Malachi's view on temple rituals and its ethical implications

A Thesis
Submitted in Fulfilment of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Philosophy
(PhD in Old Testament Studies)

At the
Department of Old Testament Studies
Faculty of Theology

By

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Declaration

I, the undersigned student, do hereby declare that this thesis titled: ***Malachi's view on temple rituals and its ethical implications*** is my own original work and has not previously in its entirety or in part been submitted to any institution for a degree.

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Dedication

To my Dear wife, Ufuoma in sincere thanks for her unflagging support and encouragements throughout this journey of faith, to our Children; Ọghẹnẹnyhẹrhovwo, Avwarosuọghẹnẹ, Ọkeọghẹnẹ and Ọghẹnẹrukevwẹ Symeon-Benzion, with the prayer that they, like the Children of Levi, will live to become for Yahweh bearers of offerings in righteousness (Mal.3:3).

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Acknowledgements

I am sincerely grateful to Yahweh; for his faithfulness throughout this journey of faith. To Him alone are dominion, power and glory forever! I wish to register my deep gratitude to the University of Pretoria for her valuable contribution and research support required for the success of this project. I am also delighted to use this medium to express my profound gratitude to the Governing Council, President, and faculty of the Baptist Theological Seminary, Eku, for the continuing education privilege and time off I received for this study.

I was very fortunate to have had an excellent relationship with my supervisor and mentor, Professor Dr. Alphonso Groenewald. He has been an incredible mentor – he took the time and effort to try to understand me, my unique learning and working styles. He allowed me the space and freedom I needed to pursue my research in my own way, and yet he always kept a watchful and careful eye over my progress. He also opened up opportunities for me to collaborate with leading Old Testament scholars, all of which allowed me to grow and develop in many ways. To him my thanks are due and gratefully offered, for his love, wishes, encouragement and guidance on many points. Without his patience and constructive advice, this study could not have been completed.

I owe a profound debt of gratitude to the following staff of the Department of Old Testament Studies, Professors Pieter M. Venter (former HoD) through whom I got in touch with my supervisor, Dirk Human (Deputy Dean of the Faculty of Theology and HoD, Old Testament Studies). I am grateful for the opportunity to sit under the following guest professors, who put their vast expertise of Biblical studies into their lectures: JA Loader (emeritus dean of

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the protestant faculty of theology at the University of Vienna, Austria, and extraordinary professor at the University of Pretoria), Ulrich Berges (University of Bonn, Germany) and Aaron Schart (University of Essen-Duisburg, Germany). I appreciate an array of national and international scholars, who presented intellectually stimulating lectures and papers during the annual Pro-Pent and Pro-Psalms conferences of the Department of Old Testament Studies, University of Pretoria: Professors Eckart Otto, Thomas Römer, Jurie Le Roux, Nancy deClaissé-Walford, Louis Jonker, Raik Heckl, Eben Scheffler, Christo Lombaard, Gert Prinsloo, Phil Botha, Jaco Gericke, Hans Ausloos, Drs. Frances Klopper, Sias Meyer, and several others.

My deepest gratitude goes to the following friends for their love, encouragements, prayers and valuable contributions: J.U. & J.N. Ejenavi, M. Igbereyivwe, R. Enakrire, G. Gheghor A. & B. Eghrudje, A.O. Okoro, J.A. Ottuh, O.D. Awatefe, E.O. Ojameruaye, V.O. Osagbowa, S.O. Onakonvwen, F. Erhabor, S. Okoh, Augustus I, S. Mohammed, R. Udoh-King, B. Awaritoma, M.R. Makama, G. Ofenomor, A. Esemudje, O. Eruotor, T. Arhiphrure, E. Adogbeji, J.U. Eghuatorhe, M. Oviawe, J. Momoh, M.V.E. Amuro, N.A. Agbikimi and C. Okpara. I appreciate most sincerely my International house mates and friends: Drs. C. Tadmon, S. Khamlich, L. Kiboiy, N. Kumar, O. Chidiebere, S. Sojinu, E. Tambo, B. Kumwenda, C. Adegoke, and A.A. Kpwegeh. To my language editor, Sandra Duncan, I say thank you for your kind gesture. Finally, I heartily appreciate the love, encouragement, prayers and enthusiasm of a galaxy of others too numerous to mention, or even to remember, who in some small way have contributed to the successful completion of this project. To one and all, I say thank you.

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List of Abbreviations

AB	Anchor Bible
ABC	Anchor Bible Commentary
ABD	Anchor Bible Dictionary. Edited by D. N. Freedman. 6 vols. New York, 1992.
AD	*Anno Domini*, in the year of Christ
AJBS	*African Journal of Biblical Studies*
AnBib	*Analecta biblica*
AOTC	Abingdon Old Testament Commentaries
ASR	*American Sociological Review*
ASV	American Standard Version
ATJ	*Ashland Theological Journal*
BBC	Broadman Bible Commentary
BCE	Before Common (or Christ) Era
BDB	Brown, F. Driver, S. R. and Briggs, C. *Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament.* Oxford: Clarendon.
BLS	*Bible and Literature Series*
BS	*Biblical Seminar*
BSac	*Bibliotheca Sacra*
BT	*Bible Translator*
BTB	*Biblical Theology Bulletin*
BulBR	*Bulletin for Biblical Research*
BZAW	*Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die Alttestamentliche Wissenschaft*
CBQ	*Catholic Biblical Quarterly*
CE	Common Era/ Christ Era

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CEV	Contemporary English Version
CTR	*Creswell Theological Review*
CurTM	*Currents in Theology and Mission*
DJD	Discoveries in the Judaean Desert
DtrH	Deuteronomistic History
EBC	The Expositor's Bible Commentary
Enc Jud	*Encyclopaedia Judiaca* (16 vols; Jerusalem)
FAT	*Forschungen zum Alten Testament*
FRLANT	Forschungen zur Religion und Literatur des Alten und Neuen Testaments
GTJ	*Grace Theological Journal*
HALOT	*The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament.* Edited by L Koehler and W. Baumgartner. 5 vols. 1994.
HAR	*Hebrew Annual Review*
HB	Hebrew Bible
HBT	*Horizons in Biblical Theology*
HTR	*Harvard Theological Review*
HTS	*Harvormde Teologiese Studies*
IB	*Interpreter's Bible*
IDB	*The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*, ED. G.A. Buttrick et al.
IDBSup	Supplementary Volume to IDB
ICC	International Critical Commentary
IJCTEA	*International Journal of Contextual Theology in East Asia*
IJHSS	*International Journal of Humanities and Social Science*
Int	*Interpretation*
ISBE	*International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia*

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ITC	International Theological Commentary
JBL	*Journal of Biblical Literature*
JCS	*Journal of Cuneiform Studies*
JETS	*Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society*
JHS	*Journal of Hebrew Scriptures*
JNSL	*Journal of Northwest Semitic Languages*
JSem	*Journal for Semitics*
JSOT	*Journal for the Study of Old Testament*
JSOTSup	Journal for the Study of Old Testament Supplement Series
JSSt	*Journal of Semitic Studies*
JTS	*Journal of Theological Studies*
KAT	Kommentar zum Alten Testament
KBulCS	*Koers – Bulletin for Christian Scholarship*
KJV	King James Version
LB	The Living Bible
LHBOTS	Library of Hebrew Bible/Old Testament Studies
LNTS	Library of New Testament Studies
LSTS	Library of Second Temple Studies
LXX	Septuagint
MisAfr	*Mission Afric*
MT	Masoretic Text
NAB	New American Bible
NAC	New American Commentary, ed. R. Clendenen
NASB	New American Standard Bible
NBC	New Bible Commentary
NCBC	New Century Bible Commentary

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NIB	The New Interpreters' Bible
NIV	New International Version
NIDOTTE	*The New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis,* ed. W.A. Van Gemeren
NJB	The New Jerusalem Bible
NLT	New Living Translation
NRSV	New Revised Standard Version
NT	New Testament
NTS	New Testament Studies
OT	Old Testament
OTE	Old Testament Essays
OTL	Old Testament Library
OTS	*Oudtestamentische Studien* (Old Testament Studies)
PFES	Publications of the Finnish Exegetical Society
RevExp	*Review and Expositor*
RTR	*Reformed Theological Review*
SBJT	*Southern Baptist Journal of Theology*
SBLSym	Society of Biblical Literature Symposium Series
SBL	Society of Biblical Literature
SBLDS	Society of Biblical Literature Dissertation Series
SBLSS	Society of Biblical Literature, Semeia Studies
SBTS	Sources for Biblical and Theological Study
SEÅ	*Svensk Exegetisk Årsbok*
SJOT	*Scandinavian Journal of Old Testament*
SSN	*Studia Semitica Neerlandica*
StPB	*Studia post-biblica*
SWJT	*South-western Journal of Theology*

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TDOT	*Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*
T:IJHMS	*Transformation: An International Journal of Holistic Mission Studies*
TOTC	The Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries
TWOT	*Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament.* Edited by R. L. Harris, and G. L. Archer Jr. 2 Vols. Chicago, 1980.
TynBul	*Tyndale Bulletin*
USQR	*Union Seminary Quarterly Review*
VC	*Vigiliae Christianae*
VT	*Vetus Testamentum*
VTSup	Vetus Testamentum Supplement
WBC	Word Biblical Commentary
ZAW	*Zeitschrift für die Alttestamentliche Wissenschaft*

Table of Hebrew Transliteration[1]

Consonants

Letter	Hebrew Form (s)	Transliteration
Aleph	א	ʾ
Beth With daghesh lene With daghesh forte	בּ ב ב	bh b bhbh
Gimel With daghesh lene With daghesh forte	גּ ג ג	gh g ghgh
Daleth With daghesh lene With daghesh forte	דּ ד ד	dh d dhdh
He With daghesh (mappiq)	הּ ה	[h] Silent when last in a word h –when initial/middle
Waw	ו	w
Zayin	ז	z
Heth	ח	ḥ
Teth	ט	ṭ
Yodh	י	y
Kaph Final form in a word With daghesh lene With daghesh forte	כּ ךּ כ כ	kh kh k khkh
Lamedh	ל	l
Mem Final form in a word	מּ ם	m m
Nun Final form in a word	נ ן	n n
Samekh	ס	s

[1] Weingreen (1959:1, 4, 8-10).

Ayin	ע	ʿ
Pe Final form in a word With daghesh lene With daghesh forte	פ ף פּ פּ	ph ph p phph
Tsadhe Final form in a word	צ ץ	ts ts
Qoph	ק	q
Resh	ר	r
Sin Shin With daghesh forte With daghesh forte	שׂ שׁ שּׂ שּׁ	ś sh śś shsh
Taw With daghesh forte With daghesh forte	ת תּ תּ	th t thth

Long Vowels

Letter	Hebrew Form (s)	Transliteration
Qamets	ָ	ā
Tsere	ֵ	**ē**
Tsere Yodh	ֵי	**ê**
Hireq Yodh	ִי	**î**
Sureq	וּ	**û**
Holem Waw	וֹ	**ô**
Holem	ֹ	**ō**

Short Vowels

Letter	Hebrew Form (s)	Transliteration
Pathah	ַ	a
Seghol	ֶ	**e**
Hireq	ִ	**i**
Qibbuts	ֻ	**u**
Qamets Hatuph	ָ	**o**

Half Vowels

Letter	Hebrew Form (s)	Transliteration
Shewa	ְ	[e] - vocal
Hateph Pathah	ֲ	**ă**
Hatheph Seghol	ֱ	**ĕ**
Qamets Hatuph	ֳ	**ŏ**

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Summary of Thesis

This study is an attempt to understand Malachi's ethics by situating them firmly in a particular historical, religious and socio-economic context. The first chapter, which served as an introduction to the study, reflected on the setting of the problem which, according to Malachi was a burden of the Lord. In addition, the chapter also looked at the statement of problem, aims and objectives of the study, research design and methodology, delimitation and structure of the study, and clarification of terminologies. The second chapter focused on the prophet, prophecy, prophetic books, and eschatology. It looked at the nature and social functions of Israelite prophecy which is similar to prophetic activity elsewhere in the ancient Near East. Prophecy in the ancient Near East was one form of divination and consisted of encouragement in threatening situations, prophetic criticism.

Among their roles was the fact that prophets acted as intercessors and provided the people with a means of contacting Yahweh. In their capacity as bearers of God's words to His people, they provided a model of religious discourse that found its continuation in the Christian development of the Biblical tradition. It noted that while they are associated with a prophetic personage, no prophetic book is associated with more than one prophetic personage. Since eschatology is a broad term that is applicable both to prophecy and to apocalyptcism, a distinction was made between prophetic eschatology and apocalyptic eschatology. This study however focused on prophetic eschatology which is the dimension employed by the people of God when they are essentially free from outside influences and have the ability to make choices with respect to how they live as the people of God. Malachi's eschatological vision falls within this context.

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The third chapter demonstrated an understanding of the idea of the temple as expressed by the prophets. Such understanding was necessary in the light of the prophetic criticisms of the rituals of the temple. The chapter noted that the various prophetic conceptions of the temple were used by the prophets in their respective contexts to challenge people to move towards their aim. The prophets' interests seem far more concerned with the spiritual and ethical life of the nation. For them, the temple cult was conceived as a graceful gift from Yahweh to Israel and that understanding clarifies their statements.

The fourth chapter examined background information on Malachi's prophetic corpus. In the process, details of authorship, date of writing, recipients of the message, style of writing, prominent themes as well as structure of the book are undertaken. In its literary structure, the book is seen as a series of dialogues or disputes between the prophet and those he is addressing. The study notes that the book of Malachi is tightly intertwined around a well planned bond of political, economic, religious and social realities. These realities prepared the ground for the exegesis of the passages of the book dealing with cultic rituals' violations and subsequently the contextual application of its message. In the fifth chapter, a demarcation of the limits of the passage(s) dealing with the Temple ritual malpractices was made and it was followed by a transliteration and exegesis of the text(s), dealing with issues of cultic rituals' violations. Such analysis of historical and literary contexts, analysis of form and structure of the passage(s) as well as analysis of the grammar and lexical data of such passages has helped to illuminate Malachi's ethical uniqueness around theological themes: Yahweh's covenant with Israel, priesthood and temple worship, the justice of Yahweh, the fertility of the land and the Day of Yahweh that runs through Malachi's prophetic oracles.

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The sixth chapter focused on a synthesis of the results of the exegesis of Malachi's passages that refer mainly to the ritual aspects of the temple service. It afforded the study an opportunity to step back and reflect on the ethical implications of Malachi's view on temple rituals for contemporary Church experience within the larger human society. This is done in the light of basic assumption, that the biblical text is the authoritative word for the church. The ethical implications or relevance of Malachi's several prophetic narratives are examined along ethical dimensions of Yahweh (theological dimension); his people as a restored community of faith (social and political aspects) and their land (economic conditions). The chapter thus made such ethical proposals for the kind of religious, social and economic responsibilities and actions required of the individual and the church community in the larger society. Chapter seven which is the last chapter, afforded the study a final opportunity of drawing conclusions; that is on reflecting on the status of the research objectives, design, methodology, questions and findings and of making recommendations.

Key Terms: Malachi, *minḥāʰ*, covenant, Day of Yahweh, social justice, ethics, ritual, priest, temple, marriage and divorce, post-exilic and faith community.

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Abstract

Malachi's view on temple rituals and its ethical implications

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This study attempted to understand Malachi's ethics by situating them firmly in a particular historical, religious and socio-economic context. Malachi as the conscience of his people was skilful and creative in adapting the older prophetic traditions to the advantage of their religious, economic and socio-cultural context. The book of Malachi contains a fundamental critique of the sacrificial practices of the time. The prophetic criticism of the cult as seen in the book was conducted on the basis of covenantal principles. The book's ethical uniqueness is observed somehow most clearly in the preponderance of a negative emphasis the book places on temple rituals and the way the language of the cult dominates his analysis of malpractices. The book shows where the ritual delinquencies are and how to deal with them. Thus for the purpose of enacting a communal ethic, the thesis stressed the theological values and ethical relevance of the enduring message of Yahweh alone as the sovereign of all creation and thus of humble trust and hope in him, of repentance, of commitment to the ideals of fidelity and steadfastness, of judgment, truth and justice, and of covenant renewal and restoration of fortunes which Malachi offers people who yearn for them irrespective of their religious and cultural background and nationality.

The study showed how the ethical dimensions of Yahweh (theological dimension); his people as a restored community of faith (social and political aspects) and their land (economic conditions) as seen in the book of Malachi obviously make ethical proposals for faith communities in dealing with every

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theological, socio-political, and economic issue within the larger human society. Thus the various interpretations of the different oracles in the book of Malachi served as basis for this study to evolve ethical proposals for contemporary Christian application, at least within an ecclesia community. The church must serve as a channel through which the ethical demands of God for a well-ordered community can be mediated within her and larger human society and must find creative ways to translate the biblical imperative in a contemporary theological, social and economic context.

Key Terms: Malachi, *minḥāʰ*, covenant, Day of Yahweh, social justice, ethics, ritual, priest, temple, marriage and divorce, post-exilic and faith community.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1. SETTING OF THE PROBLEM

Old Testament eschatological hope[1] receives its clearest expression from the 8th century BCE onwards and most probably in the post-exilic period, but its roots go deep into Israel's covenant faith (Routledge 2008:273). As noted by Israel's prophets, the Babylonians destroyed Jerusalem in 586 BCE and carried many of into exile. However, according to the prophets God did not abandon His people. He even used Cyrus the Persian, conqueror of Babylon, to allow a band of deportees to go back to their homeland i.e. Judah, in order to start working on the reconstruction of the temple, which was completed in ca 516 BCE. The 6th and 5th century's prophets addressed concerns and issues arising out of the experiences of the exile and returned to the land. Specifically, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi[2] addressed the post exilic community.

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[1] This study in the second chapter will give a fair representation of the current state of research on the phenomenon of Israelite prophecy and development of expectations (designated with the term "eschatology") that God will turn the fate of Israel to the better in the future. Since eschatology is a broad term that is applicable both to prophecy and to apocalyptcism, a distinction will made between prophetic eschatology and apocalyptic eschatology and then the study will focus on prophetic eschatology which is the dimension employed by the people of God when they are essentially free from outside influences and have the ability to make choices with respect to how they live as the people of God. In Malachi, the prophet's eschatological vision included the prospect of purifying judgment for God's people. The Lord Almighty would come as the sovereign Lord of the nation to enforce His covenant (3:10). The coming of Yahweh in the form of his (covenant) angel would guarantee a dual role of; namely, cultic restoration and Yahweh's righting of past wrongs and the reversal of sinful societal order in the overall context of the eschatological day of Yahweh.

[2] In the light of this study, *mal'ākhî* is situated as a proper name and the study assumes that the message of the book was initially preached by someone (a prophet most probably) known to be *mal'ākhî*. In this study the recipients, context, and content of the message remain the issues of major concern. However, reference to Malachi always implies the book. In some cases, reference is made to the "authors" of the book as well as its redactors, in the light of the final stage or form of the book of Malachi as a Christian canon (see chapter three for details of authorship and date of composition).

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They made clear that this community was the successor of the pre-exilic nation, which was responsible for obeying God's covenant demands. These prophets, rather than focusing on past failures, stressed the responsibilities of the present, in addition to the glorious future God had arranged for His people. The return of the exiles to the land marked the beginning of a new era in Israel's history. There would be a fulfilment of God's earlier promises and accomplishment of His original purpose for the nation. Jerusalem would be reestablished, the Davidic throne would be restored, the priesthood would be purified and worship at the temple reinstituted (Chisholm 1991:419).

In their minds, according to Kaiser (1986:11), the script for the post exilic era was much different from what they were experiencing. According to their understanding of the earlier prophets the land would rebound with miraculous fruitfulness (Ezek. 34:26-30), the population of the people would swell mightily (Isa. 54:1-3), the nation would rise in esteem to the glorious reign of a new David (Jer. 23:5-6), and all nations would come and serve them (Isa. 49:22-23). However, the realities of the life were just the opposite. The land languished frequently from drought (Mal. 3:10), the population remained a fraction of what it had been, and the nation continued under the thumb of Persia and its governor (Mal. 1:8). As one can observe from a scriptural point of view that although some band of deportees were still in their confinement in Babylon, some others had been granted freedom especially in the Ezra-Nehemiah's periods, to go back to their ancestral land in order to reconstruct the temple, erect it as well as establish the walls and gates of the city and also to revitalise the sacrificial worship of the temple.

The post-exilic community is seen as a society with a population that is proportionally representative of all kinds of people of interest, with at least

three constituent groups: The first band consisted of those who had remained in the land following the tragedy that befell the nation in 587 BCE. The second included those who may have returned from Babylonia with Sheshbazzar early in the reign of Cyrus (Ezr. 1:7-11) and the third ones were a number of Judeans who may have returned from Babylonia with Zerubbabel and Joshua only a few years before Haggai's preaching, and thus struggling to re-establish themselves (Bedford 1995:72). There was, indeed, for the people who had stayed in Judah, those who had returned from exile were a danger in that these returnees would apply their family rights and privileges to the property on which the remnants had staked their livelihood (Albertz 1994:444).

