

Malachi

Introduction and God's Election of Israel

1:1 What follows is divine revelation.¹ The word of the LORD came to Israel through Malachi:²

1:2 “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 **1:3** and rejected Esau.³ I turned Esau’s⁴ mountains into a deserted wasteland⁵ and gave his territory⁶ to the wild jackals.”

1:4 Edom⁷ says, “Though we are devastated, we will once again build the ruined places.” So the LORD who rules over all⁸ responds, “They indeed may build, but I will overthrow. They will be known as⁹ the land of evil, the people with whom the LORD is permanently displeased. **1:5** Your eyes will see it, and then you will say, ‘May the LORD be magnified¹⁰ even beyond the border of Israel!’”

¹ **tn** Heb “The burden.” The Hebrew term מַסָּא (massa), usually translated “oracle” or “utterance” (BDB 672 s.v. מַסָּא), is a technical term in prophetic literature introducing a message from the LORD (see Zech 9:1; 12:1). Since it derives from a verb meaning “to carry,” its original nuance was that of a burdensome message, that is, one with ominous content. The grammatical structure here suggests that the term stands alone (so NAB, NRSV) and is not to be joined with what follows, “the burden [or “revelation”] of” (so KJV, NASB, ESV).

² **tn** Heb “The word of the LORD to Israel by the hand of Malachi.” There is some question as to whether מַלְאכִי (mal’akhi) should be understood as a personal name (so almost all English versions) or as simply “my messenger” (the literal meaning of the Hebrew). Despite the fact that the word should be understood in the latter sense in 3:1 (where, however, it refers to a different person), to understand it that way here would result in the book being of anonymous authorship, a situation anomalous among all the prophetic literature of the OT.

³ **tn** Heb “and I loved Jacob, but Esau I hated.” The context indicates this is technical covenant vocabulary in which “love” and “hate” are synonymous with “choose” and “reject” respectively (see Deut 7:8; Jer 31:3; Hos 3:1; 9:15; 11:1).

⁴ **tn** Heb “his”; the referent (Esau) has been specified in the translation for clarity.

⁵ **tn** Heb “I set his mountains as a desolation.”

⁶ **tn** Or “inheritance” (so NIV, NLT).

⁷ **sn** Edom, a “brother” nation to Israel, became almost paradigmatic of hostility toward Israel and God (see Num 20:14-21; Deut 2:8; Jer 49:7-22; Ezek 25:12-14; Amos 1:11-12; Obad 10-12).

⁸ **sn** The epithet LORD who rules over all occurs frequently as a divine title throughout Malachi (24 times total). This name (דְּתִיבָה לְיְהוָה, *hvaḥ ts’va’ot*), traditionally translated “LORD of hosts” (so KJV, NAB, NASB; cf. NIV NLT “LORD Almighty”; NCV, CEV “Lord All-Powerful”), emphasizes the majestic sovereignty of the Lord, an especially important concept in the postexilic world of great human empires and rulers. For a thorough study of the divine title, see T. N. D. Mettinger, *In Search of God*, 123-57.

⁹ **tn** Heb “and they will call them.” The third person plural subject is indefinite; one could translate, “and people will call them.”

¹⁰ **tn** Or “Great is the LORD” (so NAB; similar NIV, NRSV).

The Sacrilege of Priestly Service

1:6 “A son naturally honors his father and a slave respects¹¹ his master. If I am your¹² 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?’ **1:7** You are offering improper sacrifices on my altar, yet you ask, ‘How have we offended you?’ By treating the table¹³ of the LORD as if it is of no importance! **1:8** For when you offer blind animals as a sacrifice, is that not wrong? And when you offer the lame and sick,¹⁴ is that not wrong as well? Indeed, try offering them¹⁵ to your governor! Will he be pleased with you¹⁶ or show you favor?” asks the LORD who rules over all. **1:9** But now plead for God’s favor¹⁷ that he might be gracious to us.¹⁸ “With this kind of offering in your hands, how can he be pleased with you?” asks the LORD who rules over all.

