." Therefore, I have translated it by "Absolutely not!" For more details on this usage of the negative adverb, see Joüon §160j; GKC §152.c. Contra Davidson, 1966, 126, who thought that the negative adverb was a simple "no."

[53] According to the purity laws found in Leviticus, the dead bodies of a number of animals can transfer impurity to humans touching them, or to clothes, vessels, or seed that may come into contact with the corpses (Lev 11:24–40; see also, Lev 5:2–4; Num 5:2). For more information about the transfer of impurity, see Kazen 2010, 54–57.

ritual/moral defilement is not the same as littering or dumping chemicals, but the relationships between the ritual, moral, and ecological realms cannot be neglected. The connection is evident from a cause-effect perspective, at least, where ritual and moral defilement[54] cause ecological pollution (see Deut 28:17–18, 21–24).

This phenomenon is particularly evident when examined from the perspective of the Old Testament covenant, which encompasses all parties within the creational triangle – God, Israel, and their land – and reinforces their interconnectedness. The Old Testament clearly describes the covenantal relationship between God and human creation (Gen 12:1–3; Exod 19–24), God and non-human creation (Gen 9:8–17; cf. Lev 26:3–6; Isa 54:9–10; Jer 31:35–36),[55] as well as the covenantal obligation between humans and the rest of non-human creation (Gen 1:28–30; 2:15–17). Given the interconnectedness of these three parties and the covenantal bonds between them, it is not surprising that any unfaithfulness in the covenantal relationship between humans and God would also adversely affect the well-being of nature.

Now that the plausibility of the concept of environmental pollution in the Old Testament is affirmed, attention can be redirected to the specific case of land pollution in Haggai 2:10–14. Keeping in mind that the rituals prescribed for Yom Kippur (the Day of Atonement, Lev 16) primarily served to preserve the purity of the sanctuary (Exod 29; Lev 16:16), it must be said that, by extension, they also served to enable the purity of the whole land of Israel (the principle of *pars pro toto*).[56] From that perspective, it is important to note that the

[54] My goal is to avoid the negligent conflation of the distinct realms of ritual and moral impurity, as appropriately delineated by Klawans, 2000, 21–42. However, in addition to ritual and moral impurity, passages such as Lev 18:19–25, Num 35:33, Deut 21:22–23, 28:17–18, 21–24, and 32:45 also refer to the impurity of the land. The interrelation between ritual, moral, and what I would term "ecological impurity" will be explored in my forthcoming research.

[55] For a more detailed explanation of what Murray terms the "cosmic covenant," see Murray 1992, 120.

[56] Contra Milgrom 1991, 1–16, 254–261, who proposed that pollution was cleansed by חטאת purification offerings even before Yom Kippur. Here, I follow Gane 2005, who argued that the Day of Atonement offerings removed sin not only from the sanctuary, as has been suggested by his teacher Milgrom, but also from the Israelites, and argued that it was a two-stage process.

The ethical issues related to animal sacrifice in Leviticus go beyond the scope of the present work. I will only say this: in my holistic framework, animals are sacrificed not only for the benefit of humans, but also for the benefit of other parties of the ecosystem. This may not sit well with

sacrificial system had positive effects not only on human beings and the tabernacle, but also on the natural world as well.[57] This connection between ritual, moral, and ecological was also noticed by Milgrom who described three different levels of holiness of space – sanctuary, land, and earth – as shown in the graph below.[58]

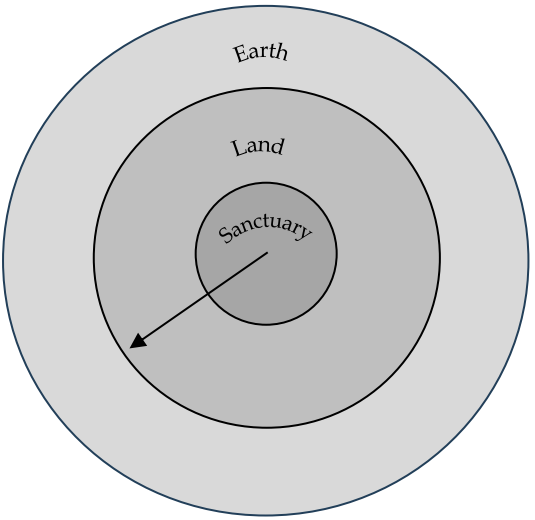

Figure 4: Milgrom's Description of the Spatial Spectrum of Holiness[59]

ecologists who focus only on the individual worth of every creature, but there are times when individual creatures can be justifiably offered for the sake of the wider ecosystem or community. Animal sacrifice is not inherently destructive of creation but can actually serve to maintain the integrity of creation. See Morgan 2010b.

