

Malachi

1:1 The message of what Yahweh has said to Israel by the hand of Malachi.¹

1:2 "I have loved you," says Yahweh.

But you say, "How have You loved us?"

"Was not Esau Jacob's brother?" declares Yahweh. "Yet, I loved Jacob,² **1:3** and I hated Esau. And I have established his mountains as a desolation and his inheritance to be possessed by the jackals of the desert."³

1:4 "Even if Edom says, 'We have been beaten down, but we will return, and we will build up the ruins,'" thus says Yahweh of the armies, "They may build, but I will destroy. And they will call them the boundary/territory of evil and the people towards whom Yahweh is angry into perpetuity."⁴

1:5 Your eyes will see, and you will say, "Let Yahweh be great beyond the border/territory of Israel."⁵

1:6 "A son honors his father, and a servant honors his master. If I am a father, where is My honor? And if I am a master, where is My fear?" says Yahweh of the armies to you, the priests who despise My name.

But you say, "How do we despise Your name?"⁶

1:7 "By presenting food which has been defiled on My altar."

But you say, "How have we defiled You?" By your saying, "The table of Yahweh is to be despised."⁷

1:8 "Because you present the blind for sacrifice, is it not evil? And because you present the lame and the sick, is it not evil? Please bring it before your governor. Would he be pleased with you? Or would he lift up your face?" says Yahweh of the armies.⁸

1:9 So now, entreat the face of God, and He will be gracious to us. This was from your hand. Will He lift His face from you?⁹

1:10 "Who is there among you also, that he shuts the doors, and you do not set light to My altar for nothing? There is nothing pleasing for Me in you," says Yahweh of the armies. "I will not accept an offering from your hand."¹⁰ **1:11** For from the rising of the sun to its setting, My name will be great among the nations, and in every place incense will be offered to My name, and a ceremonially clean offering, because My name will be great among the nations," says Yahweh of the armies."¹¹

1:12 But you are profaning it by your saying, "The table of the Lord is defiled, it and its fruit. Its food is to be despised."¹² **1:13** And you say, "What hardship!"

"And you disdainfully sigh over it," says Yahweh of the armies. "And you bring what was robbed, the lame, and the sick. Thus you bring the offering. Should I receive it from your hand?" says Yahweh.¹³ **1:14** "But cursed be the deceiver, where there is a male in his flock, but he sacrifices

a blemished animal to the Lord, because I am the great King,” says Yahweh of the armies, “and My name is feared among the nations.”¹⁴

2:1 “So this is the commandment for you, O priests.¹⁵ **2:2** If you do not listen, and if you do not commit your heart to give honor to My name,” says Yahweh of the armies, “then I will send on you the curse, and I will curse your blessings. Indeed, I have also cursed it, because there is no commitment in your heart.¹⁶ **2:3** Behold, I am rebuking your seed, and I will scatter dung on your faces, the dung of your feasts, and it will lift you to it.¹⁷ **2:4** Then, you will know that I have sent this commandment to you, so that My covenant should be with Levi,” says Yahweh of the armies.”¹⁸

2:5 “My covenant of life and shalom was with him, and I gave it to him for fear. And he feared Me, and he was terrified because of My name.¹⁹ **2:6** The instruction of truth was in his mouth, and unrighteousness was not found on his lips. In shalom and uprightness he walked with Me, and he caused many to turn back from sin.²⁰ **2:7** For the lips of a priest should guard knowledge, and they should seek instruction from his mouth, because he is the *angelos* of Yahweh of the armies.²¹ **2:8** But as for you, you have turned aside from the way. You have caused many to stumble with respect to the instruction. You have destroyed the covenant of Levi,” says Yahweh of the armies.²² **2:9** “And I also have given you as the despised ones and the lowly ones to all the people, just as there is nothing about you guarding My way. Instead, you are taking faces with respect to the instruction.”²³

2:10 Do we all not have one Father? Has not one God created us? Why do we act treacherously, a man with respect to his brother, so as to defile the covenant of our fathers?²⁴

2:11 Judah has acted treacherously, and an abomination has been committed in Israel, because Judah has treated the holy place of Yahweh, which He loves, with disrespect. And Judah has married the daughter of a foreigner.²⁵ **2:12** Yahweh will cut off the man who does this from the tents of Jacob, who protects and humiliates, and from presenting an offering to Yahweh of the armies.²⁶

2:13 And this is a second thing which you do—you cover the altar of Yahweh with tears, with your weeping and groaning, because He no longer turns to your offering, nor accepts the favor from your hand.²⁷

2:14 But you say, “Why?” Because Yahweh has been a witness between you and the wife of your youth, towards whom you have acted treacherously. But she is your companion and the wife of your covenant.²⁸

2:15 And one has not done this, and he is the remnant of the Spirit. And what of the one? God seeks the seed. And you shall be on your guard in your spirit. And you shall not act treacherously towards the wife of your youth.²⁹ **2:16** “But if you are a person of hate, you will be sent away,” says Yahweh, the God of Israel. “And he covers his violence with arguments,” says Yahweh of the armies. “Thus you shall be on guard in your spirit, and you shall not act treacherously.”³⁰

2:17 You have wearied Yahweh with your words.

But you say, “How have we wearied Him?” By your saying, “Everyone who does evil is good in the eyes of Yahweh, and He delights in them,” or, “Where is the God of judgment?”³¹

3:1 "Behold, I am sending My messenger, and he will clear the way before Me. And the Lord, whom you are seeking, will suddenly come to his temple. And the messenger of the covenant, in whom you delight, behold, he is coming," says Yahweh of the armies.³² **3:2** And who can endure the day of his coming? And who will be standing when he appears, for he is like a smelter's fire and a launderer's soap?³³ **3:3** And he will sit as a smelter and purifier of silver, and he will purify the sons of Levi. And he will remove their impurities like gold and silver, and they will belong to Yahweh when they present an offering in righteousness.³⁴ **3:4** And the offering of Judah and Jerusalem will be pleasing to Yahweh like the days of old, like the former years.³⁵

3:5 "And I will draw near to you for judgment, and I will be a witness who moves quickly against those who practice sorcery, against those who commit adultery, against those who swear falsely, against those who oppress the paid laborer, the widow, and the orphan, and those who mistreat the stranger, and they do not fear Me," says Yahweh of the armies.³⁶ **3:6** "For I Yahweh do not change, but you, sons of Jacob, do not receive in full."³⁷

3:7 "From the days of your fathers, you have turned aside from My statutes, and you have not guarded them. Return to Me, and I will return to you," says Yahweh of the armies.

But you will say, "How shall we return?"³⁸

3:8 "Will a man rob God? But you are robbing Me."

But you say, "How have we robbed you?" The tithes and the offerings.³⁹

3:9 "You are cursed with a curse, for you, the whole nation, are robbing Me.⁴⁰ **3:10** Bring the whole tithe into the house of treasure, and let there be food in My house. Test Me please in this," says Yahweh of the armies, "if I will not open for you the windows of the heavens and pour out on you a blessing without end.⁴¹ **3:11** And I will rebuke the devourer for you, and it will not destroy your fruit of the ground, and the vine in the field will not prove barren for you," says Yahweh of the armies.⁴² **3:12** "And all the nations will call you blessed, because you will be a land of delight," says Yahweh of the armies.⁴³

3:13 "Your words have been strong against Me," says Yahweh.

But you say, "What have we spoken against You?"⁴⁴

3:14 You have said, "It is futile to serve God. What have we gained from guarding His charge and from walking in mourning before Yahweh of the armies?"⁴⁵ **3:15** So now we call the proud happy."

Also, the doers of evil are built up. Also, they test God, and they escape.⁴⁶

3:16 Then, those who fear Yahweh spoke to one another, and Yahweh paid attention and heard. And the book of remembrance was written before Him for those who fear Yahweh and for those who respect His name.⁴⁷ **3:17** "They will be mine," says Yahweh of the armies, "on the day which I make a possession. And I will have pity on them as a man has pity on his son who serves him.⁴⁸ **3:18** Then, you will return, and you will distinguish between the righteous and the wicked, between the one who serves God and the one who does not serve Him."⁴⁹

4:1 "For, behold, the day is coming, burning like an oven, and all the proud and everyone who does evil will be straw. And the day which is coming will set them ablaze," says Yahweh of the

armies, “to the extent that it will not leave for them a root or a branch.”⁵⁰ 4:2 But for you, those who fear My name, the sun of righteousness will rise, and there will be healing in its wings. And you will go forth and skip about like calves from a stall.⁵¹ 4:3 And you will trample down the wicked, because they will be ashes under the soles of your feet on the day which I am making,” says Yahweh of the armies.⁵²

4:4 “Remember the Torah of Moses, My servant, what I commanded him at Horeb for all Israel, the statutes and the judgments.”⁵³

4:5 “Behold, I am sending Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and fearful Day of Yahweh.”⁵⁴ 4:6 And he will cause the hearts of the fathers to return to the hearts of the sons, and the hearts of the sons to the hearts of the fathers, lest I come and smite the land as devoted.”⁵⁵

From the translation of Micah!

2:7 For the lips of a priest should guard knowledge, and they should seek instruction from his mouth, because he is the *angelos* of Yahweh of the armies.⁵⁶ 2:8 But as for you, you have turned aside from the way. You have caused many to stumble with respect to the instruction. You have destroyed the covenant of Levi,” says Yahweh of the armies.⁵⁷ 2:9 “And I also have given you as the despised ones and the lowly ones to all the people, just as there is nothing about you guarding My way. Instead, you are taking faces with respect to the instruction.”⁵⁸

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¹ מִשָּׂא דְבַר־יְהוָה אֶל־יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּיַד מַלְאָכָי – Approximately 460-445 B.C. The Israelites have returned from the Babylonian captivity, the temple has been rebuilt, the sacrificial system is back in place, and God still has some things to say to His chosen people about their continued disobedience and their results.

² אֶהְבֵּתִי אֶתְכֶם אֲמַר יְהוָה וְאַמְרַתֶּם בְּמִנְה אֶהְבַּתְנוּ הֲלוֹאֲכָה עָשׂוּ לְיַעֲקֹב נְאֻם־יְהוָה וְאַהֲבָה אֶת־יַעֲקֹב – Probably the Israelites of Malachi’s day are not too impressed with God’s love since they returned from exile in Babylonian and because they had to return from exile. Does a loving God really kick His people off the land which He has given them? And it appears to them that He is not blessing them as much as He should for their obedience. But this is part of the problem. What they think is obedience is actually disobedience, but they are blind to it.