In the book of Malachi, the prophet's "burden" belongs to Israel. Although Israel may be contained within its scope, the book does not belong to the time when Israel and Judah were political powers on the platform of the world empires, but was actually addressed to the post-exilic period, when Judah (or Yehud, as it was often called) had been reduced to a small administrative centre in the massive Persian Empire. Thus it was in "this day of small things" (Zech 4:10) when Israel had lost its king and political independence and was struggling to learn new ways to survive, that Malachi continued his prophetic tradition and initiated new perspectives for his time and the generations to come (Schuller 1996:845-46).

One finds within these four precise chapters of the book, for example rich and creative reworking and incorporation of the important covenant themes that motivated earlier prophets. It is clear that the walls, gates of Jerusalem and temple had been rebuilt, and a round of sacrifices revived. The passion for justice, the concern for the less privileged; widow, orphan and labourers of the eight-century prophets is combined with a sharp focus on temple, cult,

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tithes, priesthood, all which reflects and addresses the centrality of these institutions for the post-exilic community.

1.2. STATEMENT OF PROBLEM

While quite a number of scholars have researched several aspects of the book of Malachi, I hold that its unique emphasis on the ritual aspect of the temple service has been scarcely addressed in the light of the widest prophetic corpus. Malachi's ethical uniqueness is observed somehow most clearly in the preponderance of the negative emphasis the prophet places on temple rituals and the way the language of the cult dominates his analysis of malpractices. Thus like Ezekiel, the ritual of the destroyed temple becomes the centrepiece of an ethical system which constantly looks back to the homeland for its symbolic coherence (Mein 2006:4). Malachi attempts to bring the priesthood closer to what the prophet perceived to be the ideal; priest who excelled in teaching; effective and efficient exegetes of scripture, priest who provided social justice, who worshipped Yahweh alone and whose performance of the cult satisfied the most rigorous cultic demands.

The book of Malachi is essentially about the religious questions of worship, temple and priesthood. The longest disputation in Malachi is the one directed at the priest (Boda 2012:15). As it were, priests and Levites played a leading role in the cultic life of Israel; the responsibility of the priests' offering sacrifices was an essential aspect of the covenant relationship between God and Israel. However, the priests in Malachi despised this covenantal relationship by neglecting their functions. In 1:6-14, the prophet charges the priests (*kohanim*) with short-changing Yahweh with offerings due him by allowing the presentation of what he, Malachi, considers inferior animals (Hugenberger 1998:883-84).

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They are not accused of profiting by this, only of violating what appeared to him to be transparently obvious standards of acceptability. In the continuation of this trade, Malachi contrasts their behaviour with that of their ancestor Levi, who provided Israel with true instruction (Mal. 2:7). Although the prophet claims no special knowledge, he assumes his right to challenge what is done in violation of recognised standards (Zevit 2006:207). Malachi's message with reference to the three kinds of reprehensible misdeed against which the prophet gave his address; the neglect of the cult, lack of economic support of the clergy, and the malpractice of mixed marriages and divorce (Blenkinsopp 1983:210) reflect aspects of violation of the social responsibility of the covenant i.e., failure to love one's brother amounts to violation of the religious responsibility i.e., failure to love God (Clendenen 2004:326).

While the neglect of the cult is considered a religious responsibility on the one hand, it is a social problem on the other hand because involvement in appropriately recognised and reputable cultic action was one of the fundamentals for participation in the temple community (Blenkinsopp 1983:198). Malachi as the conscience of his people was skilful and creative in adapting the older prophetic traditions to the advantage of his religious, economic and socio-cultural context. The oracles of Malachi for his generation in addition to the events they witnessed threw into question the various covenantal obligations and assurance on which the people had placed their safety and that were supposed to guarantee the fortitude of the tripartite covenantal triangle revolving around Yahweh, Israel, and the land of Canaan (cf. Block 2006:35).

Malachi's eschatological vision involved the expectation of purifying judgment for God's people. By his time, serious cultic and social problems

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were manifesting within the post-exilic community (1:6-14; 2:8-17; 3:6-15; 4:6). Indecision with respect to repentance would bring about divine judgment. Yahweh would come as the sovereign Lord to enforce his covenant (3:1). He is to come unexpectedly, and His day is to bring judgment upon the godless; but for those who fear God, 'the sun of salvation' will shine forth (Vos 2001:161-162). The thesis of this study is that Malachi's post-exilic; pro-temple-ritual emphases' affirms the value and necessity of the temple rituals for Israel's covenant relationship with Yahweh. This covenantal relationship with Yahweh however, remains the key to understanding both the post-exilic anti-temple ritual statements and pro-temple ritual criticisms.

Malachi portrays a post-exilic community that enjoys all the cultic privileges it did before the exile. Although Malachi reflects the social and religious struggles of the 5th century, however, his primary concern is the priesthood and its cultic activities. The priests are accused of disrespecting, dishonouring, despising and defiling Yahweh, and they question his accusations as if he either lied or was ignorant. But the principal way they despise and defile Yahweh day after day is through deficient and unacceptable offerings. This is not a single event, but a continuous negative attitude toward the cult and Yahweh.

The prophet maintains that the disappointments that the people were going through with respect to the promises of Yahweh were conditioned by their unfaithfulness (1:6-2:9; 3:7-12; 3:13-15; 2:13-17). This unfaithfulness however, is aggravated by the depressed and recurrent malpractices of the clergy who ought to have appropriately guided the faith of the people and through whom the people were supposed to receive Yahweh's blessing. The clergy on their part were totally persuaded of their blamelessness and the precision of

the manner in which they executed their religious functions and responsibilities. In the book of Malachi, one can see clear accounts of their outrageous assertions and ill-tempered lamentations to Yahweh in commanding imperatives, why their loyalty had remained unrewarded. In the light of the fact that the book of Malachi focused on the restoration community, who on the outside appeared to be very religious but whose interior life was disgusting to Yahweh, in addition to the delightful exhortation to those who are loyal, trustworthy and dedicated among them, accordingly, I am of the opinion, it generates unique ethical proposals for faith communities today.

The similarities that exist between the days in which one lives and works[3] and the days in which the restoration community in the book of Malachi lived and thrived are very remarkable. We are witnessing an unprecedented erosion of norms, reckless violation of decent cultural values, and a growing sense of cultural alienation. The spirit of unhealthy competition has overtaken the spirit of comradeship. A new wave of secret cults, individualism, subtle racism and aggressive tribalism is affecting our social life negatively. For most people life has become very insecure leading to all kinds of fear and anxiety about life today and tomorrow.

While many of us are preoccupied with material prosperity, and while it is true that our age witnesses an unprecedented material prosperity, there is a lot of abject material poverty. In the midst of it all, there is exploitation, corruption, high rate of un-employment, widening gap between the rich and

[3] That is, within the relative context of what I have witnessed in life and ministry in the church and/or society in Nigeria. My perception of the church and/or as it expressed in this thesis bears the stamp of the part of the church and/or I have experienced and into which I minister as a pastor and teacher. The rest of Nigeria and Africa may not be too far from this description

the poor with national and international money mafias who have held both less fortunate individuals and nations as economic hostages. The religious dimension of our existence demands careful attention. There are far more churches today than human history has ever recorded and more people claim to be worshippers of God than it has ever been conceived. But there is an unbelievable ungodliness and darkness in the practice of religious faith. Is this a time for those who know and love the reformed faith and the old paths to enrich themselves on earth, and to succumb to self-indulgence? The wide gap between the poor and rich, the disdain for Yahweh, the well-enriched culturally diverse society with her inter-religious marriages, among others demonstrates how significant the book Malachi is to the ecclesia community.

1.3. AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The major purpose of this study is to examine Malachi's view on temple rituals and its ethical implications for contemporary Church experience.[4] Since the book's unique conception relies on the force of the disputation to challenge current behaviour and attitudes of people and their religious leaders in matters of ritual practices, the attempt in this study is to identify

[4] This study understands the term 'Church' to mean the people of God that are built together into a spiritual building for God's habitation (Eph. 2:20-22). It includes that assembly of baptised believers in Christ in all ages, which are different from the world by virtue of their calling from and separation unto God (Eph. 1:22, 3:10, 21, 5:25-32). The expressions: ecclesia community, Yahweh's faith community and Christian community are used interchangeably. On the other hand, experience as used in the study implies people's accommodation or integration of an emerging understanding of life through the images and groups that are accessible to them in a specific location and season. It involves an attempt to maintain a continuing relationship with the Lord in the hope of securing divine blessing for the community by means of obeying the commands of the Lord, providing for His needs, propitiating His anger, and maintaining the integrity of His sanctity. This is basically expressed in worship.

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such disputation speeches with the aim at a more logical and thorough exegetical and theological evaluation of Malachi's ritual ethics for contemporary faith communities. Thus for the purpose of enacting a communal ethic, the thesis aims at stressing the theological values and ethical relevance of the enduring message of Yahweh alone as the sovereign of all creation and thus of humble trust and hope in him, of repentance, of commitment to the ideals of fidelity and steadfastness, of judgement, truth and justice, and of covenant renewal and restoration of fortunes which Malachi offers people who yearn for them irrespective of their religious and cultural background and nationality. The study will thus benefit any theological and exegetical undertaking, irrespective of the context in which such is undertaken.

Specifically, the following objectives are designed for this study:

(a) To investigate the attempts to relate prophecy via its eschatological affinity; that is, the relation between prophecy and eschatology;

(b) To demonstrate an understanding of the temple as expressed by the prophets in their criticisms of cultic/temple rituals;

(c) To examine background information on Malachi's prophetic corpus with the aim of situating Malachi's view on the temple rituals within a particular historical, economic and socio-religious contexts;

(d) To determine the limits of the passage(s) dealing with the temple ritual malpractices within the temple purview in Malachi;

(e) To exegete such passages dealing with the issues of cultic ritual violations in Malachi and

(f) To draw such ethical implications necessary for calling the Church and her priests to renewal, challenge them to uphold the truth of God's word by being

a model of godly living, and vigilant to protect the purity of Yahweh's worship in the practice of religious faith.

The prospects of this study therefore are to offer significant opportunity for restoring authenticity and depth to the Church's often impoverished private and corporate experience of ritual ethics and practices. To this end, the following questions are addressed:

- What was the prophetic conception of the temple?
- Is Malachi's emphasis on the ritual delinquencies of the temple unique or distinct in any way to Israel's prophetic history/tradition?
- Does Malachi's pro-temple ritual emphasis contradict earlier biblical prophets?
- What was Malachi's view of the temple and how did he approach it?
- Since Malachi's prophecy is tightly intertwined within a strategic nexus of religious, socio-political and economic realities, what does Malachi teach about Yahweh-the God of Israel and what shape, then, should Yahweh's people in faith communities today take?
- Does Malachi's ethical thrust provide Christians with generally acceptable principles for understanding the Bible in theology?
- Does the level of ritual malpractices in Malachi have any implications for the priesthood and the Church today?
- What moral demand does Malachi's prophetic narrative make upon personal Christian ethics in the individual's own course of life and in his or her daily living and the Christian community in larger human society?
- What ethical ideals and practical moral demands does reflection on Malachi's prophetic dialogue on the economic angle present Yahweh's people with - their attitude toward and use of their possessions?

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These and other fundamental issues are discussed in this thesis, with suggestions for a way forward.

1.4. RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

While biblical scholarship is dominated by a multiplicity of methods, two general types of exegetical methodologies, namely; diachronic and synchronic approaches have been used in an attempt to understand the texts of the OT. No method can totally exclude the other. Diachronic approach deals with the history of texts or authorial original intention and synchronic approach is concerned with the final form of texts rather than textual origin. However, the questions that are related to these methods of biblical interpretation are varied and complex, but new theoretical perspective has given rise to what Groenewald (2003:9) understands to be "diachronically reflected synchronic reading of the text . . . the diachronic consideration explains the synchronic . . . ; that is to say, they thus inextricably intertwined and linked to one another." In their mutuality of results and status of questions, Counet and Berges (2005:6) observe, "one can speak either of synchronic oriented diachronics (question: how come the final text to its present form), or diachronic oriented synchronics (question: what is the meaning and function of the final text."

This study is an attempt to understand Malachi's ethics by situating them firmly in a particular historical, religious and socio-economic context. Thus the general research design adopted for this study is exegetical-theological (Dim 2005:23). Since the study is concerned with the faith and experience of ancient Israel in its contemporary post-exilic context, and what emerges is simply a contemporary testimony to the faith by which these people live at that particular time, then in my interpretation, an analysis of the historical conditions of that faith and life coupled with an attempt at a conversation

with the urgent demands of life today are necessary. My primary concern is to analyse the internal surface structure of the book of Malachi as part of the Christian canon.

This approach does not intend to solve all inherent problems of interpretation which are contained in the text. It is a text-based and text-oriented approach which seeks to understand the context of a given text, its basic concerns of morphology, syntax, style and semantic components rather than specific *Sitz im Leben* or the various phases of the development of the origin of the text. "It is a text-immanent or synchronic analysis, which thus has the objective of determining structural relations and intentions within the text" (Groenewald 2003:11-12). It is only in this manner, in my perspective, that one can arrive at theological and ethical relevance which are practical, viable and sustainable in one's eschatological context. Hopefully, this approach will lead one to a better understanding of the exegetical meaning and theological/ethical significance of the texts under consideration.

Since the biblical text is a product of literary, historical and theological record, an exegetical method of its study aim(s), as much as possible, at arriving at the scholarly sound meaning of the exegetical text. This method is based on the assumption that a text is historical in at least two senses, namely; it may relate history as well as have its own history. For this purpose, one can distinguish between the 'history in the text' and 'the history of the text.' According to Hayes and Holladay (1987:45):

> The former expression refers to what the text itself narrates or relates about history, whether person, events, social conditions, or even ideas. In this case, a text may serve as a window through which one can peer into a historical period . . . The later expression refers to the story of the text or what one writer calls the 'career of the text'- its own history.

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This method which is historical in its orientation presumes that words and sayings assumed a moderately fixed connotation in the course of their history. The procedure for ascertaining the primary projected meaning of the text (cf. Elwell 1984:57) is by investigation and assessment of features of the grammar and syntax, historical setting, literary category, in addition to the theological (canonical) meanings (Johnson 1990:35). This approach differentiates the primary projected meaning of the text from its importance. The text becomes basically important only when its principles are properly applied or contextualised. The main task of exegesis is to discover as much as possible the authorial intention for his/her audience, thereby obtaining a message for contemporary application (Warren-Rothlin 2005:195-212). Thus it behooves the biblical exegete to familiarise him or herself with such important issues that inspire and or underline a given biblical text for example, context, authorial intention, original readers, among others.

The study in the second and third chapters, sketches a very broad background against which one can understand and appreciate the book of Malachi. It investigates attempts to relate prophecy via its eschatological affinity; that is, the relation between prophecy and eschatology. It represents definite contributions and conclusions from some scholars who have tried their intellectual abilities on the study of prophet, prophecy, prophetic books, and eschatology for scholarly exegesis. It also demonstrates an understanding of the temple as expressed by the prophets in their criticisms of cultic rituals. The prophets emphasised the temple as the dwelling place of Yahweh, as a symbol of restoration of the community and as an eschatological symbol. These various prophetic concepts of the temple are used by the prophets in their respective contexts to challenge people to move towards their aim. The prophets' interests seem far more concerned with the spiritual and ethical life

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of the nation. For them, the temple cult was conceived as a graceful gift from Yahweh to Israel and that understanding clarifies their ritual statements.

In the fourth chapter, the study examines background information on Malachi's prophetic corpus with the aim of situating Malachi's view on the temple rituals within particular historical, economic and socio-religious contexts. In the process, details of authorship (with several arguments on the traditions behind Malachi: deuteronomistic tradition, priestly language in the text of Malachi and scribal influence), date of writing, recipients of the message, style of writing, prominent themes as well as structure of the book are undertaken. In any case, whether Malachi was originally written or delivered orally, the recipients, author, context, and content of the message in its synchronic form, remained the issues of major concern. The study notes that Malachi's oracles are rooted within various historical realities: political, economic, social and religious. These realities, prepared the ground for the exegesis of the texts of Malachi dealing with cultic rituals' violations.

Malachi's unique conception relies on the force of the disputation to challenge current behaviour and attitudes of people and their religious leaders in matters of ritual practices, thus the fifth chapter attempts to identify such disputation speeches. Malachi reflects concern on the past and warns about the future. His disputations challenges syncretistic cultic practices on the one hand and fear the coming day of Yahweh on the other hand (Nogalski 2011:1002). The following oracles, namely; second (Mal. 1:6-2:9), third (Mal. 2:10-16), fourth (Mal. 2:17-3:5), and fifth (Mal. 3:6-12) are selected for consideration, owing to the content of their temple ritual language components. These pertinent verses (1:6-2:9; 2:10-16; 2:17-3:5; 3:6-12) focus attention on the ritual aspect of the temple particularly the sacrifices/offerings

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and all that is associated with it. Hebrew grammar books, lexicon, encyclopaedia and dictionary are employed to ascertain the meaning of words used in their grammatical context.

The exegetical process involves, transliteration of each text or verse, explanatory notes on language structure and meaning of key words used in the passage, analysis of historical and literary contexts, analysis of form and structure of the passage(s) as well as analysis of the grammar and lexical data of such passages are provided when necessary. To this end, I adhere to the counsel of Steck (1995:24) namely;

> The goal of exegesis cannot be to subdue the text under a dominating measure of socio-political wishful thinking or an individual mode of experience… the most decisive thing paving the way for exegesis is not the "I" in the face of the text, but in accordance with the self-understanding of the biblical world, the text in its librating, critical and reorienting outlook towards the humanity and the living world.

In the second disputation oracle (1:6-2:9) the study examines the various accusations against the priests. Priests are expected to offer sacrifices upon the altar and to insure that the animals for sacrifice are neither blind nor lame, and neither sick nor seized. The kindling of the altar fires and their presentation of *minḥāʰ* should be done religiously. However, the actions and character of the current priesthood contradicted the ideal. They are found to be polluting the altar of Yahweh by offering polluted food on it. In Malachi 2:4-9, the prophet highlights the shortcomings of the corrupt priesthood of his day with respect to their teaching potential by way of what is expected of them, as demonstrated by the ideal of the ancient Levites. The analysis focuses on the identity of Levi and the nature of God's covenant with him elaborating on his excellent ability to teach and concluded with the corruption and contempt of the priests with respect to their lack of the same ability.

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In the third oracle (2:10-16), the study examines accusations of unfaithfulness against covenant members. The weakening of the religious life in Malachi's day had given rise to grave social implications. Perversity at the place of worship had resulted in perverseness on the part of those who come to worship. As a temple ritual component, Malachi pointed out the failure of his audience to live up to covenant obligations by denouncing three widespread abuses which bear on the whole a ritual character: malpractices of mixed marriages, unfaithfulness to God (corrupted worship), and the heartless divorce of Judean wives by Judean men. This, in the eyes of the prophet was an abomination to Yahweh.

Malachi's fourth disputation introduces a new topic namely, the coming of the divine messenger to cleanse Yahweh's people and restore true worship and obedience to the ethical standards of the law. Earlier Malachi had castigated the priests and people for their attitude and actions toward sacrifices and the altar. Now in the light of the lawlessness alluded to in 2:17, the corruption of the priesthood in 3:3, the inadequacy of worship in 3:4 and the corruption of personal and civil morality in 3:5, readers are introduced to three urgent issues: the need for messianic intervention, the need for the day of judgement and the need for social justice.

The fifth oracle (3:6-12) is a sketch of a people in a covenant relationship who have become conceited and very disobedient in the light of hard economic realities, and who are now condemning Yahweh, their covenant partner of desertion and unfaithfulness. Here, Yahweh through his prophet brought to the people's awareness an additional and different sector where their conspiracy and revolt against Him was obvious, namely, the holding back of the tithes and the hypocrisy associated with them. The accusations against the

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people with respect to their unfaithfulness and their deceitful practices in the offering of sacrifices (3:6-12) are parallel to the accusations against the priests in 1:6-2:9. These oracles 1:6-2:9 and 3:6-12, in a sense are companion pieces, in that they focus on the neglect of the cult (Tiemeyer 2006:27).

Theological analysis and canonical synthesis affords the privilege of comparing the confession of the community of faith from generation to generation in the overall canon of the OT. The canonical synthesis attempts to demonstrate that the OT coheres through discussions of inter-textual connections (House 1998:8). The exegetical foundations of the selected oracles and or disputations in the book of Malachi provide the ground for the contextual application of its message.

