

CHAPTER 2

INTRODUCTION TO MALACHI 2

This chapter contains a reproof both of priests and people for their sins. It begins with the priests, (^{301E}Malachi 2:1) and threatens, in case they attend not to glorify the name of the Lord, they and their blessings should be cursed, their seed corrupted, dung spread upon them, and they took away with it, (^{301E}Malachi 2:2,3) and the end of this commandment being sent them, of giving glory to the name of God, was that the covenant might appear to be with Levi, or him that was typified by him, (^{301E}Malachi 2:4) of which covenant some account is given, with the reason why the blessings of it were given to him, with whom it was, (^{301E}Malachi 2:5) who is described by the true doctrine he preached; by the purity of his lips; by the peaceableness and righteousness of his walk and conversation; and by his usefulness and success in turning many from sin, (^{301E}Malachi 2:6) and it being part of the priest's office to preserve true knowledge, and communicate it, it is the duty of the people to seek to him for it; since he is the messenger of the Lord, (^{301E}Malachi 2:7) but as for the priests of those times the prophet respects, they were apostates from the way of the Lord; made others to stumble at the law, and corrupted the covenant; and therefore became contemptible, base, and mean, in the sight of the people, (^{301E}Malachi 2:8,9) who are next reprov'd for their marrying with those of other nations, idolatrous persons; and using polygamy and divorces, which were a profanation of the covenant of their fathers; a piece of perfidy and treachery among themselves; an abomination to the Lord; a profanation of his holiness; and led to idolatry, (^{301E}Malachi 2:10,11) wherefore they are threatened to be cut off from the tabernacles of Jacob, and their sacrifices to be rejected; insomuch that the altar is represented as covered with weeping and tears, because disregarded, (^{301E}Malachi 2:12,13). The reason of which was, because marrying more wives than one, and these strange women, was dealing treacherously with their lawful wives; was contrary to the first creation of man, and the end of it; and therefore such practices ought to be avoided; and the rather, since putting away was hateful to the Lord, (^{301E}Malachi 2:14-16) and the chapter is concluded with a charge against them, that they wearied the Lord with their wicked words;

affirming that the Lord took delight in the men that did evil; and that there were no judgment, truth, nor righteousness, in him, (^{<3127>}Malachi 2:17).

Ver. 1. *And now, O ye priests,* etc.] That despised and profaned the name of the Lord; that suffered such corrupt and illegal sacrifices to be brought and offered up:

this commandment [is] for you: of giving glory to the name of God; of taking care of his worship; of teaching the people knowledge, and directing them in the way in which they should walk; as follows:

Ver. 2. *If ye will not hear,* etc.] The commandment enjoined them; or the Gospel preached to them by Christ, and his apostles:

and if ye will not lay [it] to heart to give glory to my name, saith the Lord of hosts; which they had despised and profaned before; if they did not take care of his worship and service, and honour the Messiah sent unto them, in whom the name of the Lord was:

I will even send a curse upon you; both upon priests and people; those that bring the bad offerings, and those that receive them, as Kimchi; though Abarbinel restrains it to the priests:

and I will curse your blessings, either with which the priests blessed the people; or with which both they and the people were blessed; namely, their temporal blessings, such as their corn, and wine, and oil: and what wicked men have of this world, they have it with a curse, and not a blessing, as the righteous have; and therefore a little which they have, is better than much enjoyed by the wicked, (^{<3576>}Psalm 37:16):

yea, I have cursed them already; that is, from the time they began to despise his name, and not give him the glory due unto him, as Kimchi and Abarbinel explain it:

because ye do not lay [it] to heart; to glorify God.

Ver. 3. *Behold, I will corrupt your seed,* etc.] Or, “the seed for you”,^{f40}; that is, for your sake, as Kimchi and Ben Melech explain it; meaning the seed they cast into the earth, which the Lord threatens to corrupt and destroy; so that it should not spring up again, and bring forth any increase: or, “rebuke”^{f41} it, as the word sometimes signifies; and so the Targum,

“behold, I will rebuke you in the increase, the fruit (son) of the seed.”

