
מלאכי • MALACHI

INTRODUCTION

The *Book of Malachi* presents a substantial amount of information about its author's viewpoints. He speaks frequently of the Covenant (2:4, 5, 8, 10, 14, 3:1) and shows great respect for the priestly 'instruction' (the *Torah* - 2:6-9). Instead of adopting the oracular style normally used by the earlier prophets, Malachi employs a distinctive question-and-answer method of stating his argument. Nevertheless, his emphasis on sin, judgement, and repentance, and on the advent of the Day of Yahweh (3:1-5, 7, 4:1-3, 6) mark him as a prophet, and he may best be understood as a 'cultic prophet'.

One central theme dominates Malachi's thought: fidelity to Yahweh's Covenant and its teachings. From this standpoint, he both condemns the priests for corrupting worship and misleading the people (1:6-2:9, 3:3-4) and charges his brethren to remain faithful to their wives from the community of covenant and thus have 'godly' offspring (2:13-16). In exhorting Israel to faithfulness, Malachi also gives striking descriptions of the worship of Yahweh by the Gentiles (1:11, 14), the ideal priest (2:5-7) and the blessing of obedience (3:10-12, 16-17, 4:2-3). He asserts, further, that all members of the community are begotten by the same God (2:10) and adds to the concept of the Day of Yahweh (Zp 1:14-18) the figure of the appointed forerunner (3:1-4, cf. 4:5-6).

The *Book of Malachi* is the last of the 12 'Minor Prophets' in both the *Masoretic Text* and the *Septuagint*. Significant parts of the text are preserved in *Qumran MS 4QXII^a*.

AUTHORSHIP AND DATES

Nothing is known about the person of Malachi. Even his name, which means 'My Messenger', may only be an appellation, based on 3:1 (cf. 2:7). Living probably in the period 500-450 BCE, he was devoted to the Temple and held a high view of the priesthood and its responsibilities. Most scholars consider the book as the work of a single author and there is no reason to doubt that it was the prophet named in the text.

מלאכי פרק א

א מִשָּׂא דְבַר־יְהוָה אֶל־יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּיַד מְלָאכִי:
ב אֶהְבֵּתִי אֶתְכֶם אָמַר יְהוָה וְאַמַּרְתֶּם בְּמֶה
אֶהְבַּתְנוּ הַלּוֹא־אָח עָשׂוּ לִיעֲקֹב נְאֻם־יְהוָה וְאֶהֱבֶה
אֶת־יַעֲקֹב: ג וְאֶת־עֲשׂוֹ שְׂנֵאתִי וְאֲשִׁים אֶת־הָרָיו
שְׂמָמָה וְאֶת־נַחְלָתוֹ לְתַנּוֹת מִדְּבַר: ד כִּי־תֹאמַר
אָדָם רִשְׁשָׁנוּ וְנָשׁוּב וְנִבְנֶה חֲרֻבוֹת כֹּה אָמַר יְהוָה
צְבָאוֹת הֵמָּה יִבְנוּ וְאֲנִי אֶהְרֹס וְקִרְאוּ לָהֶם גְּבוּל
רִשְׁעָה וְהָעַם אֲשֶׁר־זָעַם יְהוָה עַד־עוֹלָם: ה וְעֵינֵיכֶם
תִּרְאִינָה וְאַתֶּם תֹּאמְרוּ יִגְדַל יְהוָה מֵעַל לְגְבוּל
יִשְׂרָאֵל: ו בֶּן יִכְבַּד אָב וְעֶבֶד אֲדָנָיו וְאִם־אָב אָנִי
אִיֶּה כְבוֹדִי וְאִם־אֲדוֹנִים אָנִי אִיֶּה מוֹרְאֵי אָמְרוּ
יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת לָכֶם הִכְהַנִּים בְּזוּי שְׁמִי וְאַמַּרְתֶּם
בְּמֶה בְּזִינוּ אֶת־שְׁמִי: ז מְגִישִׁים עַל־מִזְבְּחִי לֶחֶם
מִגָּאֵל וְאַמַּרְתֶּם בְּמֶה גְּאֻלְנוּ בְּאַמְרֹכֶם שְׁלַחַן

MALACHI 1

¹ An oracle. The word of Yahweh to Israel through by. ² "I have loved you, says Yahweh, but you ask, "How have you loved us?" "Is not Esau Jacob's brother?" says Yahweh; yet I loved Jacob ³ but I hated Esau. I turned his mountains into a desert and his heritage into dens for jackals. ⁴ If Edom says, "We are shattered but we shall rebuild our ruins," Yahweh Sabaoth says this, "Let them build, but I shall pull down! They will be known as 'Land of Wickedness' and 'Nation-with-which-Yahweh-is-angry-forever'." ⁵ Your own eyes will see this and you will say, "Yahweh is mighty beyond the borders of Israel." ⁶ The son honours his father and the slave his master. If then, I am father, where is my honour due? If I am master, where is my awe? – says Yahweh Sabaoth to you priests who despise my name. You ask, "How have we despised your name?" ⁷ By putting polluted food on my table. You ask, "How have we polluted it?" By saying, "Yahweh's table deserves no

