



10-1-1988

*Haggai, Zechariah 1-8* Carol L. Meyers and Eric M. Meyers

Stephen E. Robinson

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/byusq>

---

**Recommended Citation**

Robinson, Stephen E. (1988) "*Haggai, Zechariah 1-8* Carol L. Meyers and Eric M. Meyers," *BYU Studies Quarterly*: Vol. 28 : Iss. 4 , Article 12.

Available at: <https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/byusq/vol28/iss4/12>

This Book Review is brought to you for free and open access by the Journals at BYU ScholarsArchive. It has been accepted for inclusion in *BYU Studies Quarterly* by an authorized editor of BYU ScholarsArchive. For more information, please contact [scholarsarchive@byu.edu](mailto:scholarsarchive@byu.edu), [ellen\\_amatangelo@byu.edu](mailto:ellen_amatangelo@byu.edu).

CAROL L. MEYERS and ERIC M. MEYERS. *Haggai, Zechariah 1-8* (Anchor Bible, vol. 25B). Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1987. xcv; 478 pp. \$20.00.

Reviewed by Stephen E. Robinson, associate professor of ancient scripture, Brigham Young University.

It is unlikely that another commentary will soon approach this contribution by Carol and Eric Meyers in either its massive attention to detail or its analysis of literary structure. In fact, so comprehensive is the present work that what was originally to have been one volume is now going to be two, and the reader will have to wait for Zechariah 9–14 and Malachi to come out as Anchor Bible 25C. The volume follows the usual format of the Anchor Bible (translation, notes, comment), but it might have been better in this case to merge the notes and comment. Because of the sheer bulk of the material, the discussions in the notes and those in the comment sometimes lose track of or repeat each other.

The authors are to be congratulated for a sensible translation that preserves the character of the Hebrew text even at the expense of an elegant English rendering. Readers can get elegance from the King James Version; Meyers and Meyers have stuck to *their* task, which is to put us in touch with the Hebrew text as much as is possible in translation. Also particularly good is the introductory section dealing with historical context (xxix–xliv).

The authors' basic thesis is "that Haggai-Zechariah 1–8 is a single compendious work" (xlvii). They argue for the literary unity of this material on the bases of (1) chronological data (xlvi), (2) structural unity (xlvii–xlviii), (3) correspondence of key themes and terms as employed throughout the whole of Haggai-Zechariah 1–8 (xlviii–lxiii), and (4) consistent use of the genre "oracular prose" as measured by the percentage distribution of prose particles (lxiii–lxvii). The charts and other data marshaled to support each of these arguments are impressive, but the authors will be criticized for what amounts to an eclectic method of literary criticism. Other scholars, using what has become the more standard methodology heavy on form and redaction criticism, will arrive at other conclusions about the literary unity of Haggai-Zechariah 1–8. This is not to say that Meyers and Meyers are wrong, but merely to point out again that one's conclusions are usually a function of one's method.

A second thesis, corollary to the first, is "that Haggai and Zechariah were the authors of virtually all that is attributed to them and that Zechariah himself, since his concluding words echo some of Haggai's themes, had a composite work in mind" (xlvii). The

logical conclusion is that Zechariah himself was the author-redactor of our Haggai-Zechariah 1–8. But here, oddly, Meyers and Meyers begin to equivocate, referring to “the final editor, be it Zechariah or his disciple.” Given the chronological frame of 520–515 B.C.E., the unity of structure and thematic interests, the integrity of authorship, and Zechariah’s having a composite work in mind (all of which Meyers and Meyers insist on), surely it is an unnecessary and cumbersome elaboration of their thesis to reintroduce, perhaps as a sop to redaction critics, some “final redactor” other than Zechariah himself.

A third thesis of the work is that Haggai-Zechariah 1–8 was prepared “for presentation at the ceremony of the rededication of the temple in 515 B.C.E.” (lxviii) and that the rebuilding of the temple is “the key to understanding Zechariah” (lxxi). Since the temple and the monarchy were so closely tied in Israelite thinking, it was necessary, Meyers and Meyers theorize, for Zechariah to affirm prophetically that a temple centered society could legitimately exist even without an earthly king.

A major weakness of the volume is its complete indifference to the place of Haggai-Zechariah in the developing apocalyptic tradition in Judaism. No attempt is made to analyze the text as apocalypse. In fact there is no attempt to relate Haggai-Zechariah 1–8 to any subsequent literature—canonical, apocryphal, pseud-epigraphical, Christian, or Rabbinic. Though such omissions are perhaps defensible on narrow philosophical grounds, they are nevertheless lamentable, especially since most of the related works are also part of the Anchor Bible.

Nevertheless, Meyers and Meyers have plowed new ground. Their treatment of Haggai-Zechariah 1–8 is fresh and creative. Much of their work will be challenged, but most of the valuable work that contributes important new insights is challenged. This volume is a solid contribution to scholarship based on a thorough analysis of the data. Meyers and Meyers have not merely sifted through the work of others; they have given the rest of us something to sift.