

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

Malachi 1–4

Title

1:1 What follows is divine revelation. The word of the LORD came to Israel through Malachi:

Israel Questions God's Claim of Love

2 "I have shown love to you," says the LORD, but you say, "How have you shown love to us?" "Esau was Jacob's brother," the LORD explains, "yet I chose Jacob

3 and rejected Esau. I turned Esau's mountains into a deserted wasteland and gave his territory to the wild jackals." [\[Rom 9:13\]](#)

4 Edom says, "Though we are devastated, we will once again build the ruined places." So the LORD who rules over all responds, "They indeed may build, but I will overthrow. They will be known as the land of evil, the people with whom the LORD is permanently displeased.

5 Your eyes will see it, and then you will say, 'May the LORD be magnified even beyond the border of Israel!'"

Israel Questions God's Charge of Disrespect

6 "A son naturally honors his father and a slave respects his master. If I am your father, where is my honor? If I am your master, where is my respect? The LORD who rules over all asks you this, you priests who make light of my name! But you reply, 'How have we made light of your name?'

7 You are offering improper sacrifices on my altar, yet you ask, 'How have we offended you?' By treating the table of the LORD as if it is of no importance!

8 For when you offer blind animals as a sacrifice, is that not wrong? And when you offer the lame and sick, is that not wrong as well? Indeed, try offering them to your governor! Will he be pleased with you or show you favor?" asks the LORD who rules over all.

9 But now plead for God's favor that he might be gracious to us. "With this kind of offering in your hands, how can he be pleased with you?" asks the LORD who rules over all.

10 "I wish that one of you would close the temple doors, so that you no longer would light useless fires on my altar. I am not pleased with you," says the LORD who rules over all, "and I will no longer accept an offering from you.

11 For from the east to the west my name will be great among the nations. Incense and pure offerings will be offered in my name everywhere, for my name will be great among the nations," says the LORD who rules over all.

12 "But you are profaning it by saying that the table of the Lord is common and its offerings despicable.

13 You also say, 'How tiresome it is.' You turn up your nose at it," says the LORD who rules over all, "and instead bring what is stolen, lame, or sick. You bring these things for an offering! Should I accept this from you?" asks the LORD.

14 "There will be harsh condemnation for the hypocrite who has a valuable male animal in his flock but vows and sacrifices something inferior to the Lord. For I am a great king," says the LORD who rules over all, "and my name is awesome among the nations."

Warning to the Priests

2:1 "Now, you priests, this commandment is for you.

2 If you do not listen and take seriously the need to honor my name," says the LORD who rules over all, "I will send judgment on you and turn your blessings into curses—indeed, I have already done so because you are not taking it to heart.

3 I am about to discipline your children and will spread offal on your faces, the very offal produced at your festivals, and you will be carried away along with it.

4 Then you will know that I sent this commandment to you so that my covenant may continue to be with Levi," says the LORD who rules over all.

5 "My covenant with him was designed to bring life and peace. I gave its statutes to him to fill him with awe, and he indeed revered me and stood in awe before me.

6 He taught what was true; sinful words were not found on his lips. He walked with me in peace and integrity, and he turned many people away from sin.

7 For the lips of a priest should preserve knowledge of sacred things, and people should seek instruction from him because he is the messenger of the LORD who rules over all.

8 You, however, have turned from the way. You have caused many to violate the law; you have corrupted the covenant with Levi," says the LORD who rules over all.

9 "Therefore, I have caused you to be ignored and belittled before all people to the extent to which you are not following after me and are showing partiality in your instruction."

God Charges Israel With Unfaithfulness

10 Do we not all have one father? Did not one God create us? Why do we betray one another, in this way making light of the covenant of our ancestors?

11 Judah has become disloyal, and unspeakable sins have been committed in Israel and Jerusalem. For Judah has profaned the holy

things that the LORD loves and has turned to a foreign god!

12 May the LORD cut off from the community of Jacob every last person who does this, as well as the person who presents improper offerings to the LORD who rules over all!

13 You also do this: You cover the altar of the LORD with tears as you weep and groan, because he no longer pays any attention to the offering nor accepts it favorably from you.

14 Yet you ask, "Why?" The LORD is testifying against you on behalf of the wife you married when you were young, to whom you have become unfaithful even though she is your companion and wife by law.

