

Malachi's Prophecy to the Remnant (c. 432/431 BC)

Malachi 1–4

Title

1:1 The oracle of the word of the LORD to Israel through Malachi.

Israel Questions God's Claim of Love

2 "I have loved you," says the LORD. But you say, "How have You loved us?" "*Was not Esau Jacob's brother?*" declares the LORD. "Yet I have loved Jacob;

3 but I have hated Esau, and I have made his mountains a desolation and *appointed* his inheritance for the jackals of the wilderness." [[Rom 9:13](#)]

4 Though Edom says, "We have been beaten down, but we will return and build up the ruins"; thus says the LORD of hosts, "They may build, but I will tear down; and *men* will call them the wicked territory, and the people toward whom the LORD is indignant forever."

5 Your eyes will see this and you will say, "The LORD be magnified beyond the border of Israel!"

Israel Questions God's Charge of Disrespect

6 "A son honors *his* father, and a servant his master. Then if I am a father, where is My honor? And if I am a master, where is My respect?" says the LORD of hosts to you, O priests who despise My name. But you say, 'How have we despised Your name?'

7 *You* are presenting defiled food upon My altar. But you say, 'How have we defiled You?' In that you say, 'The table of the LORD is to be despised.'

8 But when you present the blind for sacrifice, is it not evil? And when you present the lame and sick, is it not evil? Why not offer it to your governor? Would he be pleased with you? Or would he receive you kindly?" says the LORD of hosts.

9 "But now will you not entreat God's favor, that He may be gracious to us? With such an offering on your part, will He receive any of you kindly?" says the LORD of hosts.

10 "Oh that there were one among you who would shut the gates, that you might not uselessly kindle *fire on* My altar! I am not pleased with you," says the LORD of hosts, "nor will I accept an offering from you.

11 For from the rising of the sun even to its setting, My name *will be* great among the nations, and in every place incense is going to be offered to My name, and a grain offering *that is* pure; for My name *will be* great among the nations," says the LORD of hosts.

12 "But you are profaning it, in that you say, 'The table of the Lord is defiled, and as for its fruit, its food is to be despised.'

13 You also say, 'My, how tiresome it is!' And you disdainfully sniff at it," says the LORD of hosts, "and you bring what was taken by robbery and *what is* lame or sick; so you bring the offering! Should I receive that from your hand?" says the LORD.

14 "But cursed be the swindler who has a male in his flock and vows it, but sacrifices a blemished animal to the Lord, for I am a great King," says the LORD of hosts, "and My name is feared among the nations."

Warning to the Priests

2:1 "And now this commandment is for you, O priests.

2 If you do not listen, and if you do not take it to heart to give honor to My name," says the LORD of hosts, "then I will send the curse upon you and I will curse your blessings; and indeed, I have cursed them *already*, because you are not taking *it* to heart.

3 Behold, I am going to rebuke your offspring, and I will spread refuse on your faces, the refuse of your feasts; and you will be taken away with it.

4 Then you will know that I have sent this commandment to you, that My covenant may continue with Levi," says the LORD of hosts.

5 "My covenant with him was *one of* life and peace, and I gave them to him *as an object of* reverence; so he revered Me and stood in awe of My name.

6 True instruction was in his mouth and unrighteousness was not found on his lips; he walked with Me in peace and uprightness, and he turned many back from iniquity.

7 For the lips of a priest should preserve knowledge, and men should seek instruction from his mouth; for he is the messenger of the LORD of hosts.

8 But as for you, you have turned aside from the way; you have caused many to stumble by the instruction; you have corrupted the covenant of Levi," says the LORD of hosts.

9 "So I also have made you despised and abased before all the people, just as you are not keeping My ways but are showing partiality in the instruction.

God Charges Israel With Unfaithfulness

10 "Do we not all have one father? Has not one God created us? Why do we deal treacherously each against his brother so as to profane the covenant of our fathers?

11 Judah has dealt treacherously, and an abomination has been committed in Israel and in Jerusalem; for Judah has profaned the sanctuary of the LORD which He loves and has married the daughter of a foreign god.

