

## Mal'akhi ~ Part 2

In **Mal'akhi** 2:1–16, the prophet delivers a stern rebuke from **God**, focusing on the corruption of the priesthood and the people's social unfaithfulness. The passage is divided into two primary indictments: the failure of religious leaders and the breaking of the marriage covenant.

### No Priestly Teaching

*2<sup>1</sup> "Now, Cohanim, this command is for you. <sup>2</sup> If you won't listen, if you won't pay attention to honoring my name," says Adonai-Tzva'ot, "then I will send the curse on you; I will turn your blessings into curses. Yes, I will curse them, because you pay no attention. <sup>3</sup> I will reject your seed; I will throw dung in your faces, the dung from your festival offerings, and you will be carted off with it.*

In addition to the positive motivation of 1:2–5, **God** decreed that if the **Cohanim's** attitude and behavior did not change, **He** would treat them with contempt (as they had treated **Him**) and would remove them from service. The *dung* and unclean sacrificial remains after a **Temple** festival that were disposed of "outside the camp." **God** had entrusted the **Cohanim** with the spiritual well-being of **Isra'el**. By the time of **Yeshua**, the **Yerushalayim** priesthood was under **God's** curse. But the promise of a lasting **Levitical** priesthood was still in effect.

*4 Then you will know that I sent you this command to affirm my covenant with Levi," says Adonai-Tzva'ot. <sup>5</sup> "My covenant with him was one of life and peace, and I gave him these things. It was also one of fear, and he feared me; he was in awe of my name. <sup>6</sup> The true Torah was in his mouth, and no dishonesty was found on his lips; he walked with me in peace and uprightness and turned many away from sin. <sup>7</sup> A Cohen's lips should safeguard knowledge, and people should seek Torah from his mouth, because he is the messenger of Adonai-Tzva'ot. <sup>8</sup> But you turned away from the path, you caused many to fail in the Torah, you corrupted the covenant of Levi," says Adonai-Tzva'ot. <sup>9</sup> "Therefore, I have in turn made you contemptible and vile before all the people, because you did not keep my ways but were partial in applying the Torah."*

The *covenant with* or of *Levi* in verses 4 and 8 refers not to a covenant with the son of **Ya'akov** but to the "covenant of peace" that **God** made with the **Levite Phinehas**, **Aaron's** grandson. **God** promised **Phinehas** and his descendants a "perpetual priesthood" in return for his zeal in protecting **Isra'el** from the corruption of idolatry. God had earlier set apart the entire tribe of Levi after a similar act of faithfulness at **Mount Sinai**. They were assigned responsibility for the sanctuary and worship. The tribe's function was to teach the law to **Isra'el**.

### Intermarriages

*10 Don't we all have the same father? Didn't one God create us all? Then why do we break faith with each other, profaning the covenant of our ancestors? <sup>11</sup> Y'hudah has broken faith; an abomination has been committed in Isra'el and Yerushalayim. For Y'hudah has profaned the sanctuary of Adonai, which he loves, by marrying the daughter of a foreign god. <sup>12</sup> If a man does this and presents an offering to Adonai-Tzva'ot, may Adonai cut him off from the tents of Ya'akov, whether initiator or follower.*

*Marrying the daughter of a foreign god.* A worshiper of an idol was considered to be his child (Jeremiah 2:27). The prophets often mixed the ideas of *adultery* and *idolatry* or *physical* and *spiritual adultery*. Unless they became true proselytes to Judaism, pagan women led their husbands into idolatry and thereby contaminated **Israelite** worship. Those **Jews** who married them profaned **God's Temple** and the covenant community. **Solomon's** violation of this law opened the door to idolatry in **Judah**. Both **Ezra** and **Nehemiah** faced this sinful problem. This common term was generally used to refer to death. Their adulterous actions of divorce and intermarriage disqualified them from participation in the rights and privileges of the community of **Isra'el**, so their offerings to **God** would be rejected.

## Rampant Divorce

*<sup>13</sup> Here is something else you do: you cover Adonai's altar with tears, with weeping and with sighing, because He no longer looks at the offering or receives your gift with favor.*

*<sup>14</sup> Nevertheless, you ask, "Why is this?" Because Adonai is witness between you and the wife of your youth that you have broken faith with her, though she is your companion, your wife by covenant. <sup>15</sup> And hasn't he made [them] one [flesh] in order to have spiritual blood-relatives? For what the one [flesh] seeks is a seed from God. Therefore, take heed to your spirit, and don't break faith with the wife of your youth. <sup>16</sup> "For I hate divorce," says Adonai the God of Isra'el, "and him who covers his clothing with violence," says Adonai-Tzva'ot. Therefore, take heed to your spirit, and don't break faith. <sup>1</sup>*

The people shed tears at the **altar** because the **Lord** no longer accepted their offerings with favor. And why not? *Because the Lord* had been a *witness* at their marriages, which they were now breaking so readily. **He** had intended them to be one pure people, producing *godly offspring* and separated from the corruption of the heathen. *God ... hates* unscriptural *divorce* and its resulting *violence*.

Are the pressures of life causing you to forget the beauty of your marriage vows? **Malakhi** reminds us of the sanctity of marriage. Take time this week to sit down with your spouse and share your favorite memories together. This exercise can reignite your appreciation for each other and your commitment to your marriage, reinforcing the covenant you made before God.

In our next post, we will continue to explore **Mal'akhi**.

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<sup>1</sup> Mal'akhi 2:1–16.