The sense is the same; corrupting the seed being a rebuke to them; and rebuking the seed being a corruption of that, or hindering it from growing up. It is a threatening of a sore famine that should be in the Jewish nation; and which Cocceius thinks was that which happened in the days of Claudius Caesar, (^{<4112>}Acts 11:28,29). The Septuagint version renders it, “behold, I separate to you the shoulder”; the Arabic version, “the right hand”, or arm; and the Vulgate Latin is, “behold, I will cast forth to you the arm”; the right shoulder of the sacrifice, which was given to the priests, and here threatened to be cast to them with indignation, (^{<0172>}Leviticus 7:32,34 ^{<1581B>}Deuteronomy 18:3) but the former sense is best:

and spread dung upon your faces, [even] the dung of your solemn feasts; that is, the dung of their beasts which were slain for sacrifice at their solemn feasts: so this word **gj** is used for a beast offered for sacrifice at a festival, (^{<1487>}Psalms 118:27). The sense is, that their sacrifices and solemn feasts were so far from being acceptable to God, that he would reject both them and their persons, and would cast the very dung of the creatures brought for sacrifice into their faces, and spread it over them: a phrase expressive of the utmost contempt of them, and of exposing them to the greatest shame and confusion for their sins. So the Targum,

“I will make manifest the shame of your sins upon your faces; and will cause to cease the magnificence of your feasts.”

The Septuagint render it, the ventricle, or “maw”; which was given to the priests, (^{<1581B>}Deuteronomy 18:3) and in which the dung was contained:

and [one] shall take you away with it; with the dung spread upon them; they looking like a heap of dung, being covered with it, and had in no more account than that: or “to it”^{f42}; that is, as Jarchi explains it, to the dung of the beasts of your sacrifices they shall carry you; or you shall be carried to it, that ye may be rejected and despised as that. Kimchi’s note is

“the iniquity (you are guilty of) shall carry you to this contempt; measure for measure; you have despised me, and ye shall be despised:”

or “with him”, or “to himself”^{f43}; meaning he, or it that shall take them away; either the wind or dung; or the enemy, as Aben Ezra interprets it; by

whom the Romans may be designed, who took them away out of their own land, and carried them captive. According to the Septuagint, Syriac, and Arabic versions, this is to be understood of God, who render the words, “I will take you together”, or “with it”.

Ver. 4. *And ye shall know that I have sent this commandment unto you,* etc.] (See Gill on “~~3011~~Malachi 2:1”):

that my covenant might be with Levi, saith the Lord of hosts; not that the ceremonial law might be confirmed and established, on which the Levitical priesthood was founded; for it was the will of God that that should be abolished, because of the weakness and unprofitableness of it; but that the covenant of grace made with Christ, the antitype of Levi, with whom the true Urim and Thummim are, (~~4638~~Deuteronomy 33:8), who has a more excellent ministry and priesthood than his, might take place, be made manifest, and be exhibited under the Gospel dispensation; of which, and of the person with whom it is, an account is given in the following verses.

Ver. 5. *My covenant was with him of life and peace,* etc.] Not with Aaron, nor with Phinehas; nor is it to be understood of a covenant, promising temporal life and outward prosperity to either of them; Aaron living a hundred and twenty three years, (~~4639~~Numbers 33:39) and Phinehas, according to some Jewish writers, above three hundred years, which they gather from (~~4728~~Judges 20:28) but of the covenant made with Christ from everlasting, called “a covenant of life”, because it was made with Christ the Word of life, who was with the Father from all eternity, and in time was made manifest in the flesh; and was made in behalf of persons ordained to eternal life, and in which that was promised and given to them in him; and in which it was agreed that he should become man, and lay down his life as such, that they might enjoy it: and it is called a “covenant of peace”, because the scheme of peace and reconciliation was drawn in it, and agreed unto; Christ was appointed in it to be the Peacemaker; and in consequence of which he was sent to procure peace, and he has made it by the blood of his cross: and this covenant may be said to have been and to be “with him”; because it was made with him from all eternity, as the head and representative of his people, and he had all the blessings and promises of it put into his hands; and it stands fast with him, and will do so for evermore.