As part of the process of appropriating the results of the exegetical materials in the light of the fact that this thesis is concerned with the faith and experience of ancient Israel in its contemporary post-exilic context and what emerges is simply a contemporary testimony to the faith by which these people live at that particular time, an attempt at a conversation with the urgent demands of life today are necessary. While it may sometimes be difficult to create a link between Israel and the church (and or faith communities), the biblical presupposition and portrayal of Israel as an ethical community (Birch 1995:119) and a model of God's purpose for human community in general (Sloane 2008:30) permits me to interpret the church in the light of Malachi. This as well makes me to be very enthusiastic that Malachi's message can generate distinctive ethical proposals for faith communities today. It is hope that this attempt to appropriate the text of Malachi for believing communities especially within the parameters of my ideological and theological convictions will lead one to a better understanding

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of the exegetical meaning and theological/ethical significance of Malachi's ritual ethics for contemporary faith communities.

In the sixth chapter, the study develops an OT ethics in the light of the triangular bond rotating around the dimensions: Yahweh (theological facet); Israel-his people as a restored community of faith (social and political aspects) and their land (economic conditions) as observed in the book of Malachi. Here, the study's first attempt to develop an ethical relevance of Malachi's message for a contemporary Christian context begins with the establishment of Israel's theological self understanding. If theology is understood to be the reasoned statement of biblical understanding and/or interpretation, in specific places and times, it makes possible the transmission of biblical faith to future generations. Theology is not theology unless it has to do with contemporary life. The interpreter of the biblical text must be able to bridge the gap between the realities of the past and those of the present. Thus it is a reflective response to the interpretive process placed upon the biblical text.

The meaning of Malachi for Christianity and or the Christian tradition must be found therefore, within the limitations of the text's basic orientation. Malachi as the conscience of his people was skilful and creative in adapting the older prophetic traditions to the advantage of his religious, economic and socio-cultural context. The theological section of the study on the other hand, elucidates and streamlines the results of the exegetical chapter, focusing them specifically on the Lord (Yahweh) and His plan for His people - particularly from the eschatological, ethical view point.

The study no doubt, relates these results to other sections of the Old Testament where necessary. In this regard, the lived realities of the restoration community of Judah turn out to be an essential medium for communicating

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the prophetic and eschatological faith and confidence that Yahweh will form a remnant of holy people further than the post-exilic context or era. The last chapter (7) summarises the thesis, draws conclusions, and makes recommendations in the light of the potential relevance of the ethical message of Malachi for a contemporary Christian context of faith communities and the work of the scholarly community.

1.5. DELIMITATION AND STRUCTURE OF THE STUDY

The scope of this study is limited to the distinctiveness of the eschatological dialogue of Malachi which consists first of all, in the prevalence of the negative accent on the accusation for sin in contrast to the encouraging message of the good things to come which appears respectively compacted and reserved (Vos 2001:160). Malachi's remarkable eschatological characteristics as relatively established by the negative arrangement, includes: The promise of universalism in which Yahweh's name will be great among the Gentiles. The key component of this will be that "a pure offering" will be brought from them to Yahweh in the widest compass (1:11), the coming of Yahweh to the His temple (3:1), the judgment aspect of Yahweh's advent namely; "day of wrath" (3:2; 4:1), the rising of the "Sun of *ts^{e}dhāqāh*" (4:2), and preceding the coming of Yahweh is "behold, I send my messenger before me" (3:1) as well as the specific mission of Elijah which is defined as a "turning of the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers" (4:6) (Vos 2001:160-161).

The negative accusations of sin is graphically made clear by the remark that the misdemeanour charged to the people's account bears, in its entirety a ritual quality, although the social-economic elements similar to those of the older prophets are by no means totally absent. These remarkable and

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discouraging elements include: The bringing of polluted offerings on the altar; of the blind, lame, sick, torn animals to the sanctuary for sacrifice (1:7-8, 13); an attitude of ritual disillusionment and a logical apathy underpinning the offering they bring; the priests' conspiracy with the ritual negligence – an infringement of the covenant of Levi (2:8 cf. 2:1-3; 3:14); the failure to bring the required tithes to the sanctuary (3:10); the marrying of the daughter of a strange god and the unfaithfulness involved in this to the marital ideal in Israel (2:15). Malachi's eschatological vision involved the expectation of purifying judgment for God's people. By his time, serious cultic and social problems were manifesting within the post-exilic community (1:6-14; 2:8-17; 3:6-15; 4:6). Indecision with respect to repentance would bring about divine judgment. Yahweh would come as the sovereign Lord to enforce His covenant (3:1). He is to come unexpectedly, and His day is to bring judgment upon the godless; but for those who fear God, 'the sun of salvation' will shine forth (Vos 2001:161-162). The idea that Yahweh will send a messenger before his own final advent (Mal.3:1) is only found in Malachi (Von Rad 1968:255).

The study is made up of an exhaustive investigation and interpretation of those verses found in the book of Malachi which I considered to be significant to the message of the criticisms of the clergy and people in the restoration community of Judah. Nevertheless, I also explained as reasonable as achievable, how parallel prophetic criticisms manifest in other prophetic biblical books. This is done in order to illustrate the fact that the prophet (and or the writers of the book of Malachi) drew from a parallel prophetic heritage. While the study did not delve into original research regarding the socio-religious and socio-historical context of Malachi, it interacts with the rich works of other scholars who have tried their intellectual abilities on issues in Malachi. Thus a preliminary review of literature on prophecy and eschatology

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in the area of the research problem is followed by the prophetic conceptions of the temple in the light of their criticisms.

1.6. SUMMARY

This chapter, as an introduction to the study, so far reflects on the setting of the problem which, according to the prophet or authors of the book Malachi was a burden of the Lord. In addition, the chapter also looks at the statement of problem, aims and objectives of the study, research design and methodology, delimitation and structure of the study, and summary.

CHAPTER II

A SURVEY OF THE HISTORY OF RESEARCH ON PROPHECY AND ESCHATOLOGY

It must be said from this section that this research is undertaken not because there is lack of recent and informative review articles to the status of research on the prophets, especially those pertaining to the Book of Malachi.[1] Thus, the aim of this thesis and in particular this chapter is, therefore not to increase the existing material, but rather to represent definite contributions and conclusions from some erudite scholars who have tried their intellectual abilities on the prophets for scholarly exegesis. In this section of the research, an even more restricted perspective is provided. The purpose of these concise presentations is to set a perspective for the present work. In the process, it reflects on prophet, prophecy, prophetic books, and eschatology.

2.1. OLD TESTAMENT SCHOLARSHIP ON PROPHET, PROPHECY AND PROPHETIC BOOKS

In recent decades, there has been a strong interest in studying the prophets as literature. The interpretations of several past years have revealed that the prophetic books are not merely a mountain of words underneath which the individual oracles of the men of God lie hidden like treasures, but that they are like literary cathedrals that have been crafted – or rather composed and revised – for centuries by various architects (Berges 2010:551). Some readers focus attention on literary devices reflecting structural coherence that allows reading them as wholes. Troxel (2012:1) states, "The prophets have long

[1]See for example Boda (2012:13-33), Snyman (2011:156-168), Assis (2011:207-220), Krause (2008:475-486), Schaper (2006:177-188), among several others.

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fascinated people for their stinging criticism of society, their defense of the vulnerable, and their vision for the future."

Indeed, the study of Israelite prophecy has always been an important component of Old Testament scholarship and ancient intellectual history. One might spend a great deal of time collecting and classifying theories about the nature of Israelite prophecy and its origin (Peterson 1972:1). While historical inquiry must open the door to the character of the prophetic books in order to arrive at a certain level of knowledge, the historical task of clarifying strong impressions from prophetic writings for today's understanding appears to lack agreement. Thus research must approach the field of the text in a manner that sees it as a new territory (Steck 2000:6-7). This section of the study focuses attention on the definition and description of the prophet, the nature and development of prophecy in the Hebrew Bible (HB) and the prophetic books.

2.1.1. Defining and Describing the Prophet

In all of history, events that interrupted the usual, or deviation from the ordinary, were widely thought to hold a special meaning. To uncover that meaning, ancient people consulted persons who were credited with special powers of interpretation. They sought guidance in several ways: casting lots, shooting arrows and throwing spears, then reading the results. Indeed, in the OT times God truly make His will known in various mysterious ways by dreams, visions and through the prophets (Murphy 1995:22).

2.1.1.1. Terminology for 'Prophet' in the Biblical History

A key element in the relationship between Yahweh and His people is the fact that he makes Himself and His will known to them. One of such important means of revelation in the OT is through prophecy. What or who then is a

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prophet? It has been noted that no other religious specialist has such an abundance of material in the Hebrew Bible as the prophet (Grabbe 1995:82). Thus, prophets and their alleged pronouncements were clearly important to the traditions of the Hebrew Bible. Within this body of traditions one encounters a variety of positive, negative and ambivalent perspectives. Some of these prophets are clearly considered to be 'true prophets', while others are termed 'false prophets' (Groenewald 2011a:31).

Within the HB many figures are identified, in one way or another, as prophets. Indeed, there has been an increasing recognition of the fact that prophecy was one of the various distinctive means of determining the divine will and was an integral form of ancient Near Eastern divination whose function was to confirm the identity, rule and legitimacy of the ruler and the basis and extent of royal power through communication between the ruler and the god(s) (Overholt 1989:140-47).[2]

The Hebrew word for prophet in the OT which confirms that which is regarded as the appropriate method of comprehending the will of the divine, namely the ecstatic prophet is *nābhî'* (Edelman 2009:30). This is probably associated with the verb 'to call', and points to someone called by God or who called to others on God's behalf. The divine call was vital in that it validated the prophet's ministry and gave authority to his message.[3] All the more striking is the unanimity of the testimony that Yahweh's call alone had put them into action. He had called them in a way that was direct and unsought.

[2] Others who have made similar observations includes: Nissinen (2004:378:17-37(21); Barstad (1993:57:39-60(47-48); Vanderkam (1995:2083-2094 (2083).

[3] Several of the prophetic books describe the prophet's call, for example Isaiah 6:8-9; Jeremiah 1:4-10; Amos 7:14-15; Jonah 1:1-2. Isaiah for instance accepted God's call willingly; Jeremiah argued with God; Amos was willing, but seems surprised by the call; and Jonah tried to run away.

Amos stresses how undesired it was: "The lion has roared; who will not fear? The Lord God has spoken; who can but prophesy?" (3:8). All of them saw an inescapable urgency confronting them and that created entirely new circumstances. Thus Yahweh's call plunged each prophet into great loneliness, and such loneliness repeated itself many times. From such isolation they were then released into the public life of Israel (Wolf 1987:17).

Over and above the term *nābhî*, there are also other terms used in the HB. The words, *rō'eh* and *ḥōzeh*, come from verbs meaning 'to see', and are often translated 'seer'. At one time there may have been a difference between a 'prophet' (*nābhî'*) and a 'seer' (*rō'eh, ḥōzeh*). Rowley (1967:147-160) in his *Worship in Ancient Israel* observes that at one point scholars regarded the *nābhî'* as an ecstatic prophet, while seers prophesied to order, though this, like all other simple divisions, breaks down. Often, the HB uses the lexical groups of, *nābhî'*, *ḥōzeh*, *rō'eh* interchangeably and in connection with each other. From a certain stage onwards these terms were used as synonyms. It is possible that there may have been different sub-specialities in which visions were induced by different technical terms. These different types of specialists may have functioned in different contexts (Edelman 2009:32).

Samuel is described as both a *rō'eh* (I Sam. 9:9, 19; I Chr. 29:29) and a *nābhî'* (I Sam. 3:20; 2Chr. 35:18); and Gad is both a *ḥōzeh* (2 Sam. 24:11; I Chr. 29:29) and a *nābhî'* (I Sam. 22:25; 2 Sam. 24:11) (Edelman 2009:30). In these descriptions the distinction between *rō'eh*[4] and *ḥōzeh* is preserved, and Nathan, mentioned

[4] Redditt (2008:5) notes that a *rō'eh* was one who saw things, particularly things that were hidden, usually by inquiring for information from God. In today's designation a *rō'eh* would be called a "diviner", one who can discover things that are hidden. The means of divination included among others, the interpretation of dreams, (Jer. 23:25-32), casting lots (Jonah. 1:7), necromancy (I Sam. 28:8-20, but was always condemned in the Old Testament), and reading stars (Ez. 32:7; Joel 2:10).

alongside Samuel and Gad, is only called a *nābhî'*. Truly, divine revelation enabled prophets to see what others could not. These might be glimpses of the future, or deep spiritual truths. They might also be quite practical: Saul came to Samuel because he hoped the 'seer' could help him to find his father's lost donkeys (I Sam. 9:3-11) (see Habel 1965:298, 303; Shalom-Guy 2011:10). The label "prophet" is employed in the description of Gad in I Samuel 22:5, while the narrator is pleased to retain the novel label of *ḥōzeh* (I Chr. 21:9; 2Chr. 29:25). Outside the corpus of Deuteronomistic tradition, Auld (1983:3-23) in his assessment of the MT and LXX texts of verses that utilise the verbal or noun forms of the stem *nbh'* in the HB, notes that it was simply after the exile that *nābhî'* became a label for describing characters who had been addressed with other designations in the course of their days.

It is therefore on this note that Edelman (2009:32) states, "It is not wise to assume that the three terms *nābhî'*, *rō'eh* and *ḥōzeh* were interchangeable in the monarchic era and that all referred to a single form of cultic functionary… a number of former distinctive specialisations have been collapsed into the single category labelled *nābhî'*." To her, the *nābhî'*, *rō'eh*, *ḥōzeh* and possibly the *sōpheh* are likely candidates to have pronounced oracles, which are divinely given replies delivered through an intermediary to questions posed to a deity by one speaking to know the divine will. The intermediary speaks on behalf of the deity, but that speech can be an interpretation of a vision received through second sight, a straightforward audition, or even some sort of other sound, like wind, rustling leaves or echoing in cave, which is then interpreted and presented orally (Edelman 2009:34).

The term *'îš hā'ĕlōhîm* ('man of God') is a somewhat different case: it is used exclusively for individual men and always positively. Although the term *'îš hā'ĕlōhîm* is employed in the introduction of prophetic characters on many

occasions in the HB, the practice is not extensive and prevalent (Auld 1996:28). While *ʾîš hāʾĕlōhîm* is used of Elijah (1 Kgs. 17:17, 24; 20:28; 2 Kgs. 1:10-13) and Elisha (2 Kgs. 4:7, 16, 27; 6:6, 9-10, 15), Samuel himself, is three times introduced as 'man of God' (1 Sam. 9:7, 8, 10). Similarly, there are six references to Moses and three to David as 'man of God' (Groenewald 2011a:32).[5]

Although the term *nābhîʾ* achieved primacy as the most prevalent term for prophet, the four role labels: *ḥōzeh, rōʾeh, nābhîʾ*, and *ʾîš hāʾĕlōhîm* point to moments in Israel's history when not all intermediaries were known as *nᵉbhîʾm;* they point to situations in which not all intermediaries did the same thing as well as to periods when intermediaries acted at the same time in different ways (Perterson 2003:270).While terminology, however, may not always be the sole criterion by which prophets are defined as noted by Grabbe (1995:82) many prophetic figures are singled out by their social function and activities. Thus, one does not necessarily have to be called, for example, a *nābhîʾ* to be identified as a prophet. This difference in terminology could be the result of historical development in certain historical periods. However, there is clearly an overlap in usage of the term and the identification of a prophet depends more on certain particular characteristics, rather than just the terms which are used in the specific text (Groenewald 2011a:32-33).

Again, it is clearly observed that most of the traditions concerning the prophets as one encounters them in the HB are not necessarily historical descriptions of the actual nature of prophecy but that they are a reflection of

[5] References to Moses are found in such passages as Deut. 33:1; Josh. 14:6; 1 Chron. 23:14; 2 Chron. 30:16; Ezr. 3:2; Ps. 90:1, while references to David are seen in 2 Chron. 8:14; and Neh.12:24, 36 (Groenewald 2011a:32).

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prophecy based on later perceptions (De Jong 2007:323).Thus, the imaginary descriptions of the prophets in the HB should not be taken as an actual depiction of what prophecy really was or how it functioned in Judah and Israel. The following section will focus on the different roles of the prophets as one encounters them in the HB.

2.1.1.2 The Role of the Prophet

The basic role of the OT prophet was as a mediator: bringing direct communication from God to the people. The prophetic office is described in text from the book of Exodus that says: ". . . See, I make you like god to Pharaoh, and your brother Aaron shall be your prophet. You shall speak all that I command you, and your brother Aaron shall speak to Pharaoh that he let the sons of Israel go out of his land" (7:1-2; NASB).[6] In the description assigned to the prophets in Chronicle (2 Chr. 9:29) the prophets are seen as people who held positions such as guardians of imperial collections rather than messengers as the three times parallel indicates: "the records of the prophet Nathan, the prophecy of Ahijah the Shilonite and the visions of the seer Iddo" (Beentjes 2011:37).[7]

It may be that individual prophets had a prophetic office in the cult at the Jerusalem temple along with the priests, especially in connection with individual and congregational service of lamentation (for example, Obadiah and Habakkuk). However, and in general one sees the prophets strongly opposed to the official temple prophets and also the priests (Isa. 28:7ff; Hos.

[6] Eichrodt (1961, 1:326) describes the *nābhî'* as the mediator through whom the divine life made its way into a world otherwise sealed against it.

[7] The noun *nᵉbhû'āh* ("prophecy") appeared for at least two more occasions in the HB namely, 2 Chronicles 15:8, and Nehemiah 6:12, where it has a bearing on the words spoken by someone.

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4:5; Mic. 3:5-8, 11; Jer. 23:11; 26:7f; Ezek. 7:26; 22:25f). Amos strongly rejects attempts at associating him with prophetic groups (7:14) and as a free husbandman stresses his independence over against official temple orders. What distinguished them and at the same time bound them together was the unsought and irresistible tie to a new word of Yahweh affecting all Israel. They had to expect it anew from time to time.[8]

The prophet received his message from God and proclaimed it to the people on God's behalf. That message was received in various ways. One of such ways is through the Spirit of God.[9] The principal and/or standard example of prophetic declaration is conveyed by David. As soon as he opened with the signatory formulae *n^{e}ûm dāwidh ben-yishay,* "the declaration of David son of Jesse," he declared the power and influence of his declaration, "the Spirit of Yahweh spoke though me, His word was upon my tongue; the God of Israel has spoken, the Rock of Israel has said to me . . ." (2 Sam. 23:1-3). Prophesying thus is a sign of the spirit coming upon a person; for example the elders of Israel (Num. 11:25-29), Saul (I Sam.10:6, 10; 19:23), Saul's men (I Sam. 19:20), and ultimately, all people, (Joel 2:28; cf. Isa. 59:21). The spirit inspires prophets, enabling them to speak God's word (e.g. Ezek. 11:5; Mic. 3:8). In Hosea 9:7, prophet is parallel to inspired man (*'îš hārûaḥ* 'man of the spirit').[10]

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[8] In 8:11, Isaiah presents a speech to his disciples, which is to be connected with the commissioning reported in chapter 6: "For the Lord spoke thus to me with his strong hand upon me, and warned me not to walk in the way of this people…" In the absence of a word of Yahweh, Jeremiah after a few observations of his own (28:6ff), must abandon the field to his opponent Hananiah (11); the fresh arrival of a speech of Yahweh has to be awaited (vv.12ff). Jeremiah 42:7 speaks of a ten-day waiting period.

[9] There is a close relationship in the OT between the Spirit of God and prophecy (Lindblom 1962:174-79). The highly visible feature is found in the use of the certain form, *rûaḥ*. There is the unavoidable expressions *rûaḥ'ĕlohim,* "Spirit of God", and *rûaḥ-Yhwh,* "Spirit of Yahewh", in suffixed form in which the pronoun refers to deity (Num. 9:20, 30) (Block 1997:43).

[10] See also Num. 24:2; 2 Sam. 23:2; 2 Chr. 15:1; 20:14; 24:20; Neh. 9:30; Isa. 48:16; Ezek. 2:2;3:24.

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The involvement of *rûaḥ* in prophetic declarations or speeches is reflected in many locations; especially where the influence of *rûaḥ* is connected to the vocal expression of Yahweh. Examples of this phenomenon are found in Ezekiel 2;2, "the Spirit entered me as he spoke to me", Ezekiel 3:24, "the spirit entered me and set me on my feet, and he said to me," and Ezekiel 11:5, "the Spirit of Yahweh fell upon, and he said to me …" The prophets undoubtedly based their messages upon direct and personal encounters with Yahweh at His own initiation, and their authority on *dābhār Yahweh,* 'the word of Yahweh," which came to them almost as an objective concrete entity directly from God (Block 1989:41). Prophets also received revelation through dreams and visions (Num. 12:6; Hos. 12:10),[11] as well as being admitted into the divine council.

Windsor (2003:1) notes,

> A fundamental concern of Israel's prophets is the relationship between God and his people. God establishes this relationship in the form of a covenant. Because Israel is God's elect people, they will be blessed. Yet when they sin, they will be judged. The prophets explore the tension which inevitably arises in Israel's history between blessing and judgment, and in doing so describe the transformation in the meaning of 'the people of God'. The key to this transformation is the idea of 'remnant'.