1:10 “I wish that one of you would close the temple doors,¹⁹ so that you no longer would light useless fires on my altar. I am not pleased with

¹¹ **tn** The verb “respects” is not in the Hebrew text but is supplied in the translation for stylistic reasons. It is understood by ellipsis (see “honors” in the preceding line).

¹² **tn** The pronoun “your” is supplied in the translation for clarification (also a second time before “master” later in this verse).

¹³ **sn** The word table, here a synonym for “altar,” has overtones of covenant imagery in which a feast shared by the covenant partners was an important element (see Exod 24:11). It also draws attention to the analogy of sitting down at a common meal with the governor (v. 8).

¹⁴ **sn** Offerings of animals that were lame or sick were strictly forbidden by the Mosaic law (see Deut 15:21).

¹⁵ **tn** Heb “it” (so NAB, NASB). Contemporary English more naturally uses a plural pronoun to agree with “the lame and sick” in the previous question (cf. NIV, NCV).

¹⁶ **tc** The LXX and Vulgate read “with it” (which in Hebrew would be הַיִּרְטֵהוּ, *hayirtsehu*, a reading followed by NAB) rather than “with you” of the MT (הַיִּרְטֵךְ, *hayirts’kha*). The MT (followed here by most English versions) is to be preferred because of the parallel with the following phrase הַיִּרְטֵךְ (*fanekha*, “receive you,” which the present translation renders as “show you favor”).

¹⁷ **tn** Heb “seek the face of God.”

¹⁸ **tn** After the imperative, the prefixed verbal form with vav conjunction indicates purpose (cf. NASB, NRSV).

¹⁹ **sn** The rhetorical language suggests that as long as the priesthood and people remain disobedient, the temple doors may as well be closed because God is not “at home” to receive them or their worship there.

you,” says the LORD who rules over all, “and I will no longer accept an offering from you. **1:11** 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,”¹ says the LORD who rules over all. **1:12** “But you are profaning it by saying that the table of the Lord is common and its offerings² despicable. **1:13** 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?”³ asks the LORD. **1:14** “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,”⁴ says the LORD who rules over all, “and my name is awesome among the nations.”

The Sacrilege of the Priestly Message

2:1 “Now, you priests, this commandment is for you. **2:2** If you do not listen and take seriously⁵ the need to honor my name,” says the LORD who rules over all, “I will send judgment⁶ on you and turn your blessings into curses – indeed, I have already done so because you are not taking it to heart. **2:3** I am about to discipline your children⁷ and will spread offal⁸

on your faces,⁹ the very offal produced at your festivals, and you will be carried away along with it. **2:4** Then you will know that I sent this commandment to you so that my covenant¹⁰ may continue to be with Levi,” says the LORD who rules over all. **2:5** “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. **2:6** He taught what was true;¹¹ sinful words were not found on his lips. He walked with me in peace and integrity, and he turned many people away from sin. **2:7** For the lips of a priest should preserve knowledge of sacred things, and people should seek instruction from him¹² because he is the messenger of the LORD who rules over all. **2:8** You, however, have turned from the way. You have caused many to violate the law;¹³ you have corrupted the covenant with Levi,”¹⁴ says the LORD who rules over all. **2:9** “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 your¹⁵ instruction.”

The Rebellion of the People

2:10 Do we not all have one father?¹⁶ Did not one God create us? Why do we betray one another, in this way making light of the covenant of our ancestors? **2:11** Judah has become disloyal, and unspeakable sins have been committed in Israel and Jerusalem.¹⁷ For Judah has profaned¹⁸ the holy things that the LORD loves and

¹ **sn** My name will be great among the nations. In what is clearly a strongly ironic shift of thought, the LORD contrasts the unbelief and virtual paganism of the postexilic community with the conversion and obedience of the nations that will one day worship the God of Israel.