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- ¹ The literal translation of 'oracle' (מִשָּׂא) is 'burden'. The name 'Malachi' (מְלָאכִי) means 'My Messenger' (cf. 3:1), which is how the LXX translates it, adding, "Lay (this) therefore to your hearts." (θέσθε δὴ ἐπὶ τὰς καρδίας ὑμῶν.) The Tg reads, "My messenger, whose name is Ezra the scribe."
- ² 'Esau' is the eponymous ancestor of Edom (see Gn 36:1 and #Dt 2:1 & 5).
- ³ In place of 'for jackals', here following the MT & NRSV, the LXX (& NJB) has 'in the wastelands' (ἐρήμου).
- ⁴ 'Edom' became an example of hostility toward Israel and God (see Nb 20:14–21, Dt 2:8, Jr 49:7–22, Ezk 25:12–14, Am 1:11–12, Ob 10–12).
- ⁵ In place of 'your own eyes', here following the NRSV, the NJB has 'you yourselves'.
- ⁶ After 'slave', the NJB adds 'stands in awe of'; the phrase is not present in the MT (or NRSV).
- ⁷ The word 'table', a synonym for 'altar', has overtones of covenant imagery in which a feast shared by the covenant partners was an important element (see Ex 24:11); it also draws attention to the analogy of sitting down at a common meal with the governor (v. 8).

יְהוָה נְבוֹזָה הוּא: ^ח וְכִי־תִגִּישׁוּן עֹזֵר לְזִבְחַ אֵין רָע
 וְכִי תִגִּישׁוּ פֶסֶחַ וְחִלָּה אֵין רָע הַקְרִיבֵהוּ נָא
 לְפֶתַח־דֶּרֶךְ הַיְרֻצֵדְךָ אִזּוּ הִישָׂא פָנֶיךָ אָמַר יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת:
^ט וְעַתָּה חֲלוּ־נָא פְנֵי־אֵל וַיְחַנְּנוּ מִיַּדְכֶם הִיתָה זֹאת
 הִישָׂא מִכֶּם פָּנִים אָמַר יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת: ^י מִי גַם־בְּכֶם
 וַיִּסְגֹר דְלָתַיִם וְלֹא־תֵאֲרִיזוּ מִזְבְּחֵי חֲנֹם אֵין־לִי חֶפֶץ
 בְּכֶם אָמַר יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת וּמִנְחָה לֹא־אֲרַצֶּה
 מִיַּדְכֶם: ^{יא} כִּי מִמְזֹרַח־שֶׁמֶשׁ וְעַד־מְבוֹאוֹ גְדוֹל שְׁמִי
 בַּגּוֹיִם וּבְכָל־מְקוֹם מִקְטֹר מִגִּישׁ לְשָׁמִי וּמִנְחָה
 טְהוֹרָה כִּי־גְדוֹל שְׁמִי בַּגּוֹיִם אָמַר יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת:
^{יב} וְאַתֶּם מְחַלְלִים אוֹתוֹ בְּאַמְרֹכֶם שְׁלַחַן אֲדֹנָי
 מִגֶּאֱל הוּא וְנִיבּוֹ נְבוֹזָה אָכְלוּ: ^{יג} וְאַמַּרְתֶּם הֲנֵה
 מִתְלַאֶה וְהִפְחַתֶּם אוֹתוֹ אָמַר יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת
 וְהִבֵּאתֶם גְּזוּל וְאֶת־הַפֶּסֶחַ וְאֶת־הַחֹלֶה וְהִבֵּאתֶם
 אֶת־הַמִּנְחָה הָאֲרָצָה אוֹתָהּ מִיַּדְכֶם אָמַר
 יְהוָה: {ס}

respect.” ⁸ When you bring blind animals for sacrifice, is it not evil? When you bring the lame and the sick, is it not evil? Offer them to your governor and see if he is pleased with them or shows you favour, says Yahweh Sabaoth. ⁹ And now, plead with God to take pity on us – that is what you have done – will he take any notice? – says Yahweh Sabaoth. ¹⁰ Why does one of you not close the doors and so stop the pointless lighting of fires on my altar? I am not pleased with you, says Yahweh Sabaoth; from your hands, I find no offering acceptable. ¹¹ For, from farthest east to farthest west, my name is great among the nations, and everywhere incense and a pure gift are offered to my name, since my name is great among the nations, says Yahweh Sabaoth. ¹² But you profane it by saying, “The table of the Lord is polluted, hence the food and its produce offered on it deserves no respect.” ¹³ You say, “How tiresome it all is,” and sniff disdainfully at me, says Yahweh Sabaoth. You bring a stolen, lame or sick animal as an offering! Am I to accept this from you? – says Yahweh.