³ וְאַת־עָשׂוּ שְׂנֵאתִי וְאַשְׂיִם אֶת־הַרְרֵי שְׂמֹמָה וְאַת־נַחֲלֹתָיו לְתַנּוֹת מִדְבָּר – God assures the Jews that they are His chosen people and that He does love them, because He made a radical distinction between Esau and his descendants and Jacob and his descendants. The former will lose their land, never to have it returned to them, while the latter lost their land and are now back on it. In other words, God will remain faithful to His promise to give to Abraham and his descendants the land of Israel and to make of them a great nation (Genesis 12:1-7). Therefore, God loves the Israelites in comparison to what may look like His “hating” the descendants of Esau.

EBC – In the fourth century B.C., the Nabataeans moved through Edom—driving the Edomites westward out of their centuries-old homeland—to the southern part of Judah. This area later came to be known as Idumea (cf. Mark 3:8).

⁴ וְנִבְנְתָה חֲרְבוֹת כֹּה אָמַר יְהוָה נִבְאֹת הַקָּדוֹם יִבְנוּ וְאֲנִי אֶהְרֹס וְקִרְאִי לָהֶם גְּבוּל רְשָׁעָה וְהָעַם אֲשֶׁר־זָעַם יְהוָה עַד־עוֹלָם – Just in case the Jews think that whenever the Edomites lose their land and they say that they will rebuild their ruins as the Israelites have, they can be assured that God will not allow the Edomites to be like the Jews. Whatever the Jews have and are building currently, it will remain in the sense that there will be a final kingdom of Israel which will truly be blessed by God. However, God will never permit the Edomites to restore their kingdom to its former glory. This is how much He loves the Israelites.

And those who really understand God will recognize just how evil the Edomites have been and how justified God is in remaining angry with them so that He does not allow them to become great like His chosen people, the Jews.

⁵ וְעֵינֵיכֶם תִּרְאִינָה וְאַתֶּם תֹּאמְרוּ יְהוָה מַעַל לְגְבוּל יִשְׂרָאֵל – And the Jews will eventually recognize clearly the distinction between them and their enemies, and they will declare explicitly that they want God to demonstrate His greatness by judging and destroying their enemies. This of course He will do most dramatically when Jesus returns and sets up his millennial kingdom.

⁶ אֲנִי אֶהְיֶה כְבוֹדִי וְאִם־אֲדוֹנִים אֲנִי אֵינִי מוֹרְאֵי אֲמַר יְהוָה נִבְאֹת לְכֶם הַכֹּהֲנִים בּוֹנֵי שְׂמֵי וְאַמְרַתֶּם בְּמִנְה בּוֹנֵינוּ אֶת־שָׁמַיִךְ – In this next section, God declares His displeasure with the Jews who have returned to the land of Israel/Judah, and particularly with the priests who are accepting offerings from the people which are obviously blemished and unacceptable to God. And God singles out the the priests, who ought to be saying something and ought to be teaching the people. So the priests are letting them get away with disobeying God and the Mosaic Covenant which requires the best of the people’s flocks and grown food to be brought to Him as offerings.

In this verse, God implies that the Israelites are honoring their fathers and those whom some of them are serving because they are basically slaves. But they are not honoring Him. They are granting honor to their fellow human beings, but they are giving no honor to their Maker, a critical error that demonstrates very poor judgment and wisdom on their part.

God is carrying on a dialogue with the people, but He knows what they are thinking and what they would say. So the conversation is really a monologue being carried by God. He makes them sound incredulous that they are not obeying properly, and He has them ask how they are despising Him.

⁷ מִגִּישִׁים עַל־מִזְבְּחֵי לֶחֶם מִגָּאֵל וְאַמְרַתֶּם בְּמִנְה גָּאֵלְנוּךְ בְּאַמְרֹכֶם שְׁלַתֵּן יְהוָה נִבְאֹת הוּא – God’s answer which is their answer is that they are presenting Him with “food” on the altar of God, i.e., animal offerings, which constitutes damaged goods. They may not be explicitly declaring that the “table of God,” the altar in the temple, should be hated, but their actions mean the same thing.

Only because of the Mosaic Covenant and its commandments for the Jews to present offerings to God at the temple does it make sense that God would criticize them for the bad offerings they are bringing to Him. In other words, we would expect God to criticize them and anybody else for violating His moral commandments which are universally obligatory. But, because the commandments regarding sacrifices and offerings are part of the covenant, they basically become moral commandments for the Jews only. They are obligated as a nation to obey all the commandments of the covenant.

⁸ עֲמַד לְזַבְחֵי אֵין רָע וְכִי תִגִּישׁוּ פֶסֶחַ וְחֹלֶה אֵין רָע תִּקְרִיבוּהוּ נָא לְפָנֶיךָ הַיְדָרְצֶךָ אוֹ הַיִּשָּׂא פְנֵיךְ אֲמַר יְהוָה נִבְאֹת – By refusing to present the best of their flocks and crops to God according to the Mosaic Covenant, they might as well say, “We hate God.” To love God is to obey Him. To hate God is to disobey Him. It is this easy.

God asks them to present blemished and damaged food to the person in authority over them in the land of Israel and see how he reacts. Will he be pleased, God asks? Of course not. So the implied question is, Why do they think that their Creator will be pleased with damaged offerings when human beings would be offended by such gifts? The answer is plainly obvious, but the people are so rebellious and foolish that they cannot even see their error.

⁹ וְעַתָּה חֲלוּ-גַּא פְּנֵי-אֵל וַיִּתְנַנְּנוּ מִיְדֵיכֶם תִּיחָה זֹאת הִישָׂא מִכֶּם פְּנִים אָמַר יְהוָה זְבָאוֹת – Malachi, as God’s spokesman, urges the people to seek God’s forgiveness and mercy, because if they do with sincere hearts, God will respond with actual mercy. He will be gracious to them. Malachi is convinced, probably because he understands God properly, which the people of Israel clearly do not. They think that they can get away with less than satisfactory offerings to God.

¹⁰ מִי גַם-בְּכֶם וְיוֹסֵף דְּלֹתִים וְלֹא-תֵאֵירוּ מִזִּבְחֵי תַנְּם אִין-לִי חֲפִין בְּכֶם אָמַר יְהוָה זְבָאוֹת וּמִנְחָה לֹא-אָרְצָה מִיְדֵיכֶם – God asks if there is anyone in the nation of Israel who is willing to walk up to the new temple and shut its doors to prevent people from bringing their bad and unacceptable offerings to Him on the altar. Does anyone care this much about the nation’s obeying God? Clearly not. No one is stepping up to the plate and barring people from violating the commandments of sacrifices and offerings. Therefore, God goes on to say that everybody displeases Him. None of their Mosaic Covenant obedience is to His liking. And as a result, He refuses to accept any of their offerings, which means that they are back in the same position as they were before the Babylonian destruction of Jerusalem and the temple and at risk of losing the land and their lives.

¹¹ וְעַד-מְבוֹאוֹ גְדוֹל שְׁמִי בַגּוֹיִם וּבְכָל-מְקוֹם מִקְטָר מִגֵּשׁ לְשִׁמִּי וּמִנְחָה שְׂהוּרָה פִּי-גְדוֹל שְׁמִי בַגּוֹיִם אָמַר יְהוָה זְבָאוֹת – The nation of Israel’s disobedience is especially evil, because they are the chosen people of God, while it is also true that eventually their God’s reputation and character will be respected and extolled eventually among all the rest of the people of the earth. Why cannot His chosen people revere Him properly when those who are not His chosen people will revere Him at some time in the future (after the 1st coming of the Messiah).

¹² וְאַתֶּם מִחֲלָלִים אוֹתוֹ בְּאַמְרֵיכֶם שְׁלַתֶן אֲדֹנָי מִגֵּאֵל הוּא וְנִיבּוֹ נִבְּרָה אֲכָלוּ – God repeats His accusation of their not caring less about how to worship Him according to the specifics He has described in the Mosaic Covenant.

¹³ אוֹתוֹ אָמַר יְהוָה זְבָאוֹת וְהִבְאַתֶּם גְּדוֹל וְאַתֶּם-תְּחוּלָה וְהִבְאַתֶּם אֶת-הַמִּנְחָה הָאֲרֻצָּה אוֹתָהּ מִיְדֵיכֶם אָמַר יְהוָה – The people’s only response is, what a burden He has placed on them to pick out the best of their flocks and their harvests to offer Him. They take the easy (and apparently more advantageous on a practical level) way out. And He asks them if it really makes sense that He accept their illegal offerings?

¹⁴ וְאַדְוָר נֹכַח וְגַשׁ בְּעַדְדוֹ זָכַר וְנִבְרָ וְזִבְחָ מִשְׁחַת לֹא-לִנִּי כִּי לְקֹדֶשׁ גְּדוֹל אֲנִי אָמַר יְהוָה זְבָאוֹת וְשִׁמִּי נִזְרָא בַגּוֹיִם – God condemns anyone among the people of Israel who knows right where to grab the unblemished animal and best of his harvest to offer to God and yet does not. This is just as serious an issue for Him as if they are committing murder, committing adultery, or stealing. Why? Because He is their King, the One to whom they are morally obligated to submit with respect to the entirety of the Mosaic Covenant. In addition, He should be feared and revered among all the peoples of the earth and, therefore, that much more among His chosen people Israel!

¹⁵ וְעַתָּה אֲלֵיכֶם הַמִּזְבֵּחַ הַזֶּה הִיא הַכְּהֻנִּים – Initially in 1:6 God addressed specifically the priests because they have allowed the people to bring blemished and unacceptable animals and food as offerings to God at the new temple. God continues rebuking them and gives them a commandment, which is basically an ultimatum.

¹⁶ כְּבוֹד לְשִׁמִּי אָמַר יְהוָה זְבָאוֹת וְשַׁלַּחְתִּי בְכֶם אֶת-הַמְּאֹרָה וְאֹרֹתֵי אֶת-בְּרִכּוֹתֵיכֶם וְגַם אֹרֹתֵיהֶם כִּי אֵינְכֶם שְׁמִים עַל-לֵב – God warns the priests that if they do not commit their hearts to Him and the Mosaic Covenant, so that it is properly obeyed by them and the rest of the people, then they will incur His judgment and a curse upon them. Indeed, He says that they have already experienced His curse because there is currently no commitment to Him in their hearts. Because of what He says in the next verse, He means that He has already set in motion their receiving the curse.