² **tn** Heb “fruit.” The following word “food” in the Hebrew text (אֲכִילוֹ, *’okhlo*) appears to be an explanatory gloss to clarify the meaning of the rare word נֵיב (*niv*, “fruit”; see Isa 57:19 Qere; נוב, *nov*, “fruit,” in *Kethib*). Cf. ASV “the fruit thereof, even its food.” In this cultic context the reference is to the offerings on the altar.

³ **tn** Heb “from your hand,” a metonymy of part (the hand) for whole (the person).

⁴ **sn** The epithet *great king* was used to describe the Hittite rulers on their covenant documents and so, in the covenant ideology of Malachi, is an apt description of the LORD.

⁵ **tn** Heb “and if you do not place upon [the] heart”; KJV, NAB, NRSV “lay it to heart.”

⁶ **tn** Heb “the curse” (so NASB, NRSV); NLT “a terrible curse.”

⁷ **tc** The phrase “discipline your children” is disputed. The LXX and Vulgate suppose זרע (*zera*, “arm”) for the MT זרע (*zera*, “seed”; hence, “children”). Then, for the MT זָעַר (*go’er*, “rebuking”) the same versions suggest גָּרַע (*gara*, “take away”). The resulting translation is “I am about to take away your arm” (cf. NAB “deprive you of the shoulder”). However, this reading is unlikely. It is common for a curse (v. 2) to fall on offspring (see, e.g., Deut 28:18, 32, 41, 53, 55, 57), but a curse never takes the form of a broken or amputated arm. It is preferable to retain the reading of the MT here.

⁸ **tn** The Hebrew term פָּרֶשֶׁת (*feresh*, “offal”) refers to the entrails as ripped out in preparing a sacrificial victim (BDB 831 s.v. פָּרֶשֶׁת). This graphic term has been variously translated: “dung” (KJV, RSV, NRSV, NLT); “refuse” (NKJV, NASB); “offal” (NEB, NIV).

⁹ **sn** See Zech 3:3-4 for similar coarse imagery which reflects cultic disqualification.

¹⁰ **sn** My covenant refers to the priestly covenant through Aaron and his grandson Phinehas (see Exod 6:16-20; Num 25:10-13; Jer 33:21-22). The point here is to contrast the priestly ideal with the disgraceful manner in which it was being carried out in postexilic times.

¹¹ **tn** Heb “True teaching was in his mouth”; cf. NASB, NRSV “True instruction (doctrine) was in his mouth.”

¹² **tn** Heb “from his mouth” (so NAB, NASB, NRSV).

¹³ **tn** The definite article embedded within בְּתוֹרָה (*battorah*) may suggest that the Torah is in mind and not just “ordinary” priestly instruction, though it might refer to the instruction previously mentioned (v. 7).

¹⁴ **tn** Or “the Levitical covenant.”

¹⁵ **tn** Heb “in the instruction” (so NASB). The Hebrew article is used here as a possessive pronoun (cf. NRSV, NLT).

¹⁶ **sn** The rhetorical question *Do we not all have 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 in v. 10 as well as to Israel and Judah (v. 11) makes it clear that the referent of “we” is God’s elect people.

¹⁷ **map** For location see Map5-B1; Map6-F3; Map7-E2; Map8-F2; Map10-B3; JP1-F4; JP2-F4; JP3-F4; JP4-F4.

¹⁸ **tn** Or perhaps “secularized”; cf. NIV “desecrated”; TEV, NLT “defiled”; CEV “disgraced.”

has turned to a foreign god!¹ **2:12** May the LORD cut off from the community² of Jacob every last person who does this,³ as well as the person who presents improper offerings to the LORD who rules over all!