In his assessment of prophetic activity in Israel after the exile, Barton (1986:272) observes, "the classical prophets were not what the ancient world called prophets; they were individuals without a status, lone geniuses whom any generic title belittles . . ." To him,

> The classical prophets were eccentrics, strange and alarming figures, who broke the mould of accepted beliefs and values but who, in the process, changed those values and altered the national religion into

[11] In some cases, the absence of visions is linked with the absence of prophetic voice (I Sam. 3:1). The young Samuel heard God speak in a vision (I Sam. 3:15).

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> something scarcely paralleled in the ancient world. For postexilic Judaism, [however,] especially in its development from the time of Ezra, the prophets were characters in a book written by the finger of God. Their utterances were not the words of mortal men, but divine oracles . . . (1986:269).

On the contrary, Matthews (2001:21-26) expressed that OT prophets were not strange individuals who plagued the world of the Bible with their visionary or unreliable activities. They were important players in the struggle for survival. The excitement that overpowered these prophetic figures identified them as vehicles for the transmission of the divine will to the human society of their time. Both their deeds and utterances offered the community of humans a fleeting foretaste of the aftermath of the action of their leaders. The Hebrew prophets were influential in that they were tactful and sympathetic in relation to the feelings of others; they understood the insecure and unstable relationship that existed between Yahweh and national leaders, and also the people's responsibility to Yahweh in their covenantal relationship. Thus they could comprehend and transmit the consequences of a singular action of their leaders on their nation in times to come.

Until the eighth century BCE the main prophetic role appears to have been in national affairs. Moses, sometimes described as the 'prophet *par excellence*,'[12]

[12] This is based on Deuteronomy 18:15; 34:10, though his experience at the burning bush (Ex. 3), where he received a message from God to proclaim to the people, also suggests a prophetic role (Ellison 1958:13; Huffmon 2000:63). Van der Toorn (2007:34) calls him, "the prophet of prophets." Achenbach (2011:441) notes that according to Deuteronomy 18:15–20, after the revelation of the Covenant Code and Deuteronomy there had happened a *third revelation* at Mount Horeb, announced by Moses, in addition to the regulations for the organization of justice and priests in Deuteronomy 16:18–17:13; 18:1–8 and in connection with the fictional laws of the king (17:9–20) and laws on divination (18:9–14). This revelation is regarded to be a prophetic oracle, answering the quest for an intermediary by the people (cf. Exod. 20:19; Deut. 5:25; Deut. 18:16). Of all the leaders of Israel, he attained the highest level of intimacy with the God and fulfilled most completely the role and responsibility of a prophet (Freedman 1997:59-60). Albertz (1994:2,477-480) links the emphasis on Moses as the ideal prophet with a post-exilic development of the Deuteronomic movement, which wanted to retain an emphasis of prophecy, but also to subordinate it to Mosaic Law.

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was set apart by the biblical writers in association with the law as being unique among the prophets; thus, the standard by which all others are to be measured. The focal point of difference is that, while Yahweh communicated generally by means of dreams, visions, or auditions, to other prophets, he communicated with Moses face to face (Deut. 34:10-12) or mouth to mouth (Exod. 33:11) and not in a vision, dream or 'riddles' (Auld 1996:40; Achenbach 2011:441-442). Where other prophets only sensed the presence of God, Moses saw his actual form and person (Num. 12:8; cf. Exod. 33:9, 17-23; 34:5-8). Samuel too, was a national leader. Israel's first king, Saul, is described as a prophet (see I Sam. 10:11-12).

During the monarchy, prophets advised, and often confronted and challenged kings. They played an important role at times of national importance, such as political-military crises caused by the threat of an enemy, wars and internal power conflicts (De Jong 2007:342). Before proceeding on a military campaign, a king consulted his prophets (I Kgs. 22:6-7; 2 Kgs. 3:11).[13] A key prophetic task was to counsel and guide the leaders of the nation and to encourage them to walk in God's ways.[14]

There appears however to be a shift in emphasis in the eighth century BCE.[15] Prophets such as Amos, Isaiah, and Jeremiah still had messages from God to

[13] Elisha passed on military intelligence given by God to the king of Israel during his war with Syria (2 Kgs. 6:8-12).

[14] Thus, as well as giving help and advice to the king, Samuel challenged Saul (1 Sam. 13:13); Nathan rebuked David over his sin with Bathsheba (2 Sam. 12:1-14), and Elijah confronted Ahab and Jezebel (I Kgs. 18:16-18; 21:20-24). In some cases the prophets announced the occurrence of a specific disaster, with the aim of averting the disaster by undertaking the right action. In so doing, the prophets were not in opposition to the establishment, but served the interest of the king and nation by revealing otherwise hidden knowledge concerning a threat to the well-being of the nation.

[15] The prophets of the eighth century BCE forward are described as the 'classical' prophets. While their role may differ, it is not necessary to see a clear and significant discontinuity

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deliver to kings and to other national leaders, but their prophetic words were directed more towards the people and to society as a whole. This may be due to the worsening historical crisis facing Israel and Judah. When kings and leaders of the nation failed to maintain godliness, the result was simply impending judgment. Thus, a significant task of the prophets at this moment was to warn the people and call them to repentance. In these ways, the prophets were, essentially, preachers proclaiming God's word to those who would listen. In doing this, they used different rhetorical and dramatic means to attract attention and to drive their message home to their listeners.[16]

These classical prophets, when condemning the political and religious institutions and leaders, they also criticised other prophets and priests, indicating that prophets may also have had an official status as the leader of the nation.[17] Thus this official status may have tempted them to compromise with their paymasters, or to prophesy to please their audience thereby giving the possibility for false prophecy. This has given rise to the consideration of

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between them and earlier prophets (Rendtorff 2005:157-162; Preuss 1996, 2:70-73; Auld 1988:246-48; Lindblom 1962:216-219; Von Rad 1962:26-32).

[16] Sometimes prophets present their message in the form of a parable or allegory. Major Prophets like Isaiah, Jeremiah and Ezekiel use what is sometimes called 'prophetic symbolism': acting out their message in a dramatic manner. For instance, Isaiah went *naked and barefoot* (Isa. 20:2-3) to show the fate of the Egyptians and Cushites at the hands of Assyria; Jeremiah buried a *linen belt*, which, by the time it was recovered, it was completely *ruined and totally useless* in order to demonstrate God's judgment (Jer. 13:1-11); he also smashed a clay jar as part of his message to demonstrate the destruction coming on the nation (Jer. 19:10-13). Ezekiel drew and laid siege to a representation of Jerusalem, and for 390 days he laid down on his left path and on his right for 40 days (Ezek. 4:1-6); and later, he gathered his belongings and dug through the wall of his house (Ez. 12:3-7). Amos (1-2), attracts the attention and support of the people by first condemning Israel's enemies before turning on the Israelites themselves (Routledge 2008:212-213).

[17] (See for example Isa. 28:7; Jer. 2:26; Ezek. 7:26; Mic. 3:11; Neh. 9:32; Zech. 7:1-3). The expression 'prophet of Israel' (Ezek. 13:2), suggest an official position. Apart from Amos 7:14, where there is the reference 'sons of the prophets' or 'company of the prophets' (*běnê hannĕbî'im*); there are no such references in the classical period. This may be due to the fact that all such prophetic groups had become 'official'.

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some prophets as 'true prophets', while others are 'false prophets' (see De Jong 2012:1-30(4)).

2.1.1.3. True and False Prophets

Indeed, differentiating between true and false prophecy was/is very important, but not very straightforward. The critical issue is the source of the prophecy. According to the perspective of the writer of the texts which change in different historical context, the true prophet is called by God and receives his message from God, while false prophets speak on their own authority or the name of other gods.[18] The plural *nᵉbhî'îm* in the prophetic scroll of Jeremiah represents two separate illustrations of prophetic figures. On the one side of the divide are those who are considered to be genuine messengers of Yahweh, those who alert and caution the people but do so fruitlessly. On the other side are those prophets who are considered to be fraudsters, swindling the people that everything will be well with them but do so deceptively (De Jong 2011b:495-496).

However, with respect to prophecy as a historical phenomenon, this division that exists between genuine messengers of Yahweh (i.e. prophets) and fraudsters is rooted in a misconception. The biblical prophetic scrolls depict genuine messengers of Yahweh as hostile and confrontational individuals, who proclaimed the unalterable failure of their nation. This at best is depiction of a scribal trident; a creation of later contemplation on the tragedies that the Israelites suffered and not totally prophecy as a historical reality (De Jong 2012:5; see also, De Jong 2011a:66; Tiemeyer 2005a: 329–350).

[18] This distinction is made in following passages: Ezek. 13:1-12; 22:28. Jer. 29:8-9; Deut. 18:9-14; Mic. 3:5, 11; Isa. 28:7; Zeph. 3:4; Jer. 23:16.

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From the foregoing, it is clear that the prophetic function of encouraging the kings and the people in threatening circumstances is behind the image of the prophets as 'false and deceptive smooth-talkers'. This picture of the false prophet is a caricature of the prophetic function of guarding the safety and well-being of the king and the nation. The prophetic function to remind the addressees of their duties and the criticism of behaviour that poses a threat to the well-being of the state is behind the picture of the prophets as 'Yahweh's servants' warning the people (Groenewald 2011a:39-40).

The prophets are considered to be fraudsters, swindling the people and society (e.g. Isa. 9:14-16; Jer. 23:9-32; Mic. 3:5-7), they are depicted as madmen (2 Kgs. 9:11; Jer. 29:26; Hos. 9:7), denounced as promoters of ungodliness in the community (Jer. 23:15) and considered accountable for the downfall of Jerusalem: "Your prophets have seen for you false and foolish visions; and they have not exposed your iniquity so as to restore you from captivity, but they have seen for you false and misleading oracles" (Lam. 2:14, NASB). Such shortcomings typified Zechariah where the declaration of any young person to be a messenger of Yahweh would seriously be dealt with by his parents to the extent that all further assertions to serve as a messenger of Yahweh would cause shame (Groenewald 2011a:40):

> And it will come about that if anyone still prophesies, then his father and mother who gave birth to him will say to him, 'You shall not live, for you have spoken falsely in the name of the LORD'; and his father and mother who gave birth to him will pierce him through when he prophesies. Also it will come about in that day that the prophets will each be ashamed of his vision when he prophesies, and they will not put on a hairy robe in order to deceive; but he will say, 'I am not a prophet; I am a tiller of the ground, for a man sold me as a slave in my youth' (Zech. 13:3-5, NASB).

There is a very positive view that characterises the prophets as 'servants of Yahweh' (Auld 1996:24). In this characterisation, the prophets work hard to

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convince the people to change their behaviour and conduct; they announce Yahweh's punishment over Judah and Israel and also function as mediators of the law (Groenewald 2011a:41). This clearly indicates a redactional approval (Carroll 1996:41-42; see also De Jong 2007:323; cf. Ben Zvi 2000:8; Dixon 2009:164). These basic characterisations of the prophets: that of the prophet as a deceiving liar and that of the prophet as true servant of Yahweh, give the impression that they generally refer to the prophets (De Jong 2007:332). Those prophets who are depicted as false prophets are thus to be blamed for the disaster and those prophets who are depicted as Yahweh's servants are excused for what had happened. In this context, the disaster was interpreted as the result of constant rejection of the prophets who were sent by Yahweh (De Jong 2011b:496).

There is however, a text in the HB, that in one way or another, seems to connect these two traditions together; namely Deuteronomy 18:9-22 (Lange 2002:311). This text redefines prophecy in the sense that it brings some order to the variety of prophetic images by putting the two descriptions of the *nᵉbhî'îm* under a common denominator. Moses declares 'the word of the Lord' and promises the elevation of a *nābhî'* who will be like him (Deut. 18:15, 18). On the one hand, there will be a 'prophet like Moses', who is the true spokesperson of Yahweh (Deut. 18:15-19) and, on the other hand, there will be a prophetic messenger who communicates by the authority of other deities or who pretends to communicate in the name of Yahweh (Deut. 18:20-22).

2.1.1.4. The message of the Prophets

According to popular explanation (De Jong 2011a: 40), the biblical prophetic books are believed to contain at their literary cores the message of historical prophets. This message is regarded as consisting of genuine, i.e. *ante eventum*,

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- Yahweh's categorical "no" to his own people - prophecy of unconditional and total judgment, and this kind of prophecy is believed to be a unique phenomenon within the world of the ancient Near East. With respect to this explanation, the prophetic message of the eighth-century classical prophets and their seventh- and sixth-century successors represent a singularity, something unparalleled in the ancient world. However, are these texts genuine predictions predating the events to which they refer, or are there other possible interpretations or even preferable? Whereas most scholars[19] hold to the common explanation, some dissenting voices have been heard over the past few decades.

As one has observed and presented, a key function of Israel's prophets was to call the nation back to the ways of God, by challenging political and spiritual leaders, and by addressing the people directly. They are presented by biblical writers as ones who spoke out against immorality, and social injustice, particularly the oppression and exploitation of the weak by the strong.[20] They also condemned the nation's unfaithfulness in turning away from the worship of Yahweh to follow other gods, describing it as spiritual adultery. As a result of the nation's sins, the prophets pronounced coming judgment; though some others point to the ultimate restoration and renewal of the nation and the coming of the kingdom of God (Routledge 2008:215).

[19] The divine "no" is regarded to be a literary-redactional device by Collins (1993:13).

[20] One of the emphases of the prophets is to call people back to the ethics of the covenant faith. Although prophets before Jeremiah made relatively few specific references to Sinaitic covenant, the relationship between God and Israel is a central focus of prophetic preaching. Their theology is deeply rooted in Israel's covenant tradition. Prophet Micah sums up God's requirements for his people: "He has showed you, O man, what is good. And what does the LORD requires of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God" (Mic. 6:8; cf. Hos. 12:6).

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While criticism of contemporary circumstances plays a dominant role in prophecy,[21] even more prominent and characteristic is the prophet's word about the future. The decisive content of all call narratives and visions is not really contemporary sin, but those coming events brought forth by Yahweh. When both elements are not presented as the word of God, then only announcement of the future is; the incitement of the hearers is never given alone (cf. Am. 3:9-11; 4:1-3; Isa. 5:8-10; Mic. 2:1-5) (Wolff 1987:19).

Truly, the prophets' messages concern wholly and exclusively their own present age, and point to the past or to the future only insofar as these are relevant for the present. Also the eschatological prophets from the exile onward proclaimed a new salvation in the immediate future and inspired the present with courage to await it (Wolff 1987:20-22). The prophets stand over against traditional piety and theology which felt certain of salvation. They behold the deep sin of man against God which cannot be removed by a proclamation of salvation because there is no salvation (Jer. 6 14).

The prophet himself must learn that God will not only temporarily punish, as it was believed, but that he must destroy (Isa. 6 11). Therefore the prophets see man involved in a fundamental situation of disaster with a decisive "either-or," as Jeremiah 22 1-5 formulates for the kings of Judah and Isaiah 1 19-20 for all Israel. Either justice or righteousness will be done and salvation follow, or they will not be done, and disaster will ensue. Since, however, sin is

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[21] As observed by Greonewald (2011:33), the prophetic books contain individuals who are portrayed as delivering prophecies of judgment against a hostile establishment and that this portrayal of the image of Yahweh's real spokespersons, who prophesy of doom against an immoral establishment, is a textual portrayal that was included in later layers during the different developmental stages of these books. Thus Gottwald (1996:139) expressed that these varieties and nuances of prophetic ideology appear to be rooted firmly in the social and historical circumstances of their specific backgrounds and the groups' interests with which they identify and for which they speak, as well as they oppose.

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predominant, then the "either-or" means in effect: either the just destruction because of sin or the two possibilities of redemption by turning from the false path back to God or by being redeemed by God. Thus the writer of Jeremiah sums up his prophetic activity of twenty three years:

> For twenty-three years... I have spoken persistently to you, ... 'Turn now, every one of you, from his evil way and wrong doings, and dwell in the land which the Lord has given to you and your fathers from of old and forever . . .' (Jer. 25 3, 5).

This clearly indicates that the true end of prophecy was and is to turn the sinful man of that day to repentance or redemption and thereby to effect the salvation of lost man. It is precisely this that constitutes the importance of the prophets' messages for the present day (Fohrer 1961:319).

2.1.2. Nature and Development of Prophecy

Old Testament prophecy as believed does not really exist. It is neither a homogenous nor an isomorphic phenomenon. It has gone through different phases of development and its roots were in different sources. Various interest groups, as well as diverse societal associations and classes, were responsible for its development (Groenewald 2011a:30). Groenewald steps further by stating that:

> It is essential for readers to grasp the literary character of the prophetic books in the HB in order to discern their respective understandings of the significance of Judah's and Israel's relationship with Yahweh and the events they portray. While predictions of the future often appear in the prophetic books…they do not exhaust the preaching of the prophets in the HB. Much of their recorded proclamations, indeed by far the majority, dealt with explanation of the past and present events and exhortations for the people to live righteously, priests to teach properly, and rulers and judges to administer justice fairly (Groenewald 2011a:30).

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Since there has been no scholarly consensus on the questions of the nature and social functions of Israelite prophecy, and each new generation tends to reinterpret the message of the prophets differently (Steck 2000:7). This lack of scholarly consensus is particularly noticeable in the case of the early Israelite prophets, these individuals who prophesied before the time of Amos. Thus one can describe prophetic activity in Israel in its early history as a "riddle wrapped in a mystery" (Wilson 1987:1).

De Jong (2011a:51) in line with other contributors like Barstad (1993:10-32); Nissinen (2009:103-130), notes that there is no direct evidence for answering the question of what early Israelite prophetic activity looked like. He starts off with the hypothesis that in ancient Israel and Judah, prophetic activity was basically—i.e. with regard to its meaning and function, but not in its forms and formula—similar to prophecy elsewhere in the ancient Near East.[22]

To him, prophetic activity in the ancient Near East was not an isolated phenomenon, but part of a broader, and well-documented system of divination. Whereas divination took on quite different forms (depending on current techniques, methods, customs, circumstances, etc.) it contained essential 'shared characteristics', such as its support of the stability of the state. Since Israel and Judah, in the period of our interest, also were states, with a king, temple(s), and a social structure, the hypothesis that divination

[22] It was one form of divination among many (De Villiers 2011:14-17; De Jong, 2007:287-318; Nissinen 2004:21-22). Prophets, like other diviners, functioned as religious specialists. Through their oracles, prophets encouraged in times of emergency and gave support in times of trouble. The gods also used prophets to present their claims. In their role as guardians of the well-being of the state, which they shared with the other diviners, prophets could harshly denounce persons whom they perceived as posing a threat to the well-being of the state. A final function of the prophets to be mentioned was to announce the occurrence of disasters planned by the gods, with the purpose of averting them. Diviners were to ascertain whether an unfavorable consequence was foreshadowed, so that if this were the case it could be averted. See Maul (1999: 123-129) and for this aspect of prophecy in the context of divination, Tiemeyer (2005a: 329-350).

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(whatever form it took) functioned essentially in a similar way, makes sense. As far as one grants the Israelites and Judeans a 'normal political state', one should expect divination, and hence prophecy, to have functioned in a 'normal way'. Following this hypothesis, one would expect prophecy in Israel and Judah to have included also some of the following common ingredients:

> (1) Prophecy of encouragement in threatening situations (2) prophetic criticism directed against specific addressees concerning specific issues (3) denouncement of specific enemies (external and internal) (4) warnings and threats aiming to avert the calamities announced (De Jong 2011a:52).

However, apart from these resemblances, the biblical texts also contain decisive differences from the picture of prophecy as drawn above. These differences according to De Jong (2011a:52-53) can be understood as a revisionary perspective on the 'normal prophetic activity'. The revisionary perspective involved a redefinition of the function of the prophets and of the meaning of prophecy in its various aspects. First, encouragement is presented as no longer valid. Prophecy of encouragement is depicted as being superseded, the message of encouragement is associated with deceitful prophets, the encouragement is turned upside down: whereas God in the past promised to act against the enemies of his people (encouraging), God now acts against his own people and thus encouragement is postponed: only after severe punishment may good fortune be possible again.

Second, criticism is generalised. In this regard, specific addressees become general addressees (society, the people as a whole) and as such, criticism of specific flaws becomes accusation of general evil and sinfulness. Third, denouncement of the enemies is generalised. Instead of specific enemies, society as a whole is denounced as 'the enemy' to be destroyed and fourth

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warnings and threats have lost their averting aim. Warning and threats have become announcements of total and irreversible punishment. Here, the spokesmen of Yahweh are exonerated. The coming of disaster is not their fault; it is not due to their failure to avert them. Instead it is claimed that the disasters are the will of God and the fault of stubborn and wicked people (De Jong 2011a:53-4).