¹⁷ הֲנִי גַעַר לְכֶם אֶת-הַזֵּרַע וְזִרְתִּי פָרֵשׁ עַל-פְּנֵיכֶם פָּרֵשׁ חֲגִיכֶם וְנִשָּׂא אֶתְכֶם אֵלָיו – God is saying that the future looks bleak for the priests, that somehow they will end up with their own offal on their faces. All the food that they are eating and that their bodies naturally eliminate during the prescribed festivals will end up on their faces, because God does not approve of the manner in which they are worshipping Him during the festivals. Does He mean literally or metaphorically that their dung will end up on their faces? It is not clear.

There are two Possibly, 1) the seed will lift you to the dung, 2) the dung will lift you to the seed.

¹⁸ וַיִּדְעֶתְּם כִּי שַׁלַּחְתִּי אֲלֵיכֶם אֶת הַמִּזְבֵּחַ הַזֶּה לְהִזּוֹת בְּרִיתִי אֶת-לְוִי אָמַר יְהוָה זְבָאוֹת – When the priests experience God’s justice in such a dramatic fashion, then they will be reminded that God had made the Mosaic Covenant with a special role for the tribe of Levi to be the priests for the entire nation of Israel.

¹⁹ בְּרִיתִי הָיְתָה אִתּוֹ תְּחִיבִים וְהַשְׁלֹם וְאַתְּנֵם-לִי מִזְרָא וְיִזְרְאֵנִי וּמִפְּנֵי שְׁמִי נִתַּת הוּא – God intended the Mosaic Covenant to bring life and a wholesome experience to the nation of Israel with the Levitical priests at its center, probably for two reasons, one of which God mentions explicitly here. The priests were to fulfill their responsibility of presenting the people’s offerings to God while fearing God’s justice. This would be because they recognized that they were helping the people to appeal to God for mercy and forgiveness in order to avoid His justice, condemnation, and destruction. Thus, they were to fear God and His justice, and God says that initially the priests did fear Him—obviously in contrast the the current priests whom He is rebuking.

²⁰ תּוֹרַת אָמַת הָיְתָה בְּפִיהוּ וְעוֹלָה לֹא-נִמְצָא בְּשַׁפְּתָיו בְּשָׁלוֹם וּבְמִישׁוֹר הִלְךְ אִתִּי וְרַבִּים הֵשִׁיב מֵעוֹן – God mentions the second reason in this verse why the Levitical priests are at the center of the Mosaic Covenant, because they are meant to instruct the rest of the people in God’s Torah. And He says that initially the Levitical priests did just exactly this.

²¹ כִּי-שַׁפְּתֵי כֹהֵן יִשְׁמְרוּ-לְעַת וְתוֹרָה וּבִקְשׁוּ מִפִּיהוּ כִּי מִלְּאֵךְ יְהוָה זְבָאוֹת הוּא – God spells out the reason why the Levitical priests have the responsibility to teach the people constantly from what God has said through the Abrahamic and Mosaic Covenants. It is because each one is an *angelos* of Yahweh, meaning in this case a messenger of God (not a theophany as in Genesis 19) as the focal point of the covenants. They serve the people for the sake of their gaining God’s mercy and forgiveness.

There is nothing more important for a human being to do in this life than to obtain God's mercy. Consequently, the priests are not only instruments of divine mercy, but they are also instruments of divine instruction and the Torah.

22 וְאַתֶּם כֹּהֲנֵי הַדְּרֹךְ הַכְשָׁלְתֶם רַבִּים בַּתּוֹרָה שִׁחַתְתֶּם בְּרִית הַלְוִי אָמַר יְהוָה זְבָאוֹת – However, the Levitical priests of Malachi's day have so neglected their God-given responsibility that they have, in effect, destroyed the Mosaic Covenant. They are not teaching the people what they should be doing, so that they have stumbled and fallen with respect to His instruction. They are basically doing the exact opposite of what they should do.

23 וְגַם־אֲנִי נִתְתִּי אֶתְכֶם נְבוֹנִים וּשְׂפָלִים לְכָל־הָעַם כִּפִּי אֲשֶׁר אֵינְכֶם שֹׂמְרֵי אֶת־דְּרֹכַי וְנֹשְׂאִים פְּנֵים בַּתּוֹרָה – God has despised the ways of the priests and, as a result, despised them. Therefore, they are His gifts to the people to do their work in the temple as Levitical priests, but this gift is despised and less than honorable in God's eyes. And part of the reason the priests are held in such low esteem by God is because they are not impartial in their fulfilling their responsibilities. Probably what God means is that they are benefiting somehow from their relationship with the wealthy to the extent that it is socially, financially, or politically advantageous to pay more attention to the wealthy than to the poor. And this is while they are supposed to be completely impartial in the fulfillment of their priestly and teaching duties.

24 הֲלוֹא אָב אֶחָד לְכֻלָּנוּ הֲלוֹא אֵל אֶחָד בְּרָאֵנוּ מִדּוֹעַ נִבְגַּד אִישׁ בְּאֵחָיו לְחַלֵּל בְּרִית אֲבֹתֵינוּ – Verses 10 through 15 are a good example of how a prophet changes voices in a short amount of time. In v. 10, he speaks as though he is the entire group of the present nation of Israel who have returned to the land after the Babylonian exile. In vs. 11 and 12, he speaks of Judah, the returning exiles and their present descendants in the third person, i.e., "they" (basically) and "he" ("the man"). In vs. 13ff., he speaks as if he is God and addresses the people as "you" (pl.).

Someone who knows what he is talking about asks why the people of Israel are treating each other so badly. After all, do they not have one source of their existence, the transcendent Creator Elohim. And He is a Father to them by also providing for all their needs? He has also made a covenant with their "fathers," which we can assume refers to both the Abrahamic and Mosaic Covenants, the former where God promises to turn them into a great nation and the latter where God lays out His requirements for them as His one chosen ethnic people.

This is a very interesting verse because of its implications for all human beings. Even if God gave to only the Jews the Mosaic Covenant, nevertheless He is the ultimate provider and source of existence for every human being. Therefore, simply on the basis of His being every person's source of life and provider of his needs, all human beings are morally obligated to treat other with love, respect, kindness, patience, etc.—unless of course God directs otherwise as He did in the case of the Israelites who were required to destroy the Canaanites on the land of Canaan as they entered it after being rescued by God from slavery in Egypt. This is God's prerogative as the sovereign Creator of all reality.

25 בְּגֵרָה יְהוּדָה וְתוֹעֵבָה נַעֲשֶׂתָה בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל וּבִירוּשָׁלַם כִּי חֲלָל יְהוּדָה קֹדֶשׁ יְהוָה אֲשֶׁר אָהֵב וּבָעַל בַּת־אֵל נָכַר – God through Malachi has already described the details of the Israelites' disrespecting the temple and its required sacrifices (cf. 1:8ff.). In this way, the people have acted treacherously towards God. Another way to say this is that the people are in effect worshipping a foreign god or gods, i.e., "they have married the daughter of a foreigner," who has influenced them away from worshipping the one, true God, just as Solomon's foreign wives influenced him to trust in pagan gods.

26 יְכַרֵּת יְהוָה לְאִישׁ אֲשֶׁר יַעֲשֶׂה עֵר וְעֵזָה מֵאֵהָלֵי יַעֲקֹב וּמִגִּישׁ מִנְחָה לַיהוָה זְבָאוֹת – This is a very difficult to translate. But I have followed the LXX to an extent as hopefully a legitimate aid – ἐξολεθρεύσει κύριος τὸν ἀνθρώπον τὸν ποιοῦντα ταῦτα. ἕως καὶ ταπεινωθῆ ἔκ σκηνομάτων Ἰακωβ καὶ ἐκ προσαγόντων θυσίαν τῷ κυρίῳ παντοκράτορι. The general gist of this verse is that God will bring judgment and destruction on each person of Judah who acts treacherously towards Him by disrespecting the specifics of the commandments regarding sacrifices and offerings.

27 וְזאת שְׁנֵית תַּעֲשׂוּ פְסוֹת דְּמַעַל אֶת־מִזְבַּח יְהוָה בְּכִי וְאַנְקָה מֵאִין עוֹד פְּנוֹת אֶל־הַמִּנְחָה וְלִקְחַת רִצּוֹן מִיָּדְכֶם – Now God through Malachi addresses the people of Israel with the 2nd person plural pronoun "you." And He lists another egregious error of theirs. After they have heard that God has rejected their sacrifices and offerings (and will bring judgment on them), they weep with unstoppable tears, not because they are repentant, but because they cannot understand why God has come to the conclusion He has and is rejecting both them and their efforts to worship Him.

28 וְאַמְרַתֶּם עַל־מָה עָל כִּי־יְהוָה הֵעִיד בֵּינָךְ וּבֵינִי וְאִשֶׁת נַעֲוִיךָ אֲשֶׁר אָתָּה בְּגַדְתָּהּ כִּי וְהִיא חִבְרַתְךָ וְאִשֶׁת בְּרִיתְךָ – So the people of Israel act completely surprised at God's accusing them of wrongdoing and ask why God is so critical of them, because it does not make sense to them, and they cannot figure out what has provoked Him so. And God's answer is that it involves more than their unacceptable manner of worshipping Him, which allows us to derive the principle that poor worship of God is usually accompanied by poor moral behavior that should be obvious also. In this case, the men of Israel are mistreating their wives without compunction or any feelings of guilt. God says that each one's wife is the woman who is meant to be his companion and to whom he made an agreement to love and remain faithful.

The inference is that the men have simply grown tired of working at loving their wives. It may not be that deep and insoluble problems have entered into their relationships with one another. It is just that the men have been led by their selfishness to abandon their wives.

29 וְלֹא־אֶחָד עָשָׂה וּשְׂאָר רֵוַח לֹו וּמָה הָאֶחָד מְבַקֵּשׁ יַרְע אֱלֹהִים וְנִשְׁמַרְתֶּם בְּרוּחֲכֶם וּבְאִשֶׁת נַעֲוִיךָ אֶל־יְבָרֵךְ – Again, I have used the LXX to help translate this verse which is also difficult—καὶ οὐκ ἄλλος ἐποίησεν, καὶ ὑπόλειμμα πνεύματος αὐτοῦ. καὶ εἶπατε Τί ἄλλο ἄλλ' ἢ σπέρμα ζῆτει ὁ θεός; καὶ φυλάξασθε ἐν τῷ πνεύματι ὑμῶν, καὶ γυναῖκα νεότητός σου μὴ ἐγκαταλίπης. It seems that God is pointing out that if there is one person who is not so disobeying God, and there most likely is at least one, he is identified as "the remnant of the Spirit," God's Spirit, in that God is still working among the people of Israel. And this is because God is always "seeking" (and causing to come into existence through His inward work in people) His seed, the

promised descendants of Abraham who will have genuine belief.