⁸ ‘With them’ follows the LXX (αὐτό); the MT has ‘with you’.

⁹ The literal translation of ‘try pleading with God’ is ‘seek God’s face’.

¹⁰ As long as the priesthood and people remain disobedient, the Temple may as well be closed because God is not ‘at home’.

¹¹ The form of worship of which the prophet speaks here as addressed to Yahweh is not so much the widespread cult in the Persian Empire of the ‘God of heaven’ (Ezr 1:2, 5:11ff, 6:9ff, 7:12,21–23, Ne 1:4ff, 2:4,20, Dn 2:18, 4:34, 5:23), as the perfect sacrifice of the messianic age.

¹² Instead of ‘you have profaned it’, the original text probably read ‘you have profaned me’, later corrected by the scribes out of respect for God’s majesty; similarly in v. 13, where we restore ‘at me’, where the MT reads ‘at it’. For another example of scribal correction, see #Zc 2:12. The NJB and NRSV, following the Tg & Peshitta text, omit ‘and its produce’, here following the MT.

¹³ ‘Bring that as an offering’ is a conjectural translation; the MT has ‘bring the offering’.

וְאָרוּר נֹכֵחַ וַיֵּשׁ בְּעֶדְרוֹ זָכָר וְנָדַר וְזָבַח מִשְׁחָת
לְאֵדֵנִי כִּי מֶלֶךְ גָּדוֹל אֲנִי אָמַר יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת וְשְׁמִי
נִרְאָה בַּגּוֹיִם: 14 “Cursed be the rogue who has a male in his flock but pays his vow by
sacrificing a blemished animal to me! For, I am a great king, says
Yahweh Sabaoth, and among the nations, my name inspires awe.

¹⁴ 'To me' is a conjectural translation following the *NJB*; the *MT* (and *NRSV*) has 'to the Lord'.

מלאכי פרק ב

א ועתה אליכם המצוה הזאת הכהנים: ב אם-לא תשמעו ואם-לא תשימו על-לב לתת כבוד לשמי אמר יהוה צבאות ושלחתי בכם את-המארה וארותי את-ברכותיכם וגם ארותיה כי אינכם שמים על-לב: ג הנני גער לכם את-הזרע וזריתי פֶרֶשׁ על-פניכם פֶרֶשׁ חֲגִיבִים ונשא אתכם אליו: ד וידעתם כי שלחתי אליכם את המצוה הזאת להיות בריתי את-לוי אמר יהוה צבאות: ה בריתי ויתנה אתו החיים והשלום ואתנם-לו מורא וייראני ומפני שמי נחת הוא: ו תורת אמת היתה בפיהו ועולה לא-נמצא בשפתיו בשלום ובמישור הלך אתי ורבים השיב מעון: ז כִּי-שִׁפְטִי כֹהֵן יִשְׁמְרוּ-דַעַת וְתוֹרָה יִבְקְשׂוּ מִפִּיהוּ כִּי מִלֶּאדָּי יִהְיֶה-צְבָאוֹת הוּא: ח ואתם סרתם מן-הדרך הכשלתם

MALACHI 2

1 " And now, priests, this command is for you. 2 If you will not listen, if you will not resolve to glorify my name, says Yahweh Sabaoth, I shall lay a curse on you and I shall curse your blessing. Indeed, I will lay a curse, for none of you makes this resolve. 3 Now, I am going to break your arm and throw offal in your faces – the offal of your solemn feasts – and sweep you away with it. 4 Then you will know that I sent this command to you, so that my covenant with Levi may hold, says Yahweh Sabaoth. 5 My covenant was with him – a covenant of life and peace, which I gave him – a covenant of respect, and he respected me and held my name in awe. 6 The law of truth was in his mouth and guilt was not found on his lips; he walked in peace and justice with me and he converted many from sinning. 7 The priest's lips ought to safeguard knowledge; his mouth is where the law ought to be sought, since he is Yahweh Sabaoth's messenger. 8 However, you have turned aside from