Prophetic announcements as indicated in the texts were envisioned for a specific period in history as a cautionary measure, an admonishment, and reassurance. The prophets as servants of the deities had their primary obligation towards the deities. As the deities' spokespersons, they had it as it were a responsibility to make declarations on behalf of the deities they represent. They may well criticise the status quo and go against the wishes of the king (De Villiers 2011:13-14, 24; cf. De Jong 2007:312-313). Thus prophets as the mouthpiece of Yahweh possess "the gift of expounding scripture, speaking and preaching; and not only that, but also predicting future events" (Nissinen 2004:19). Fundamentally, as a process of divine-human communication, prophecy consists of several elements namely, "the divine sender of the message; the message (the 'revelation'); the transmitter of the message (the prophet); and the recipient of the message" (Nissinen 2004:20). If these essential components are taken seriously, one can say "there can be no prophecy without God (or a deity), no prophecy without a message and audience, and finally, no prophecy without a prophet" (Nissinen 2004:20).

Indeed, the early history of prophecy in Israel is complex (Wilson 1987: 13). The exact words of the prophetic characters scarcely endured the period of their declaration. The prophetic words themselves could not survive or are as lost just as the original prophets themselves (De Villiers 2011:26). To reiterate anew the statement of Steck:

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> If the original prophets can only be encountered in the received transmission of prophetic books, the one must begin with the investigation of these received sources, and suspend the question of the original prophet. One must first utilize the image that these sources offer and the lines of origin that they suggest. Until the opposite can be demonstrated, one must also assume that the goals of shaping material belong to the process of transmitting the books, whether that material is independent material, material related to the book or to the transmission, or material that provides meaning (2000:10).

However, the main difference of opinion between the two camps of synchronic (the validity of the text) and diachronic (the origin and the development of the existing end text) hermeneutical methodology to the text, does not lie in the question as to whether biblical texts originated historically or not, but rather to what extent and to what degree the origin of the verse, the colon and semi-colon can be accurately retraced and made plausible over the distance of more than 2000 years. Whatever decision one may take, the historical dimension remains a constitutive part of scholarly exegesis and of academic theology (Berges 2010:550).

Thus just as contemporary readers and hearers of the prophetic scripts all have their individual cultural and historical preconceptions of what is receptive-hermeneutically of significance, so also do the production hermeneutic preconditions and circumstances of the initial authors and readers form an integral part of the business of interpretation (Berges 2010:551; Middlemas 2011:141). As one takes a closer look at the prophetic books he/she sees that, "each prophetic book presents itself as a document about a particular prophet, written by someone else looking back on the prophet from a (short or long) historical distance" (Floyd 2008:222).

The prophet at the beginning of tradition and the question of the development of this tradition into the final shape of the books are beset today

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as they were at the beginning with irritating uncertainty. The following questions are more open in the area of historical inquiry that allows the prophetic books to be what they are-texts of antiquity: by whom, when what, and in what context was something first put into words? What experimental framework takes effect and what original meaning is connected with the current process of formulation and transmission as the books develop? One must inquire into the self-presentation of the prophetic documents that stem from a time that does not yet know historical inquiry in ones sense (see Steck 2000:6-7).

2.1.3. Overview of the Prophetic Books

Although Israel always had prophets, only a handful of their prophecies were recorded. Such presentation of prophetic statements recorded as a document or a scroll were in time gathered in a special section of the OT. Thus according to Ben Zvi (2009:73),[23]

> There are prophetic books and there are written representations of prophecies uttered by living prophets that were produced not long after their proclamation because they were deemed relevant to the immediate concerns of the political centre, such as those attested in Mari[24] and neo-Assyrian empire.[25]

Scholars view a prophetic book as a repository of utterances by the prophet named at the outset, even if those are entrusted with additions that obscure

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[23]See, Van der Toorn (2000a:219-234) and Nissinen (2000:235-237).

[24] While prophetic activity was a seen to be a well-known fact throughout the ancient Near East, the majority of data for prophetic corpus emanates from two important areas with Mari as the main site. Most of the texts from this area were discovered in the royal archive - dated from around the 18th century BCE - perhaps less, to the final decade of about 1775-1761, during the reign of Zimri Lim (De Villiers 2011:14-15).

[25] The Assyrian prophecies date from around the 7th century BCE to the period of influence of the kings of Esarhaddon (681-669BCE) and Ashurbanipal (669-631 BCE), and thus coinciding with the reigns of Manasseh and Josiah king of Judah (De Villiers 2011:14-15; cf. De Jong 2007:171).

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their meanings. In line with an assumption that primitive cultures were oral rather than literate, in addition with a belief that poetry was the primal form of oral expression, biblical scholars tend to believe that prophets must have spoken poetry. They thus posited that the words of the prophets stood at the core of an onion-like structure whose layers (later editors' expansions) could be peeled away to reveal the pristine oracles (Troxel 2012:4).

With respect to the ancient self-presentation of the prophetic books, everything is unambiguous. Self-presentation identifies the statements of the book with the prophetic figure. The prophet is provided in the superimposition of a relatively lengthy process of tradition that may have played a more or less relative role. The process results in prophetic writing. This situation implies that the book stands in front of the prophet and to find the prophet, one must first go through the book (Steck 2000:7).

In Jewish tradition the prophets appear between the Historical and Wisdom books. In Christian Bibles, the prophetic books are at the end of the OT. The Prophets embrace two collections: the former prophets; Joshua, Judges, I and 2 Samuel, 1 and 2 Kings and the latter prophets; heading the list are the "major prophets" each of which consumed one scroll and following the major is twelve which could fit on a single scroll- called, for that reason, "the Book of the Twelve" – and earned the moniker "the minor prophets" (Troxel 2012: 3). These books do not appear in chronological order. By arranging them in proper chronological sequence, one can "begin at the beginning" and follow the development of the prophets' thought in an orderly fashion. In this list, the Major Prophets are identified by capital letters.[26]

[26] Murphy (1995:19-20), Amos (750 BC), Hosea (760-734), ISAIAH (736-700), Micah (740-700), Zephaniah (631-609), JEREMIAH (627-586), Nahum (612), Habakkuk (605), EZEKIEL (598-538), 2ND ISAIAH (586-538), Haggai (520), Zechariah (520), Malachi (450), Obadiah (450) Joel (?), DANIEL (150), Jonah (uncertain)

2.1.3.1. The Concept of Prophetic Books

There is no gainsaying that fact that there are prophets and there are prophetic books. While there are Historical prophets who played important roles in ancient cultures, with the inclusion of ancient Israel and Judah, prophetic books are a quite a different type of "social product" than flesh and blood prophets (Ben Zvi 2009:73). According to Steck (2000:9-10), a prophetic book or writing presents a literary image of a prophet. This literary image stands before the aesthetically oriented search for the image of a brilliant, creative, original prophetic personality. This literary figure stands again in front of the kerygmatically oriented search for the image of a theologically innovative preacher figure. This image could look different from the original prophetic figure.

The prophetic book as a literally genre is a clear manifestation of the cognitive prototype of the prophetic book, though at a slightly different level. The category of Israelite prophetic books is a subcategory within that of Israelite authoritative books. This description brings to the forefront that these books being discussed were produced only within a particular ancient Near Eastern society that identified itself, theologically and ideologically as Israel. This is to say: they were produced in and for ancient Israelites as well as to deal primarily with Israel and its deity. Thus, they can be categorised as a sub-set of ancient Israelite, self-contained books that claim association with the prophetic character of the past and are presented to the intended and primary re-readerships as Yahweh's word (Ben Zvi 2009:74).

Each prophetic book is associated with a prophetic personage, and no prophetic book is associated with more than one prophetic personage. (Ben Zvi 2003:272-82). The prophetic books are certainly about hope. The books

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were a strategy for developing, shaping and, above all, co-opting weighty memories of the past. They construed memories of a shared past, primarily the monarchic past and its immediate aftermath. Thus they contributed to the social cohesion and a sense of self-identity among the readers since the past was about "them" (Ben Zvi 2009:74-75).

Furthermore, Ben Zvi (2010:9) notes:

> Within the authoritative repertoire of the Yehudite literati the prophetic books are construed as instances of 'the Word of God,' and therefore the textually reported oracles they contain are contextualized and given 'proper' meaning according to their 'Sitz im Buch.' Conversely, within this discourse, YHWH's Word becomes identified with a written text. Significantly, the construed written divine word as it was reread by the literati created worlds, including mental images of temples that could not be destroyed by flames or be affected by any disorder brought about by actual, remembered, or imagined, past or future, historical events. The prophetic books imply and advance the central metaphor of God as a teacher of Israel and a construction of the latter as a text-centered Israel, which is ideologically conceived as an Israel centered on YHWH and YHWH's teachings. Within this system, those who have access to the teachings of the deity, that is, those who can access documents such as the prophetic scrolls and teach Israel about their contents, become, as it were, representatives of that deity.[27]

The prophetic collections contain first-person revelations from Yahweh about correct ways to behave in life and the consequences for failing to do so. Thus like the Torah, the prophetic corpus provides instruction from the deity himself about the proper way a member of the *qᵉhal yisrā'ēl*, i.e. a practitioner of an emerging monotheistic Judaism, is to behave and the consequences of such action (Edelman 2009: 41). Thus these collections emphasise,

> Emphasize human agency and admonish Israel to learn the didactic lessons shaped by these books, which are presented as YHWH's teachings to Israel, and to follow the latter. At the same time they de-

[27] See Römer (2000: 207-225), Liss (2006:143), and Ben Zvi (2008:43–57).

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> emphasize human agency in the larger context of human–divine relationship, in part to strengthen the sense of unconditional hope for the (long-term) future. They assume and communicate a sense that there is something akin to social entropy, that is, Israel tends to sin, and constant effort is required to teach and socialize Israel at least until utopia is achieved (Ben Zvi 2010:10).

The prophetic books grapple with foundational theological questions of evil and righteousness. These books attempt to come to grips with the tragedies posed by the Babylonian invasion of Jerusalem and the Temple, as well as the prospects for the restoration of both in the aftermath of the Babylonian exile. Of course, the very long history of the prophetic books "c.500years" (which certainly does not apply to all prophetic books) indicates that such questions were not only limited to the Babylonian exile and the post-exilic restoration (Groenewald 2011a: 43; Sweeney 2005:15). In her judgment, O'Brien (2008: xiii), states that the prophetic books provide some of the Bible's most challenging metaphors. These metaphors no doubt, provide a productive atmosphere for contemporary biblical scholars' engagement with questions related to the literary confusion within the prophetic texts (cf. Carroll 1989: 208)

2.1.3.2. Identification of the Socio-Historical Setting

Any attempt to explore the socio-historical setting of Israelite prophecy must take into account the nature of available evidence. In the light of the limited amount of resources available for writing a history of early Israelite prophecy, it is not astonishing to see scholars beginning their work with a picture of prophecy drawn from prophetic documents or scrolls and then tried to relate this picture to the narrative accounts of earlier prophetic activity. These attempts have been based either on the subject matter of the prophetic

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message or on the character and setting of prophetic activity (Wilson 1987:2-3).

Edelman (2009:41) notes that the creators of prophetic books selected the spokesmen for Yahweh from a large corpus of materials that would have existed based on their prediction of the fall of Jerusalem, Judah or Israel or their prediction of divine punishment for unacceptable acts. It is likely that records of oracles, omens, visions, dreams and communication received by ecstatic would have been filed away in temple libraries, in royal archives particularly when they involved the king (see De Villiers 2011:16 cf. De Jong 2007:183), and some exemplars also perhaps would have been kept in collections that functioned like Houses of life, for instruction. She concludes that the temple complex at Bethel would have been a likely source for the materials in Hosea, Amos, and some of Elijah and Elisha traditions. The Neo-Babylonians would have transferred to Mizpah, the new provincial seat, records from the temple and palace in Jerusalem before its destruction. Materials underlying other prophetic collections most likely came from one or more of these sources (see Lange 2006:248-275 (256-259); Ellis 1989:134-140).[28]

It is therefore logical to assume, then, that the creators of individual prophetic books accessed the preserved archives, chose oracles, omens, visions, dreams and communication received by various specialties of priestly personnel that suited their larger purposes, and then expanded them to make them especially relevant to their own historical circumstances and ideology. Van der Toorn (2007: 173) contends that the books of the prophets, date from the Persian and early Hellenistic periods. Although, there is solid evidence to

[28] Ellis (1989:134-140) for instance, states that prophetic documents were preserved in the Mari Kingdom in palace archives in Mari and in temple archives like that of Kititum Temple in Ishchali.

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show that written collections of prophetic oracles were already in existence in the period of the monarchy, in the seventh and sixth centuries BCE.

In his attempt to reconstruct the historical setting of the present form of the prophetic book and the related literary genre of the prophetic book Ben Zvi (2009: 78-79) notes that such an effort must include spatial, social and temporal dimensions. According to him, the traditional triad of pre-exilic, exilic and post-exilic periods, which is woefully inadequate for so many reasons, should be replaced by categories such as: (a) the social and political centre of late monarchic Judah; (b) the centre of neo-Babylonian Yehud, which was located in Benjamin at Mizpah; (c) Jerusalem-centred groups in Early Persian Yehud that existed prior to the time in which Jerusalem became the social, political economic and religious heart of Judah; (d) Jerusalem centred group in late Persian Yehud, when Jerusalem was its capital and main centre; (e) inhabitants in rural areas in Babylonia who considered Judah their homeland and whose social organisation followed "ethno-religious" lines; and (f) the court of exiled king Jehoiachin in Babylon.

The latest possible setting for the concept is marked by the dates of the books of Chronicles[29] and Jonah, both likely from the late Persian period. Jonah is a meta-prophetic book, and as such it implies both an authorship and intended readership well aware of what a prophetic book is supposed to be. Chronicles quote or allude to a number of prophetic texts and seems to have considered

[29] There has been considerable debate regarding the time of the composition of the book of Chronicles with the current tendency of dating it either to the late Persian or the very beginning of the Hellenistic period (which is the fourth century BCE). Among recent contenders are; Klein (2006:13-17); Knoppers (2004:101-117); Kalimi (2005:41-65); Peltonen (2001:225-271). Ben Zvi (2009:89) however noted that although there is clear evidence for Greek cultural influence in Yehud during the Persian period as could be seen from coins, from the perspective of the local population, the real beginning of the "Hellenistic period" that marked the shift in Yehud from one political, social and economic system to a substantially different one is not to be associated with Alexander's conquest.

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the prophetic books among its authoritative texts Thus, the existence of an authoritative prophetic book predated the composition of both Chronicles and Jonah and, therefore, needs to be assigned prior to the late Persian period. This being so, only four social groups remain as potential candidates for the historical setting of the concept of a prophetic book as represented by 15 books now present in the HB: (a) neo-Babylonian Judah (i.e., 586-538 BCE); early Persian Yehud (as opposed to late Persian Yehud represented by Chronicles); (c) Judeans living in the Diaspora, particularly in Babylonia, from 586-332 BCE; and the court of exiled king Jehoiachin in Babylon (Ben Zvi 2009:79).

However, in his summation he states that it is far more probable that the setting of the prototype of what a prophetic book is, and likely all prophetic books in their present form, would have been in Yehud than in any diasporic setting in Babylonia. Thus, only two of the six historical settings may serve as a likely background for the conceptual crystallisation of the genre of prophetic literature and the production of most of the prophetic books: the neo-Babylonian province of Yehud or Yehud in the early Persian period (that is, the period before Chronicles and Jonah). There is a significant element of material and demographic continuity between these two scenarios but also a substantial difference: the presence of the temple in Jerusalem, even if it were small and "incipient", and the accompanying development of Jerusalem as a city around the temple, even relatively minor from a demographic viewpoint (Ben Zvi 2009:83).

To him, a number of considerations suggest that the early Persian period is the most likely setting for the development of the prototype of what a prophetic book should be and of the corpora of prophetic books as we know them. Five of these considerations are:

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> (a) no prophetic character has been portrayed in this literature as growing out of the neo-Babylonian community in Yehud, particularly from Mizpah or Bethel, which were two of its most important centres; (b) the (Jerusalem) temple-centredness (of most) of these texts; (c) the relatively anti-Benjaminate tendencies that appear in some of these books (and other biblical literature), which fits a period in which there was some discursive, ideological tension between a temple leadership in Jerusalem and the political, economic and demographic centre of Yehud in the land of Benjamin; (d) the social and financial infrastructure provided by a temple, along with the need to educate and support its cadres; and (e) the need to influence elite opinion through institutional and ideological means one may reasonably associate with an incipient temple whose ideology set it at the "centre of the world" but which had no lands for revenue, faced competing claims among Yhwhists in Yehud and neighboring areas, and was located in the traditional centre of the past but still in a political and marginal area even within Yehud (Ben Zvi 2009: 82-83).

The conclusion can be drawn by stating here that while prehistory of prophetic activity in Israel is such a complex one, Israelite prophecy and the prophetic books are eminently historical in setting and content.

2.1.3.3. Materials within the Prophetic Collections

The following characterisations, categorisations, descriptions, or formulae appear within the prophetic collections: Visions (*ḥāzôn*), word or matter (*dābhār*), elevated matter (*māśśā'*), utterance or whispering (*n^{e}'um*), hymn of petition (*t^{e}pillāh*), woe (*hôy*), and "in that day." These are not evenly distributed among all prophetic books; some are more favoured in certain collections than others (Edelman 2009: 43). For example, *t^{e}pillāh* prayer or petition only occurs in single time as a category in Habakkuk 3:1, even though the form appears in a more general sense in Isaiah.[30]

[30] Isaiah (as a noun: 1:15; 37:4; 56:7; as a verb: 16:3, 12; 18:7; 37:15, 21; 38:2; 44:7) and Jeremiah (as a noun: 7:16; 11:4; as a verb: 7:16; 11:14; 14:11; 29:7, 12). It is a form more typical of the psalms (4:2; 5:3; 6:10; 17:1; 32:6; 35:13; 39:13; 42:9; 54:4; 55:2; 61:2; 65:3; 66:19,20; 69:14; 72:15;

The noun *ḥāzôn*, "vision" is used in the prophetic corpus such as, Habakkuk (2:2, 3), Hosea (12:11), Micah (3:6), Obadiah (1), Nahum (1:1). Elsewhere, it occurs in Proverbs (29:18), Lamentations (2:9), and Daniel (1:17; 8:1-2, 13, 15, 17 26; 9:21, 24; 10:14; 11:14). Another term, *ḥāzzûth*, occurs three times in Isaiah (21:2; 28:18; 29:11), twice in Daniel (8:5, 8), and once in 2 Chronicles (9:29), while *ḥāzzāyôn* is used in Isaiah (22:1, 5), Joel (3:1), and Zachariah (10:2). Outside the prophetic books, it is found in 2 Samuel (7:17) and in Job (20:8; 33:15).

The verb *ḥāzah* is also used in the prophetic books: Isaiah (1:1; 2:1; 13:1; 26:11; 30:10; 33:17, 20; 47:13; 48:6; 57:8), Ezekiel (12:27; 13:6-9, 16, 23; 18:21; 21:34; 22:28; 24:11), Amos (1:1), Micah (1:1; 4:11), Habakkuk (1:1) and Zachariah (10:2) and elsewhere in other books. The profession of the visionary, the *ḥōzeh*, is recorded to have been practiced by Gad (2 Sam. 24:11; 1Chron. 21:9; 29:25, 29), Iddo (2 Chron. 19:2), Asaph (2 Chron. 29:30), as well as Dothan (2 Chron. 13:15). Three of these are identified as holding the office of *ḥōzeh* of the king (Gad, Heman and Dothan), raising the question as to whether all of them might not have held this important office. Amos is described as a *ḥōzeh* in 7:12, and he does not deny that title, only the claim that he engages in ecstatic behaviour (verb nābhā').

Indeed all the Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek terms that are translated "vision" in the modern versions of the Bible are terms that primarily denote "appearance" or "sight" in contexts that refer to normal visual perception. Only the context reveals when the "vision" refers to a psychological or revelatory experience in which the subject privately "sees" that which is not physically present to ordinary unaided sense perception (Aune 1988:993). It

80:5; 84:9; 86:1,6; 88:3; 90:1; 102:1,2,18; 106:30; 109:4,7; 141:2; 142:1; 143:1). It also occurs in 2 Samuel (7:27) 1 Kings (8:28) and other passages (Edelman 2009:43).

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is noted, "in prophetism . . . the mystery of the vision is the mystery of the word - the mystery of God's disclosure of himself and of the meaning of history in the light of his effective impingement upon it, his reign over it, and his purpose ultimately to redeem all history" (Napier 1982:791). Some formal features characterise most of these types of vision, including first-person narration, an indication of the setting of the vision, i.e. the narrative framework of the visionary experience, the presentation of the vision itself, and finally the reaction of the prophet to the vision. Aune (1988:994) describes a few of these types:

Prophetic Call Narratives: These revelatory visions exist in two forms: the narrative form, which consists of a dialogue between the prophet and Yahweh (Jer. 1:4-10; Exod.3:1-12; Jug. 6:11-17) and the throne theophany type, which includes a vision of the heavenly throne of Yahweh (1 Kgs. 22:19-22; Isa. 6:1-13; Ezek. 1:1-3).

