

The principle brought out by this question is that uncleanness is communicable. The Lord then applied this latter principle to His people. He said that just as a person who had touched a dead body was ceremonially unclean and that uncleanness was communicated to the person touched, so His people were morally unclean in His sight because they had neglected to do the work He wanted them to do, namely, to rebuild the temple (Hag. 2:14a) and that uncleanness was communicated to everything they produced with their hands (their agricultural products) as well as the sacrifices they offered to Him on the altar of burnt offering (Hag. 2:14b).

Note: The word "there" in Hag. 2:14b refers to the altar of burnt offering the Jews built after they had returned from Babylon to the province of Jerusalem -Judah (cf. Ezra 3:3).

- b. The Lord exhorted His people to consider (lay to heart) their past and the chastisement He had brought upon them because of their moral uncleanness (Hag. 2:15-17).

- (1) Time of the chastisement (Hag. 2:15,15a)

It was the time before the Lord's people resumed the work He wanted them to do, namely, the rebuilding of the temple (Hag. 2:15,16).

Note: The words "from this day" (Hag. 2:15a), "from before a stone was laid upon a stone in the temple of the Lord" (Hag. 2:15b), and "since those days were" which would be better translated "from their existence," i.e. from the existence of a stone upon a stone in the temple of the LORD (Hag. 2:16a) all refer to the same time and that was the time before the work of rebuilding the temple was resumed.)

- (2) Reason for the chastisement (Hag. 2:15a)

It was the moral uncleanness, i.e., sin of the Lord's people. This is brought out by the word "now" in Hag. 2:15a which is used to draw a conclusion from what the Lord had previously said. In this passage then the Lord said that because His people had been morally unclean before they resumed the work He wanted them to do, namely, the rebuilding of the temple, He wanted them to consider the time before they resumed that work and the chastisement He brought upon them at that time because of their moral uncleanness. Thus the context makes it clear that the reason for the chastisement the Lord brought upon His people was their moral uncleanness i.e. their sin of neglecting to do the work He wanted them to do, namely, the rebuilding of the temple.

- (3) Form of the chastisement (Hag. 2:16b,17)

It took the form of crop failures