15 No one who has even a small portion of the Spirit in him does this. What did our ancestor do when seeking a child from God? Be attentive, then, to your own spirit, for one should not be disloyal to the wife he took in his youth.

16 "I hate divorce," says the LORD God of Israel, "and the one who is guilty of violence," says the LORD who rules over all. "Pay attention to your conscience, and do not be unfaithful."

Israel Questions God's Charge of Wearisome Words

17 You have wearied the LORD with your words. But you say, "How have we wearied him?" Because you say, "Everyone who does evil is good in the Lord's opinion, and he delights in them," or "Where is the God of justice?"

3:1 "I am about to send my messenger, who will clear the way before me. Indeed, the Lord you are seeking will suddenly come to his temple, and the messenger of the covenant, whom you long for, is certainly coming," says the LORD who rules over all. [[Matt 11:10](#); [Mark 1:2](#); [Luke 7:27](#)]

2 Who can endure the day of his coming? Who can keep standing when he appears? For he will be like a refiner's fire, like a launderer's soap.

3 He will act like a refiner and purifier of silver and will cleanse the Levites and refine them like gold and silver. Then they will offer the LORD a proper offering.

4 The offerings of Judah and Jerusalem will be pleasing to the LORD as in former times and years past.

5 "I will come to you in judgment. I will be quick to testify against those who practice divination, those who commit adultery, those who break promises, and those who exploit workers, widows, and orphans, who refuse to help the immigrant and in this way show they do not fear me," says the LORD who rules over all.

6 "Since, I, the LORD, do not go back on my promises, you, sons of Jacob, have not perished.

Israel Questions God's Charge of Disobedience

7 From the days of your ancestors you have ignored my commandments and have not kept them! Return to me, and I will return to you," says the LORD who rules over all. "But you say, 'How should we return?'

8 Can a person rob God? You indeed are robbing me, but you say, 'How are we robbing you?' In tithes and contributions!

9 You are bound for judgment because you are robbing me—this whole nation is guilty.

10 "Bring the entire tithe into the storehouse so that there may be food in my temple. Test me in this matter," says the LORD who rules over all, "to see if I will not open for you the windows of heaven and pour out for you a blessing until there is no room for it all.

11 Then I will stop the plague from ruining your crops, and the vine will not lose its fruit before harvest," says the LORD who rules over all.

12 "All nations will call you happy, for you indeed will live in a delightful land," says the LORD who rules over all.

Israel Questions God's Charge of Hard Words

13 "You have criticized me sharply," says the LORD, "but you ask, 'How have we criticized you?'

14 You have said, 'It is useless to serve God. How have we been helped by keeping his requirements and going about like mourners before the LORD who rules over all?'

15 So now we consider the arrogant to be happy; indeed, those who practice evil are successful. In fact, those who challenge God escape!"

16 Then those who respected the LORD spoke to one another, and the LORD took notice. A scroll was prepared before him in which were recorded the names of those who respected the LORD and honored his name.

17 "They will belong to me," says the LORD who rules over all, "in the day when I prepare my own special property. I will spare them as a man spares his son who serves him.

18 Then once more you will see that I make a distinction between the righteous and the wicked, between the one who serves God and the one who does not.

Remember the Coming "Day of the Lord"

4:1 "For indeed the day is coming, burning like a furnace, and all the arrogant evildoers will be chaff. The coming day will burn them up," says the LORD who rules over all. "It will not leave even a root or branch.

2 But for you who respect my name, the sun of vindication will rise with healing wings, and you will skip about like calves released from the stall.

3 You will trample on the wicked, for they will be like ashes under the soles of your feet on the day which I am preparing," says the

LORD who rules over all.

4 “Remember the law of my servant Moses, to whom at Horeb I gave rules and regulations for all Israel to obey.

5 Look, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the great and terrible day of the LORD arrives. [[Matt 17:10](#); [Mark 9:11](#)]

6 He will encourage fathers and their children to return to me, so that I will not come and strike the earth with judgment.”

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 the book of Moses was read aloud in the hearing of the people. They found written in it that no Ammonite or Moabite may ever enter the assembly of God,

2 for they had not met the Israelites with food and water, but instead had hired Balaam to curse them. (Our God, however, turned the curse into blessing.)

3 When they heard the law, they removed from Israel all who were of mixed ancestry.

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

4 But prior to this time, Eliashib the priest, a relative of Tobiah, had been appointed over the storerooms of the temple of our God.