For Shalom-Guy (2011:2-3), the common relevant, fundamental, and syntactical characteristics of the call account of Moses and Gideon (Exod 3:1–15; Jug. 6:11–24) do not call for any foreword, nonetheless that identification of the stories as pertaining to a common fictional convention – "a biblical 'type-scene' of appointment and investiture." According to her, a number of components basic to appointment and investiture narratives are recognised by biblical scholars. These include:

> (1) The divine confrontation; (2) the introductory word; (3) the commission; (4) the objection; (5) the reassurance; and (6) the sign. All of these elements appear in the Gideon and Moses narratives. Other biblical call narratives, such as those of Joshua, Samuel, and Elisha, and of Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel, also broadly fit the above model, but, by comparison, the Gideon and Moses ones exhibit an outstanding level of shared topical-linguistic features (Shalom-Guy 2011:3-9).

Symbolic Dream Vision: These are visionary experiences that occur at night and are closely associated with dreams; what is seen in the vision requires interpretation, usually provided by an interpreting angel (Dan. 7-8; Ezek. 11-12).

Reports of Vision: These are first-person nonfictional narratives of what a prophet sees and/or hears through extra-sensory observation or perception (2 Kgs. 8:7-15; Ezek. 14:20; Jer. 38:21ff). They consist of two main structural elements: the announcement of the vision and the vision sequence itself, often introduced with the term "behold." Often, a question-and-answer dialogue is based on a visionary image (Am. 7:7f; 8:1f; Jer. 1:11-14; Zech. 5:1-4).

Oracles of Assurance: This is also called salvation, dream or vision oracles. They represent a type of revelatory vision experience found in the OT, and elsewhere in the NT and Greco-Roman world. They consist of a narrative setting, an admonition pronounced by a supernatural revealer introduced with stereotyped phrases such as "fear not" or "have courage", and a promise that provides grounds for the admonition (2 Chron. 20:14ff; 1 Sam. 23: 4; 24: 5; 26: 8, Jug. 7: 7; 1 Kgs. 20: 13, 28).[31] The idea of God going out to war with the Israelites and marching at their side and saving them from the enemy's multitudes is very common in the Bible, and especially instructive in this context are the military exhortations in Exodus 14:13; Deuteronomy 7: 17 ff.; 20: 1-4; 31: 1-8, etc. The promise of scattering the enemy's troops is also

[31] A full account of an oracle given in the precincts of the temple by a person who was seized by the spirit of God is found in 2 Chronicles 20: 14 ff. At the time of war with the Ammonites and Moabites, Jehoshaphat and the people gathered in the temple for prayer, and all of a sudden a Levite by the name of Yahziel was seized by the spirit of God in the midst of the assembly *hāyᵉthāʰ ʾālāyw rûaḥ yhwh bᵉthôkh hakhkhāhāl*; he said . . . "Thus said the Lord: Have no fear, do not be dismayed by the great multitude, for the battle is in God's hands ... Go down to them tomorrow ... you will find them at the end of the valley ... stand firm and wait and you will see the deliverance". The next morning we hear Jehoshaphat saying to the people: "have faith in your God ..., in his prophets and you will prosper."

characteristic of the ancient salvation oracles of the holy war for example in Numbers 10: 35: *qûmāʰ yhwh weyāputsû ʾōybheʸkhā weyānusû meśanʾeʸkhā miphphāneʸkhā* "Stand up, O Lord, may your enemies be scattered" (cp. Ps. 68: 2).

Theophanies and Epiphanies: This form consists primarily in the description of a divinity or supernatural being (Exod. 19; Mic. 1:3f; Hab. 3:3-6) and otherworldly journeys (Rev. 4:1-22:6).

Prophetic utterances were often called *dābhār* ("word") of God, an "oracle" or "utterance" *neum* of Yahweh. The phrase *wayehî dhebhar–yhwh ʾēlay* ("and the word of the Lord came to me") appears several times in the Old Testament as an official formulae for prophetic declaration (Smith 1988:999). The *māśśāʾ* is such a technical term found in the prophetic corpus of Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Habakkuk, Nahum, Zechariah and Malachi. Etymologically,[32] it means "burden" in some contexts (Num. 4:24; Dt. 1:12), and it is believed that *oracle* is the "burden" shouldered by a prophet and a burden set on the people by the divine utterance. Jeremiah plays off this meaning when the people came to him to ask what the *māśśāʾ* (oracle) of the Lord is, he responds by telling them that they are the *māśśāʾ* (burden) of the Lord (Jer. 23:33-40).

In the light of the tentative nature of the etymological explanations of the meaning of *māśśāʾ*, some scholars have attempted to arrive at a definition of the term by other means. Weis, (1986 cited in Wilson 2009:335-336) for

[32] It is connected with the verb *nāshāʾ* "to lift, carry" or "that which rises" which is used in the expression "to lift up the voice" (Gen. 21:16; Jer. 2:4; 2 Sam. 3:32). It has been connected with the use in a number of Mari texts of the verb *tēbum*, "to rise"; to describe a prophet's "rising up" to speak at a public festival (Fleming 2004:54). It is linked to a Mari text that describes the "rising" of a prophet in the temple before the statue of the god Dagan, making himself an extension of the god before speaking the direct words of the deity (Van der Toorn 2000b:80-82). According to this understanding, an oracle is that which is spoken by the prophets when they "lift their voice."

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example isolates a three-part rhetorical pattern in oracles that bear the title *māśśā'*: an assertion is made about God's involvement in a particular set of events, the *māśśā'* clarifies a previously given prophecy and applies it to the current situation and the *māśśā'* informs the hearers of appropriate responses to the current situation. He then proposes that *māśśā'* be understood as a prophetic reinterpretation of a prior divine message. Its function is to clarify a prophecy that has been previously given or apply an older message to a new situation.

It is frequently used as a title for prophetic speeches and collections for prophetic sayings. It does not seem to refer to a particular form-critical genre of prophetic speech,[33] as oracles designated by this term take a variety of forms. It is used in the superscription of three prophetic books as a designation for the entire collection of that prophet's oracles (Nah. 1:1; Hab. 1:1; Mal. 1:1). It is also used for two appendixes in Zechariah (9:1; 12:1). Its occurrence in Proverbs 30:1; 31:1 is problematic (Wilson 2009:336).

The term translated oracle is associated with *n^{e}um* (Num. 24:4; 2 Sam. 23:1). The meaning "to groan", "to sigh", based on the Arabic parallel, has been suggested (BDB 1979:133), but this has been rejected in support of the meaning "to speak" or "to utter" (Koehler, Baumgartner, et al. 1995:657).[34] The term means "utterance" and is frequently used in direct quotations to indicate who is speaking (Num. 14:28; Isa. 14:22). It is used to describe the inspired speech of the seer Balaam in Number 24:3, 15. In prophetic speech, its usage is parallel to the expression "thus says the Lord." It is not intended as a

[33] For an argument that it represents a type of prophetic book, see Floyd (2002:422). He only examines the uses of the term in the book of the twelve.

[34] This stance is also adopted by Eising (1998:109-13).

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designation for a type of oracle, as it is used in non-prophetic contexts (2 Sam. 23:1; Prov. 30:1; Wilson 2009: 335-336).

In the light of this background understanding of prophet, prophetic books and prophecy, the next section of the study focuses on prophecy as it relates to eschatology and then will concludes with Malachi's eschatological categories.

2.2. *OLD TESTAMENT PROPHETIC ESCHATOLOGY*

Prophetic literature that was composed after the return from the Babylonian exile has been the subject of lively scholarly debate in the last half century. Much of this debate centred on the relationship between prophecy and apocalypticism, or between prophetic and apocalyptic literature (Finitsis 2011:5). While the post-exilic period is seen as the transitional period par excellence between Biblical Israel and early Judaism, it is more importantly, the time when prophecy undergoes a series of prominent changes, when some of the novel traits that turn up for the first time in prophetic books become apocalyptic hallmarks. Again, there was the fact that the shared traits occur primarily in post-exilic prophetic passages with eschatological content.

In this regard, post-exilic prophecy was regarded as the grey area between prophecy and apocalypticism, and eschatology was considered their point of contact (Finitsis 2011:6). In his attempt to create a distinction between prophetic eschatology and apocalyptic eschatology, Hanson (1979:11-12) writes:

> Prophetic eschatology we define as a religious perspective which focuses on the prophetic announcement to the nation of the divine plans for Israel and the world which the prophet has witnessed unfolding in the divine council and which he translates into the terms of plain history, real politics, and human instrumentality; that is the

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> prophet interprets for the king and people how the plans of the divine council will be effected within the context of their nation's history and the history of the world. Apocalyptic eschatology we define as a religious perspective which focuses on the disclosure (usually esoteric in nature) to the elect of the cosmic vision of Yahweh's sovereignty - especially as it relates to his acting to deliver his faithful - which disclosure the visionaries have largely ceased to translate into the terms of plain history, real politics, and human instrumentality due to a pessimistic view of reality growing out of the bleak post-exilic conditions within which those associated with the visionaries found themselves. These conditions seemed unsuitable to them as a context for the envisioned restoration of Yahweh's people.

What is clear from this distinction is that, "both perspectives are eschatological, in the sense that there is the expectation of a future in which God will be revealed to the world and the faithful of God's people will be vindicated" (Larkin 1994:10-11). Arnold (2010:33) puts it further,

> The assumption in prophetic eschatology is that the evil in the world lies *internally* among the people of God. . . . The main problems addressed are idolatry and injustice, and on a broader scale the failure to do *tôrāh* in the world. The solution is for God's people to repent and practice righteousness and justice (wherein the social ethics in the Prophets). The assumption in apocalyptic thinking is that evil in the world is *external* to the people of God. That is, the main problem impeding God's work in the world is the evil and wickedness of empires and rulers and systems that control human history. The main problems addressed are arrogance, pride, abuse of power, and on a broader scale lawlessness and tyranny. . . . The emphasis in this perspective falls on God overthrowing that wickedness in the world so that God's people can live faithfully in the world as his people. Each of these perspectives arises from a particular historical and social context.

Since eschatology is a broad term that is applicable both to prophecy and to apocalyptcism, the challenge that lies ahead is to distinguish between the various types of eschatology. In this section, I will investigate the attempts to relate prophecy via its eschatological affinity.

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The term Eschatology (*eschatos logos*) means "a doctrine of the last things" or a distinct age beyond the present age (Martens 2012:178). It deals with expectations of beliefs that are characteristic of a certain religion; namely the world or part of it moves to a definite goal (*telos*); and that there is a new final order of affairs beyond the present. It is simply the doctrine of consummation of the world-process in a supreme crisis leading on into a permanent state (Vos 2001:1). In the Septuagint, it has the form *eschatai hemerai*, with some unessential variations. The Hebrew form from which this Greek rendering is derived is *'aḥarîth hayyãmîm*. The general meaning of the root *'aḥar* refers to what is "behind" as well as to "future things," thus the expression *'aḥarîth hayyãmîm*- the end of days, refer to expectations and events that are believed to take place at an end-time. This end-time constitutes a definitive change but can be construed in either an absolute or a relative sense. In the first case, it pertains to the destruction and/or renewal of the physical universe, and this is a view that is often found in apocalyptic literature, while in the second it relates the destruction and/or renewal of Israel, a notion that is predominant in prophecy (Finitsis 2011:7; cf. Harris, *et al* 1980, 34).

According to Mowinckel (2005:125), eschatology is a doctrine or a complex of ideas about 'the last things.' Every eschatology includes "in some form or other a dualistic concept of the course of history, and implies that the present state of things and the present world order will suddenly come to an end and be superseded by another of an essentially different kind" (Mowinckel 2005:125). This definition, understood in this manner, with particular reference to the Old Testament, reveals that there is little eschatology in the Old Testament. For if eschatology is a doctrine of the end of the world and the history of humankind, there is no eschatology at all in the Old Testament prophets (see Udoekpo 2010:30). Seen in this light, Clements (1965:104) notes

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that a major aspect of this concept of eschatology is that the coming consummation lies on the other side of history. A characteristic element of eschatology in relation to the Old Testament hope is the idea of two eons, namely; the present eon and the future one. This is not only developed in later apocalyptic writings, but is present in the Old Testament.

In his concept, Albertz (2003:40) explains that the apocalyptic revelation of the imminent end of history is nothing other than an interpretation of the exilic period. Of course, no one can prove that the apocalyptic concept of an *eschaton* when all prior history would come to an end and an entirely new age of salvation would dawn sprang directly from reflection on the exilic fate of Israel. However, the many substantive and structural points of contact between the understanding of the exile as a period of divine judgment, long-lasting but limited by God's faithfulness, and this new concept of history meant that the latter could be supported, interpreted, and even calculated on the basis of the exile. Thus, it is no accident that this darkest period in the history of Israel could not be integrated fully until there was a historical schema based on the termination of a history gone massively awry. While the exile had forced Israel to suffer an abrupt end to its political history; it nevertheless survived. It is therefore, probably no accident that in Israel the apocalyptic concept of the end of world history and the beginning of a new age could come to appear so plausible (Albertz 2003:44).

Apocalyptic eschatology grows out of crises situations, a time when great forces and powers control God's people such that they do not have much say over their lives. It comes during times of great doubt about what the future holds. Prophetic eschatology on the other hand, is the standpoint employed by the people of God when they are essentially free from influence and dominance and have the ability to make choices with respect to how to live as

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His people. In this context, injustice and exploitation of the weak as well as religious syncretism features prominently and all through the Scripture and in most of the history of Israel, prophets shout out against these maltreatments (Arnold 2010:33). This study focuses on prophetic eschatology.

The OT prophets constantly look forward to a time of God's decisive intervention in human history to bring about a transformation of the present world order so profound and far-reaching into a new age. While eschatology in the narrower sense means the doctrine of the closing stages of history and ushering in of the season of eternal salvation, in its broader sense and as a significant component of the OT faith, it describes a future in which there would be a change to the events of history to such an extent that one is able to speak of a completely new and different state of things, with a structure of history in view (Rist 1982, 2:126-127). Thus OT eschatology could be defined as everything that pertains to the creation of an entirely new world order.

2.2.1. Eschatological Hope in the Old Testament

Old Testament eschatological hope receives its clearest expression from the 8th century BCE onwards and most probably in the post-exilic period, but its roots go deep into Israel's covenant of faith (Routeledge 2008:273). Israel's theology is intensely grounded in time and space, and especially in the events of Israel's own history. The presence of eschatology in the OT gradually became more prominent in the prophets and in later Jewish apocalyptic texts, which began to appear already in the canon of the OT itself (Arnold 2010:23). Israelite eschatology is manifested in the expectation of a future *eon* radically discontinuous with the present, in which the circumstances of history will be

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transformed and the present cosmos redeemed by God.[35] Thus, central to this Israelite understanding is the idea of the "radical wrongness of the present world and the conviction that radical changes, to make this right, will indeed occur 'in that day,' that is, at some time known to God. With this in mind, the people of God are called upon to live faithfully to the covenant, hearing Yahweh's call to righteous behaviour, resulting in an 'eschatological ethic'" (Arnold 2010:24-25).

According to Arnold (2010:25), the conceptual foundations for Israel's eschatology, then, may be traceable along a historical continuum in the narration of redemptive history, beginning with the ancestral promises of Genesis (12:1-3)[36] which later become the "realised eschatology" for the Mosaic period (Exd. 2:24-25). While the Sinaitic covenant traditions themselves appear to make little direct contribution to the development of eschatology in Israel, their insistence on future compliance to the covenant stipulations creates a distinctly forward- looking trajectory. At the heart of prophetic eschatology is the consideration given to the Day of Yahweh. The exert phrase *yôm yhwh*, "day of the Lord," occurs first in Amos 5:18.[37] While it

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[35] It is instructive to note that the temporal orientation of the Hebrew concept of time is connected to spatial categories and that the past is "before" one (*qedhem*) and the future is "behind" (*'aḥar*). Thus the Israelites, with apparently all other people of the ancient world, perceived themselves standing on a line going from east to west, from past to future, moving along the line backward. See Wyatt (2001:33-52).

[36] Arnold (2010:25) states further, "The numerical extent of the progeny as 'a great nation' (Gen.12:2), and the geographical extent of the Promised Land (Gen.15:18-21) could not come to reality in the lives of the ancestral generations. The promises themselves are by definition projected into the future." Thus Jenni (1982:127) could express that the sequence of history is ascertained by the promise which Yahweh gives and fulfills from time to time. "Eschatology is the part of the history of salvation which is still in prospect and which presses for realization."

[37] The expression *yôm yhwh* occurs in an equivalent form in Isa. 2:12; Ezek. 30:3; Zech. 14:1. It is referred to as *the day of the Lord's wrath* (Zeph. 1:15, 18), the *Lord's Day of vengeance* (Isa. 34:8; Jer. 46:10 cf. Isa. 61:2; 63:4), and *of trampling and tumult* (Isa. 22:5). Sometimes it is referred to simply as *the day* (Lam. 1:21; Ezek. 7:7) or *that day* (Isa. 2:11; cf. 24:21; 27:1).

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tells little about the day itself, the prophet (Amos) clearly refers to an idea well established by the eighth century BCE. In some passages, it suggests a day of battle, when Yahweh will finally defeat all those powers that oppose him and will establish his reign.[38] Scholarly debate has centred on the punitive origins of the day of Yahweh, with most gravitating to the theory that it was derived from the holy war tradition (Von Rad 1959:97-108), particularly as these traditions were carried through the royal cult (Cross 1973:111).

Eichrodt (1961:1; 460-62) describes it as a day when "the nations as far as the ends of the earth would be crushed before his onslaught, and with them their gods would topple from their thrones, that Israel's God might ascend the throne of the universe alone." Mowinckel (2005:132-133, 138-143) links the Day of the Lord with the annual enthronement festival, which celebrated God's renewed victory over the forces of chaos, and gave assurance that he would not fail his people. He argues that the theme was later taken up by Deutero-Isaiah after the fall of Jerusalem, though by then its fulfilment focuses on the distant future. Under the influence of this traditional element, the prophetic concept of the *eschaton* was also to some extent systematised, that is to say, predictions connected with the expectation of the Day of Yahweh which began from different traditions were to some extent blended (Von Rad 1968:99).

While there is nothing intrinsically eschatological about the day of Yahweh, its use takes on a negative expectation, and when tied to the positive

[38] For example, Isa. 13:4-5; 34:1-6; 63:1-6; Jer. 46:10; Ezek. 13:5; 30:3-4; Joe. 2:11; Obad. 1; Zeph. 1:16; Zech. 14:3. The people of Amos's day clearly hoped and long for Yahweh's day, in which Yahweh would punish Israel's enemies and deliver them from their troubles. But somehow, the prophet surprisingly and dramatically reversed their popular ideology by turning the day into a judgment, not for Israel's enemies, but of Israel. See examples of dramatic reversal in Amos 3:1-2, 5:4-6, 9:7; Paul (1991:182-184).

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expectations of the people rooted and grounded as they were in Sinaitic covenant hopes and Davidic expectations, this prophetic preaching becomes a negative eschatology, as it were (Peterson 1992:577). After the exile, the conceptual foundations at the centre of the saving event of Israel, that is; the creatorship of Yahweh and God of the fathers, Yahweh's covenants with Israel at Sinai and Zion, and the one alone who supports and upholds the Davidic King, coalesced in the post-exilic prophets in a new era of eschatological development. Influential in these developments are the ideologies prevalent during the exile, especially those preserved in the writings of second Isaiah. Post-exilic prophets like Haggai and his associates considered the leftover population to be made up of devoted members of the restoration community (Hasel 1988; 4:133). In Haggai 2:3, the prophet asks: "Who is left among you who saw this temple in its former glory? And how do you see it now? Does it not seem to you like nothing in comparison?"The acknowledgement by the leftover population that the present temple is unsatisfactory became the encouraging foundation for the earnest expectation and eschatological realisation of the glory to come and of the promises of the covenant in which he has an eye to the Messianic age (Haggai 2:4–5ff).

In the prophetic books of Zechariah and Malachi, the writers' use of remnant (*she'ē rîth*) is more eschatological in nature. For instance in the book of Zechariah, "Yahweh will deal with a future remnant differently to the way he dealt with Israel in former times. Cursing and judgment will give way to blessing (8:11–13). Even the Philistines can join this remnant (9:7). The remnant is that which survives the eschatological battle against the nations" (Dumbrell 1994:130). On the other hand, Dumbrell (1994:130) notes that in the book of Malachi, the remnant are not those who survived the exile, but those who are committed and dedicated to Yahweh in the restoration community

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and they will therefore subsist the anger to come (3:16–18). In this regard, Yahweh is presented as one who is faithfully committed to those whose hearts are directed toward the covenant of the fathers (4:6). The restored community however faced poverty, poor harvests, internal adversaries, corruption and idolatry, threat of foreign invasion, and despair. In the light of such deprivation and hardship, these prophets (Mal. 1:2-3; Isa. 58:13-14; 63:7-9) evinced a renewed interest in the ancestral traditions, and the covenants (Zech. 9:11; Mal. 2:10; 3:1).