To all the people (“you” plural), God exhorts them to protect their own inwardness from rebelling against Him and to demonstrate this by not mistreating their wives.

³⁰ כִּי־שָׁנָא שְׁלַח אָמַר יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וְכַסָּה חָמָס עַל־לְבוּשׁוֹ אָמַר יְהוָה צָבָאוֹת וְנִשְׁמַרְתֶּם בְּרוּחֲכֶם וְלֹא תִבְגְּדוּ – The LXX translates this verse—ἀλλὰ ἐὰν μισήσας ἐξαποστείλης, λέγει κύριος ὁ θεὸς τοῦ Ἰσραηλ, καὶ καλύψει ἀσέβεια ἐπὶ τὰ ἐνθυμήματά σου, λέγει κύριος παντοκράτωρ, καὶ φυλάξασθε ἐν τῷ πνεύματι ὑμῶν καὶ οὐ μὴ ἐγκαταλίπητε, and again, I have used it to translate the difficult Hebrew.

God is addressing the person who mistreats his wife, labelling him as someone who is hateful. And He declares that this kind of person will be sent away from the people Israel. As the LXX says, this person will be “destroyed,” which is coherent with God’s “cutting off” from Israel the man who disrespects the commandments of sacrifices and offerings (cf. 2:12).

God also says that these men rationalize their immoral behavior with all sorts of seemingly good arguments, but they are deceiving themselves if they think that they are reasoning correctly. God considers their mistreatment of their wives to be violence, even if they are not actually striking them physically.

And God ends this paragraph with exhorting all the people to be very aware of what is happening within them so as to protect themselves from evil. As a result, they will not act treacherously towards God or each other.

³¹ יְהוָה בְּדַבְרֵיכֶם וְאָמַרְתֶּם בְּמִנְהַ הַיּוֹנְעָנוּ בְּאִמְרֹתְכֶם כָּל־עֲשֵׂה רָע טוֹב אֲבִיעֵנִי יְהוָה וּבְהֵם הוּא חָפִץ אִי אֱלֹהֵי הַמִּשְׁפָּט הַיּוֹנְעֵתֶם – Again, God through Malachi addresses the people of the northern kingdom. God is simply tired of the way people talk.

And they ask, What is so tiresome about the speech, when they firmly believe that they are stating truth which should be pleasing to God? His answer is that they basically call evil good and good evil, while also stating that God is pleased with them. Either they are saying this, which wearies (so to speak) God when He listens to them talk, or they are asking where God and His judgment are, probably referring to God’s promise to rid them of all their enemies when He makes them a great nation. The people of Israel firmly believe that they are adequately obeying God and the Mosaic Covenant which should result in His blessing them by eliminating any enemies they have and the problems that ensue from having such enemies.

³² לָפָנַי וּפְתָאֵם יְבוֹא אֱלֹהֵיכֶלֹ הָאָדוֹן אֲשֶׁר־אַתֶּם מְבַקְשִׁים וּמִלְאֵךְ הַבְּרִית אֲשֶׁר־אַתֶּם תַּפְצִיִּים הִנֵּה־בָא אָמַר יְהוָה צָבָאוֹת

³² לָפָנַי וּפְתָאֵם יְבוֹא אֱלֹהֵיכֶלֹ הָאָדוֹן אֲשֶׁר־אַתֶּם מְבַקְשִׁים וּמִלְאֵךְ הַבְּרִית אֲשֶׁר־אַתֶּם תַּפְצִיִּים הִנֵּה־בָא אָמַר יְהוָה צָבָאוֹת – In Matthew 11:10 and Luke 7:27, Jesus quotes this verse and identifies John the Baptist as this messenger of God. Therefore, the Lord is Jesus (cf. Psalm 11:10, “Yahweh said to my Lord, sit at My right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet.”), who enters his temple, meaning that he comes to the temple of God as the very icon of God on earth (cf. 2 Corinthians 4:4; Colossians 1:15). However, the rest of the statements about Jesus point more to his second coming than to his first coming. He will destroy his enemies, set up his kingdom on the land of Israel where he will sit on his throne in Jerusalem, and direct either the rebuilding of the temple or the proper offering of sacrifices by the Levitical priests in a rebuilt temple.

The people of Israel will delight in Jesus authentically, believing that he is their Messiah and ultimate priest before God, and he will be God’s messenger of the New Covenant to the people, finally welcomed and embraced by all of the Jews on the land.

³³ וּמִי מִכְלֵכֵל אֶת־יוֹם בּוֹאֹ וּמִי הַעֲמֵד בְּהַרְאוֹתָו כִּי־הוּא כָּאֵשׁ מְזַרְף וּכְבָרִית מְכַבְּסִים – Jesus at his second coming will be a purifying fire and cleaning soap among the people on the land, so that they will all either be killed because of their unbelief (the Man of Lawlessness with his invading army and any unbelieving Jews) or brought out of hiding/protection and restored to the land (Jews who become believers just after his return; or they were believers before his return, so that they are raptured and transformed into immortal and morally perfect people).

³⁴ וַיֵּשֶׁב מְזַרְף וּמְשַׁהֵר לְפָנָי וְיָהִר אֶת־בְּגֵדֵי־לְוִי וּזְקַק אֹהֶם כְּפֹהֵב וּכְכֹסֶף וְהָיָה לַיהוָה מִיַּיְשִׁי מִנְחָה בְּצַדִּיקָה – Jesus’ appearance will precipitate the changing of the hearts of Levites who will then qualify to administrate the offerings in the temple for Yahweh. In this way, they will be God’s own possessions as people of authentic belief in the midst of their fulfilling their duties to present God with the offerings of the people on the altar in the temple according to the Mosaic Covenant.

³⁵ וְעָרְבָה לַיהוָה מִנְתַּת יְהוּדָה וַיְרוּשָׁלַם כִּי־מִן עוֹלָם וְכִשְׁנִים קָדְמִנְיוֹת – Because of the changed hearts of the people and the Levites, their offerings to God will be like the days of Aaron and Moses when people of genuine belief brought their offerings to God. It was their changed inward condition which made their offerings pleasing to God.

³⁶ בְּמִכְשָׁפִים וּבְמִנְאָפִים וּבְנִשְׁבָּעִים לְשֹׁקֵר וּבְעֲשָׂקֵי שְׂכָר־שְׂכִיר אֲלֻמְנָה וַיְתוֹם וּמִשִׁי־גֵר וְלֹא יָרְאוּ אָמַר יְהוָה צָבָאוֹת – Assuming that God is still talking about the second coming of the Messiah, He will bring about judgment and destruction for those Jews who are disobeying Him at that time.

³⁷ כִּי אֲנִי יְהוָה לֹא שָׁנִיתִי וְאַתֶּם בְּגֵי־עֵקֶב לֹא כִלְיִתֶם – The LXX is helpful in translating the last verb, Διότι ἐγὼ κύριος ὁ θεὸς ὑμῶν, καὶ οὐκ ἠλλοιώματ καὶ ὑμεῖς, υἱοὶ Ἰακωβ, οὐκ ἀπέχεσθε (=you are not paid in full). The Jews deserve to be completely destroyed because as a nation they will not be operating as a whole people who are devoted to God, His promises, the Mosaic Covenant, and Jesus as the Messiah. However, even though God does not decrease in His sense of justice, i.e., He does not change, nevertheless, He does not change either in His remaining committed to fulfilling His promise to them to make them a great nation eventually. Thus, He will mercifully not pay back to the Jews what they deserve entirely, complete destruction.

³⁸ לְמִיָּמֵי אֲבֹתֵיכֶם כִּתְּתֶם מִחֻקֵּי וְלֹא שָׁמַרְתֶּם שׁוּבוּ אֵלַי וְאֲשׁוּבָה אֲלֵיכֶם אָמַר יְהוָה צָבָאוֹת וְאָמַרְתֶּם בְּמִנְהַ נָשׁוּב – First, God says that the Jews of Malachi’s day are acting like their forefathers who ignored His commandments by not obeying the Mosaic Covenant properly. But He also encourages them that if they were to repent and turn to Him with genuine hearts of elief, then He would bless them accordingly.

³⁹ הִקְבַּע אֲדָם אֱלֹהִים כִּי אַתֶּם קִבְּעִים אֹתִי וְאַמְרַתֶּם בְּמִן קִבְּעִנִיךָ הַמַּעֲשֵׂר וְהִתְרוּמָה – Again, God portrays the Israelites as mystified by His accusations of disobedience to them. How have we robbed you, they ask in surprise. God’s answer is that they are withholding their tithes from Him and bringing Him less than acceptable offerings (cf. 1:8).

⁴⁰ בְּמִאֲרָה אַתֶּם נֹאדִים וְאֹתִי אַתֶּם קִבְּעִים הַגּוֹי כֻּלּוֹ – God makes another definitive statement to indicate that it is as if the entire Kingdom of Judah/Israel who have returned from exile in Babylon who are disobeying Him, cursed for their disobedience, and robbing Him of what is rightfully His—tithes and acceptable offerings. Or at least God will possibly cause all the people to suffer even though there are some who are authentic believers. Or probably it is more coherent with all the rest of the biblical message to say interpret God as saying that because the whole nation is not yet obeying Him with changed hearts, they have also not yet reached their goal of being a great nation according to the promise in Genesis 12:1-3. This is the foundation for the next statement to the effect that the entire nation should also obey Him in order to bring about His blessings upon them.

⁴¹ בְּבִיטִי וּבְחַנּוּנִי נָא בִּזְאֵת אָמַר יְהוָה זְבָאוֹת אִם-לֹא אִפְתַּח לְכֶם אֶת-אֲרְבֹּת הַשָּׁמַיִם וְהִרִיקְתִּי לְכֶם בָּרֶכֶת עַד-בְּלִי-דָי – God urges the Israelites to bring the entirety of what they should as a tithe to Him, and He also encourages them to improve the quality of their sacrifices and offerings so that there will be proper “food” for him presented on the altar in the temple in Jerusalem by the Levitical priests. Indeed, He practically begs them to test His faithfulness and loyalty to His promises to them as His chosen people. If they are all truly willing to be obedient to Him and the Mosaic Covenant in an appropriate manner (obviously with changed inwardness as an entire group of people), then He will bless them with rain and food in abundance. In other words, it is as though they really do not want to see if God is as faithful as He is, because they are ignoring what it actually takes to receive His blessings as an entire nation.