2:13 You also do this: You cover the altar of the LORD with tears⁴ as you weep and groan, because he no longer pays any attention to the offering nor accepts it favorably from you. **2:14** Yet you ask, “Why?” The LORD is testifying against you on behalf of the wife you married when you were young,⁵ to whom you have become unfaithful even though she is your companion and wife by law.⁶ **2:15** No one who has even a small portion of the Spirit in him does this.⁷ What did our ancestor⁸ 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.⁹

2:16 “I hate divorce,”¹⁰ says the LORD God of Israel, “and the one who is guilty of violence,”¹¹ says the LORD who rules over all. “Pay attention to your conscience, and do not be unfaithful.”

Resistance to the Lord through Self-deceit

2:17 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,¹² and he delights in them,” or “Where is the God of justice?” **3:1** “I am about to send my messenger,¹³ who will clear the way before me. Indeed, the Lord¹⁴ you are seeking will suddenly come to his temple, and the messenger¹⁵ of the covenant, whom you long for, is certainly coming,” says the LORD who rules over all.

3:2 Who can endure the day of his coming? Who can keep standing when he appears? For he will be like a refiner’s fire,¹⁶ like a launderer’s soap. **3:3** 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. **3:4** The offerings¹⁷

¹ **tn** *Heb* “has married the daughter of a foreign god.” Marriage is used here as a metaphor to describe Judah’s idolatry, that is, her unfaithfulness to the LORD and “remarriage” to pagan gods. But spiritual intermarriage found expression in literal, physical marriage as well, as vv. 14-16 indicate.

² **tn** *Heb* “tents,” used figuratively for the community here (cf. NCV, TEV); NLT “the nation of Israel.”

³ **tc** *Heb* “every man who does this, him who is awake and him who answers.” For “answers” the LXX suggests an underlying Hebrew text of אָנַח (*anah*, “to be humbled”), and then the whole phrase is modified slightly: “until he is humbled.” This requires also that the MT עָרַ (‘er,’ “awake”) be read as עָד (*ed*, “until”; here the LXX reads εἰς, *heōs*). The reading of the LXX is most likely an alteration to correct what is arguably a difficult text.

tn *Heb* “every man who does this, him who is awake and him who answers.” The idea seems to be a merism expressing totality, that is, everybody from the awakener to the awakened, thus “every last person who does this” (NLT similar); NIV “whoever he may be.”

⁴ **sn** You cover the altar of the LORD with tears. These tears are the false tears of hypocrisy, not genuine tears of repentance. The people weep because the LORD will not hear them, not because of their sin.

⁵ **tn** *Heb* “the LORD is a witness between you and [between] the wife of your youth.”

⁶ **sn** Though there is no explicit reference to marriage vows in the OT (but see Job 7:13; Prov 2:17; Ezek 16:8), the term *law* (*Heb* “covenant”) here asserts that such vows or agreements must have existed. References to divorce documents (e.g., Deut 24:1-3; Jer 3:8) also presuppose the existence of marriage documents.

⁷ **tn** *Heb* “and not one has done, and a remnant of the spirit to him.” The very elliptical nature of the statement suggests it is proverbial. The present translation represents an attempt to clarify the meaning of the statement (cf. NASB).

⁸ **tn** *Heb* “the one.” This is an oblique reference to Abraham who sought to obtain God’s blessing by circumventing God’s own plan for him by taking Hagar as wife (Gen 16:1-6). The result of this kind of intermarriage was, of course, disastrous (Gen 16:11-12).

⁹ **sn** The wife he took in his youth probably refers to the first wife one married (cf. NCV “the wife you married when you were young”).

¹⁰ **tc** The verb אָנַח (*sane*) appears to be a third person form, “he hates,” which makes little sense in the context, unless one emends the following word to a third person verb as well. Then one might translate, “he [who] hates [his wife] [and] divorces her...is guilty of violence.” A similar translation is advocated by M. A. Shields, “Syncretism and Divorce in Malachi 2.10-16,” ZAW 111 (1999): 81-85. However, it is possible that the first person pronoun אָנַחִי (*anokhi*, “I”) has accidentally dropped from the text after כִּי (*ki*). If one restores the pronoun, the form אָנַחִי can be taken as a participle and the text translated, “for I hate” (so NAB, NASB, NRSV, NLT).

sn Though the statement “I hate divorce” may (and should) be understood as a comprehensive biblical principle, the immediate context suggests that the divorce in view is that of one Jewish person by another in order to undertake subsequent marriages. The injunction here by no means contradicts Ezra’s commands to Jewish men to divorce their heathen wives (Ezra 9-10).