[57] Murray 1992, 82– 83, asserted that "the establishment of *shalom* is the positive side of the 'rituals of control': the side of blessing as opposed to cursing, of attracting good power as opposed to exorcizing evil power. The rituals of *shalom* will have affirmed the supremacy of *sedeq*, the right order in the cosmos and on earth, and symbolized the 'marriage of heaven and earth' in order to ensure the right functioning of nature and right relationships between all the inhabitants of earth. The existence of rituals with these objects is far less hypothetical than that of the 'control rituals' just described, for the latter have not survived in Judaism in anything like their original form . . ."

[58] According to Milgrom, 1991, 1–16, 725, holiness is status which is not only related to God and humans, but also to animals and space.

[59] Milgrom 1991, 1–16, 725.

In ancient Israel, holiness was closely related to ritual practices. Holiness of the land, which was the highest goal for the flourishing land in the Old Testament, was holistically connected to the rituals of the Israelite cult (Lev 18:24–28; 25:23; Num 35:33–34; Deut 11:11–12; Zech 2:16[12]). Haggai, however, describes the impurity of the land rather than its holiness, attributing this defilement to the people's neglect in rebuilding the temple. This neglect subsequently led to their infelicitous ritual activities performed at the temple site. It is challenging to envision how the intricate ritual regulations prescribed in the Pentateuch could be faithfully observed without the prior reconstruction of the temple, its consecration, and the reinstatement of the priesthood (Lev 8). Thus, the neglect by the people to rebuild the temple, coupled with their subsequent infelicitous ritual activities, should be recognized as a primary cause of the impurity.

There are two ways how Haggai connects ritual offering from Hag 2:14 to the ecological infertility. First, by situating this passage about impurity (Hag 2:10–14) in the midst of the discussion about infertility of the land; and second, by associating impurity with "all the works of their hands" (Hag 2:14). The same phrase is later used in v. 17 as reference to agricultural produce of the people of Yehud. In this way by making connection between impurity associated with ritual activities and impurity of the land, Haggai asserts that it is precisely ritual activities that are related with the well-being of the land. In this way, the description of the first ritual activity in the book of Haggai is negative: infelicitous ritual activities performed on the site of the ruined temple affect nature in a negative way.

The second ritual activity described in the book of Haggai is the foundation-laying ceremony. In addition to marking a significant milestone in the temple-rebuilding process, this ritual is portrayed as a social activity that influences the state of nature. This is not surprising when considering that references to this ritual in ancient Near Eastern sources are frequently associated with the flourishing of the natural world. In his work on temple-rebuilding rituals, Boda argues that this phenomenon is evident not only in ancient Near Eastern sources but also in the temple-building narratives found in the Old Testament. These narratives describe the same ritual in the context of the construction of the first temple (1 Kgs 5:17; 6:37–38 [cf. 1 Kgs 7:9–10]; 2 Chr 3:3; 8:16) as well as in accounts related to the reconstruction of the second temple (Hag 2:15, 18; Zech 4:9; 8:9) (Boda 2006, 240).

Boda asserts, that an important element in both ancient Near Eastern and Old Testament descriptions of temple constructions is the concept of securing divine blessings. These blessings encompass various aspects such as ensuring of material prosperity, military success, protection of the temple, and the assurance that people's prayers are heard (Lev 9:22–23; 1 Kgs 8:12–61; 9:1–9; 1 Chr 17:10–14; 23–27; 2 Chr 7:12–22).[60] However, one of the most significant aspects of blessings associated with temple construction is the attainment and heightening of agricultural fecundity.[61] This is evident from both extra-biblical sources and the narratives of Solomon's temple construction, particularly in 1 Kgs 8:35–40 and 2 Chr 7:12–22, where there is a clear connection between the construction of the first temple and the flourishing of nature. It is not surprising, then, that Haggai also associates the foundation-laying ceremony of the second temple with agricultural prosperity (Hag 2:15–19). This intertextual link between Haggai's account of the reconstruction of the second temple and the passages about the building of the first temple in the context of promises of agricultural blessings is further strengthened by Haggai's allusions to covenantal language of curses and blessings.

As previously mentioned, Haggai explicitly links agricultural curses to the unfortunate state of the Jerusalem temple (Nogalski 2007, 128. See Boda 2000, 295–302, as well as Boda 2006, 243). The unsatisfactory harvests and lack of grain, food, drink, clothing, wine, oil, figs, and pomegranates (Hag 1:6, 11; 2:17, 19) clearly refer to the fertility curses from Lev 26 (especially Lev 26:16b, 19, 26); Deut 28 (particularly Deut 28:22–24, 33, 38–39, 47–48a 63); and 1 Kgs

[60] Boda 2006, 240–241, explained that the blessing of protection of the temple is mostly related to the Assyrian account. The blessing of hearing prayers is mostly related to Babylonian building accounts.