5 He made for himself a large storeroom where previously they had been keeping the grain offering, the incense, and the vessels, along with the tithes of the grain, the new wine, and the olive oil as commanded for the Levites, the singers, the gate keepers, and the offering for the priests.

Nehemiah Cleanses the Temple of Tobiah’s Influence

6 During all this time I was not in Jerusalem, for in the thirty-second year of King Artaxerxes of Babylon, I had gone back to the king. After some time I had requested leave of the king,

7 and I returned to Jerusalem. Then I discovered the evil that Eliashib had done for Tobiah by supplying him with a storeroom in the courts of the temple of God.

8 I was very upset, and I threw all of Tobiah’s household possessions out of the storeroom.

9 Then I gave instructions that the storerooms should be purified, and I brought back the equipment of the temple of God, along with the grain offering and the incense.

Nehemiah Restores the Tithes to the Levites

10 I also discovered that the grain offerings for the Levites had not been provided, and that as a result the Levites and the singers who performed this work had all gone off to their fields.

11 So I registered a complaint with the leaders, asking “Why is the temple of God neglected?” Then I gathered them and reassigned them to their positions.

12 Then all of Judah brought the tithe of the grain, the new wine, and the olive oil to the storerooms.

13 I gave instructions that Shelemiah the priest, Zadok the scribe, and a certain Levite named Pedaiah be put in charge of the storerooms, and that Hanan son of Zaccur, the son of Mattaniah, be their assistant, for they were regarded as trustworthy. It was then their responsibility to oversee the distribution to their colleagues.

14 Please remember me for this, O my God, and do not wipe out the kindness that I have done for the temple of my God and for its services!

Nehemiah Enforces Observance of the Sabbath

15 In those days I saw people in Judah treading winepresses on the Sabbath, bringing in heaps of grain and loading them onto donkeys, along with wine, grapes, figs, and all kinds of loads, and bringing them to Jerusalem on the Sabbath day. So I warned them on the day that they sold these provisions.

16 The people from Tyre who lived there were bringing fish and all kinds of merchandise and were selling it on the Sabbath to the people of Judah—and in Jerusalem, of all places!

17 So I registered a complaint with the nobles of Judah, saying to them, “What is this evil thing that you are doing, profaning the Sabbath day?

18 Isn’t this the way your ancestors acted, causing our God to bring on them and on this city all this misfortune? And now you are causing even more wrath on Israel, profaning the Sabbath like this!”

19 When the evening shadows began to fall on the gates of Jerusalem before the Sabbath, I ordered the doors to be closed. I further directed that they were not to be opened until after the Sabbath. I positioned some of my young men at the gates so that no load could enter on the Sabbath day.

20 The traders and sellers of all kinds of merchandise spent the night outside Jerusalem once or twice.

21 But I warned them and said, “Why do you spend the night by the wall? If you repeat this, I will forcibly remove you!” From that time on they did not show up on the Sabbath.

22 Then I directed the Levites to purify themselves and come and guard the gates in order to keep the Sabbath day holy. For this please remember me, O my God, and have pity on me in keeping with your great love.

Nehemiah Punishes Those Who Had Married Foreign Women

23 Also in those days I saw the men of Judah who had married women from Ashdod, Ammon, and Moab.

24 Half of their children spoke the language of Ashdod (or the language of one of the other peoples mentioned) and were unable to speak the language of Judah.

25 So I entered a complaint with them. I called down a curse on them, and I struck some of the men and pulled out their hair. I had them swear by God saying, “You will not marry off your daughters to their sons, and you will not take any of their daughters as wives for your sons or for yourselves!

26 Was it not because of things like these that King Solomon of Israel sinned? Among the many nations there was no king like him. He was loved by his God, and God made him king over all Israel. But the foreign wives made even him sin!

27 Should we then in your case hear that you do all this great evil, thereby being unfaithful to our God by marrying foreign wives?”

28 Now one of the sons of Joiada son of Eliashib the high priest was a son-in-law of Sanballat the Horonite. So I banished him from my sight.

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

30 So I purified them of everything foreign, and I assigned specific duties to the priests and the Levites.

31 I also provided for the wood offering at the appointed times and also for the first fruits. Please remember me for good, O my God.

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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.