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- ¹ In place of 'command', here following the NRSV, the NJB has 'commandment' (as also in v. 4).
- ² 'Blessing' follows the LXX (εὐλογία), and cf. what follows in the 2nd half of the verse; the MT has 'blessings'.
- ³ 'Break your arm' follows the LXX (ἀφορίζω ὑμῖν τὸν ὄμω - literally, 'separate you to the shoulder') and NJB; the MT (& NRSV) has 'rebuke your seed'. '(I shall) sweep you away with it' follows the Peshitta; the MT has 'he will sweep you away to him'.
- ⁴ 'My covenant' refers to the priestly covenant through Aaron and his grandson Phinehas (see Ex 6:16-20, Nb 25:10-13, Jr 33:21-22).
- ⁵ In place of 'peace', here following the NJB, the NRSV has 'well-being'.
- ⁶ 'The law of truth' follows the LXX (νόμος ἀληθείας) and NJB; the MT (and NRSV) has 'true instruction'.
- ⁷ After 'knowledge', NETB adds 'of sacred things', though it is unclear what textual evidence there is for this (neither LXX nor Vg include it).
- ⁸ The definite article embedded within בתורה ('the way') may suggest that the Torah is in mind and not just 'ordinary' priestly instruction.

רְבִים בַּתּוֹרָה שְׁחַתְּמָם בְּרִית הַלְוִי אָמַר יְהוָה
 צְבָאוֹת: ^ט וְגַם־אֲנִי נָתַתִּי אֶתְכֶם גְּבוּזִים וְשֹׁפְלִים
 לְכָל־הָעָם כְּפִי אֲשֶׁר אֵינְכֶם שֹׁמְרִים אֶת־דַּרְכֵי
 וְנִשְׂאִים פָּנִים בַּתּוֹרָה: {פ}

י' הֲלוֹא אָב אֶחָד לְכֻלָּנוּ הֲלוֹא אֵל אֶחָד בְּרָאנוּ
 מִדּוּעַ נִבְגַּד אִישׁ בְּאָחִיו לְחַלֵּל בְּרִית אֲבֹתֵינוּ:
 י"א בְּגֵדָה יְהוּדָה וְתוֹעֵבָה נַעֲשֶׂתָה בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל
 וּבִירוּשָׁלַם כִּי חָלַל יְהוּדָה קֹדֶשׁ יְהוָה אֲשֶׁר אָהָב
 וּבָעַל בַּת־אֵל נָכַר: י"ב יִכְרַת יְהוָה לְאִישׁ אֲשֶׁר
 יַעֲשֶׂנָה עֵר וְעֵנָה מֵאֵהֳלֵי יַעֲקֹב וּמִגִּישׁ מִנְחָה
 לַיהוָה צְבָאוֹת: {פ}

י"ג וְזֹאת שְׁנִית תַּעֲשׂוּ בְּסוֹת דְּמָעָה אֶת־מִזְבַּח יְהוָה
 בְּכִי וְאֲנָקָה מֵאִין עוֹד פְּנוֹת אֶל־הַמִּנְחָה וְלִקְחַת
 רִצּוֹן מִיְדְכֶם: י"ד וְאָמַרְתֶּם עַל־מָה עַל כִּי־יְהוָה
 הֵעִיד בֵּינָךְ וּבֵין אִשְׁתְּ נַעֲוִיךָ אֲשֶׁר אָתָּה בְּגַדְתָּה

the way; you have caused many to lapse by your teaching; you have destroyed the covenant of Levi, says Yahweh Sabaoth, ⁹ so I in my turn have made you contemptible and vile to the whole people, for not having kept my ways and for being partial in applying your law.

¹⁰ “Have we not all one Father? Did not one God create us? Why, then, are we faithless with one another, profaning the covenant of our fathers?

¹¹ Judah has broken faith; an abomination has been done in Israel and in Jerusalem. For, Judah has profaned Yahweh’s beloved sanctuary; he has married the daughter of an alien god. ¹² May Yahweh deprive such an offender of witness and advocate in the tents of Jacob among those who present offerings to Yahweh Sabaoth!

¹³ “And this you do as well: you cover Yahweh’s altar with tears, with weeping and wailing; for, he now won’t consider the offering or accept it from you. ¹⁴ And you ask, “Why?” Because Yahweh was a witness between you and the wife of your youth, with whom you have broken

⁹ The literal translation of ‘your law’ is ‘the law’; the article is used here as a possessive pronoun.

¹⁰ The rhetorical question, “Have we not all one father” by no means teaches the ‘universal fatherhood of God’, that is, that all people equally are children of God; the reference to the covenant, as well as to Israel and Judah (v. 11), makes clear that the ‘we’ is referring to God’s elect people.

¹¹ ‘Judah’, hitherto understood collectively, is now used in the distributive sense: individual members of Judah marry the ‘daughters’ of an alien god, i.e. idolatresses.

¹² ‘Witness’ is conjectural (עֵד) – the MT has ‘arouse’ (עָרָה). ‘Those who present’ follows the LXX (προσαγόντων); the MT has ‘he who presents’.