12 As for the man who does this, may the LORD cut off from the tents of Jacob *everyone* who awakes and answers, or who presents

an offering to the LORD of hosts.

13 “This is another thing you do: you cover the altar of the LORD with tears, with weeping and with groaning, because He no longer regards the offering or accepts *it with* favor from your hand.

14 Yet you say, ‘For what reason?’ Because the LORD has been a witness between you and the wife of your youth, against whom you have dealt treacherously, though she is your companion and your wife by covenant.

15 But not one has done *so* who has a remnant of the Spirit. And what did *that* one *do* while he was seeking a godly offspring? Take heed then to your spirit, and let no one deal treacherously against the wife of your youth.

16 For I hate divorce,” says the LORD, the God of Israel, “and him who covers his garment with wrong,” says the LORD of hosts. “So take heed to your spirit, that you do not deal treacherously.”

Israel Questions God’s Charge of Wearisome Words

17 You have wearied the LORD with your words. Yet you say, “How have we wearied *Him*?” In that you say, “Everyone who does evil is good in the sight of the LORD, and He delights in them,” or, “Where is the God of justice?”

3:1 “Behold, I am going to send My messenger, and he will clear the way before Me. And the Lord, whom you seek, will suddenly come to His temple; and the messenger of the covenant, in whom you delight, behold, He is coming,” says the LORD of hosts. [[Matt 11:10](#); [Mark 1:2](#); [Luke 7:27](#)]

2 “But who can endure the day of His coming? And who can stand when He appears? For He is like a refiner’s fire and like fullers’ soap.

3 He will sit as a smelter and purifier of silver, and He will purify the sons of Levi and refine them like gold and silver, so that they may present to the LORD offerings in righteousness.

4 Then the offering of Judah and Jerusalem will be pleasing to the LORD as in the days of old and as in former years.

5 “Then I will draw near to you for judgment; and I will be a swift witness against the sorcerers and against the adulterers and against those who swear falsely, and against those who oppress the wage earner in his wages, the widow and the orphan, and those who turn aside the alien and do not fear Me,” says the LORD of hosts.

6 “For I, the LORD, do not change; therefore you, O sons of Jacob, are not consumed.

Israel Questions God’s Charge of Disobedience

7 “From the days of your fathers you have turned aside from My statutes and have not kept *them*. Return to Me, and I will return to you,” says the LORD of hosts. “But you say, ‘How shall we return?’

8 “Will a man rob God? Yet you are robbing Me! But you say, ‘How have we robbed You?’ In tithes and offerings.

9 You are cursed with a curse, for you are robbing Me, the whole nation *of you*!

10 Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, so that there may be food in My house, and test Me now in this,” says the LORD of hosts, “if I will not open for you the windows of heaven and pour out for you a blessing until it overflows.

11 Then I will rebuke the devourer for you, so that it will not destroy the fruits of the ground; nor will your vine in the field cast *its grapes*,” says the LORD of hosts.

12 “All the nations will call you blessed, for you shall be a delightful land,” says the LORD of hosts.

Israel Questions God’s Charge of Hard Words

13 “Your words have been arrogant against Me,” says the LORD. “Yet you say, ‘What have we spoken against You?’

14 You have said, ‘It is vain to serve God; and what profit is it that we have kept His charge, and that we have walked in mourning before the LORD of hosts?’

15 So now we call the arrogant blessed; not only are the doers of wickedness built up but they also test God and escape.”

16 Then those who feared the LORD spoke to one another, and the LORD gave attention and heard *it*, and a book of remembrance was written before Him for those who fear the LORD and who esteem His name.

17 “They will be Mine,” says the LORD of hosts, “on the day that I prepare *My* own possession, and I will spare them as a man spares his own son who serves him.”

18 So you will again distinguish between the righteous and the wicked, between one who serves God and one who does not serve Him.

Remember the Coming “Day of the Lord”

4:1 “For behold, the day is coming, burning like a furnace; and all the arrogant and every evildoer will be chaff; and the day that is coming will set them ablaze,” says the LORD of hosts, “so that it will leave them neither root nor branch.”