And I gave them to him; namely, the blessings of life and peace; eternal life is the gift of God; and not only the promise of it, but that itself, was given to Christ in covenant for his people, and a power to give it to as many as

the Father gave to him, (^{<3204>}Psalm 21:4) (^{<5001>}2 Timothy 1:1 ^{<6162>}1 John 5:12 ^{<6172>}John 17:2) he gave him also peace to make, put this work of peacemaking into his hand; and he allows it to be made by him, and that it is rightly effected; and from his blood and righteousness peace springs to his people; and they enjoy peace in him and through him, yea, all prosperity and happiness:

[for] the fear wherewith he feared me; because of his obedience to the precept and penalty of the law; because of his righteousness, and sufferings, and death, by means of which life and peace came to his people, and in which he showed great fear and reverence of God, (^{<8007>}Hebrews 5:7) the word “for” is not in the original text, and may be left out in a version, or supplied with “and”; and the sense be, besides the blessings of life and peace, I also gave him the fear with which he feared me; which must be understood of the grace of fear bestowed on him as man: so the Septuagint version, “I gave unto him in fear to fear me”; and the Vulgate Latin version, “and I gave him fear, and he feared me”: and the Arabic version, “I gave him fear, that he might fear me”: the Targum is,

“I gave him the perfect doctrine of the law, or the doctrine of the perfect law ((see ^{<5025>}James 1:25)) that he might fear before me.”

And was afraid before my name; frightened, and put into consternation, as he was when in the garden, and he began to be heavy and sore amazed, (^{<4143>}Mark 14:33) or he was broken and bruised, as Kimchi interprets the word here used, because of the name of the Lord, to satisfy his justice, fulfil his law, and glorify all his perfections.

Ver. 6. *The law of truth was in his mouth*, etc.] The Gospel, the word and doctrine of truth; which comes from the God of truth; is concerning Christ the truth and men are guided into it by the Spirit of truth; it contains most glorious truths, and nothing but truth: and this was in the mouth of Christ, being put there by his Father, who gave him what he should say, and what he should speak; and which was preached by him in the most faithful manner, and so as it never was by any other, for which he was abundantly qualified:

and iniquity was not found in his lips; there was none in his nature; nor in his heart; nor in his life; nor in his lips; none could be found there by men nor devils: there was no falsehood in his doctrines; no deceit in his promises; no dissimulation in his expressions of love to men; nothing vain,

light, frothy, and unprofitable, dropped from him in common conversation; no reviling in return to his enemies; nor any impatient expressions or murmurings at the time of his sufferings and death, (~~4122~~ 1 Peter 2:22,23):

he walked with me in peace and equity: he walked with God, he had communion with him; though he was sometimes left alone, he was not alone, God was with him; he was conformable to his will, and walked according to it, in obedience to his law, moral and ceremonial, and in the discharge of all religious duties: he walked with God “in peace”, without quarrelling with any of his dispensations towards him; he did nothing to break the peace that subsisted between them, but always did the things which pleased his father, and had peace in what he did; and he walked with him in “equity”, or righteousness, fulfilling his righteous law, and bringing in an everlasting righteousness:

and did turn many away from iniquity; doctrinal and practical; which is to be understood, not of a bare reformation only in principle and practice, but of true real conversion; of which there were many instances under the ministry of his forerunner John the Baptist, and under his own ministry when in person on earth; and under the ministry of his apostles, attended with his Spirit and power, both in Judea, and in the Gentile world.

Ver. 7. *For the priest's lips should keep knowledge*, etc.] Or “shall keep knowledge”, as the Septuagint and Vulgate Latin versions; or “do keep knowledge”, as the Arabic version; and so the Syriac version, “for the lips of the priest drop knowledge”; all this is true of Christ our great High Priest; for as it was predicted of him, that his lips should keep knowledge, so they have kept it, and do keep it; not concealing it, but preserving it, and communicating it freely and openly; as he did to his disciples and followers when here on earth, and by them to others; and still does by his Spirit, giving to men the knowledge of themselves and state; the knowledge of himself, and the way of salvation by him, and of the truths of the Gospel:

and they should seek the law at his mouth; not the law of Moses, but the doctrine of grace, and any wholesome instruction and advice; which he is greatly qualified to give, being the wonderful Counsellor: it may be rendered, “they shall seek”, or “do seek”; and which has been fulfilled, especially in the Gentiles, and in the isles that waited for his law or doctrine, (~~23110~~ Isaiah 11:10 42:4):

for he [is] the messenger of the Lord of hosts; or “angel”^{f44}; he is the Angel of God’s presence, and of the covenant, (^{236B}Isaiah 63:9) (^{300B}Malachi 3:1) which name he has from being sent, for he came not of himself, but his Father sent him; he was sent as a priest to atone for the sins of his people, and to be their Saviour; and as a prophet, to instruct and teach them; and therefore they should seek to him for knowledge, and attend his word and ordinances, and implore his spirit and grace.