⁴² וְגַעַרְתִּי לְכֶם בְּאֵלֶּל וְלֹא-יִשְׁתַּת לְכֶם אֶת-בְּרִי הָאֲדָמָה וְלֹא-תִשָּׁבֵל לְכֶם הַגֶּפֶן בְּשָׂדֶה אָמַר יְהוָה זְבָאוֹת – God promises that harm will not come to their food supply if they all will but obey Him as He requires in the Mosaic Covenant.

⁴³ וְאֲשֶׁרֶוּ אַתְּכֶם כָּל-הַגּוֹיִם כִּי-תִהְיוּ אַתֶּם אֲרִיץ תִּפְּוֹן אָמַר יְהוָה זְבָאוֹת – Indeed the Gentile nations will themselves recognize just how well-off the Israelites are and say outloud just how fortunate they are. Their country will be a delightful one in which to live because of the abundance of what they will have to enjoy life.

⁴⁴ תִּזְקֶוּ עָלַי דְּבָרֵיכֶם אָמַר יְהוָה וְאַמְרַתֶּם מִה-נִבְרַחְנוּ עֲלֵיךָ – God again points out how the Israelites who have returned from the Babylonian exile and reestablished themselves in the land of Israel have done that which is wrong and spoken quite negatively of God. However, as usual, the people are surprised to hear that they have done anything wrong and ask what it is that they have spoken that has offended God.

⁴⁵ אֲמַרְתֶּם שׁוּא עֲבַד אֱלֹהִים וּמִה-בָּצַע כִּי שָׁמַרְנוּ מִשְׁמֹרֶתוֹ וְכִי הִלְכְנוּ קְדֻרָתָי מִפְּנֵי יְהוָה זְבָאוֹת – Whether explicitly or just within their own hearts, God says that the Jews have made the comment that obeying God and even repenting of their sin has been fruitless as far as they are concerned, meaning that they expect their lives to be much better than they are if God were faithful to His promise to bless them for their obedience.

⁴⁶ וְעַתָּה אֲנַחְנוּ מֵאֲשֶׁרִים וְזָרִים גַּם-נִבְנֶנּוּ עֲשֵׂי רִשְׁעָה גַם בְּחַנּוּ אֱלֹהִים וְיִמְלֹטוּ – As a result of deciding that it is futile to obey God, those who have found success in their lives, i.e., who have created their own blessings by means of immoral behavior, consider that arrogance, engaging in evil, and testing God with their disobedience to be the means to happiness, success, and salvation from the typical consequences of disobeying God respectively. They must be tired of waiting on God to bless them and are actively bringing about their own blessings through whatever means they find humanly available.

⁴⁷ אֵיזוֹ נִבְרַחְנוּ יִרְאֵי יְהוָה אִישׁ אֶת-דַּרְעָהוּ וַיִּקְשָׁב יְהוָה וַיִּשְׁמַע וַיִּכְתֹּב סֵפֶר זְכָרוֹן לְפָנָיו לְיִרְאֵי יְהוָה וְלֹחֲשָׁבֵי שִׁמּוֹ – Yet, there are authentic believers in Israel/Judah whose names He writes in a book in His own presence as a way to remember permanently who they are. This is similar if not exactly the same “book” first mentioned by Moses in Exodus 32:32, “But now, if You will forgive their sin. But if not, please blot me out of Your book which You have written.” And there is Psalm 69:28, “May they be blotted from the book of life (ἐκ βίβλου ζώντων) (cf. Isaiah 4:3; Daniel 12:1).” And Philippians 4:3, “Yes, I ask also you, genuine fellow-worker, to lend help to these woman, who have worked with me in the cause of the good news, along with Clement and the rest of my fellow-workers, whose names are in the book of life (ἐν βίβλῳ ζωῆς) (cf. Luke 10:20, Hebrews 12:23, Revelation 3:5, 13:8, 17:8, 20:12,15, 21:27).” Cf. Isaiah 49:16, “Behold, I have written you on the palms of My hands.” Thus, to be written in a book or on His hands is God’s way of saying that people are permanently set apart for the blessing of eternal life. A book is written in order to ensure that its words will last into the future and be available for reference sake.

In line with Gods’ writing their names in His book, it must be that those who fear God at this time speak ideas of genuine truth and encouragement to one another in contrast to the unbelievers who cannot grasp properly just how evil their actions and words are. Therefore, God is pleased with the former and reiterates to Himself that the destiny of those who fear Him is permanently established as eternal life and salvation.

⁴⁸ וְהָיוּ לִי אָמַר יְהוָה זְבָאוֹת לְיָוִם אֲשֶׁר אֲנִי עֹשֶׂה סִגְלָה וְחַמְלָתִי עֲלֵיהֶם כַּאֲשֶׁר יְחַמֵּל אִישׁ עַל-בְּנֵוֹ הַעֲבָד אֹהִו – God states categorically that those who currently fear Him and whose names are written in His book of remembrance will become His permanent and eternal possession, because He will be merciful to them and forgive them for their sins (just as He will for every authentic believer in human history).

⁴⁹ וְשַׁבְתֶּם וּרְאִיתֶם בֵּין צְדִיק לְרָשָׁע בֵּין עֲבָד אֱלֹהִים לְאֲשֶׁר לֹא עֲבָדוּ – God tells those who fear Him and receive His forgiveness in the future that they will once again be able to discern who are those who genuinely obey God in contrast to those who do not. Since this is most likely a reference to the first resurrection of the righteous in Revelation 21 at the return of Jesus the Messiah when he sets up his millennial kingdom on the land of Israel to rule not only it but also the rest of the world, God is saying that those who fear God in Malachi’s day will return to the earth. And then there are two options for what God means by

those who are the righteous and the wicked, 1) those in the world who are authentic believers and who are not, 2) those who are resurrected with them as righteous ones and those who are not. Probably #1 is better as a reference to the job that the resurrected righteous will have of encouraging the genuine believers in the world to continue in their belief and of encouraging the unbelievers to repent.

50 פתגור וְהָיוּ כָּל-יְרֵמִים וְכָל-עֲשָׂה רְשָׁעָה לְקִשׁ וְלַהֲט אֹתָם הַיּוֹם הַזֶּה אָמַר יְהוָה זָבָאוֹת אֲשֶׁר לֹא-יִעָזֵב לָהֶם שָׂרֵשׁ וְעֵגֶר
בְּעֵר – The LXX has the phrase ἡμέρα κυρίου = the Day of Yahweh, which certainly is that to which God is referring in this verse. And the mention of fire and straw being burnt up with nothing left but ashes means that God is speaking of judgment. But 1) is this the judgment of the unbelievers on the land of Israel which would include both the invading Gentile army and Jews who are destroyed at the return of Jesus, or 2) is this the judgment of the second resurrection of all unbelievers who are subsequently destroyed? #1 seems to the more likely in the light of how God continues in the next two verses.

51 וְזָרְקָה לָכֶם יְרֵאֵי שְׁמִי שָׁמֶשׁ זָרְקָה וּמִרְפָּא בְּכַנְפֶיהָ וַיְצַאֲתֶם וּפְשָׁתֶם כְּעֵגֶר מִרְבֵּק
Israelites of Malachi's day who are resurrected to immortal and morally perfect life, or 2) those who fear my name the Jews on the land (and even off the land) who either have been believers before Jesus' return or who become believers immediately afterwards, the former to an immortal and morally perfect life and the latter to the promise of immortality and moral perfection after they die? It would seem in this context that option #1 is the better. Thus, the sun of righteousness' rising is their own resurrection to immortality and moral perfection, a freedom from the calf stall of sin and moral depravity, which results in their helping to defeat the enemies of God on the land of Israel to the effect that they are destroyed from the land.

52 וְעִסְוֹתֶם רְשָׁעִים כִּי-יִהְיוּ אַפְרַח תַּחַת רַגְלֵיכֶם בַּיּוֹם אֲשֶׁר אֲנִי עֹשֶׂה אָמַר יְהוָה זָבָאוֹת
– Thus, the resurrected and changed believers from Malachi's day will walk on the land of Israel without any possible harm from the recently destroyed enemies of God, because the latter will be like ashes under their feet, i.e., non-existent, assuming this is probably metaphorical.

53 וְזָרְקוּ תוֹרַת מִשְׁנֵה עֲבָרֵי אֲשֶׁר צִוִּיתִי אוֹתוֹ בְּחָרֵב עַל-כָּל-יִשְׂרָאֵל הַקִּיָּם וּמִשְׁפָּטִים
– God is addressing this to either just the righteous of Malachi's day or to all the Israelites at that time. The latter seem the more likely with this as a general appeal to all Israelites to obey God that will eventually be followed up with God's changing the hearts of all Jews on the land when Jesus returns after John the Baptist starts this process even before Jesus' own first public appearance (cf. the next two verses).

54 הֲנֵה אֲנֹכִי שְׁלַח לָכֶם אֶת אֵלֶיהָ הַנְּבִיא לְפָנַי בּוֹא יוֹם יְהוָה הַגָּדוֹל וְהַנּוֹרָא
– cf. Matthew 11:14, 17:12; Mark 9:11-13; Luke 1:17 in the light of 3:1ff. above. While John the Baptist may be the “messenger” of Malachi 3:1, he is not the “Elijah” of this verse. In John 1:21, John the Baptist even denies being Elijah after the priests and Levites ask him directly if he is. Therefore, this Elijah is more likely to be one of the two witnesses of Revelation 11 who begin the process of Jews' coming to authentic belief in Yahweh and the Messiah where this process ends with the Jews' being restored to the land all with changed hearts when Jesus returns in Revelation 20.

55 וְהָשִׁיב לִב-אֲבוֹתַי עַל-בָּנִים וְלִב בָּנִים עַל-אֲבוֹתָם פֶּן-אֲבֹא וְהִכִּיתִי אֶת-הָאָרֶץ חָרָם
– Probably חָרָם (which I have translated as “devoted”) is the key word here (ἄρην in the LXX meaning completely, entirely, utterly). It is as though if John the Baptist did not start the process of the Jews' genuinely repenting as a result of their changed hearts in Jesus' day, God could have justified completely destroying them from the land, just as God had commanded the Israelites to destroy entirely the Canaanites when they entered into the land under Joshua's leadership (cf. Joshua 6:7). Certainly, it is not as though devastating events have not occurred for the Jews on the land in A.D. 70 and A.D. 132 specifically, but God withholds complete destruction of the Jews for the sake of His promises to the nation of Israel through Abraham with the appearance of John the Baptist whom He uses to cause Jews to become believers, which itself probably started an enduring process of more Jews' becoming believers from that point on. The end of this process will occur with the second coming of Jesus when God will change the hearts of all the Jews in order that they may live on the land of Israel under the leadership of their Messiah Jesus and obey properly the Mosaic Covenant for the first time as an entire nation.