They explored the implications of monotheism, which was basic for a new political period (Zech. 4:10; Mal. 1:11). These prophets were concerned with the ethical demands of Israel's relationship with Yahweh (Zech. 7:8; Mal. 3:5), and also reflected an increased emphasis on the spirit of Yahweh (Hag. 2:5; Zech. 4:6, 6:8, 12:10). Their eschatological vision thus started to take on a transformative and cosmic dimension, resulting in descriptions of this new eon that will transcend all current human experiences (Arnold 2010:28-29). The focus, then, of the next section, will be specifically on the eschatological peculiarity of the discourse of Malachi.

2.2.2. Malachi's Eschatological Discourses

Malachi gives less of a broad exposition of eschatological ideas than any other prophet, perhaps because he uses the form of the polemic dialogue (Von Rad 1968:255). The distinctiveness of the eschatological dialogue of Malachi consists first of all, in the prevalence of the negative accent on the accusation for sin in contrast to the encouraging message of the good things to come which appears respectively compacted and reserved (Vos 2001:160). Malachi's remarkable eschatological characteristics as relatively established by the negative arrangement, includes: The promise of universalism in which

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Yahweh's name will be great among the Gentiles. The key component of this will be that "a pure offering" will be brought from them to Yahweh in the widest compass (1:11), the coming of Yahweh to the His temple (3:1), the judgment aspect of Yahweh's advent namely; "day of wrath" (3:2; 4:1), the rising of the "Sun of *ts^{e}dhāqāh*" (4:2), and preceding the coming of Yahweh is "behold, I send my messenger before me" (3:1) as well as the specific mission of Elijah which is defined as a "turning of the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers" (4:6) (Vos 2001:160-161).

The negative accusations of sin is graphically made clear by the remark that the misdemeanour charged to the people's account bears, in its entirety a ritual quality, although the social-economic elements similar to those of the older prophets are by no means totally absent. These remarkable and discouraging elements include: The bringing of polluted offerings on the altar; of the blind, lame, sick, torn animals to the sanctuary for sacrifice (1:7-8, 13); an attitude of ritual disillusionment and a logical apathy underpinning the offering they bring; the priests' conspiracy with the ritual negligence – an infringement of the covenant of Levi (2:8 cf. 2:1-3; 3:14); the failure to bring the required tithes to the sanctuary (3:10); the marrying of the daughter of a strange god and the unfaithfulness involved in this to the marital ideal in Israel (2:15).

Malachi's eschatological vision involved the expectation of purifying judgment for God's people. By his time, serious cultic and social problems were manifesting within the post-exilic community (1:6-14; 2:8-17; 3:6-15; 4:6). Indecision with respect to repentance would bring about divine judgment. Yahweh would come as the sovereign Lord to enforce His covenant (3:1). He is to come unexpectedly, and His day is to bring judgment upon the godless;

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but for those who fear God, 'the sun of salvation' will shine forth (Vos 2001:161-162). The idea that Yahweh will send a messenger before his own final advent (Mal.3:1) is only found in Malachi (Von Rad 1968:255). The attempt in the following sections focuses on the identity of the eschatological figure as well as the duties of the eschatological messengers.

2.2.2.1. Malachi's Eschatological Figures

Malachi 3:1 is believed to be an enigmatic passage. The personality of the different characters indicated in the passage continues to attract fascinating questions for scholarly debates (Miller 2007:3; Snyman 2006:1031; O'Brien 2004: 305-306; Malchow 1984:252). The ambiguities in this text have caused exegetes to interpret it in a variety of ways. The text refers to three figures: "my messenger," "the Lord," and "the messenger of the covenant." Are these three really the same person or two or three different beings? With whom therefore is each to be associated? While scholars have answered these questions in totally different manners, there is wide agreement that these verses are a later addition to the book and reveal nothing about the author's intention (Petersen 1995:209-212; Smith 1980: 63; Snyman 2006:1032).

From a redactional perspective, scholars observe "that third person singular forms dominate in 3:1b-4 (he will come to his temple v1; his coming, he appears, he is like fire v2; he will sit, he will purify and refine v3) while 3:1a, 5 is characterised by first person singular forms (my messenger v1; I shall come near, I shall be v5), and thus conclude that 3:1b-4 represents a later hand at work" (Snyman 2006:1032; cf. Petersen 1995:209-212). It is believed that the messenger in Mal 3:1 is Elijah in Mal 3:23-24 [4:5-6 KJV] (Kaiser 1986:80; Verhoef 1987:340). Thus the concluding sentences of the corpus of the prophetic book: "Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming

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of the great and dreadful day of the LORD: And he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse" (Mal 3:23-24 (4:5-6) KJV) is an interpretation of the announcement of a preparing messenger in Mal 3:1: "Behold, I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me."

The coming of Elijah will not only be to still the anger of Yahweh but also to assemble Israel's tribes, in order that the duty of the servant of Yahweh (Isa 49:6) is handed over to him (Öhler 1999:461-62).[39] Dentan (1956, 6:1137) and Eissfeldt (1965:441) are of the opinion that there is another late attempt to identify the messenger in 1:1, where the author of the book is called "my messenger," *mal'ākhî.* This however, does not make the original meaning of 3:1 clear. Smith (1980:63) and Mason (1977:152) believe that the messenger is an unspecified figure. It is further suggested that the angel of the Lord and Yahweh are interchangeable and thus, the phrase "the angel of the Lord" 3:1 is a "euphemism for God to emphasize the transcendence of Yahweh" (White 1999:299-305). The angel might be conceived according to the old concept of "the angel of the Lord," who is a manifestation of Yahweh (Dentan 1956:6, 1137), a somewhat independent, spiritual servant of God (Lindblom 1962:405, 421). Prophetic interpretations include, Malachi himself (Mason 1977:152), and a future, greater prophet (Mowinckel 2005:298).

It is also observed that *mal'ākhî* is an allusion to a prophetic envoy whose duty is that of making ready the eschatological arrival of Yahweh. In this regard, *hā'ādhôn* is an indication of Yahweh visiting his temple while the *malākh habhbhᵉrîth* (messenger of the covenant) is understood to be "a later addition to the text and identified as a guardian angel" (Snyman 2006:1033). It is also

[39] In the LXX, the reading of the prophecy of Malachi differs somewhat, saying that Elijah will not only bring the fathers' hearts to the sons but equally people's hearts to their neighbours.

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argued that because the word *malākh* is used two times it must be a reference to one and the same person whose task is that of preparing the Lord's way (Merrill 1994:429, 432). This might be quite contrary to the view that "my messenger" is a prophetic envoy and the other two designations in the light of the "strong elements of parallelism between the two lines" aim at the one same character who perhaps may be a lesser divine being or a prophetic character "endowed by the same sorts of powerful abilities that Elijah received according to Malachi 3:23-24" (Petersen 1995:210-212). What is remarkable and important here is that Petersen's description does not indicate that *hā'ādhôn* is the Lord pointing directly to Yahweh. Redditt (1995:176) and Weyde (2000:290) believe that the allusion to *hā'ādhôn* ("the Lord") is Yahweh. For them, the "messenger of the covenant" is not different from "the angel of the Lord" which is similar to what is found elsewhere in the OT.

Thus with respect to the personality of "my messenger" Redditt (1995:176) believes, "it is impossible to determine whether the prophet had himself or an angel of the Lord in mind." In spite of an awareness by some that the clause of 3:1, "and the Lord whom you seek will suddenly come to his temple" could refer to a messenger, virtually all modern interpreters agree that the "Lord" is Yahweh. One observation that this is correct is that apparently it could only be said of Yahweh that the Temple was his (Zech 1:16). Again, the reference here to seeking the Lord fits well with the context in 2:17, where Israel had asked where God was. The Lord for whom they were searching will appear. He will come for an eschatological judgment (cf. 3:5; Malchow 1984:252-255). Notwithstanding, "messenger of the covenant" is believed to be the same as "the Lord" but the personality of the messenger who is going to come before the Lord is uncertain (Achtemeier 1986:184). Baldwin (1972:242-243) while identifying these different figures notes that even though the personality of

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"my messenger" is undisclosed, it is to be taken as a figure with a special mission that should be differentiated from that of the messenger of the covenant. Malchow (1984:252) stresses that if verses lb-4 are an addition to the text, whom then did the interpolator consider "the messenger of the covenant" to be? Apart from those who identify this figure with God, there are those who connect this 'messenger of the covenant' with the same type of being as the messenger at the beginning of the verse. Thus, some relate the figure in verse lb to an angel or specifically to a guardian angel or the angel of the Lord. "The messenger of the covenant could also be a prophetic envoy." However, the terms "messenger" and "covenant" can more easily be identified with a priestly figure in this context (Weyde 2000:289-290).[40] These terms are used with that kind of association in the book of Malachi, and the interpolator may well have been influenced by the book to continue that same line of thought.

Some interpreters have decided to go for a messianic-Christological interpretation, identifying two different personalities (Kaiser 1986; Stuart 1998). The messenger (*mal'ākhî*) then is associated with the *messenger of the covenant*: a human being linked with Elijah the prophet (Kaiser 1986:80; Glazier-McDonald 1987:130-133). There is therefore, a logical link between *hā'ādhôn* and the "messenger of the covenant" with the exception that the "messenger of the covenant" is "to be identified with the pre-incarnate Christ"[41] in this situation (Kaiser 1986:81-82). According to Stuart (1998:1350), this verse is "unmistakably messianic doctrine… It describes God's angel who represents God among the people and goes ahead as they leave Sinai for the

[40] It is believed and argued that the messenger could have been a priestly envoy in the light of overwhelming criticisms and curses the prophet placed on the priestly class (Malchow 1984:252-255).

[41] The messenger of the covenant is "God's own self-revelation, the pre-incarnate Christ of the numerous OT Christophanies" (Kaiser 1982:225).

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Promised Land, to prepare their way so that they will have success in conquering the Promised Land."In light of this basic perspective Stuart concludes:

> Malachi 3:1 and 3:23-24 [4:5-6] together constitute one of Malachi's special contributions to prophecy. They are the most detailed Old Testament contexts indicating that the coming of the Messiah would be preceded by a precursor who would announce the need to prepare for his coming. In this regard Malachi is even more explicit than the more famous verses from Isaiah 40:3-5 . . . that speaks of the 'voice' that announces the messianic advent (1998:1352).

From the foregoing, it is obvious that several scholarly positions have been noted with respect to the identity and or identities of Malachi's eschatological figures. There are those who hold that *mal'ākhî* ("my messenger") is the prophet himself (Malachi), an unidentified prophet or a prophetic harbinger, with the *malākh habhbhᵉrîth* either as an angel, imprecise eschatological figure or a priestly envoy and *hā'ādhôn* is God or Yahweh. On the other hand, some scholars have chosen not to identify the messenger, while others have decided to go for a messianic-Christological interpretation. In this paper, my conclusion is in line with that of Snyman (2006:1043), "The three figures mentioned are references to two persons, the one human and the other divine. The messenger of Yahweh (*mal'ākhî*) is identified as indeed the prophet Malachi. A later redactor saw the prophecies of this prophet as the preparation for the coming of Yahweh himself."

2.2.2.2. The Duties of the Eschatological Messengers in Malachi

What then are the duties of Malachi's eschatological messengers in the light of the conclusion that the three characters indicated in 3:1 are allusions to two persons: one divine and the other human? What is of major concern in Malachi 2:17-3:5 is "the question of Yahweh's justice in view of his failure to come to his people" that is, although Israel has physically returned from exile

there was a lingering feeling of exile. For, far from the nations flocking to Jerusalem (Isa. 2:1-5; 4:1-3), Israel was still subject to foreign rule. It seemed that, for Malachi's audience, the righteous suffered while the wicked prospered (Watts 2000:68).

Again and indeed, for those living under Hellenistic rule, it did not seem that the exile was over. It is against this backdrop that the promise of Malachi 3:1 is stated: A messenger will be sent to prepare the way for Yahweh's return to his temple. Malachi 3:1 speaks of a messenger, who later is identified as an eschatological Elijah (Mal 3:23-24 MT; Mal 4:5-6 LXX), that will be sent by God in order to bring about reconciliation (Collins 2007: 136) and herald the Messiah as God's agent (Hooker 2001: 35).

Although Malachi 4:5-6 is never mentioned in Mark, John the Baptist is portrayed, throughout the Gospel, as the "eschatological Elijah who has come into the world again… and has accomplished his role as precursor of Jesus, the Son of Man" (Öhler 1999: 465-66). In Mark's entire gospel, John the Baptist is portrayed as the returned Elijah; that is, as the one preparing the way for the Messiah (Collins 2007:136). In the citation from Malachi and Exodus, in verse 2, John the Baptist is identified as the eschatological Elijah who will make ready the arrival of the Messiah. Likewise, in Mark 1:3 John is identified as the *phōnē boōntos en tē erēmō* (the voice crying in the wilderness) from Isaiah 40:3.

To better understand the implications of John's association with the *phōnē* (voice) mentioned in Isaiah, one must therefore take a look at what Isaiah 40:3 proclaims. This promise, of Yahweh's return, which will bring about the end of the exile, is a promise that was spoken in Isaiah 40. In 40:3-5 Isaiah uses imagery to call for the preparation of the way for Yahweh's "triumphant return to his people" (Watts 2000:77). It can therefore be understood and

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stated that one of the duties of the eschatological messengers in Malachi, is the mission of Yahweh's forerunner "preparing the way of the Lord" (Mal. 3:1). In other words, the identity of Yahweh's forerunner defines the content and nature of the preparation of the Lord's way. The introduction of the messenger of Yahweh, who will be sent to prepare Yahweh's way for His return to His temple, intensifies the ethical uniqueness of the book of Malachi and marks a significant contribution to eschatological dimension of the OT.

Again, another task that is noticeable within the text of Malachi's eschatological figures is the duty of "the Lord's coming to His temple." In the books of Ezekiel and Zechariah, Yahweh's coming to His temple means restoration and salvation, but in Malachi, the Lord's coming to His temple is not for salvation but for judgment. Since this is Yahweh's solemn promise, it will be fulfilled. The people expected justice. They explicitly asked for Yahweh who metes out justice and prophet's response is that "'the Lord' himself will suddenly come to his temple."

In Malachi 3:1, the announcement is within the context of the day of the arrival of the messenger of the covenant. But it is an unbearable one, *ûmî mekhakēl 'eth-yôm bô'ô* "But who can withstand the day of His coming?"(3:2). The question, "who can bear/endure/ resist/ withstand the day of his coming? And who shall stand when he appears? Re-echoes Joel 2:11, *kî-ghādhôl yôm-yhwh wᵉnôrā' mᵉ'ōdh ûmî yᵉkhîlennû* "For the day of the LORD *is* great and very terrible; and who can abide it?" The question presumes, when the Day of the Lord is near. The description carries the emblem of the traditional characteristics of the Day of Yahweh of judgment and security (Cheung 2001:55).

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The meaning and significance of the Lord's sudden coming to his temple requires further careful investigation and this is reserved for the exegetical chapter of this study. But suffice it to say here that Yahweh's coming to His temple in the form of His (covenant) angel would guarantee a dual role of; namely, cultic restoration and Yahweh's righting of past wrongs and the reversal of sinful societal order in the overall context of the eschatological day of Yahweh. The preliminary question raised by the people with regard to the justice of, is answered. The Lord Almighty would come as the sovereign Lord of the nation to enforce His covenant (3:1). Yahweh is to come unexpectedly, and His day is to bring judgment upon the godless; but for those who fear God, 'the sun of salvation' will shine forth. In this way, "Yahweh still remains the God of justice" (Snyman 2006:1043). As Clendenen (2004:238) notes,

> Right behavior is grounded in the redemptive dimension as response of gratitude consistent with what God has done in the past. It is also grounded in the eschatological dimension as confidence that the God who began his work of righteous redemption will complete it, eliminating evil and vindicating the righteous, establishing justice and peace. God's faithful love in the past as elaborated in 1:2–5 and the coming day of Yahweh announced in 3:16–4:6 together were to be the motivating factors for all the exhortations in the book.

As is third-Isaiah, Malachi delivered his message after the exile which had scattered the people of the nation of Israel. Even though their eschatological hopes agree in content with pre-exilic prophets, insofar as they envision the future events 'in the land', they seem to presuppose a different social situation. Both prophets restrict the eschatological hope to a specific group within the nation of Israel. This group seems to consist of people who have an actively and vigilantly covenantal framework, despite the upheavals of the exile. This change marks the onset of a new consciousness of community that is not forged along the traditional understanding of ethnicity. In this way, Malachi contributed to the production of a radical redefinition of the identity

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of Israel, which departed from the one employed by pre-exilic prophets. Israel is never any more defined over against foreign nations, but over against its own members, who are going to be excluded from partaking in the eschatological future.

2.3. SUMMARY

This chapter began with the aim of representing definite contributions and conclusions from some erudite scholars who have tried their intellectual abilities on the prophets for scholarly exegesis. In it, an even more restricted perspective was provided. The purpose of these concise presentations as stated earlier, was to set a perspective for the present work. In the process, it reflected on the prophet, prophecy prophetic books, and eschatology. Although the nature and social functions of Israelite prophecy is difficult to determine, it is argued that prophetic activity in ancient Israel and Judah was basically—i.e. with regard to its meaning and function, but not in its forms and formula—similar to prophetic activity elsewhere in the ancient Near East. Prophecy in the ancient Near East was one form of divination among many. It consisted of encouragement in threatening situations, prophetic criticism directed against specific addressees concerning specific issues, denouncement of specific enemies (external and internal), warnings and threats aiming to avert the calamities announced.

In their capacity as bearers of God's words to His people, the prophets prepared ideologically the survival of Israel through the catastrophe of the exile and furnished part of the foundation for Israel's future existence as a "pariah community" in the world of nations. They also, of course, provided a model of religious discourse that found its continuation in the Christian developments of the Biblical tradition. The prophetic books on the other hand,

as a literally genre is a clear manifestation of a subcategory within that of Israel's authoritative books. They are associated with a prophetic personage, and no prophetic book is associated with more than one prophetic personage. The prophetic books are certainly about hope and provide instruction from the deity himself about the proper way a member of the *qᵉhal yisrā'ēl* should behave and live.

The creators of prophetic books are seen to have selected the spokesmen for Yahweh from a large corpus of materials that would have existed based on their prediction of the fall of Jerusalem, Judah or Israel or their prediction of divine punishment for unacceptable acts. While early history of Israelite prophecy is complex, Israelite prophecy and prophetic books are eminently historical in setting and content. Within the prophetic collections are classifications such as visions (*ḥāzôn*), word or matter (*dābhār*), elevated matter (*massā'*), utterance or whispering (*nᵉ'um*), hymn of petition (*tᵉpillāh*), woe (*hôy*), as well as other genres and phrases involving sympathetic magic and signs.

The study further investigated the attempts to relate prophecy via its eschatological affinity. Since eschatology is a broad term that is applicable both to prophecy and to apocalyptcism, a distinction was made between prophetic eschatology and apocalyptic eschatology. This study however focused on prophetic eschatology which is the dimension employed by the people of God when they are essentially free from outside influences and have the ability to make choices with respect to how they live as the people of God.

In Malachi, the prophet's eschatological vision included the prospect of purifying judgment for God's people. The Lord Almighty would come as the sovereign Lord of the nation to enforce His covenant (3:10). Yahweh is to

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come unexpectedly, and His day is to bring judgment upon the godless; but for those who fear God, 'the sun of salvation' will shine forth. The idea that Yahweh will send a messenger before his own final advent (Mal.3:1) is only found in Malachi. The introduction of Yahweh's messenger, who will be sent to prepare Yahweh's way to his temple, intensifies the ethical uniqueness of the book of Malachi and marks a significant contribution to eschatological dimension of the OT. The coming of Yahweh in the form of his (covenant) angel would guarantee a dual role of; namely, cultic restoration and Yahweh's righting of past wrongs and the reversal of sinful societal order in the overall context of the eschatological day of Yahweh.

CHAPTER III

THE TEMPLE IN ISRAEL'S PROPHETIC TRADITION

During the period of the OT, the phenomenon of prophetic speech is observable in Israel from the monarchical era to the post-exilic era. While it is true that not all the prophets of Israel left deposits of oracles, one finds traces of such early prophetic traditions in the Torah that reaches over from the tradition of Moses to the prophetic literature from the Persian period of the Second Temple. The traditional prophetic heritage may not necessarily be that of envisaging future events but of devotion to morality and truth that can guarantee a very colourful and positive future for Yahweh's people. The aim of this chapter then, is to simply and briefly demonstrate an understanding of the idea of the temple as expressed by the prophets/ prophetic books. Such understanding is necessary in the light of the prophetic criticisms of the rituals of the temple.