¹³ The ‘weeping’ is the ‘crocodile tears’ of hypocrisy, not repentance; the people weep because God will not hear them, not because of their sin.

¹⁴ Marriage is a sacred covenant honoured by members of the community of covenant (Gn 2:24, Ezk 16:8, Ho 2:19, Mk 10:2–9, Ep 5:21–23). Though there is no explicit reference to marriage vows in the Hebrew Bible (but see Job 7:13, Pr 2:17, Ezk 16:8), the term ‘covenant’ here asserts that such vows or agreements must have existed.

בָּהּ וְהִיא חֲבֵרְתָּךְ וְאִשְׁתְּ בְרִיתְךָ: ^{טו} וְלֹא-אֶחָד
 עָשָׂה וּשְׂאֵר רוּחַ לּוֹ וּמָה הָאֶחָד מִבְּקֵשׁ זֶרַע
 אֱלֹהִים וְנִשְׁמַרְתֶּם בְּרוּחֲכֶם וּבְאִשְׁתְּ נְעוּרֶיךָ אֶל-
 יְבַגְד: ^{טז} כִּי-שָׁנָא שְׁלַח אָמַר יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל
 וְכִסָּה חֲמָס עַל-לְבוּשׁוֹ אָמַר יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת
 וְנִשְׁמַרְתֶּם בְּרוּחֲכֶם וְלֹא תִבְגְּדוּ: {פ}

^{יז} הֲוֹגְעֲתֶם יְהוָה בְּדַבְרֵיכֶם וְאַמַּרְתֶּם בְּמֶה הֲוֹגְעֵנוּ
 בְּאַמְרֵיכֶם כָּל-עֲשֵׂה רָע טוֹב בְּעֵינֵי יְהוָה וּבְהֶם
 הוּא חֹפֵץ אִו אֵיה אֱלֹהֵי הַמְּשַׁפֵּט:

faith, though she was your partner and wife by covenant. ¹⁵ Did he not create a single being, having flesh and breath? And what does this one being seek, God-given seed? Respect your own life, then, and do not break faith with the wife of your youth. ¹⁶ For, I hate divorce, says Yahweh, God of Israel, and him hiding his cruelty under a cloak, says Yahweh Sabaoth. Take heed to yourselves and do not break faith.

¹⁷ “You have wearied Yahweh with your talk. You ask, “How have we wearied him?” By saying, “Any evildoer is good in Yahweh’s eyes and he is delighted with him;” or, “Where is the God of justice now?”

¹⁵ ‘Did he not create’ follows the Vg (*nonne unus fecit*); the MT has ‘he did not create’. ‘Flesh and breath’ is a conjectural translation (שְׂאֵר וְרוּחַ); the MT has ‘residue of breath’ (שְׂאֵר רוּחַ). This is a difficult verse, here loosely following the NJB; the NRSV reads, “Did not one God make her? Both flesh and spirit are his; and what does the one God desire – Godly offspring. So, look to yourselves, and do not let anyone be faithless to the wife of his youth.”

¹⁶ ‘I hate’ is a conjectural translation; the MT has ‘he hates’.

¹⁷ On the problem set by the prosperity of the wicked at a time when only earthly sanctions were envisaged, see Job, and Ps 37 & 73.

מלאכי פרק ג

א הַנְּגִי שְׁלַח מַלְאָכִי וּפְנֵה-דֶרֶךְ לְפָנַי וּפְתָאֵם יְבוֹא אֶל-הַיְכָלֹוּ הָאֵדוּן אֲשֶׁר-אַתֶּם מְבַקְשִׁים וּמְלֹאֲךָ הַבְּרִית אֲשֶׁר-אַתֶּם חֹפְצִים הִנֵּה-בָא אָמַר יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת: ^ב וּמִי מְכַלְכֵּל אֶת-יוֹם בּוֹאוֹ וּמִי הָעֹמֵד בְּהִרְאוֹתָו כִּי-הוּא כָּאֵשׁ מְצַרֵּף וּכְבָרִית מְכַבְּסִים: ^ג וַיֵּשֶׁב מְצַרֵּף וּמְטַהֵר כֶּסֶף וְטָהַר אֶת-בְּנֵי-לֵוִי וְזָקַק אֹתָם כְּזָהָב וּכְכֶסֶף וְהָיוּ לַיהוָה מְגִישֵׁי מִנְחָה בְּצִדְקָה: ^ד וְעָרְבָה לַיהוָה מִנְחַת יְהוּדָה וִירוּשָׁלַם כִּימֵי עוֹלָם וּכְשָׁנִים קִדְמֹנִית: ^ה וְקִרְבָּתִי אֵלֵיכֶם לְמַשְׁפֵּט וְהָיִיתִי עַד מְמַהֵר בְּמַכְשָׁפִים וּבְמִנְאָפִים וּבְנֹשְׁבְעִים לְשָׁקֵר וּבְעֹשֵׂי שְׂכָר-שְׂכִיר אֶלְמָנָה וַיִּתּוֹם וּמְטִי-גֵר וְלֹא יֵרְאוּנִי אָמַר יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת: ^ו כִּי אֲנִי יְהוָה לֹא שֶׁנִּיתִי וְאַתֶּם בְּנֵי-יַעֲקֹב לֹא כָלִיתֶם: ^ז לְמִימֵי אֲבֹתֵיכֶם סָרְתֶם מִחֻקֵּי וְלֹא שְׁמַרְתֶּם שׁוּבוּ אֵלַי וְאָשׁוּבָה אֵלֵיכֶם אָמַר יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת וְאַמַּרְתֶּם