Ver. 8. *But ye are departed out of the way*, etc.] Of truth and righteousness, of life and peace, of eternal salvation and happiness, pointed to by Christ and his forerunner, and by his apostles and ministers that followed him, and which was clearly showed in the preaching of the Gospel: this was the character of the chief priests, Scribes, and Pharisees, in Christ’s time, to which the prophet seems to have respect; who not only failed in their observance of legal sacrifices, complained of in the former chapter (^{300C}Malachi 1:1-14), but left that way of atonement and salvation they directed to, and led others out of the way with them:

ye have caused many to stumble at the law; at the doctrine of justification by the righteousness of Christ; which was the stumbling stone they fell at, seeking for righteousness, and directing others to seek for it, not by faith, but as it were by the works of the law, (^{402B}Romans 9:32,33):

ye have corrupted the covenant of Levi, saith the Lord of hosts: that which was foreshadowed by the Levitical priesthood and covenant, namely, the covenant of grace, dispensed under the Gospel dispensation by the ministry of the word and ordinances; which they rejected, despised, and set at nought, and as much as in them lay endeavoured to make void, by not attending to these things, nor suffering others, but doing all they could to bring them into disuse, contempt, and disgrace.

Ver. 9. *Therefore have I also made you contemptible and base*, etc.] When their city and temple were destroyed by the Romans, and they were carried captive by them, and became a taunt and a proverb in all places where they came:

before all the people; the nations of the world, among whom they were scattered:

according as ye have not kept my ways; neither those which the law directed to, either moral or ceremonial; nor what the Gospel directed to,

the ordinances and institutions of Christ, particularly baptism, which the Jews rejected against themselves, (^{<4073>}Luke 7:30):

but have been partial in the law; in the observance of it, attending to the lesser, and taking no notice of the weightier matters of it, as the Jews are charged by Christ, (^{<4233>}Matthew 23:23) and in the interpretation of it, restraining its sense only to outward actions, for which they are reprov'd, (^{<4088>}Matthew 5:1-48) or “received faces”, or “accepted persons in the law”^{f45}; in matters of the law they were concerned in, they had respect to the persons of men, by giving the sense of it, and pronouncing judgment, in favour of some, to the prejudice of others, wrongly.

Ver. 10. *Have we not all one father?* etc.] Whether this is understood of Adam the first man, of whose blood all nations of the earth are made, and who in the same sense is the father of all living, as Eve was the mother of all living; or of Abraham the father of the Jewish people, of whom, as their father, they used to glory; or of Jacob, as Kimchi and Aben Ezra interpret it, whom the Jews used to call our father Jacob; or of God, who is the Father of all men by creation, and of the Jews by national adoption of them; and who may the rather be thought to be meant, since it follows,

hath not one God created us? either as men, or formed us as a body politic; which may serve to explain what is meant by their having one father: whichever is the sense of these words, the argument from hence is strong; that there ought to be no partiality used in the law, or any respect had to persons, in that the rich and the poor have all one Father and one Creator; (see ^{<5011>}James 2:1-8):

why do we deal treacherously every man against his brother; by perverting justice, having respect to persons, favouring one to the prejudice of another, as it follows:

by profaning the covenant of your fathers? the covenant made with them at Sinai, as Jarchi explains it; the law that was then enjoined them, particularly such as forbid respect of persons, (^{<4095>}Leviticus 19:15 ^{<5169>}Deuteronomy 16:19) some think, as Aben Ezra, that a new section here begins, and that the prophet proceeds to a new reproof, and for another sin these people were guilty of, in marrying wives of another nation, contrary to the law in (^{<4245>}Exodus 34:15) which was dealing treacherously with one another, and profaning the covenant of their fathers.

Ver. 11. *Judah hath dealt treacherously*, etc.] Not only every man against his brother, by being partial in the law; or against the women of their nation, by marrying others; or against their wives, by putting them away; but against Christ the Son of God by betraying and delivering him up into the hands of the Gentiles, to be mocked, and scourged, and crucified:

and an abomination is committed in Israel, and in Jerusalem; which was the taking of the true Messiah with wicked hands, condemning him and putting him to death, even the shameful and accursed death of the cross; which was done in the land of Israel, and in and near the city of Jerusalem:

for Judah hath profaned the holiness of the Lord, which he loved; Christ, who is the Lord's Holy One, holiness itself, the most holy, and holiness to the Lord for his people; and who is his dear Son, the Son of his love, whom he loved from everlasting, continued to love in time amidst all his meanness, sorrows, and sufferings, and will love for evermore; him the Jews profaned by blaspheming him, falsely accusing him, and condemning him; by spitting upon him, buffeting, scourging, and crucifying him: some interpret this "holiness" of the soul of Judah, which was holy before the Lord, and loved, as the Targum; so Jarchi of Judah himself, or Israel, who was holiness to the Lord; and others of the holy place, the sanctuary, and all holy things belonging thereto; and others of the holy state of marriage, since it follows:

and hath married the daughter of a strange god; which the Targum paraphrases thus,

“and they were pleased to take to them wives, the daughters of the people;”

the Gentiles, such as Moabites, Ammonites, and the like: and this sense is followed by most interpreters, though the phrase seems rather to be expressive of idolatry; and so the Septuagint, Syriac, and Arabic versions interpret it of their being intent upon, and serving, strange gods; and as the Jews rejected the Son of God, and his word, ordinances, and worship, they had not the true God, nor did they worship him, but became guilty of idolatry; and besides, as they rejected the King Messiah from being their King, so they declared they had no king but Caesar, an idolatrous emperor, and joined with the idolatrous Gentiles in putting Christ to death, (^{<B12>}John 19:12,15 ^{<A12>}Acts 4:27).

Ver. 12. *The Lord will cut off the man that doeth this*, etc.] That is guilty of such treachery, wickedness, and idolatry: or “to the man that doeth this”^{f46}; all that belong to him, his children and substance: it denotes the utter destruction, not of a single man and his family only, but of the whole Jewish nation and its polity, civil and ecclesiastical, as follows:

the master and the scholar out of the tabernacles of Jacob; the Targum paraphrases it,

“the son, and son’s son, out of the cities of Jacob;”

agreeable to which is Kimchi’s note,

“it is as if it was said, there shall not be left in his house one alive; that there shall not be in his house one that answers him, that calls by name.”

In the Hebrew text it is, “him that is awake, and him that answers”^{f47}; which the Talmudists^{f48} explain, the former of the wise men or masters, and the latter of the disciples of the wise men; to which sense our version agrees: but by “him that waketh or watcheth”, according to Cocceius, is meant the civil magistrate, who watches for the good of the commonwealth, and so may design the elders and rulers of the people; and by him that “answereth”, the prophet, who returns answers when he is consulted in things belonging to the law of God, and such were the scribes and lawyers.

And him that offereth an offering unto the Lord of hosts; the priests, that offered sacrifice for the people; so that hereby is threatened an entire destruction, both of the civil and ecclesiastical polity of the Jews, that there should be no prince, prophet, and priest among them; all should be removed out of the tents of Jacob, or cities of Israel; (see ^{<300>}Hosea 3:4).

Ver. 13. *And this have ye done again*, etc.] Or “in the second”^{f49} place; to their rejection and ill treatment of Christ they added their hypocritical prayers and tears, as follows:

covering the altar of the Lord with tears and weeping, and with crying out; for the Messiah they vainly expect, pretending great humiliation for their sins: though some, as Kimchi and Aben Ezra, make the first evil to be their offering illegal sacrifices on the altar, complained of in the former chapter (^{<300>}Malachi 1:1-14); and this second, their marrying strange wives, on

account of which their lawful wives came into the house of God, and wept over the altar before the Lord, complaining of the injury that was done them:

insomuch that he regardeth not the offering any more, or receiveth it with good will at your hand; which expresses an utter rejection and abrogation of legal sacrifices; and which some make to be the reason of their covering the altar with tears and weeping: or the altar is represented as weeping, because sacrifice is no more offered upon it; (see ^{<2107>}Daniel 9:27 ^{<2104>}Hosea 3:4).