¹¹ **tn** *Heb* “him who covers his garment with violence” (similar ASV, NRSV). Here “garment” is a metaphor for appearance and “violence” a metonymy of effect for cause. God views divorce as an act of violence against the victim.

¹² **tn** *Heb* “in the eyes of the LORD.”

¹³ **tn** In Hebrew the phrase “my messenger” is מַלְאָכִי (*mal’akhi*), the same form as the prophet’s name (see note on the name “Malachi” in 1:1). However, here the messenger appears to be an eschatological figure who is about to appear, as the following context suggests. According to 4:5, this messenger is “Elijah the prophet,” whom the NT identifies as John the Baptist (Matt 11:10; Mark 1:2) because he came in the “spirit and power” of Elijah (Matt 11:14; 17:11-12; Lk 1:17).

¹⁴ **tn** Here the Hebrew term הַאֲדוֹן (*ha’adon*) is used, יְהוָה (*yehvah*, typically rendered LORD). Thus the focus is not on the Lord as the covenant God, but on his role as master.

¹⁵ **sn** This messenger of the covenant may be equated with my messenger (that is, Elijah) mentioned earlier in the verse, or with the Lord himself. In either case the messenger functions as an enforcer of the covenant. Note the following verses, which depict purifying judgment on a people that has violated the Lord’s covenant.

¹⁶ **sn** 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.

¹⁷ **tn** Or “gift.”

of Judah and Jerusalem¹ will be pleasing to the LORD as in former times and years past.

3:5 “I² 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,³ and those who exploit workers, widows, and orphans,⁴ who refuse to help⁵ the immigrant⁶ and in this way show they do not fear me,” says the LORD who rules over all.

Resistance to the Lord through Selfishness

3:6 “Since, I, the LORD, do not go back on my promises,⁷ you, sons of Jacob, have not perished. **3:7** From the days of your ancestors you have ignored⁸ my commandments⁹ 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?’ **3:8** Can a person rob¹⁰ God? You indeed are robbing me, but you say, ‘How are we robbing you?’ In tithes and contributions!¹¹ **3:9** You are bound for judgment¹² because you are robbing me – this whole nation is guilty.¹³

3:10 “Bring the entire tithe into the storehouse¹⁴ 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. **3:11** Then I

will stop the plague¹⁵ from ruining your crops,¹⁶ and the vine will not lose its fruit before harvest,” says the LORD who rules over all. **3:12** “All nations will call you happy, for you indeed will live in¹⁷ a delightful land,” says the LORD who rules over all.

Resistance to the Lord through Self-sufficiency

3:13 “You have criticized me sharply,”¹⁸ says the LORD, “but you ask, ‘How have we criticized you?’ **3:14** You have said, ‘It is useless to serve God. How have we been helped¹⁹ by keeping his requirements and going about like mourners before the LORD who rules over all?’²⁰ **3:15** So now we consider the arrogant to be happy; indeed, those who practice evil are successful.²¹ In fact, those who challenge²² God escape!”

3:16 Then those who respected²³ the LORD spoke to one another, and the LORD took notice.²⁴ A scroll²⁵ was prepared before him in which were recorded the names of those who respected the LORD and honored his name. **3:17** “They will belong to me,” says the LORD who rules over all, “in the day when I prepare my own special property.²⁶ I will spare them as a man spares his son who serves him. **3:18** Then once more you will see that I make a distinction between²⁷ the righteous and the wicked, between the one who serves God and the one who does not.