[61] See, for instance, Levenson, 1985, 111–37 and Averbeck 2010, 15–16. Cf. Kessler, 2010, 375–77, who noted that "Haggai utilizes these motifs in a distinctive way. The concepts of fertility and wealth are the reverse of much of the received ancient Near Eastern Tradition." Kessler explained that the book of Haggai describes fertility as "removal of the divine displeasure" and not as "confirmation of the legitimacy for the project." Regardless of differences in explanations as to the connection between the temple building and the fertility of the land functions, it is clear that the association between the rebuilding of the temple and the agricultural activities exists in both the ANE sources and the book of Haggai. In this work, I place an emphasis on the efficacy of the ritual in the production of fertility of the land.

8:31–53 (especially 1 Kgs 8:35–37).[62] Although Haggai connects these curses to the state of the Jerusalem temple – a demand not typically stated in the earlier covenantal obligations from the Pentateuch – this connection between the temple and covenantal blessings and curses is clearly established in 1 Kings 8:31–53. Thus, it is not surprising that the foundation-laying ritual performed on the twenty-fourth day of the ninth month initiates a drastic change concerning the aforementioned disappointing harvests and lack of agricultural products, transforming curses into blessings.[63] This transformation is evident in Hag 2:16, where the prophet, within the context of this ritual, references past agricultural problems, as well as in the last clause of Hag 2:19, where the phrase "from this day on" (מן־היום הזה אברך) is used to denote future agricultural blessings.[64]

In sum, the connection between temple rituals and fertility found in Haggai is not unusual when considering that this concept was prevalent in Old Testament narratives about temple buildings, as well as ancient Near Eastern literature, particularly in Mesopotamia and Egypt. In these cultures, harmony between humans and nature (and nature's fruitfulness) was achieved through fertility rituals.[65] Haggai refers to this widely accepted understanding of ritual, prevalent at that time, as well as to covenantal stipulations found in earlier Old Testament literature, when associating ritual activities with the fertility of the land.[66]

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[62] For the use of curse language from Deut 28; Lev 26; Amos 4, and Micah 6 and its function within the book of Haggai, see Kessler 2015, 240–248.

[63] See for instance, Nogalski 2007, 128–129, who also noticed this.

[64] For the philological difficulties found in Hag 2:15–19, see Rogland 2013, 69–77. Even though I do not translate v. 16 in the same way as Rogland, both Rogland's and my translation point to the fact that the foundation-laying ceremony affected the state of nature's space.

[65] This is by no means an attempt to equate the rituals of surrounding nations with those practiced by the people of Israel or to suggest that they functioned in the same manner These rituals are fundamentally distinct, and the scope of this study does not permit a comprehensive exploration of their differences. However, recognizing these fundamental distinctions does not preclude the existence of similarities. One notable similarity is the relationship between ritual practices and the fertility of nature.

[66] For more information about fertility cults in the ancient world, see Healey 1992, 2:791–93. See also, Barton 2010, 53–54.

6. Conclusion

One trend in the ecological research has been appropriation of various interdisciplinary approaches including efforts of eco-theologians who focus on investigation of biblical teachings about the intrinsic value of Earth. Even though eco-theologians have examined environmental matters in the book of Haggai and argued for the importance of religious concerns in environmental ethical dialogue, they surprisingly have not done much on the influence of ritual activities on ecosystem even though this theme is carefully addressed in this book. This lacuna in scholarship has prompted me to explore the potential connections between two ritual practices and environmental well-being described in Haggai in this present paper. I sought to demonstrate that Haggai connects faithfulness to cultic practices with the well-being of the natural environment, agriculture, and thus the food supply.

After establishing an interdisciplinary approach featuring insights from exegesis, ecology, and ritual studies, I first focused on the description of ill-being of nature in the book of Haggai. Examination of Haggai's portrayal of nature showed that the Yehudites experienced a severe ecological crisis in the 500s BCE. Haggai reveled that God was the one who called for a drought and sent these "natural" disasters. Consequences were devastating: all landscapes in the area were affected, and the earth was not able to bring forth its produce. People experienced the lack of olives and grapes, as well as a deficiency of grain, seed, figs, and pomegranates.

In the next section of the paper, I introduced two rituals that are purposefully mentioned in Haggai. In this way, I laid a foundation for further study of the role of ritual practices in affecting the environment. The last section of the paper demonstrated that unfaithfulness to moral obligations regarding cultic practices has a significant impact on the well-being of the environment, agriculture, and food. The prophet, however, ended on a positive note: the foundation-laying ceremony for the temple indicated the start of a better time when the land would be fertile.