Ver. 14. *Yet ye say, Wherefore?* etc.] What is the meaning of the women covering the altar with tears? as if they knew not what was the reason of it, when they were so notoriously guilty of breach of covenant with them; which is an instance of their impudence, as Abarbinel observes: or, “if ye say, wherefore?” as the Targum and Kimchi interpret the words; should you say, what is the reason why the Lord will not regard nor receive our offerings? the answer is ready,

Because the Lord hath been witness between thee and the wife of thy youth: when espoused together in their youthful days, the Lord was present at that solemn contract, and saw the obligations they were laid under to each other, and he was called upon by both parties to be a witness of the same; and at the present time he was a witness how agreeably the wives of the Israelites had behaved towards their husbands, and how treacherously they had acted towards them; he saw and knew, that, whatever pretensions they made, they did not love them, nor behave as they should towards them; and therefore had just cause of complaint against them, and must be a witness for the one, and against the other: this sin of hating and divorcing their wives, or of marrying others besides them, which prevailed much in our Lord’s time, is particularly mentioned, though they were guilty of many other sins, as a reason of the Lord’s not accepting their offerings: the aggravations of it are, that they had broken a contract God was witness to, and dealt injuriously with wives they had espoused in the days of their youth; (see ^{<2107>}Proverbs 2:17 5:18):

against whom thou hast dealt treacherously; by divorce or polygamy: the Vulgate Latin version renders it, “whom thou hast despised”: and the Septuagint and Arabic versions, “whom thou hast left”; divorced and took others, which arose from hatred and contempt of their former: other aggravations follow:

yet [is] she thy companion; or, “and she is”, or “though she is thy companion”^{f50}: has been so in time past, and ought to be so still, and so accounted: the wife is a part of a man’s self, is one flesh with him; a partaker of what he has; a partner with him in prosperity and adversity; a companion in life, civil and religious, and ought to remain so till death part them; for, whom God has put together, let no man put asunder:

and the wife of thy covenant; wherefore either to divorce her, or marry another, was a breach of covenant; for by “covenant” is not meant the covenant of God made with the people of Israel, in which they both were; but the covenant of marriage made between them, and which was broken by such practices.

Ver. 15. *And did not he make one?* etc.] That is, did not God make one man, and out of his rib one woman? did he not make man, male and female? did he not make one pair, one couple, only Adam and Eve, whom he joined together in marriage? or rather, did he not make one woman only, and brought her to Adam to be his wife? which shows that his intention and will were, that one man should have but one wife at a time; the contrary to which was the then present practice of the Jews:

Yet had he the residue of the spirit; it was not for want of power that he made but one woman of Adam’s rib, and breathed into her the breath of life, or infused into her a human soul or spirit; he could have made many women at the same time; and as the Father of spirits, having the residue of them with him, or a power left to make as many as he pleased, he could have imparted spirits unto them, and given Adam more wives than one:

And wherefore one? what is the reason why he made but one woman, when he could have made ten thousand, or as many as he pleased? the answer is,

That he might seek a godly seed; or “a seed of God”^{f51}; a noble excellent seed; a legitimate offspring, born in true and lawful wedlock; (see ~~4074~~ 1 Corinthians 7:14) a seed suitable to the dignity of human nature, made after the image of God, and not like that of brute beasts, promiscuous and uncertain:

Therefore take heed to your spirit; to your affections, that they do not go after other women, and be led thereby to take them in marriage, and to despise and divorce the lawful wife, as it follows:

and let none deal treacherously with the wife of his youth; by marrying another, or divorcing her: these words are differently rendered and interpreted by some; but the sense given seems to be the true one, and most agreeable to the scope of the place. Some render the first clause, “hath not one made?”^{f52} that is, did not the one God, who is the only living and true God, make one man or one woman? and then the sense is the same as before; or did not that one God make, constitute, and appoint, that the woman should be the man’s companion, and the wife of his covenant, as in the latter part of the preceding verse (~~3023~~ Malachi 2:13)? or, “did not one do?”^{f53} that is, so as we have done, take another wife besides the wife of his youth? and so they are the words of the people to the prophets, justifying their practice by example; by the example of Abraham, whom some of the Jewish writers think is intended by the “one”, as in (~~2510~~ Isaiah 51:2 ~~4504~~ Ezekiel 33:24). The Targum is,

“was not one Abraham alone, from whom the world was created?”

or propagated. Kimchi gives it as his own sense, in these words;