MALACHI 3

¹ "See, I shall send my messenger to clear a way before me; and suddenly, the Lord whom you seek will come to his Temple; yes, the angel of the covenant, for whom you long, is on his way, says Yahweh Sabaoth. ² Who can resist the day of his coming? Who can stand when he appears? For, he will be like a refiner's fire, like fuller's soap. ³ He will sit as refiner and purifier of silver; he will purify the Levites and refine them like gold and silver, so that they can offer to Yahweh with uprightness. ⁴ The offering of Judah and Jerusalem will then be pleasing to Yahweh as in former days, as in the years of old. ⁵ I come to put you on trial and I shall be a ready witness against sorcerers, adulterers, perjurers, and against those who oppress the wage earner, the widow and the orphan, and who rob the foreigner of his rights and do not respect me, says Yahweh Sabaoth. ⁶ No; I, Yahweh, do not change; and you have not ceased to be children of Jacob! ⁷ Ever since the days of your fathers, you have turned aside from my statutes and not observed them.

MALACHI 3

- ¹ The precursor of Yahweh (Is 40:3) will be identified with Elijah (3:23). The 'angel' of the new covenant is not this precursor, since his arrival at the Temple is simultaneous with that of Yahweh; it is probably an enigmatic designation of Yahweh himself, derived from Ex 3:2, 23:20.
- ² The 'refiner's fire' was used to purify metal and refine it by melting it and allowing the dross, which floated to the top, to be scooped off.
- ³ In place of 'sit', here following the NRSV, the NJB has 'take his seat' and NETB has 'act like'.
- ⁴ In place of 'offering', here following the NJB & NRSV, NETB has 'gift'.
- ⁵ God will appear for judgement against the wicked and godless (Zp 1:14-18, 3:1-8, Mk 13:14-37, 2Th 2:1-12).
- ⁶ This passage should perhaps be linked to 1:2-5, in which case it would provide the answer to the sceptical question of 1:2.
- ⁷ For 'turned aside from', following the NRSV, MT, NJPS & LXX - ἐξελίνατε... ἄπο), the NJB has 'evaded'; it is unclear whence this difference arises.

בְּמָה נָשׁוּב׃ ח׃ הִקְבַּע אָדָם אֱלֹהִים כִּי אַתֶּם
 קִבְּעִים אֹתִי וְאַמַּרְתֶּם בְּמָה קִבְּעֵנוּךְ הַמַּעֲשֶׂר
 וְהַתְּרוּמָה׃ ט׃ בְּמֵאֲרָה אַתֶּם נֹאֲרִים וְאֹתִי אַתֶּם
 קִבְּעִים הַגּוֹי כְּלוֹ׃ י׃ הִבִּיאוּ אֶת־כָּל־הַמַּעֲשֶׂר אֶל־
 בַּיִת הָאוֹצֵר וַיְהִי טָרֶף בְּבֵיתִי וּבְחֲנוּנַי נָא בְּזֹאת
 אֶמַר יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת אִם־לֹא אֶפְתַּח לְכֶם אֶת
 אַרְבּוֹת הַשָּׁמַיִם וְהִרִיקְתִּי לְכֶם בָּרֶכָה עַד־בְּלִי־דֵי׃
 יא׃ וְגַעַרְתִּי לְכֶם בְּאֹכֵל וּלְאִי־שַׁחַת לְכֶם אֶת־פְּרִי
 הָאֲדָמָה וְלֹא־תִשְׁכַּל לְכֶם הַגֶּפֶן בְּשׂוּדָה אֶמַר יְהוָה
 צְבָאוֹת׃ יב׃ וְאֲשֶׁרוּ אֶתְכֶם כָּל־הַגּוֹיִם כִּי־תִהְיוּ אַתֶּם
 אֶרֶץ חֶפְץ אֶמַר יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת׃ {פ}