¹ map For location see Map5-B1; Map6-F3; Map7-E2; Map8-F2; Map10-B3; JP1-F4; JP2-F4; JP3-F4; JP4-F4.

² tn The first person pronoun (a reference to the LORD) indicates that the LORD himself now speaks (see also v. 1). The prophet speaks in vv. 2-4 (see also 2:17).

³ tn Heb “those who swear [oaths] falsely.” Cf. NIV “perjurers”; TEV “those who give false testimony”; NLT “liars.”

⁴ tn Heb “and against the oppressors of the worker for a wage, [the] widow and orphan.”

⁵ tn Heb “those who turn aside.”

⁶ tn Or “resident foreigner”; NIV “aliens”; NRSV “the alien.”

⁷ tn Heb “do not change.” This refers to God’s ongoing commitment to his covenant promises to Israel.

⁸ tn Heb “turned aside from.”

⁹ tn Or “statutes” (so NAB, NASB, NRSV); NIV “decrees”; NLT “laws.”

¹⁰ tc The LXX presupposes an underlying Hebrew text of אָקַבְתָּ (“aqav,” “deceive”), a metathesis of קָבַעַתָּ (“qava,” “rob”), in all four uses of the verb here (vv. 8-9). The intent probably is to soften the impact of “robbing” God, but the language of the passage is intentionally bold and there is no reason to go against the reading of the MT (which is followed here by most English versions).

¹¹ sn The tithes and contributions mentioned here are probably those used to sustain the Levites (see Num 18:8, 11, 19, 21-24).

¹² tn Heb “cursed with a curse” that is, “under a curse” (so NIV, NLT, CEV).

¹³ tn The phrase “is guilty” is not present in the Hebrew text but is implied, and has been supplied in the translation for clarification and stylistic reasons.

¹⁴ tn The Hebrew phrase בֵּית הַאֹסָר (bet ha’otsar, here translated “storehouse”) refers to a kind of temple warehouse described more fully in Nehemiah (where the term לְשֵׁכָה גְדֹלָה [lishkah g’dolah, “great chamber”] is used) as a place for storing grain, frankincense, temple vessels, wine, and oil (Neh 13:5). Cf. TEV “to the Temple.”

¹⁵ tn Heb “the eater” (אֹכֵל, ‘okhel), a general term for any kind of threat to crops and livelihood. This is understood as a reference to a locust plague by a number of English versions: NAB, NRSV “the locust”; NIV “pests”; NCV, TEV “insects.”

¹⁶ tn Heb “and I will rebuke for you the eater and it will not ruin for you the fruit of the ground.”

¹⁷ tn Heb “will be” (so NAB, NRSV); TEV “your land will be a good place to live in.”

¹⁸ tn Heb “your words are hard [or “strong”] against me”; cf. NIV “said harsh things against me”; TEV, NLT “said terrible things about me.”

¹⁹ tn Heb “What [is the] profit”; NIV “What did we gain.”

²⁰ sn The people’s public display of self-effacing piety has gone unrewarded by the LORD. The reason, of course, is that it was blatantly hypocritical.

²¹ tn Heb “built up” (so NASB); NIV, NRSV “prosper”; NLT “get rich.”

²² tn Or “test”; NRSV, CEV “put God to the test.”

²³ tn Or “fear” (so NAB); NRSV “revered”; NCV “honored.”

²⁴ tn Heb “heard and listened”; NAB “listened attentively.”

²⁵ sn The scroll mentioned here is a “memory book” (סֵפֶר זִכְרוֹן, sefer zikkaron) in which the LORD keeps an ongoing record of the names of all the redeemed (see Exod 32:32; Isa 4:3; Dan 12:1; Rev 20:12-15).

²⁶ sn The Hebrew word מְנִיחָה (s’gullah, “special property”) is a technical term referring to all the recipients of God’s redemptive grace, especially Israel (Exod 19:5; Deut 7:6; 14:2; 26:18). The LORD says here that he will not forget even one individual in the day of judgment and reward.