“Abraham, who was one, and the father of all that follow him in his faith, did not do as ye have done; for he did not follow his lust, nor even marry Sarah, but so that he might cause the seed of God to remain;”

yet he mentions it as his father’s sense, that they are the words of the people to the prophet, expressed in a way of interrogation, saying, did not our father Abraham, who was one, do as we have done? who left his wife, and married Hagar his maid, though he had the residue or excellency of the spirit, and was a prophet; to whom the prophet replies, and what did that one seek? a godly seed; which is, as if it was said, when he married Hagar, it was to seek a seed, because he had no seed of Sarah his wife. A seed was promised him, in which all nations of the earth were to be blessed; he sought not to gratify his lust, but to obtain this seed, the Messiah, to whom the promises were made, as the apostle argues, (~~4816~~ Galatians 3:16) “he saith not, and to seeds as of many; but as of one, and to thy seed, which is Christ”; called here the “godly seed”, or the “seed God”^{f54}, as some choose to render the words; that is, that seed which is God, who is a divine Person, God and man in one person; or which is of God, of his immediate production, without the help of a man; which the Jews call the seed that comes from another place, and which they use as a periphrasis of the

Messiah. So on those words in (⁰¹⁰²⁵Genesis 4:25), “she called his name Seth, for God hath appointed me another seed”,

“says R. Tanchuma, in the name of R. Samuel, she has respect to that seed which comes from another place; and what is this? this is the King Messiah^{f55}.”

And the same Rabbi elsewhere^{f56} observes, on those words in (⁰¹¹⁹²Genesis 19:32), “that we may preserve seed of our father”,

“it is not written, that we may preserve a son of our father, but that we may preserve seed of our father; that seed which is he that comes from another place; and what is this? this is the King Messiah.”

Now as Abraham had the promise of a son, and his wife was barren, he took the method he did that he might have one, the son of the promise, a type of the Messiah, and from whom he should spring; and this is sufficient to justify him in it: besides, he did not deal treacherously with Sarah his wife, for it was with her good will and by her authority he did this thing; but do you take heed to your spirit, that no one of you deal treacherously with the wife of his youth, to leave her, and marry the daughter of a strange God: and much the same sense Jarchi takes notice of as the Agadah, or the interpretation of their ancient Rabbins. Some render the words, “and not one does this”; that is, deals treacherously with the wife of his youth, that has the residue of the spirit, or the least spark of the Spirit of God in him; and how should anyone do it, seeking a godly seed? therefore take heed to your spirit, etc.; so Deuteronomy Dieu. But according to others the sense is,

“there is not one of you that does according to the law, whose spirit remains with him that is not mixed with the daughter of a strange god;”

which is Aben Ezra’s note. But according to Abarbinel the sense is, not one only has done this, committed this evil, in marrying more and strange women; not some only, and the rest have the spirit with them, and keep it pure from this sin; so that a godly seed cannot be procreated from you; therefore take heed to your spirit.

Ver. 16. *For the Lord the God of Israel saith, that he hateth putting away,* etc.] The divorcing of wives; for though this was suffered because of the

hardness of their hearts, it was not approved of by the Lord; nor was it from the beginning; and it was disagreeable, and even hateful to him, (~~408~~ Matthew 19:8) in the margin of some Bibles the words are rendered, “if he hate her, put her away”; and so the Targum,

“but if thou hatest her, put her away;”

to which agree the Vulgate Latin, Septuagint, and Arabic versions; and this sense made mention of in both Talmuds, and is thought to be agreeable to the law in (~~424~~ Deuteronomy 24:3) though the law there speaks of a fact that might be, and not of what ought to be; wherefore the former sense is best; and this other seems to have been at first calculated to favour the practice of the Jews, who put away their wives through hatred to them. The Jews were very much inclined to divorce their wives upon very trivial occasions; if they did not dress their food well, were not of good behaviour, or not so modest as became the daughters of Israel; if they did not find favour with their husbands; and, especially, if they had entertained a hatred of them: so says R. Judah^{f57},

“if he hate her, let him put her away:”

but this is by some of them restrained to a second wife; for of the first they say,

“it is not proper to be hasty to put away a first wife; but a second, if he hates her, let him put her away^{f58},”

and R. Eleazer says^{f59}, whoever divorces his first wife, even the altar sheds tears for him, referring to the words in (~~323~~ Malachi 2:13) and divorces of this kind they only reckon lawful among the Israelites, and found it upon this passage; for so they make God to speak after this manner^{f60},

“in Israel I have granted divorces; among the nations of the world I have not granted divorces. R. Chananiah, in the name of R. Phinehas, observes, that in every other section it is written, “the Lord of hosts”; but here it is written, “the God of Israel”, to teach thee that the holy blessed God does not put his name to divorces (or allow them) but in Israel only. R. Chayah Rabba says, the Gentiles have no divorces.”

