

Malachi 3:4-12

After reading the description of the priests' instructions for the offerings in Leviticus 6-7, Malachi 3:3 explains that God "shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver: and he shall purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer unto the LORD an offering in righteousness." This will be seen in the next chapters of Leviticus, as the priests are anointed and begin their service.

Verses 1-3 talk about God's Messenger and His coming "suddenly to His Temple."

This messenger "sent before" is Elijah /John the Baptist (See **Malachi 4:5-6**), preparing the way of the Messiah, who is the Lord, the real "Messenger of the Covenant" spoken of in the latter part of the text. Rabbinical commentary interprets this coming to be in "the world to come" or the Days of Messiah. (Bemidbar Rabba, sect. 16. fol. 219. 4.)

Maimonides agrees - "in the days of the King Messiah, when his kingdom is restored, and all Israel shall be gathered to him, all will have their genealogies set right by his mouth, through the Holy Spirit that rests upon him, as it is said, 'he shall sit a refiner and purifier'" In other words, purifying the sons of Levi by separating those who are not really descendants of Aaron from the genuine priests.

But Jesus identified the spirit of Elijah with John the Baptist:

- **Matthew 11:10** - "This is the one about whom it is written: 'Behold, I will send My messenger ahead of You, who will prepare Your way before You'" (see **Malachi 3:1**).

The Lord will "purify" the sons of Levi - i.e. He will cleanse His ministers (we are a "nation of priests") of every error or self-serving thought, the dross, corruption, and impurity - and perfect the offerings and worship of Israel "as in the former years," meaning as it was seen in heaven by Moses. Christ accomplished this by being the perfect sacrifice, as well as the ultimate High Priest. But "who can abide" this? No one can or could - all died on the cross, and those who believe have become new creations in Christ.

The haftarah reading starts with the next verse that speaks of the "offerings":

Malachi 3:4 - "Then shall the offering of Judah and Jerusalem be pleasant unto the LORD, as in the days of old, and as in former years."

- referring to either the offerings which they bring, or the offering up of themselves as living sacrifices, will be "sweet," which points to the sweet savor offerings that depicted Israel's acceptance by God.

But first Israel must put things right.

Malachi 3:5-8 describe wrongdoing as in the Leviticus 6-7 reading - false swearing,

oppression, etc. Even (verse 8) defrauding God - robbing from Him in deficient tithes and offerings.

Malachi 3:5 - "And I will come near to you to judgment; and I will be a swift witness against the sorcerers, and against the adulterers, and against false swearers, and against those that oppress the hireling in his wages, the widow, and the fatherless, and that turn aside the stranger from his right, and fear not me, saith the LORD of hosts."

The focus is mostly on evil committed by the wealthy and the powerful, and the religious leaders.

("False swearers" are one class of the wicked referenced in the Leviticus readings on the Trespass Offerings).

Malachi 3:6 - "For I am the LORD, I change not; therefore you sons of Jacob are not consumed."

"I change not"

Targum: "for I the Lord have not changed my covenant."

God is the same yesterday, today and forever (**Hebrews 13:8**).

- **James 1:17** - "Every good gift and every perfect gift comes down from above, from the Father of lights, with whom is no variation nor shadow of turning."

- **Psalm 102:27** - "As a vesture, Thou shalt change them and they shall be changed, but Thou art the Same, and Thy years shall not fail."

"you sons of Jacob are not consumed"

Rashi - "you have not reached the end": You are not finished from before Me, for I have left over the souls to be requited in Gehinnom. And so did Jonathan render. And you of the House of Jacob, who think that whoever dies in this world, his verdict has already ended, that is to say, you think that My verdict has been nullified, that he will no longer be punished.

But other sages interpreted it as God's mercy: I did not strike a nation and repeat a blow to it; but as for you, I have kept you up after much punishment, and My arrows are ended, but you are not ended.

In this last sense, the "gifts and calling are without repentance" (Romans 11:29), therefore the Israelites are indeed chastised and corrected, but not wholly consumed, as they rightfully should have been.

Malachi 3:7-12 - Robbery of Tithes and offerings

Malachi 3:7-8 - "Even from the days of your fathers ye are gone away from mine ordinances, and have not kept them. Return unto me, and I will return unto you, saith the LORD of hosts. But ye said, Wherein shall we return? Will a man rob God? Yet ye have robbed me. But ye say, Wherein have we robbed thee? In tithes and offerings."

This is another class of trespass - defrauding God of what is rightfully his.

Rashi - The levy that you steal from the priests and the Levites is tantamount to robbing Me. (i.e. the portion reserved for the priests in the offerings)

Later, even the priests were guilty of not passing along the portions due to the other Levites.

Nehemiah 13:10 - "I also discovered that the portions of the Levites had not been given them, so that the Levites and the singers who performed the service had gone away, each to his own field."

If they did give something, it was grudgingly, and not cheerfully, or with an evil intention, for merit rather than thankfulness.

The main thing that Israel needs to repent of, and which needs "purifying" is their attitude toward tithes and offerings.

The haftarah passage ends with a blessing if Israel brings "all the tithes into the storehouse."

This promised "superabundance" recalls the 20 percent more described in the Trespass Offering.

In the days of Hezekiah, an incident is recorded showing how this was done correctly:

2 Chronicles 31:10 - "And Azariah the chief priest of the house of Zadok answered him, and said, Since the people began to bring the offerings into the house of the LORD, we have had enough to eat, and have left plenty: for the LORD hath blessed his people; and that which is left is this great store. Then Hezekiah commanded to prepare chambers in the house of the LORD; and they prepared them" - i.e. as a "storehouse" to keep the overflow.

These were the "treasuries" of the Temple.

Giving

In New Testament times and after, the tithe and other regulation are done away with as law, but the commandments are there as examples to show us the minimum of how giving should look - we are to be "hilarious givers."

As living sacrifices, we have nothing left to protect. We are only stewards of what God has placed under our control.

- **2 Corinthians 9:7** - "As every man purposeth in his heart, so let him give, not grudgingly or out of compulsion; for God loveth the cheerful giver."

Malachi 3:11 - "And I will rebuke the devourer for your sakes, and he shall not destroy the fruits of your ground; neither shall your vine cast her fruit before the time in the field, saith the LORD of hosts."

The opposite is depicted in Joel as he describes the historical invasion by Babylon:

- **Joel 1:4** - "That which the palmerworm hath left hath the locust eaten; and that which the locust hath left hath the cankerworm eaten; and that which the cankerworm hath left hath the caterpillar eaten."

The result:

- **Joel 1:9** - "The meat offering and the drink offering is cut off from the house of the LORD; the priests, the LORD'S ministers, mourn."

This is the spiritual devastation caused by our selfishness. The meaning of the Meal Offering and the Drink Offering (both part of the Peace Offerings and others) is lost.

- **Joel 1:12** - "because joy is withered away from the sons of men."

This is even more closely combined here:

- **Joel 1:16** - "Is not the meat cut off before our eyes, yea, joy and gladness from the house of our God?"

To those giving themselves away, the locust and the devourer can't touch - there's nothing we're investing in that can be devoured.

Malachi 3:12 - "And all nations shall call you blessed: for ye shall be a delightsome land, saith the LORD of hosts."

Targum: "and all nations shall praise you, because you dwell in the land of the house of my Shechinah or majesty, and do my will in it."