

Chaggai Introduction – Typed Shiur.

Demographic information

Chaggai is the tenth of the Trey Asar prophets and is two perakim long. Chaggai, Zacharya and Malachi were the last three prophets. **Yoma 9B** brings that Chaggai's death marked the end of prophecy. Chaggai was on Ezra's beis din and part of the Anshei Knesset Hagedolah – Men of the Great Assembly. Chaggai's teacher was either Yechezkel or Baruch ben Neriah, the scribe of Yirmyahu Hanavi. Chaggai lived both in Bavel and Yerushalayim. It was Chaggai who instructed the nation to rebuild the second Beis Hamikdash. Rambam brings that Chaggai also lived to see the destruction of the second Beis Hamikdash.

Interestingly, **Megilah 9B** brings that Yonatan ben Uziel, who wrote the Targum translation for Navi, received his Targum translation from Chaggai, Zecharya and Malachi.

Overview

Chaggai encourages the nation to return to Eretz Yisrael and rebuild the second Beis Hamikdash. Chaggai also encourages the people to take his words seriously and start building on the Temple Mount, to rest assured that God will once again dwell in His home because He has not forsaken the Jewish nation.

Chaggai's Name

Ramad Walli explains that Chaggai's name, which is spelled ches, gimmel, yud, is an acronym for chessed, gevurah yibaneh, which means that with kindness and strength the Beis Hamikdash will be rebuilt, because it was Chaggai who encouraged the nation to act with both chessed and gevurah to rebuild the second Beis Hamikdash.

Another possible explanation is that Chaggai's name comes from the word *chogeg*, which means to be happy or to party, because the best way to deal with pain and suffering is to try to be happy anyway! Chaggai encouraged the nation to be happy and to resettle Eretz Yisrael despite the devastation that occurred there.

Alternatively, maybe Chaggai comes from the word *chag*, meaning holiday, as we say in Hebrew *chag sameach*, because it was indeed a celebratory time for the nation when they rebuilt the second Beis Hamikdash.

Historical Background

Chaggai's prophecy took place after the destruction of the first Beis Hamikdash, when Daryavesh (aka Darius), grandson of Koresh (aka Cyrus) was the king of Persia. During the 52nd year after the first Beis Hamikdash was destroyed, Koresh had initially given permission for the Jews to return to Eretz Yisrael and rebuild the Beis Hamikdash. However, after political pressure was applied, Koresh rescinded his permission for the Jews to rebuild the second Beis Hamikdash. This was also the seventieth year of Bavel's rise to power, which was the fulfillment of Yirmiya's prophecy in 29:10 that said the Jews would return to Eretz Yisrael when seventy years of Bavel's rule was completed.

During that time only 42,360 Jews had returned to their homeland, which was considered a very small number of Jews. Keep in mind that this took place in the wake of devastation. When the first Beis Hamikdash was destroyed, the nation and others felt that God had left the Jewish nation. Now, Koresh was giving the Jews permission to return to Eretz Yisrael and start rebuilding, which was certainly a hopeful sign for the Jewish nation at that time.

In the second year of Daryavesh's reign, Chaggai received a prophecy to encourage the downtrodden nation to continue construction on the second Beis Hamikdash, even though permission had still not been granted. The Jews listened to the words of the prophet and began construction without consent. Miraculously, Daryavesh reinstated the permission that was originally granted to Yisrael by his grandfather Koresh to build the second Beis Hamikdash, despite the political pressure at that time.

Also, interestingly enough, Daryavesh was the son of Queen Esther and Achashverosh from the Purim story which took place between the first and second Beis Hamikdash. The **Ramad Walli** notes that it was the good in Queen Esther that was passed down to her son and encouraged Daryavesh to permit the Jews to rebuild and resettle.

A lesson from Chaggai

R' Yaakov Kamenetsky asks: Yechezkel prophesied about the third Beis Hamikdash, while Chaggai, who came later in time, prophesied about the second Beis Hamikdash, which is out of order. Shouldn't the prophecy about the second Beis Hamikdash have preceded the one about the third Beis Hamikdash?!

R' Yaakov answers that the second Beis Hamikdash was not meant to be permanent. It was to be a partial redemption until the third Beis Hamikdash was built. Therefore it was precisely the knowledge of the third Beis Hamikdash that allowed for the construction of the second Beis Hamikdash because it was the prophecy of the third Beis Hamikdash that provided the correct perspective of the second Beis Hamikdash.

The Ramchal in sefer Mishkenay Elyon explains: The actual construction of the second Beis Hamikdash was built as a hybrid of the first Beis Hamikdash and the third Beis Hamikdash. The second Beis Hamikdash was to serve as a reminder that one day God will reveal Himself and show us the true purpose of this world, for all mankind to see.

May we merit to build the third Beis Hamikdash in our lifetime, with our own hands, as was done in the time of Chaggai. May we merit to see the revelation of Mashiach ben Dovid, when the cast aside nation of Yisrael will return to Eretz Yisrael, singing and dancing with utter happiness, in Yerushalayim, when there will be no more fighting on His holy mountain.

We will be starting perek aleph in the next shiur.