56 כִּי-שָׁפַתִּי כֹהֵן וְשִׁמְרוּ-דַּעַת וְתוֹרָה וּבְקִשׁוּ מִפִּיהוּ כִּי מִלֵּאדָּ יְהוָה זָבָאוֹת הוּא
– God spells out the reason why the Levitical priests have the responsibility to teach the people constantly from what God has said through the Abrahamic and Mosaic Covenants. It is because each one is an *angelos* of Yahweh, meaning in this case a messenger of God (not a theophany as in Genesis 19) as the focal point of the covenants. They serve the people for the sake of their gaining God's mercy and forgiveness. There is nothing more important for a human being to do in this life than to obtain God's mercy. Consequently, the priests are not only instruments of divine mercy, but they are also instruments of divine instruction and the Torah.

57 וְאַתֶּם כֹּרְתֶם מִן-הַדָּרֶךְ הַכְשָׁלְתֶם רַגְלֵיכֶם בַּתוֹרָה שִׁחַתְתֶּם בְּרִית הַלְלוֹי אָמַר יְהוָה זָבָאוֹת
– However, the Levitical priests of Malachi's day have so neglected their God-given responsibility that they have, in effect, destroyed the Mosaic Covenant. They are not teaching the people what they should be doing, so that they have stumbled and fallen with respect to His instruction. They are basically doing the exact opposite of what they should do.

58 וְגַם-אֲנִי נָתַתִּי אֶתְכֶם נְבִנִים וּשְׁפָלִים לְכָל-הָעָם כִּפִּי אֲשֶׁר אֵינְכֶם שֹׁמְרִים אֶת-דְּרֹכַי וְנֹשְׂאִים פָּנִים בַּתוֹרָה
– God has despised the ways of the priests and, as a result, despised them. Therefore, they are His gifts to the people to do their work in the temple as Levitical priests, but this gift is despised and less than honorable in God's eyes. And part of the reason the priests are held in such low esteem by God is because they are not impartial in their fulfilling their responsibilities. Probably what God means is that they are benefiting somehow from their relationship with the wealthy to the extent that it is socially, financially, or politically advantageous to pay more attention to the wealthy than to the poor. And this is while they are supposed to be completely impartial in the fulfillment of their priestly and teaching duties.

⁵⁹ הָלוֹא אַב אֶחָד לְכִלְנֵי הַלְוִיָּהּ אֵל אֶחָד בְּרֵאשֵׁי מִדּוֹעַ נִבְגַּד אִישׁ בְּאֶחָיו לְחַלֵּל בְּרִית אֲבֹתֵינוּ – Verses 10 through 15 are a good example of how a prophet changes voices in a short amount of time. In v. 10, he speaks as though he is the entire group of the present nation of Israel who have returned to the land after the Babylonian exile. In vs. 11 and 12, he speaks of Judah, the returning exiles and their present descendants in the third person, i.e., “they” (basically) and “he” (“the man”). In vs. 13ff., he speaks as if he is God and addresses the people as “you” (pl.).

Someone who knows what he is talking about asks why the people of Israel are treating each other so badly. After all, do they not have one source of their existence, the transcendent Creator Elohim. And He is a Father to them by also providing for all their needs? He has also made a covenant with their “fathers,” which we can assume refers to both the Abrahamic and Mosaic Covenants, the former where God promises to turn them into a great nation and the latter where God lays out His requirements for them as His one chosen ethnic people.

This is a very interesting verse because of its implications for all human beings. Even if God gave to only the Jews the Mosaic Covenant, nevertheless He is the ultimate provider and source of existence for every human being. Therefore, simply on the basis of His being every person’s source of life and provider of his needs, all human beings are morally obligated to treat other with love, respect, kindness, patience, etc.—unless of course God directs otherwise as He did in the case of the Israelites who were required to destroy the Canaanites on the land of Canaan as they entered it after being rescued by God from slavery in Egypt.

This is God’s prerogative as the sovereign Creator of all reality.

⁶⁰ בְּנִדְחָה יְהוּדָה וְתוֹעֵבָה נַעֲשֶׂתָה בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל וּבִירוּשָׁלַם כִּי חִלְּלָה יְהוּדָה קִדְשׁ יְהוָה אֲשֶׁר אָהָב וּבָעַל בַּת־אֵל נִכְרָ – God through Malachi has already described the details of the Israelites’ disrespecting the temple and its required sacrifices (cf. 1:8ff.). In this way, the people have acted treacherously towards God. Another way to say this is that the people are in effect worshipping a foreign god or gods, i.e., “they have married the daughter of a foreigner,” who has influenced them away from worshipping the one, true God, just as Solomon’s foreign wives influenced him to trust in pagan gods.

⁶¹ יְכַרְתִּי יְהוָה לְאִישׁ אֲשֶׁר יַעֲשֶׂנָה עַר וְעִנָּה מֵאֲחֵלֵי יַעֲקֹב וּמִגִּישׁ מִנְחָה לַיהוָה צְבָאוֹת – This is a very difficult to translate.

But I have followed the LXX to an extent as hopefully a legitimate aid – ἐξολεθρεύσει κύριος τὸν ἄνθρωπον τὸν ποιούντα ταῦτα, ἕως καὶ ταπεινωθῆ ἔκ σκηνομάτων Ἰακωβ καὶ ἐκ προσαγόντων θυσίαν τῷ κυρίῳ παντοκράτορι. The general gist of this verse is that God will bring judgment and destruction on each person of Judah who acts treacherously towards Him by disrespecting the specifics of the commandments regarding sacrifices and offerings.

⁶² וְזאת שְׁנִית תַּעֲשׂוּ כִסּוֹת דְּמִעֲוָה אֶת־מִזְבְּחַ יְהוָה בְּכִי וְאֲנִקְחָה מֵאֵין עוֹד פְּנוֹת אֶל־הַמִּנְחָה וְלִקְחַת רִצּוֹן מִיָּדְכֶם – Now God through Malachi addresses the people of Israel with the 2nd person plural pronoun “you.” And He lists another egregious error of theirs. After they have heard that God has rejected their sacrifices and offerings (and will bring judgment on them), they weep with unstoppable tears, not because they are repentant, but because they cannot understand why God has come to the conclusion He has and is rejecting both them and their efforts to worship Him.

⁶³ וְאָמַרְתֶּם עַל־מָה עָלַ כִּי־יְהוָה הֵעִיד בֵּינֵנוּ וּבֵין אֲשֶׁת נַעֲוִיָּהּ אֲשֶׁר אָתָּה בְּנִדְחָהּ בָּהּ וְהִיא חִבְּרָתְךָ וְאֲשֶׁת בְּרִיתְךָ – So the people of Israel act completely surprised at God’s accusing them of wrongdoing and ask why God is so critical of them, because it does not make sense to them, and they cannot figure out what has provoked Him so. And God’s answer is that it involves more than their unacceptable manner of worshipping Him, which allows us to derive the principle that poor worship of God is usually accompanied by poor moral behavior that should be obvious also. In this case, the men of Israel are mistreating their wives without compunction or any feelings of guilt. God says that each one’s wife is the woman who is meant to be his companion and to whom he made an agreement to love and remain faithful.

The inference is that the men have simply grown tired of working at loving their wives. It may not be that deep and insoluble problems have entered into their relationships with one another. It is just that the men have been led by their selfishness to abandon their wives.

⁶⁴ וְלֹא־אֶחָד עָשָׂה וּשְׂאָר רִיתוֹ לֹא וְהוּא הָאֶחָד מִבְּקִשׁ יָרַע אֱלֹהִים וְנִשְׁמַרְתֶּם בְּרוּחֲכֶם וּבְאִשֶׁת נַעֲוִיָּהּ אֶל־יִבְגְּדוּ – Again, I have used the LXX to help translate this verse which is also difficult—καὶ οὐκ ἄλλος ἐποίησεν, καὶ ὑπόλειμμα πνεύματος αὐτοῦ. καὶ εἶπατε Τί ἄλλο ἄλλ’ ἢ σπέρμα ζῆτει ὁ θεός; καὶ φυλάξασθε ἐν τῷ πνεύματι ὑμῶν, καὶ γυναῖκα νεότητός σου μὴ ἐγκαταλίπη. It seems that God is pointing out that if there is one person who is not so disobeying God, and there most likely is at least one, he is identified as “the remnant of the Spirit,” God’s Spirit, in that God is still working among the people of Israel. And this is because God is always “seeking” (and causing to come into existence through His inward work in people) His seed, the promised descendants of Abraham who will have genuine belief.

To all the people (“you” plural), God exhorts them to protect their own inwardness from rebelling against Him and to demonstrate this by not mistreating their wives.

⁶⁵ כִּי־שָׁנָא שְׂלֵחַ אָמַר יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וּכְפָה חָמַס עַל־לְבוּשׁוֹ אָמַר יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת וְנִשְׁמַרְתֶּם בְּרוּחֲכֶם וְלֹא תִבְגְּדוּ – The LXX translates this verse—ἀλλὰ ἐὰν μισήσας ἐξαποστείλης, λέγει κύριος ὁ θεός τοῦ Ἰσραηλ, καὶ καλύψει ἀσέβεια ἐπὶ τὰ ἐνθυμήματά σου, λέγει κύριος παντοκράτωρ, καὶ φυλάξασθε ἐν τῷ πνεύματι ὑμῶν καὶ οὐ μὴ ἐγκαταλίπητε, and again, I have used it to translate the difficult Hebrew.

God is addressing the person who mistreats his wife, labelling him as someone who is hateful. And He declares that this kind of person will be sent away from the people Israel. As the LXX says, this person will be “destroyed,” which is coherent with God’s “cutting off” from Israel the man who disrespects the commandments of sacrifices and offerings (cf. 2:12).

God also says that these men rationalize their immoral behavior with all sorts of seemingly good arguments, but they are deceiving themselves if they think that they are reasoning correctly. God considers their mistreatment of their wives to be violence, even if they are not actually striking them physically.