2 “But for you who fear My name, the sun of righteousness will rise with healing in its wings; and you will go forth and skip about like calves from the stall.

3 You will tread down the wicked, for they will be ashes under the soles of your feet on the day which I am preparing,” says the LORD of hosts.

4 “Remember the law of Moses My servant, *even the* statutes and ordinances which I commanded him in Horeb for all Israel.

5 “Behold, I am going to send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and terrible day of the

LORD. [\[Matt 17:10; Mark 9:11\]](#)

6 He will restore the hearts of the fathers to *their* children and the hearts of the children to their fathers, so that I will not come and smite the land with a curse.”

Nehemiah Returns to Jerusalem (c. 429/428 BC)

Nehemiah 13:1–31

Ammonites and Moabites Expelled from the Temple (occurred during Nehemiah's absence)

1 On that day they read aloud from the book of Moses in the hearing of the people; and there was found written in it that no Ammonite or Moabite should ever enter the assembly of God,

2 because they did not meet the sons of Israel with bread and water, but hired Balaam against them to curse them. However, our God turned the curse into a blessing.

3 So when they heard the law, they excluded all foreigners from Israel.

Tobiah's Presence in the Temple Chambers (occurred during Nehemiah's absence)

4 Now prior to this, Eliashib the priest, who was appointed over the chambers of the house of our God, being related to Tobiah, had prepared a large room for him, where formerly they put the grain offerings, the frankincense, the utensils and the tithes of grain, wine and oil prescribed for the Levites, the singers and the gatekeepers, and the contributions for the priests.

Nehemiah Cleanses the Temple of Tobiah's Influence

6 But during all this *time* I was not in Jerusalem, for in the thirty-second year of Artaxerxes king of Babylon I had gone to the king. After some time, however, I asked leave from the king,

7 and I came to Jerusalem and learned about the evil that Eliashib had done for Tobiah, by preparing a room for him in the courts of the house of God.

8 It was very displeasing to me, so I threw all of Tobiah's household goods out of the room.

9 Then I gave an order and they cleansed the rooms; and I returned there the utensils of the house of God with the grain offerings and the frankincense.

Nehemiah Restores the Tithes to the Levites

10 I also discovered that the portions of the Levites had not been given *them*, so that the Levites and the singers who performed the service had gone away, each to his own field.

11 So I reprimanded the officials and said, “Why is the house of God forsaken?” Then I gathered them together and restored them to their posts.

12 All Judah then brought the tithe of the grain, wine and oil into the storehouses.

13 In charge of the storehouses I appointed Shelemiah the priest, Zadok the scribe, and Pedaiah of the Levites, and in addition to them was Hanan the son of Zaccur, the son of Mattaniah; for they were considered reliable, and it was their task to distribute to their kinsmen.

14 Remember me for this, O my God, and do not blot out my loyal deeds which I have performed for the house of my God and its services.

Nehemiah Enforces Observance of the Sabbath

15 In those days I saw in Judah some who were treading wine presses on the sabbath, and bringing in sacks of grain and loading *them* on donkeys, as well as wine, grapes, figs and all kinds of loads, and they brought *them* into Jerusalem on the sabbath day. So I admonished *them* on the day they sold food.

16 Also men of Tyre were living there *who* imported fish and all kinds of merchandise, and sold *them* to the sons of Judah on the sabbath, even in Jerusalem.

17 Then I reprimanded the nobles of Judah and said to them, “What is this evil thing you are doing, by profaning the sabbath day?

18 Did not your fathers do the same, so that our God brought on us and on this city all this trouble? Yet you are adding to the wrath on Israel by profaning the sabbath.”

19 It came about that just as it grew dark at the gates of Jerusalem before the sabbath, I commanded that the doors should be shut and that they should not open them until after the sabbath. Then I stationed some of my servants at the gates *so that* no load would enter on the sabbath day.

20 Once or twice the traders and merchants of every kind of merchandise spent the night outside Jerusalem.

21 Then I warned them and said to them, “Why do you spend the night in front of the wall? If you do so again, I will use force against you.” From that time on they did not come on the sabbath.