יג׃ חִזְקוּ עָלַי דְּבַרְיֵכֶם אֶמַר יְהוָה וְאַמַּרְתֶּם מַה־
 נִדְּבַרְנוּ עָלֶיךָ׃ יד׃ אִמַּרְתֶּם שׁוֹא עֲבַד אֱלֹהִים וּמַה־
 בָּצַע כִּי שִׁמְרָנוּ מִשְׁמֵרְתּוֹ וְכִי הִלְכָנוּ קִדְרָנִית מִפְּנֵי
 יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת׃ טו׃ וְעַתָּה אֲנַחְנוּ מֵאֲשָׁרִים זָדִים גַּם־

Return to me and I will return to you, says Yahweh Sabaoth. You ask, “How are we to return? ⁸ Can a human being cheat God?” Yet, you try to cheat me! You ask, “How do we try to cheat you?” Over tithes and contributions. ⁹ A curse lies on you because you, this whole nation, try to cheat me. ¹⁰ Bring the tithes in full to the treasury, so that there is food in my house; put me to the test now like this, says Yahweh Sabaoth, and see if I do not open the floodgates of heaven for you and pour out an abundant blessing for you. ¹¹ For your sakes, I shall forbid the locust to destroy the produce of your soil or prevent the vine from bearing fruit in your field, says Yahweh Sabaoth, ¹² and all the nations will call you blessed, for you will be a land of delights, says Yahweh Sabaoth.

¹³ “You have said harsh things about me, says Yahweh; yet you say, “What have we said against you?” ¹⁴ You have said, “It is vain to serve God; what is the good of keeping his commands or walking mournfully before Yahweh Sabaoth? ¹⁵ In fact, we call the proud the happy ones; the

⁸ ‘Cheat’ (thrice here and in v. 9) follows the LXX (πτερουει) and NJB, preserving the original reading of the text (עֲקַב - a play on the name Jacob); the MT (& NRSV) has ‘rob’ (קִבְּע) - a scribal correction, transposing the consonants out of deference to the patriarch.

⁹ The literal translation of ‘a curse lies on you’ is ‘you are cursed with a curse’.

¹⁰ The phrase בַּיִת הָאוֹצֵר (‘treasury’) refers to a kind of temple warehouse described more fully in Nehemiah, which uses the term לְשֹׁכֵה גְדוּלָה (‘great chamber’), as a place for grain, frankincense, temple vessels, wine, and oil (Ne 13:5).

¹¹ The word אֹכֵל, here translated as ‘locust’ (following the NJB & NRSV - NETB has ‘plague’) is a term for any kind of threat to crops and livelihood.

¹² In place of ‘will be’, here following the MT, LXX, NJB & NRSV, NETB has ‘will live in’.

¹³ Literally translated, this verse opens, “Your words are hard against me.”

¹⁴ The people’s public display of self-effacing piety has gone unrewarded by Yahweh; the reason, of course, is that it was blatantly hypocritical.

¹⁵ Alternative translations for ‘prosper’ are ‘are built up’ and ‘are successful’.

נִבְנוּ עֲשֵׂי רָשָׁעָה גַם בַּחֲנוּ אֱלֹהִים וַיִּמְלֹטוּ: טז אֶז
 נִדְבְּרוּ יִרְאֵי יְהוָה אִישׁ אֶל־רֵעֵהוּ וַיִּקְשַׁב יְהוָה
 וַיִּשְׁמַע וַיִּכְתֹּב סֵפֶר זִכְרוֹן לִפְנֵי יְהוָה לִירְאֵי יְהוָה
 וּלְחֹשְׁבֵי שְׁמוֹ: יז וְהָיוּ לִי אֲמַר יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת לַיּוֹם
 אֲשֶׁר אֲנִי עֹשֶׂה סִגְלָה וְחִמְלָתִי עֲלֵיהֶם כַּאֲשֶׁר
 יַחְמַל אִישׁ עַל־בְּנוֹ הָעֶבֶד אֶתּוֹ: יח וְשִׁבְתֶּם וְרֵאִיתֶם
 בֵּין צְדִיק לְרָשָׁע בֵּין עַבְדֵי אֱלֹהִים לְאֲשֶׁר לֹא
 עֲבָדוּ: {פ}