And God ends this paragraph with exhorting all the people to be very aware of what is happening within them so as to protect themselves from evil. As a result, they will not act treacherously towards God or each other.

יהוה בְּדַבְרֵיכֶם וְאִמְרֹתֵיכֶם בְּמִןּה הוֹנֵנֵנוּ בְּאִמְרֹתְכֶם כָּל־עֲשֵׂה רָע טוֹב וּבְעֵינֵי יְהוָה וּבְהֶם הוּא תֹכֵן אִי אֵלֶּהי הַמְשַׁפֵּט ⁶⁶
יהוה – Again, God through Malachi addresses the people of the northern kingdom. God is simply tired of the way people talk.

And they ask, What is so tiresome about the speech, when they firmly believe that they are stating truth which should be pleasing to God? His answer is that they basically call evil good and good evil, while also stating that God is pleased with them. Either they are saying this, which wearies (so to speak) God when He listens to them talk, or they are asking where God and His judgment are, probably referring to God’s promise to rid them of all their enemies when He makes them a great nation. The people of Israel firmly believe that they are adequately obeying God and the Mosaic Covenant which should result in His blessing them by eliminating any enemies they have and the problems that ensue from having such enemies.

לָפָנַי וּפְתָאֵם יְבוֹא אֶל־הַיְכָלֹ הָאֶרְוֹן אֲשֶׁר־אַתֶּם מִבְּקָשִׁים וּמִלְאֹךְ הַבְּרִית אֲשֶׁר־אַתֶּם הַפְּצִים הַנְּהַבָּא אָמַר יְהוָה זָבָאוֹת ⁶⁷
הַנְּנִי שְׁלַח מַלְאָכֵי וּפְנֵה־דַרְדָּרָךְ – In Matthew 11:10 and Luke 7:27, Jesus quotes this verse and identifies John the Baptist as this messenger of God.

Therefore, the Lord is Jesus (cf. Psalm 11:10, “Yahweh said to my Lord, sit at My right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet.”), who enters his temple, meaning that he comes to the temple of God as the very icon of God on earth (cf. 2 Corinthians 4:4; Colossians 1:15). However, the rest of the statements about Jesus point more to his second coming than to his first coming. He will destroy his enemies, set up his kingdom on the land of Israel where he will sit on his throne in Jerusalem, and direct either the rebuilding of the temple or the proper offering of sacrifices by the Levitical priests in a rebuilt temple.

The people of Israel will delight in Jesus authentically, believing that he is their Messiah and ultimate priest before God, and he will be God’s messenger of the New Covenant to the people, finally welcomed and embraced by all of the Jews on the land.

וּמִי מִכְּלָבֵל אֶת־יָוִם בּוֹאוֹ וּמִי הַעֲמִד בְּהַרְאֹתוֹ כִּי־הוּא פֶּאֶשׁ מְזַרְךָ וּכְבָרִית מִכְּבָסִים ⁶⁸
– Jesus at his second coming will be a purifying fire and cleaning soap among the people on the land, so that they will all either be killed because of their unbelief (the Man of Lawlessness with his invading army and any unbelieving Jews) or brought out of hiding/protection and restored to the land (Jews who become believers just after his return; or they were believers before his return, so that they are raptured and transformed into immortal and morally perfect people).

וַיָּשָׁב מְזַרְךָ וּמִטְהַר לְפָנָי וְטָהַר אֶת־בְּגֵדֵי־לִוִי וְזָקַק אֹתָם כִּפְהָב וּכְפָסָךְ וְהוּי לַיהוָה מְנִישֵׁי מִנְחָה בְּצַדִּיקָךְ ⁶⁹
– Jesus’ appearance will precipitate the changing of the hearts of Levites who will then qualify to administrate the offerings in the temple for Yahweh. In this way, they will be God’s own possessions as people of authentic belief in the midst of their fulfilling their duties to present God with the offerings of the people on the altar in the temple according to the Mosaic Covenant.

וְעָרְבָה לַיהוָה מִנְחַת יְהוּדָה וּיְרוּשָׁלַם כִּי־מִי עוֹלָם וּכְשֵׁנִים קִדְמִנְיוֹת ⁷⁰
– Because of the changed hearts of the people and the Levites, their offerings to God will be like the days of Aaron and Moses when people of genuine belief brought their offerings to God. It was their changed inward condition which made their offerings pleasing to God.

בְּמִכְשָׁפִים וּבַמְנַאֲפִים וּבַנְשָׁבְעִים לַשֶּׁקֶר וּבְעֲשָׂקֵי שְׂכַר־שְׂכִיר אֲלֻמְנָה וַיְתוֹם וּמִטְיָגֵל וְלֹא יָרְאוּנִי אָמַר יְהוָה זָבָאוֹת ⁷¹
וְקָרְבָתִי אֲלֵיכֶם לְמִשְׁפַּט וְהִינִיתִי אֶד מִמֶּהֱרַר – Assuming that God is still talking about the second coming of the Messiah, He will bring about judgment and destruction for those Jews who are disobeying Him at that time.

כִּי אֲנִי יְהוָה לֹא שְׁנִיתִי וְאַתֶּם בְּגֵי־יַעֲקֹב לֹא כְלִיתֶם ⁷²
– The LXX is helpful in translating the last verb, Διότι ἐγὼ κύριος ὁ θεὸς ὑμῶν, καὶ οὐκ ἠλλοιώματ καὶ ὑμεῖς, υἱοὶ Ἰακωβ, οὐκ ἀπέχεσθε (=you are not paid in full). The Jews deserve to be completely destroyed because as a nation they will not be operating as a whole people who are devoted to God, His promises, the Mosaic Covenant, and Jesus as the Messiah. However, even though God does not decrease in His sense of justice, i.e., He does not change, nevertheless, He does not change either in His remaining committed to fulfilling His promise to them to make them a great nation eventually. Thus, He will mercifully not pay back to the Jews what they deserve entirely, complete destruction.

לְמִיָּמֵי אֲבֹתֵיכֶם כִּתְּתֶם מַחְקֵי וְלֹא שְׁמַרְתֶּם שׁוּבוּ אֵלַי וְאֲשׁוּבָה אֲלֵיכֶם אָמַר יְהוָה זָבָאוֹת וְאִמְרֹתֵיכֶם בְּמִןּה נָשׁוּב ⁷³
– First, God says that the Jews of Malachi’s day are acting like their forefathers who ignored His commandments by not obeying the Mosaic Covenant properly. But He also encourages them that if they were to repent and turn to Him with genuine hearts of elief, then He would bless them accordingly.

הֲיִקְבַּע אָרְם אֱלֹהִים כִּי אֶתֶם קִבְּעִים אֹתִי וְאִמְרֹתֵיכֶם בְּמִןּה קִבְּעוּנִי הַמְעַשֵּׂר וְהַתְרוּמָה ⁷⁴
– Again, God portrays the Israelites as mystified by His accusations of disobedience to them. How have we robbed you, they ask in surprise. God’s answer is that they are withholding their tithes from Him and bringing Him less than acceptable offerings (cf. 1:8).

בְּמִןּה אֲרָדְהוּ אֶתֶם נֹאדִים וְאֹתִי אֶתֶם קִבְּעִים הֲגוּ כְּלוֹ ⁷⁵
– God makes another definitive statement to indicate that it is as if the entire Kingdom of Judah/Israel who have returned from exile in Babylon who are disobeying Him, cursed for their disobedience, and robbing Him of what is rightfully His—tithes and acceptable offerings. Or at least God will possibly cause all the people to suffer even though there are some who are authentic believers. Or probably it is more coherent with all the rest of the biblical message to say interpret God as saying that because the whole nation is not yet obeying Him with changed hearts, they have also not yet reached their goal of being a great nation according to the promise in Genesis 12:1-3. This is the foundation for the next statement to the effect that the entire nation should also obey Him in order to bring about His blessings upon them.

בְּבֵיתִי וּבְהִנְנִי נֹא בּוֹאֹת אָמַר יְהוָה זָבָאוֹת אִם־לֹא אֶפְתַּח לָכֶם אֶת־אֲרָבּוֹת הַשָּׁמַיִם וְהִרִיקְתִּי לָכֶם בְּרֶכֶה עַד־בְּלִי־דָי ⁷⁶
– God urges the Israelites to bring the entirety of what they should as a tithe to Him, and He also encourages them to improve the quality of their sacrifices and offerings so that there will be proper “food”

for him presented on the altar in the temple in Jerusalem by the Levitical priests. Indeed, He practically begs them to test His faithfulness and loyalty to His promises to them as His chosen people. If they are all truly willing to be obedient to Him and the Mosaic Covenant in an appropriate manner (obviously with changed inwardness as an entire group of people), then He will bless them with rain and food in abundance. In other words, it is as though they really do not want to see if God is as faithful as He is, because they are ignoring what it actually takes to receive His blessings as an entire nation.

⁷⁷ וְגַעַרְתִּי לָכֶם בְּאֵכָל וּלְאִי־יִשְׁתַּחֲוֶה לָכֶם אֶת־פְּרֵי הָאָדָמָה וְלֹא־תִשְׁכַּל לָכֶם הַגִּפְּוֹן בְּשִׁדְּהָ אָמַר יְהוָה זְבָאוֹת – God promises that harm will not come to their food supply if they all will but obey Him as He requires in the Mosaic Covenant.

⁷⁸ וְאִשְׁרֵי אֶתְכֶם כָּל־הַגּוֹיִם כִּי־תִהְיוּ אִתָּם אֶרֶץ חִפְּזִין אָמַר יְהוָה זְבָאוֹת – Indeed the Gentile nations will themselves recognize just how well-off the Israelites are and say outloud just how fortunate they are. Their country will be a delightful one in which to live because of the abundance of what they will have to enjoy life.

⁷⁹ הֲזָקוּ עָלַי דְּבָרֵיכֶם אָמַר יְהוָה וְאִמַּרְתֶּם מִתְּנַדְּבָרְנוּ עָלַי – God again points out how the Israelites who have returned from the Babylonian exile and reestablished themselves in the land of Israel have done that which is wrong and spoken quite negatively of God. However, as usual, the people are surprised to hear that they have done anything wrong and ask what it is that they have spoken that has offended God.

⁸⁰ אִמַּרְתֶּם נְשׂוּא עֲבָד אֱלֹהִים וּמִתְּנַדְּבָרְנוּ עָלַי שְׂמִרְנוּנוּ מִשְׁמֵרְתוֹ וְכִי הִלְכְנוּ קִרְרָנוּ מִפְּנֵי יְהוָה זְבָאוֹת – Whether explicitly or just within their own hearts, God says that the Jews have made the comment that obeying God and even repenting of their sin has been fruitless as far as they are concerned, meaning that they expect their lives to be much better than they are if God were faithful to His promise to bless them for their obedience.