22 And I commanded the Levites that they should purify themselves and come as gatekeepers to sanctify the sabbath day. *For* this also remember me, O my God, and have compassion on me according to the greatness of Your lovingkindness.

Nehemiah Punishes Those Who Had Married Foreign Women

23 In those days I also saw that the Jews had married women from Ashdod, Ammon *and* Moab.

24 As for their children, half spoke in the language of Ashdod, and none of them was able to speak the language of Judah, but the language of his own people.

25 So I contended with them and cursed them and struck some of them and pulled out their hair, and made them swear by God, “You shall not give your daughters to their sons, nor take of their daughters for your sons or for yourselves.

26 Did not Solomon king of Israel sin regarding these things? Yet among the many nations there was no king like him, and he was loved by his God, and God made him king over all Israel; nevertheless the foreign women caused even him to sin.

27 Do we then hear about you that you have committed all this great evil by acting unfaithfully against our God by marrying foreign women?”

28 Even one of the sons of Joiada, the son of Eliashib the high priest, was a son-in-law of Sanballat the Horonite, so I drove him away from me.

29 Remember them, O my God, because they have defiled the priesthood and the covenant of the priesthood and the Levites.

30 Thus I purified them from everything foreign and appointed duties for the priests and the Levites, each in his task,

31 and *I arranged* for the supply of wood at appointed times and for the first fruits. Remember me, O my God, for good.

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Chronological Notes

1) Malachi.¹

- A) Malachi’s prophecy is difficult to date because there are no references to any dateable persons or events. Thus we must draw our conclusions from clues in the text and other external witnesses. Malachi’s place at the end of the twelve Minor Prophets in the Hebrew Bible and modern translations argues for a late date. The Talmud grouped Malachi with Haggai and Zechariah as postexilic prophets.²
- B) Malachi’s reference to “your governor” (1:8) indicates that he wrote after 538 BC when Cyrus the Persian allowed the Jews to return to their land, which was under Persian control. The word translated “governor” is *pehah*, a Persian title (cf. Ezra 5:3, 6, 14; 6:6–7, 13; Dan 3:2–3, 27; 6:7). Zerubbabel bore this title (Hag 1:1, 14; 2:2, 21), as did Nehemiah (Neh 5:14; 12:26). Malachi must have written after the temple had been rebuilt since he referred to worship there (1:6–14; 2:7–9, 13; 3:7–10). This would imply a date after 515 BC when work on the temple was complete.
- C) Since Malachi addressed many of the same matters that Nehemiah tried to reform, it is tempting to date Malachi during Nehemiah’s governorship. Both Malachi and Nehemiah dealt with priestly laxity (Mal 1:6; Neh 13:4–9), neglect of tithes (Mal 3:7–12; Neh 13:10–13), and intermarriage between Israelites and foreigners (Mal 2:10–16; Neh 13:23–28). In the twelfth year of his governorship, Nehemiah returned to Persia for an unknown period of time (Neh 5:14; 13:6). When he returned, he dealt decisively with many of the issues raised by Malachi. Thus I have chosen to place Malachi during the time period when Nehemiah was back in Persia.³

¹ Thomas L. Constable, “Notes on Malachi,” Online: <http://www.sonlight.com/constable/notes/pdf/malachi.pdf>.

² *Yoma* 9b; *Sukkah* 44a; *Rosh Hashannah* 19b; *Megillah* 3a, 15a, et al.

³ E.g., Robert L. Alden, “Malachi,” in *Daniel-Minor Prophets*, vol. 7 of *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, pp. 701–2. Other commentators have suggested a wide range of dates. For example, Craig Blasing suggested a date between 450 and 430 BC. Eugene Merrill preferred a date between 480 and 470 BC. Douglas Stuart believed Malachi wrote about 460 BC. R. K. Harrison and John Bright estimated a date close to 450 BC. Gleason Archer Jr. and Ray Clendenen concluded that Malachi wrote about 435 BC. Hobart Freeman was more specific: shortly after 433 BC. Leon Wood was quite general: during the last half of the fifth century BC, though contemporaneously with Nehemiah.