יט כִּי־הִנֵּה הַיּוֹם בָּא בְּעַר כְּתָנּוֹר וְהָיוּ כָל־זֵדִים וְכָל־
 עֹשֵׂה רָשָׁע קֵשׁ וְלֹהֵט אַתֶּם הַיּוֹם הַבֹּא אָמַר
 יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת אֲשֶׁר לֹא־יַעֲזֹב לָהֶם שָׂרֵשׁ וְעַנְף:
 כ וְזֹרְחָה לָכֶם יִרְאֵי שְׁמִי שֶׁמֶשׁ צְדָקָה וּמִרְפָּא
 בְּכַנְפֶיהָ וַיִּצְאֶתֶם וּפְשָׁתֶם כְּעֹגְלֵי מִרְבֵּק:
 כא וְעִסְוֹתֶם רָשָׁעִים כִּי־יְהִיוּ אֶפְרַח תַּחַת כַּפּוֹת
 רַגְלֵיכֶם בַּיּוֹם אֲשֶׁר אֲנִי עֹשֶׂה אָמַר יְהוָה
 צְבָאוֹת: {פ}

evildoers prosper; they test God, yet come to no harm!”¹⁶ Then, those who feared Yahweh talked to one another, and Yahweh took note and listened; and a book of remembrance was written before him for those who feared him and thought on his name.¹⁷ “On the day when I act, says Yahweh Sabaoth, they will be my own treasure, and I shall spare them as a man spares the son who serves him.¹⁸ Then, once again, you will see the difference between the upright and the wicked, between those who serve God and those who do not serve him.

¹⁹ “For look, the Day is coming! It is glowing like a furnace. And all the proud and all those who work evil will be the stubble, and the Day, when it comes, will set them ablaze, says Yahweh Sabaoth, leaving them neither root nor branch.²⁰ But, for you who fear my name, the Son of justice will rise with healing in his wings, and you will come out leaping like calves from the stall,²¹ and trample on the wicked, who will be like ashes under the soles of your feet on the day when I act, says Yahweh Sabaoth.

¹⁶ On the ‘book of remembrance’ (סֵפֶר זִכְרוֹן), compare Ex 32:32–34, Ps 69:28, Is 4:3, 65:6, Dn 7:10, 12:1).

¹⁷ The word סִגְלָה (‘treasure’) is a technical term referring to all the recipients of God’s redemptive grace, especially Israel.

¹⁸ The words ‘the difference’ are not in the MT and are here added for clarity.

¹⁹ Vv. 19–24 are included as 4:1–6 in the NRSV; here, we follow the numbering scheme of the MT (and NJB). The ‘Day’ is the well-known ‘Day of Yahweh’, so pervasive in OT eschatological texts (see Jl 2:30–31, Am 5:18, Ob 15); for the believer, it is a day of grace and salvation, but for the sinner, a day of judgment and destruction.

²⁰ ‘Justice’ here implies power and triumph, as in Is 41:2. The point of the metaphor of ‘healing wings’ is unclear; the sun seems to be compared to a bird: perhaps the sun’s ‘wings’ are its warm rays and ‘healing’ may refer to a reversal of the injury done by evildoers (3:5).

²¹ Common translations for ‘Yahweh Sabaoth’ (יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת) are ‘LORD of Hosts’ (NRSV) and ‘Sovereign LORD’ (NETB).

כב זָכְרוּ תּוֹרַת מֹשֶׁה עַבְדִּי אֲשֶׁר צִוִּיתִי אוֹתוֹ בְּחֶרֶב
עַל-כָּל-יִשְׂרָאֵל חֻקִּים וּמִשְׁפָּטִים: כג הִנֵּה אֲנֹכִי
שֹׁלַח לָכֶם אֶת אֵלֶיָּה הַנָּבִיא לִפְנֵי בּוֹא יוֹם יְהוָה
הַגָּדוֹל וְהַנּוֹרָא: כד וְהִשִּׁיב לִב-אָבוֹת עַל-בָּנִים וְלִב
בָּנִים עַל-אָבוֹתָם פֶּן-אָבֹא וְהִפִּיתִי אֶת-הָאָרֶץ
חֲרָם:
{ש}

²² “Remember the Law of my servant Moses, to whom at Horeb I prescribes decrees and ruling for all Israel. ²³ Look, I shall send you the prophet Elijah before the great and awesome Day of Yahweh comes. ²⁴ He will reconcile parents to their children and children to their parents, to forestall my putting the country under the curse of destruction.”

²² Note that the ז in זָכְרוּ is presented as an enlarged letter, as it appears in almost all *Hebrew MSS*.

²³ Elijah, taken up to heaven (2K 2:11–13), will return. This return, predicted in this passage, was to remain an important feature of Jewish eschatology (see the *Book of Enoch*).

²⁴ God’s prophetic messenger seeks to bring about salvation and restoration, thus avoiding the imposition of the covenant curse, that is, the divine ban that the hopelessly unrepentant must expect (see Dt 7:2, 20:17, Jg 1:21, Zc 14:11); if the wicked repent, the purifying judgment threatened in 4:1-3 will be unnecessary.