⁸¹ וְעַתָּה אֲנַחְנוּ מֵאֲשֵׁרִים וְדָרִים גַּם־נִבְנֵנוּ עֲשִׂי רְשָׁעָה גַם בְּחֵנוּ אֱלֹהִים וַיִּמְלֹטוּ – As a result of deciding that it is futile to obey God, those who have found success in their lives, i.e., who have created their own blessings by means of immoral behavior, consider that arrogance, engaging in evil, and testing God with their disobedience to be the means to happiness, success, and salvation from the typical consequences of of disobeying God respectively. They must be tired of waiting on God to bless them and are actively bringing about their own blessings through whatever means they find humanly available.

⁸² אֵי נִדְּבָרְנוּ יְהוָה אִישׁ אֶת־רַעְיוֹנוֹ וַיִּקְשֹׁב יְהוָה וַיִּשְׁמַע וַיִּכְתֹּב סֵפֶר זִכְרוֹנוֹ לְפָנָיו לְיִרְאַיִ יְהוָה וּלְחֹשְׁבֵי שְׂמוֹ – Yet, there are authentic believers in Israel/Judah whose names He writes in a book in His own presence as a way to remember premanently who they are. This is similar if not exactly the same “book” first mentioned by Moses in Exodus 32:32, “But now, if You will forgive their sin. But if not, please blot me out of Your book which You have written.” And there is Psalm 69:28, “May they be blotted from the book of life (בְּסֵפֶר חַיִּים) (ἐκ βιβλου ζώντων) (cf. Isaiah 4:3; Daniel 12:1).” And Philippians 4:3, “Yes, I ask also you, genuine fellow-worker, to lend help to these woman, who have worked with me in the cause of the good news, along with Clement and the rest of my fellow-workers, whose names are in the book of life (ἐν βιβλω ζωῆς) (cf. Luke 10:20, Hebrews 12:23, Revelation 3:5, 13:8, 17:8, 20:12,15, 21:27).” Cf. Isaiah 49:16, “Behold, I have written you on the palms of My hands.” Thus, to be written in a book or on His hands is God’s way of saying that people are permanently set apart for the blessing of eternal life. A book is written in order to ensure that its words will last into the future and be available for reference sake.

In line with Gods’ writing their names in His book, it must be that those who fear God at this time speak ideas of genuine truth and encouragement to one another in contrast to the unbelievers who cannot grasp properly just how evil their actions and words are. Therefore, God is pleased with the former and reiterates to Himself that the destiny of those who fear Him is permanently established as eternal life and salvation.

⁸³ וְתִהְיֶה לִי אָמַר יְהוָה זְבָאוֹת לְיָוִם אֲשֶׁר אָנִי עֹשֶׂה סִגְלָה וְחִמְלָתִי עֲלֵיהֶם כְּאֲשֶׁר יְחַמְלֵ אִישׁ עַל־בְּנוֹ הַעֲבָד אִתּוֹ – God states categorically that those who currently fear Him and whose names are written in His book of remembrance will become His permanent and eternal possession, because He will be merciful to them and forgive them for their sins (just as He will for every authentic believer in human history).

⁸⁴ וְשִׁבְחֶם וּרְאִיָּתָם בֵּין צְדִיק לְרָשָׁע בֵּין עֲבָד אֱלֹהִים לְאֲשֶׁר לֹא עֲבָדוּ – God tells those who fear Him and receive His forgiveness in the future that they will once again be able to discern who are those who genuinely obey God in contrast to those who do not. Since this is most likely a reference to the first resurrection of the righteous in Revelation 21 at the return of Jesus the Messiah when he sets up his millennial kingdom on the land of Israel to rule not only it but also the rest of the world, God is saying that those who fear God in Malachi’s day will return to the earth. And then there are two options for what God means by those who are the righteous and the wicked, 1) those in the world who are authentic believers and who are not, 2) those who are resurrected with them as righteous ones and those who are not. Probably #1 is better as a reference to the job that the resurrected righteous will have of encouraging the genuine believers in the world to continue in their belief and of encouraging the unbelievers to repent.

⁸⁵ כִּתְּנוּר וְהָיוּ כָּל־יְדָיִים וְכָל־עֹשֶׂה רְשָׁעָה קָשׁ וְלֹהֵט אֹתָם הַיּוֹם הַזֶּה אָמַר יְהוָה זְבָאוֹת אֲשֶׁר לֹא־יִעֲזֹב לָהֶם שֹׂרֵשׁ וְעֵנָה כִּתְּנוּר וְהָיוּ כָּל־יְדָיִים וְכָל־עֹשֶׂה רְשָׁעָה – The LXX has the phrase ἡμέρα κυρίου = the Day of Yahweh, which certainly is that to which God is referring in this verse. And the mention of fire and straw being burnt up with nothing left but ashes means that God is speaking of judgment. But 1) is this the judgment of the unbelievers on the land of Israel which would include both the invading Gentile army and Jews who are destroyed at the return of Jesus, or 2) is this the judgment of the second resurrection of all unbelievers who are subsequently destroyed? #1 seems to be the more likely in the light of how God continues in the next two verses.

⁸⁶ וְיִרְדְּתָה לָכֶם יְרֵאָה שְׂמוֹ שְׂמֵשׁ צְדִיקָה וּמִרְפָּא בְּכֹפְרֵיהֶ וַיְצַאֲתָם וּפְשָׁתָם כְּעֹגְלֵי מִרְבֵּק – Are 1) those who fear My name the Israelites of Malachi’s day who are resurrected to immortal and morally perfect life, or 2) those who fear my name the Jews on the land (and even off the land) who either have been believers before Jesus’ return or who become believers immediately

afterwards, the former to an immortal and morally perfect life and the latter to the promise of immortality and morally perfection after they die? It would seem in this context that option #1 is the better. Thus, the sun of righteousness' rising is their own resurrection to immortality and moral perfection, a freedom from the stall of sin and moral depravity, which results in their helping to defeat the enemies of God on the land of Israel to the effect that they are destroyed from the land.

⁸⁷ וְעֹסוֹתֵיכֶם רְשָׁעִים כִּי־יִהְיֶה אִפְרַיִם תַּחַת כַּפּוֹת רַגְלֵיכֶם בַּיּוֹם אֲשֶׁר אֲנִי עֹשֶׂה אָמַר יְהוָה זָבָאוֹת – Thus, the resurrected and changed believers from Malachi's day will walk on the land of Israel without any possible harm from the recently destroyed enemies of God, because the latter will be like ashes under their feet, i.e., non-existent, assuming this is probably metaphorical.

⁸⁸ וְכִי־יִתְּנֶה תּוֹרַת מֹשֶׁה עִבְדִּי אֲשֶׁר צִוִּיתִי אוֹתוֹ בְּחֶרֶב עַל־כָּל־יִשְׂרָאֵל הַקּוֹיִם וּמִשְׁפָּטִים – God is addressing this to either just the righteous of Malachi's day or to all the Israelites at that time. The latter seem the more likely with this as a general appeal to all Israelites to obey God that will eventually be followed up with God's changing the hearts of all Jews on the land when Jesus returns after John the Baptist starts this process even before Jesus' own first public appearance (cf. the next two verses).

⁸⁹ הֲנֵה אֲנִכִּי שְׁלַח לְכֶם אֶת אֱלִיָּה הַנְּבִיא לִפְנֵי בּוֹא יוֹם יְהוָה הַגָּדוֹל וְהַגּוֹאֵל – cf. Matthew 11:14, 17:12; Mark 9:11-13; Luke 1:17 in the light of 3:1ff. above. While John the Baptist may be the “messenger” of Malachi 3:1, he is not the exact “Elijah” of this verse. In John 1:21, John the Baptist even denies being Elijah after the priests and Levites ask him directly if he is. Therefore, this Elijah is more likely to be one of the two witnesses of Revelation 11 who begin the process of Jews' coming to authentic belief in Yahweh and the Messiah where this process ends with the Jews' being restored to the land all with changed hearts when Jesus returns in Revelation 20. This is to say that the “Elijah” of Revelation 11 exists mainly to encourage the 144,000 to remain on the path towards becoming complete believers and followers of God and His Messiah.

Nevertheless, John does come “in the spirit and power of Elijah to turn the hearts of the fathers back to the children and the disobedient to the attitude of the righteous” (cf. Luke 1:16 below). So he is Elijah without actually being the Elijah of Malachi 4:5,6.

⁹⁰ הָרָם – Probably הָרָם (which I have translated as “devoted”) is the key word here (ἄρδην in the LXX meaning completely, entirely, utterly). It is as though if John the Baptist did not start the process of the Jews' genuinely repenting as a result of their changed hearts in Jesus' day, God could have justified completely destroying them from the land, just as God had commanded the Israelites to destroy entirely the Canaanites when they entered into the land under Joshua's leadership (cf. Joshua 6:7). Certainly, it is not as though devastating events have not occurred for the Jews on the land in A.D. 70 and A.D. 132 specifically, but God withholds complete destruction of the Jews for the sake of His promises to the nation of Israel through Abraham with the appearance of John the Baptist whom He uses to cause Jews to become believers, which itself probably started an enduring process of more Jews' becoming believers from that point on. The end of this process will occur with the second coming of Jesus when God will change the hearts of all the Jews in order that they may live on the land of Israel under the leadership of their Messiah Jesus and obey properly the Mosaic Covenant for the first time as an entire nation.

The hearts of the fathers returning to the hearts of the sons, etc. is the condition of the hearts of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob being restored to that of their descendants, first at the time of Jesus' first appearance, which was minimum, and then at the time of his second appearance, which will be complete so that all the Jews (the 144,000 of Revelation who are protected by God from the Beast) acquire hearts of genuine belief. This will continue for the Jews throughout the millennial kingdom. They will be the great nation which God promised to Abraham, and their greatness will begin with their spiritual condition and include their economic prosperity and military might over the rest of the world with Jesus as their ruler and king.

Cf. [Luke 1:16](#) “And he will turn many of the sons of Israel back to the Lord their God. [17](#) “It is he who will go as a forerunner before Him in the spirit and power of Elijah, TO TURN THE HEARTS OF THE FATHERS BACK TO THE CHILDREN, and the disobedient to the attitude of the righteous, so as to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.”