²⁷ tn Heb “you will see between.” Cf. NRSV, TEV, NLT “see the difference.”

4:1 (3:19)¹ “For indeed the day² 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. “It³ will not leave even a root or branch. 4:2 But for you who respect my name, the sun of vindication⁴ will rise with healing wings,⁵ and you will skip about⁶ like calves released from the stall. 4:3 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.

Restoration through the Lord

4:4 “Remember the law of my servant Moses, to whom at Horeb⁷ I gave rules and regulations for all Israel to obey.⁸ 4:5 Look, I will send you Elijah⁹ the prophet before the great and terrible day of the LORD arrives. 4:6 He will encourage fathers and their children to return to me,¹⁰ so that I will not come and strike the earth with judgment.”¹¹

¹ **sn** Beginning with 4:1, the verse numbers through 4:6 in the English Bible differ from the verse numbers in the Hebrew text (*BHS*), with 4:1 ET = 3:19 HT, 4:2 ET = 3:20 HT, etc., through 4:6 ET = 3:24 HT. Thus the book of Malachi in the Hebrew Bible has only three chapters, with 24 verses in ch. 3.

² **sn** This day is the well-known “day of the LORD” so pervasive in OT eschatological texts (see Joel 2:30-31; Amos 5:18; Obad 15). For the believer it is a day of grace and salvation; for the sinner, a day of judgment and destruction.

³ **tn** *Heb* “so that it” (so NASB, NRSV). For stylistic reasons a new sentence was begun here in the translation.

⁴ **tn** Here the Hebrew word צִדְקָה (*ts^odaqah*), usually translated “righteousness” (so KJV, NIV, NRSV, NLT; cf. NAB “justice”), has been rendered as “vindication” because it is the vindication of God’s people that is in view in the context. Cf. BDB 842 s.v. צִדְקָה 6; “righteousness as vindicated, justification, salvation, etc.”

sn The expression *the sun of vindication will rise* is a metaphorical way of describing the day of the LORD as a time of restoration when God vindicates his people (see 2 Sam 23:4; Isa 30:26; 60:1, 3). Their vindication and restoration will be as obvious and undeniable as the bright light of the rising sun.

⁵ **sn** 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. “Healing” may refer to a reversal of the injury done by evildoers (see Mal 3:5).

⁶ **tn** *Heb* “you will go out and skip about.”

⁷ **sn** *Horeb* is another name for Mount Sinai (cf. Exod 3:1).

⁸ **tn** *Heb* “which I commanded him in Horeb concerning all Israel, statutes and ordinances.”

⁹ **sn** *I will send you Elijah the prophet*. In light of the ascension of Elijah to heaven without dying (2 Kgs 2:11), Judaism has always awaited his return as an aspect of the messianic age (see, e.g., John 1:19-28). Jesus identified John the Baptist as Elijah, because he came in the “spirit and power” of his prototype Elijah (Matt 11:14; 17:1-13; Mark 9:2-13; Luke 9:28-36).

¹⁰ **tn** *Heb* “he will turn the heart[s] of [the] fathers to [the] sons, and the heart[s] of [the] sons to their fathers.” This may mean that the messenger will encourage reconciliation of conflicts within Jewish families in the postexilic community (see Mal 2:10; this interpretation is followed by most English versions). Another option is to translate, “he will turn the hearts of the fathers together with those of the children [to me], and the hearts of the children together with those of their fathers [to me].” In this case the prophet encourages both the younger and older generations of sinful society to repent and return to the LORD (cf. Mal 3:7). This option is preferred in the present translation; see Beth Glazier-McDonald, *Malachi* (SBLDS), 256.

¹¹ **tn** *Heb* “[the] ban” (הֶרֶם, *kherem*). 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 Deut 7:2; 20:17; Judg 1:21; Zech 14:11). If the wicked repent, the purifying judgment threatened in 4:1-3 will be unnecessary.