But some of them have better understanding of these words, and more truly give the sense of them thus, as R. Jochanan does, who interprets them,

“the putting away of the wife is hateful^{f61};”

it is so to God, and ought not to be done by men but in case of adultery, as our Lord has taught, (^{<4163>}Matthew 5:32 19:9) and which was the doctrine of the school of Shammai in Christ’s time, who taught,

“that no man should divorce his wife, unless he found in her filthiness;”

i.e. that she was guilty of adultery; though this Maimonides restrains to the first wife, as before: but the house of Hillell, who lived in the same time, was of a different mind, and taught that

“if she burnt his food;”

either over dressed or over salted it, according to (^{<6241>}Deuteronomy 24:1). R. Akiba says, if he found another more beautiful than her, according to (^{<6241>}Deuteronomy 24:1), he might divorce her^{f62}; of the form of a divorce, (see Gill on “^{<4163>}Matthew 5:31”). Those interpreters among Christians that go this way do not look upon this as an approbation of divorce, on account of hatred; but that so to do is better than to retain them with hatred of them, seeing it was connived at, or than to take other wives with them.

For [one] covereth violence with his garment, or “on his garment”,

saith the Lord of hosts; as he that puts away his wife does her an open injury, which though he may cover, pretending the law, which connives at divorces; yet the violence done to his wife is as manifest as the garment upon his back: though those who think the former words are an instruction to put away wives, when hated, consider this as a reason why they should do so; because, by retaining them, and yet hating them, and taking other wives to them, is doing them a real injury, whatever cover or pretence may be used; because, if dismissed, they might be loved by, and married to, other men. Aben Ezra seems to have hit the sense of these words, when he makes this to be the object of God’s hatred, as well as the former; his note is,

“the Lord hateth him that putteth away his wife that is pure, and he hates him that covereth; or God sees his violence which is done in secret.”

Mr. Pocock proposes a conjecture, which is very ingenious and probable, that as the words will bear the construction Aben Ezra gives, that God hates putting away, and hates that one should put violence upon or over his garment; by “garment” he thinks may be meant a man’s lawful wife, which is as a garment to him; and by “violence” a second wife, or other wives, taken to the injury, hurt, and vexation of the former; and the covering, or superinducing violence over the garment, is marrying an unlawful wife, over or with, or above his lawful one: and the sense is, that as God hates divorce, so he hates polygamy:

therefore take heed to your spirit, that you deal not treacherously; (see Gill on “³⁰²⁵Malachi 2:15”).

Ver. 17. *Ye have wearied the Lord with your words,* etc.] As well as with their actions; (see ^{2383b}Isaiah 43:24) this is said after the manner of men, they saying those things which were displeasing and provoking to him, and which he could not bear to hear; or otherwise weariness properly cannot be attributed to God:

Yet ye say, Wherein have we wearied him? as if they were clear and innocent; or, as the Targum, “if ye should say”; though they might not express themselves in words in such an impudent manner; yet should they say so in their hearts, or supposing they should utter such words with their lips, out of the abundance of their evil hearts, the answer is ready:

When ye say, Every one that doeth evil [is] good in the sight of the Lord, and he delighteth in them; which they concluded from the prosperity of the wicked, and the afflictions of the righteous; so murmuring at, and complaining of, the providence of God; he acting as if he delighted in wicked men, and as if they that did evil were the most grateful and acceptable to him:

or, if this was not the case,

Where [is] the God of judgment? why does he not arise and show himself to be a God that judgeth the earth, by taking vengeance on the wicked, and granting prosperity to his people? Deuteronomy Dieu takes these last words to be the words of the prophet, and thinks that **wa** is a particle of

exclamation, and should be rendered “O”; and that the prophet expresses his wonder at the patience and longsuffering of God in bearing such impiety and blasphemy as before delivered. The Septuagint and Arabic versions are, “where is the God of righteousness?” either God the Father, who is righteous in all his ways, and faithful in the fulfilment of all his promises; or, Christ the Lord our righteousness, who was to come, and is come into this world for judgment, as well as to bring in an everlasting righteousness. This may be considered as a scoff of wicked men at the long delay of the Messiah’s coming, when they expected outward prosperity and happiness; just as the scoffers in the last day will mock at the promise of his second coming, (~~600B~~ 2 Peter 3:3,4) and so the words, with which the next chapter begins (~~300B~~ Malachi 3:1), are an answer to these.