This paper ultimately suggests that insights from the book of Haggai contribute to certain ethical issues related to food, agriculture, and the wider environment. Contemporary secular ecologists usually suggest that the main way how we can care for our environment is through actual physical deeds. However, eco-theological reading of Haggai suggests that we should go one step further in our care for the nature: not only our physical deeds but also

moral obligations towards practicing life-affirming rituals directly affect the natural world. While this may sound as a surprise to people with Western mindset, this was certainly not a shocking proposal to Yehudites who were aware of covenantal ties that exist between Yahweh, people, and nature, and importance of ritual practices in keeping their covenant obligations.

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Zusammenfassung

Das Buch Haggai gehört zu den besten Beispielen von prophetischer Literatur, in der verschiedene Fragen zu Natur und Umwelt ausführlich behandelt werden. Ökologisch sensible Interpretationen des Buches Haggai sind rar, und die wenigen, die es gibt, betonen zwei Hauptursachen für die Naturkatastrophe jener Zeit. Einerseits führt Kessler die ökologische Krise auf sozio-politische und wirtschaftliche Faktoren zurück, während andererseits Meadowcroft und Jieun einen engen Zusammenhang zwischen Naturkatastrophen und dem Zustand des Tempels herstellen. Obwohl diese Forscher eine solide Grundlage geschaffen haben, auf der andere ökologisch orientierte Lesarten des Buches Haggai aufbauen sollten, haben sie kaum Substanzielles zu dem Zusammenhang zwischen rituellen Aktivitäten und ökologischem Wohlergehen hervorgebracht, der in diesem Buch deutlich hervorgehoben wird. In diesem Aufsatz wird die in Haggai beschriebene ökologische Krise neu untersucht, indem der Schwerpunkt auf die Funktion zweier Rituale gelegt wird: das Opferritual (Hag 2,10–14) und das Ritual der Grundsteinlegung (2,15–19). Unter Verwendung eines ritualwissenschaftlichen Ansatzes (Ronald L. Grimes) im Rahmen einer ökologisch sensiblen Lektüre von Haggai (Christopher J.H. Wright) zeigt dieser Beitrag die entscheidende Rolle auf, die Rituale für die Gestaltung der natürlichen Welt spielen. Einerseits führen unpassende Opferrituale zum Leiden der Natur, andererseits tragen gelungene Rituale der Grundsteinlegung zu ihrem Gedeihen bei. Während zeitgenössische säkulare Ökologen die Bedeutung des Umweltschutzes durch physische Handlungen betonen, legt eine öko-theologische Lektüre von Haggai nahe, einen weiteren Schritt zu tun: Sowohl unsere Taten als auch unsere moralischen Verpflichtungen, lebensbejahende Rituale zu praktizieren, wirken sich direkt auf die natürliche Welt aus.

Résumé

Le Livre d'Aggée est parmi les plus beaux exemples de la littérature prophétique où diverses questions concernant la nature et l'environnement sont traitées en profondeur. Les interprétations qui tiennent compte de l'écologie dans le Livre d'Aggée sont rares, et celles qui ont été faites soulignent deux causes principales de la catastrophe naturelle de l'époque. D'une part Kessler attribue la crise écologique à des facteurs socio-politiques et économiques, tandis que d'autre part Meadowcroft et Kim ont suggéré un lien étroit entre les calamités naturelles et l'état du temple. Même si ces érudits ont établi une base solide sur laquelle d'autres lectures écologiques d'Aggée pourraient s'appuyer, ils n'ont pas fait grand-chose sur l'interconnexion entre les activités rituelles et le bien-être écologique. Ce qui est clairement souligné dans ce livre. Cet article revient sur la crise écologique décrite dans le Livre d'Aggée en se concentrant sur la fonction de deux rituels : le rituel de l'offrande (Aggée 2 : 10-14) et le rituel de l'inauguration (Aggée 2 : 15-19). En utilisant une approche basée sur des études rituelles (Ronald L. Grimes) dans le cadre d'une lecture qui tient compte de l'écologie dans le Livre d'Aggée (Christopher J. H. Wright), cet article démontre le rôle crucial que jouent les rituels en façonnant la nature. D'une part, les rituels inconvenants de l'offrande mènent à la souffrance de la nature, tandis que d'autre part, les rituels convenants de l'inauguration contribuent à son épanouissement. Tandis que les écologistes laïques contemporains soulignent l'importance de prendre soin de l'environnement par des actions physiques, une lecture éco-théologique du Livre d'Aggée suggère de faire un pas de plus : aussi bien nos actes que nos obligations morales de pratiquer des rituels qui affirment la vie ont un impact directe sur la nature.

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