3.1. CONCEPTIONS OF THE TEMPLE

The term 'temple' in this study refers to the conceived house for Yahweh, consecrated or set apart for sacred usage. David's son, Solomon,[1] was responsible for the building of the first temple in the 10th century BCE. This was however demolished by the invading Babylonians in 587 BCE. In 515 BCE, the returning exiles reconstructed a moderate temple and it was further remodelled on an impressive magnitude during the Hellenistic period. This remodelling was started by Herod the Great in 20 BCE and could not be accomplished until around 60 CE, only to be demolished later. The Bible is

[1] The architecture and design of Solomon's Temple, also known as the First Temple, has been a perennial subject of scholarly debate and has benefited from several important studies including its symbolism and religious significance (Hurowitz 2007:63f.)

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replete with texts that demonstrate the fundamental role that the temple played in Judah. During the Persian period (and the late Babylonian period), the restoration of the temple became a focal point of discussion for biblical writers (Carroll 1994:34-51; Janzen 2002:490-510). My concern therefore, in the following sections is simply to represent the prophetic view of the temple in the post-exilic community of Yehud. However, before focusing attention on discussion of the post-exilic prophetic conception of the temple as well as its criticisms, there is a need to present a brief assessment showing how temples were viewed in biblical Israel and how the prophets understood the temple in their different contexts of ministry.

3.1.1. Temples in Biblical Israel

In his literary analysis and synthesis of temples in Semitic literature, Smith (2007:3) attempts to demonstrate how deities and their characteristics are shown or relayed through temples in addition to various means of how the ancients situated their relationship to deities via temples. He identifies such means of relationships as "intersection, recapitulation, participation, and analogy (or homology)." At the centre of intersection between a divine presence (theophany) and human presence (pilgrimage) is temples. Here, ritual provides the context for divine presence with benediction from the side of the divine and human presence of priests and pilgrims with offerings from the human side. This kind of ritual activity in biblical texts has resulted in various significant studies reflected in commentaries on Leviticus and Numbers (Smith 2007:3-4).

Since temple architecture embodies and conveys several divine narratives, temples thus may summarise the understanding of the deities. For example, in 1 Kings 6-9 the cultic fittings and decorations of the Jerusalem Temple,

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conveys the narrative of the victory of Yahweh over the sea, his acceptance of the offerings of the people, the accession (or re-accession) to the divine throne within the divine house and the blessing of the people. Possibly, courtyard symbols communicate Yahweh's triumphant enthronement. As marked by the presence of objects or cultic action, the Jerusalem may suggest the model of the divine king ruling over the subjects, both divine and human (Smith 2007:6). Temples are regarded as a point of participation in the power of the deities (cf. Pss. 46; 48:13-15), as holy, consistent with the holiness of the deities (cf. Ps. 46:4-5) and both divinity and temples are treated in terms of size and attraction (Smith 2007:11, 17). Temples do not only tell where the deities are but what and how they are. Both focus on a variety of relationships that exist between divinity and humanity (Smith 2007:21).

Van der Toorn (1995:2050) notes that sacred places that are marked out for interaction and fellowship with the divine were grouped into two types in Israelite religion, namely native sanctuaries and temples in city locations. Native sanctuaries were discreetly designed with a constructed pillar or stone, an altar made of stone or earth, commonly placed close a well or a tree. While certain of these centres could hardly boast of a structural edifice, one can easily recognise these open-centres sanctuaries as sacred or high places. In these "high places," occasional sacrifices and native festivals were held. Divine images were neither present, nor was there any special care of the deity by any staff. Though these sanctuaries were normally situated within and outside the city centre, there were temples in city locations as well, that were regarded as houses for divine beings. In his further elaboration, Van der Toorn (1995:2051) highlights four basic underlying functions of the Syro-Palestinian temple, namely; religious function, an economic role, juridical as well as political functions. The reality and survival of a temple revealed the

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authority and wealth of the nation. There was a very close connection between temple and palace such that people were firm and united in their convictions about their sanctuaries.

Similarly, Dever (1995:607) identifies four basic characteristics of temples namely; they are regarded as sacred houses for divine beings i.e. gods, hallowed or religiously dedicated for holy use, priestly classes regularly officiated in them and worship carried out in these temples was made up of offerings drink and food to deities of fruitfulness and or fecundity. The system of sacrifices within the temple is very complex. The cultic life consists of rituals. The term cult refers to any ritual activity whether public or private connected with homage to a deity. It includes every activity by which individuals and societies crystallise their religious experience and life, and by which they search for and attain interaction with God (Vaux 1997:271).

The adjective 'cultic' describes any ritual acts that associate human beings to the domain of the deities. The systematised body of ritual acts that associate human beings to the realm of the deities is known as 'cultus'. The expression could also be used lightly to denote to the organisation that sustains the practices of all ritual acts. In this regard, one may speak of the 'Temple cultus,' as both the ritual activities of the temple and the temple as the institution in which these activities are carried out. In its cultic sense, a ritual is "a prescribed order of performing religious or other devoted service" (Hrobon 2010:6). The term (ritual) as used in OT scholarship is a general label for offering sacrifices, purificatory procedures, and related activities such as fasting or prayer. In the religion of ancient Israel during the 1st and 2nd Temple periods, the main responsibility for performing and maintaining rituals were assigned to priests (Hrobon 2010:6,12).

3.1.2. The Temple in Pre-Exilic and Exilic Prophets

Considering the limitations of this chapter, the discussion below focuses on the pre-exilic and exilic literary and textual conceptions or descriptions of Solomon's Jerusalem Temple in 1 Kgs. 6-7. While the concept of temples or sanctuaries differs in each of Israel's prophetic heritage, there are shared and coherent elements (Ahn 2011:78). Prophets of the pre-exilic period highlighted the temple as the house of Yahweh. Ahn (2011:78) notes that, "the Temple Mount, Zion, was the cosmic center of the reign of God." The extent to which Isaiah himself may or may not support this so-called Zion theology, whereby the temple had a prominent role to play, is open to scholarly dispute (Williamson 2007:123). In Isaiah 6:1, the text shows that the prophet receives his call and commission to a prophetic ministry in the temple at a time in which it was covered with the influence of Yahweh. In this narrative framework, it is argued that the concept of the heavenly sanctuary would inevitably be coloured by the prophet's idea of the earthly. While some aspects of Isaiah 6 are imagined as taking place in the heavenly sanctuary, Williamson (2007:124) notes,

> It is now generally accepted that there is considerable degree of overlap between the earthly and heavenly sanctuaries; . . . The eyes of the prophet in the vision and of the reader in the text are, rather, constantly redirected . . . between the heavenly . . . and the earthly temple because we are not dealing with two different holy places but rather of dimensions of God's single dwelling place where the heavenly community joins in praise with the earthly.

Isaiah's perspective of both Yahweh's throne and Yahweh's figure himself exceeding the dimensions of the temple building, from a literary point of view makes a simple contribution to ones understanding of the progress of a theology of the temple and its worship in Israel (Williamson 2007:139). It was

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the place where the prophet was purified, called, responded to God's call and was subsequently commissioned (Isa. 6:6-8).

In the book of Micah, the prophet being contemporary with the prophet Isaiah describes this as truly the sacred dwelling of God wherein Yahweh was approaching (1:2). The message of the prophet concerning Jerusalem that would become loads of ashes (3:12) was only as result of the injustice of their rulers. In Jeremiah however, the prophet's message took an undesirable posture with respect to the temple. Here, he is recorded as drastically opposed to the sacrificial cultus, maintaining that it did not form any part of Yahweh's worship (Jer. 7:22-23) (Barton 2007:112). He confronted all those who held a misleading attitude and gratification in the temple, and thus set their confidence and protection in it (7:4), and prompted their memory about Shiloh's sanctuary that was demolished (7:12). However, the prophet's attack was not simply about the temple as an institution rather it was for their misleading notions and deceitful cultic attitude (Ahn 2011:78).

Furthermore, during the period of the exile, Ahn (2011:78) observes that the temple was conceived as an emblem of the reestablishment of Israel's community. In Second Isaiah (also known as Deutero-Isaiah), during the period that lies between Isaiah at the end of the 8th century and the end of the exile imagined in Isaiah 40-55, Isaiah is noted to have proclaimed the prospect of salvation and the reconstitution of Judah-Israel and Zion-Jerusalem (40:1-2). The restoration of Zion-Jerusalem's enthronement is described in Isaiah 52:1-3 (Berges 2010:555; Baltzer 1994:52).

Three realms which cannot be disconnected in Deutero-Isaiah's theological understanding are: the city and its destiny, the well-being of the land and its people, and the sense of a final world order (Baltzer 1994:58). Yahweh is

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conceived alone as God who guarantees the balance between what is at the moment breaking in (43:19, 28). During the restoration of Yahweh's people, Ezekiel underscored the significance of the temple in two separate visions of the temple. First, he observed the detestable things the people were doing in the temple in Jerusalem (8:5-6, 10-11, 14-16), where Yahweh's wrath was triggered by its desecration and the abandonment of the people. Second, he saw that the temple's sacredness (40-48), was re-established and the glory of Yahweh reappeared again in the temple, making it his abode (Ahn 2011:78). Chapters 40-48, with their vision of the restored temple, constitute one of the peculiar master-pieces of the book, combining both drama and reality (Joyce 2007:145-147). Joyce (2007:151) citing Kasher (1998:192, 194) notes that, "It would appear that Ezekiel views the entire utopian world built in chs. 40-48 through anthropomorphic glasses, mainly in the sense that he envisages the Temple as God's permanent house or abode."

Additionally, Ezekiel 47:1-12 presents a fascinating picture of a river flowing from the temple, and down through the desert to make every living creature and the trees bearing fresh fruit. With this prophetic vision of the new and glorified temple, the prophet inspires the anticipation and optimism of the land's restoration and the salvation of the people. Yahweh will now publicly manifest himself and dwell in this city and temple, a location or home that will remain once and for all distinct from the ambits of ethical and ritual pollution (Ahn 2011:78). In these chapters (40-48), several rituals are mentioned. Joyce (2007:152) says:

> Ezekiel 40:38-43 allude to a chamber where the burnt offering was to be washed, and tables on which the various offerings were to be slaughtered. Ezekiel 42:13-14 refers to chambers where the priests shall eat the most holy offerings and also deposit their special vestments before going out into the outer court. Animal sacrifice is, then, to be a feature of Ezekiel's new Temple.

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A very remarkable statement at the end of Ezekiel 42 is the verse that indicates a wall around the temple area that will serve as a differentiation with respect to the intensity of sacredness even as the various locations of their accomplishment are specially demarcated (v. 20; cf. 44:23). Here divisions, gradation, degree, access, are the themes fundamental to the address (Joyce 2007:152). Simon (2009:416) stresses on the reason for this kind of spatial demarcation when he says that the essence of the temple rituals was to preserve the continuing procedure of cleansing, the cleansing of such unavoidable contamination and iniquity. The crucial and burning issues are that of providing opportunities as well as arrangements for the cleansing of the pollution and contamination of the people that made Yahweh send them into captivity. In Ezekiel's theological construct, there is a clear connection between the ideas of the Most Holy place and the Altar of Yahweh. The Most Holy place to him is an emblem of Yahweh's abode (*kabhodh Yhwh*), while the Altar represents the venue of purification.

This vision as noted by Simon (2009:416) is in dramatic disparity with the previous vision of the temple in Ezekiel 8. In about 592 BCE, Ezekiel was divinely conveyed back to Jerusalem in order to view the temple still-standing and to bear testimony to the detestable and wicked atrocities that the people of Israel were perpetrating there. Afterward, Yahweh disconnects his manifestation and predicts the demolition of His house (i.e. the temple) and the deportation of the remnant back to Babylon. In the restoration vision, the *kābhôdh* (i.e., glory), which is the representation or emblem of the divine manifestation, comes back to the reconstructed Jerusalem temple, while the designation given to the city from that time onward would be *Yahweh shāmmāh* ("Yahweh is Present" Ezek. 48:35). This is essentially a magnificent theocentric note for a Yahweh-centred biblical book to end (Joyce 2007:160).

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Simon further observes that the theological heritage of the priestly class to which the prophet (i.e., Ezekiel) himself is a beneficiary centres on the temple's function and its rituals for handling the various transgressions and pollutions of the house of Israel. The temple to him remains a venue of purification, constant, uninterrupted and seasonal, particularly of the people's contamination. There is contamination from normal and everyday living, such as pubic emission, monthly discharge from the womb of women and female primates who are not pregnant, contact with dead bodies, handling of unholy items, all of which makes one inaccessible to holy venues. This is in addition to such contamination arising from idol worshipping and the infringement of human rights. Israel's land also needs regular and seasonal cleansing, and as such when their accumulated and collective iniquity surpassed what the temple can accommodate in order to attain cleansing, they were subsequently ejected from their homeland to a strange land (Simon 2009:417).

What is clear from the foregoing exploration of the pre-exilic and exilic prophets' understanding of the temple is that the temple is the abode of Yahweh, the God of Israel. The prophetic emphases on the temple provided the Israelites with national security and uniqueness as well as making a significant contribution to ones understanding of the progress of a theology of the temple and its worship in Israel. This understanding of the temple no doubt persisted even in the period of the exile regardless of the nation's tragedy of about 587 BCE. In their restoration vision, the exilic prophets positioned the restoration of Israel in the temple. Although there was no temple, the anticipation of the renewal of Israel rested in the Temple. This to some reasonable extent may have served as a viable alternative the prophets of this period had with which to animate those who were in exile in order to

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arouse or stimulate their identity as a nation and their religious integrity (Ahn 2011:79).

3.1.3. The Temple in Post-Exilic Prophetic Heritage

While there have been discussions on the consistency and inconsistency of the religion of Israel after the exile (Blenkinsopp 2009:33), at the same time there is generally recognised a change in religious awareness during the restoration period. Included in this transformation, is the essential role the temple played (Ahn 2011:75). Ahn upholds that in the post-exilic era, the understanding of the prophets with respect to the temple is that of an emblem of the restoration of Yahweh's faith community and a representation of an eschatological groundwork.

An exploration of the post-exilic prophetic understanding of the temple demands however, a brief illustration of the historical conditions of the province of Yehud. It is assumed that in the Persian Period[2] Israel was in need of a reformatted identity, a new 'viable self'. Three ideas are implied in this sentence: the Persian Period is seen as an era following the radical changes caused by the Exile and return, Israel is considered as a community of people worshipping Yahweh and identity is seen as a group of symbols shared by the majority of the community and which helps cope with reality (Becking 2003:18-20).

[2] Over time historians have to broaden their focus beyond what the HB/OT suggests for the period and now seem to operate with the idea that history should describe it as the "Persian Period" rather than "Post-Exilic Period." This terminology implies that the study of this era is more complex and comprehensive than the study of the references to Jerusalem in the years covered by Ezra, Nehemiah, Haggai and Zachariah. However, given the focus of the biblical sources, in comprehensive histories of Israel, this era is still also called the post-exilic period and these expressions are used together in this study (Moore and Kelle 2011:397), see also Carter (1999:294).

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Miller and Mays (2006:487) focus on the nature of religious practice in Judah, including questions about the potential location and functions of a new temple and the possibility of ongoing cultic practices in the ruins of the Jerusalem temple. For Moore and Kelle (2011:371), while people and towns remained, all important social and cultural systems fell apart, leaving a poor and scattered population with no meaningful unifying social or economic structures and no important political or national activity.

Oded (1977:478-79) cited in (Moore and Kelle 2011) provides a convenient example of this perception. Although he argues that the destruction and deportation were limited in scope, with even the Jerusalem temple perhaps surviving to some extent, Oded asserts that life in Judah was radically disrupted to the extent that the remaining society was marked by "depression, lack of confidence, economic poverty, and political and national inactivity." However, when Babylon fell to the Persians (539BCE) the destruction of Babylon led some of the Judean theologians (Levites) to interpret this event as a sign of salvation for Zion along with the rebuilding of the cities of Judah and of the temple (Groenewald 2003:235-237; 299-300).

The post-exilic community is seen as a society with a population that is proportionally representative of all kinds of people of interest, with at least three constituent groups: The first band consisted of those who were left behind, in Judah following the tragedy of 587 BCE. The second encompassed some who had come back from Babylon in the company of Sheshbazzar in the early period of influence of Cyrus (Ezr. 1:7-11). In the third group, were a number of Judeans who may have come back from Babylon in the company of Zerubbabel and Joshua, a few years prior to the preaching of Haggai, and thus were struggling to reestablish themselves (Bedford 1995:72). There was, indeed, for those who had remained in Palestine, those who had returned

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from exile were a danger in that these returnees would apply their family rights and privileges from the property on which the remnants had staked their livelihood (Albertz 1994:444).

Thus, a disagreement amid two groups: "people of the land" and "people of Judah" (returned exiles), was anticipated (see, Ezr. 4:4-5). Surely, there may have been a different understanding of their situation among the returned exiles due to the different times from which they returned. Those who arrived earlier would be less passionate and patriotic about the rebuilding of their community than those late arrivals owing to the fact that the early arrivals were already familiar with the difficult economic and social realities that were very distinct from the restoration vision of Second- Isaiah (Ahn 2011:79-80). What therefore was the prophets' perspective of the temple under these circumstances? No doubt, their perceptions were fashioned and coloured by the peculiar conditions they faced.

During this period, two emblems of great significance for Ezra are the Temple and Torah. Ezra makes clear the significance of the temple for proper and adequate worship of Yahweh. A literary analysis of his narrative indicates that he wanted to underscore the significance of the temple not as a building as such, but as the place for a correct celebration of the Passover-festival. This system of reflection is seen as having divine (Ezr. 5:1-2) and imperial (Ezr. 6:1-5) support (Becking 1999:257-262). The Second Temple is actually portrayed slightly in Ezra 6:3-4 in the letter to Cyrus the King (Carroll 1994:35).

Biblical documents from the Persian period accentuate the centrality of the Temple. The most important agenda of Ezra's visit to Judah was principally concerned with the normalisation of the cult in Jerusalem. According to Ezra 7, concern for the law is articulated within the cultic structure which the letter

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is mostly concerned with. In other words, the context of the royal decree of Artaxexes points out that the question of imperial authorisation of Torah cannot be studied properly in isolation from the rest of the royal writ (Lee 2011:177). Lee aptly puts this observation thus:

> The most noteworthy thing about [Ezra 7:15 – 24] is that it seems to relate more to installing a Temple-cultus than to promulgating a Law. And in fact Ezra's reaction in verse 27 stresses only this aspect of the decree: 'Blesses by YHWH, the God of our fathers, who put such an idea into the heart of the King, to adorn the temple of YHWH which is in Jerusalem.' Verse 19, though not using the term "confiscated," nevertheless unmistakably echoes the terms of 1.7ff in which Cyrus authorized and promoted the original rebuilding of the Temple. This does not exclude that, since both bureaucracy and religion are strong for doing only what has solid precedent no matter how irrelevant it may be to the present need, again now Ezra may have received vessels and free-will offerings for Temple-cultus as a token of approval for his religious mission of quite different type (2011:177).

Temples were not ordinary symbols to the Achaemenids. Thus, from their standpoint, temples were a vital connection between local religious societies and local economic activity, from which they could logically derive meaningful political advantage. The temple and its cult are fundamental to the economic makeup of ancient Near Eastern society. The HB thus confirms that the Persian political evaluation of the centrality of the temple to Judean life was indeed proper and adequate. There are numerous texts in the Bible that demonstrate the essential role that the temple played in Judah. During the Persian period the restoration of the temple became a focal point of discussion for biblical scholars (Lee 2011:178-179; cf. Carroll 1994:34-36, 45-51; Janzen 2002:490ff.). Blenkinsopp clearly explains the strategic social and economic impact of temples in the Achaemenid context when he says:

> Many of the larger temples throughout the Achaemenid empire were wealthy institutions with their own land holdings and work force, their own capital in specie and produce from which they advanced loans, serving more or less the same function as banks and credit unions

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> today. Stimulation of the regional economics by temples serving as storage and redistribution centres, to the evident advantage of the imperial exchange, helps to explain why they were supported by successive Achaemenid rulers (Blenkinsopp 1991:23).

Both prophets and historians of the Persian period are characteristically interested in the accurate restoration of religious life in Judea which was disrupted by the Babylonia invasion. Middlemas (2005:123) aptly notes, "The Babylonians thoroughly disrupted the ability of Jerusalem to function as a political and religious centre through their termination of the influence of the Davidic line and the priests of the temple." Thus the volume of instructive, reflective, interpretive, and oracular dialogue about the destruction and restoration of the temple, describing the various theological and ideological perspectives dominant at that time, bear witness to the leading position of the temple in the social, economic, political and religious dimensions of Judeans' national identity (Lee 2011:179). In the light of the traditional and central role of the temple in society, the one institution in Judah that had the potential to embody the local administrative organisation, having been staffed by leading individuals who represented religious and intellectual leadership in ancient Israel (Blenkinsopp 1995:66-114), one may be correct to assume this to be the reason why the Achaemenids' political strategy toward the Judean province was primarily focused on the Temple in Jerusalem

Within the prophetic books, the temple is at best a textual one; it lacks specific detail and reference, and thus may be either the first or the second temple. The suggestions made by the text may not even be that specific, so that the temple referred to is purely textual and fictional (Carroll 1994:37). Prophetic texts that are treated as clearly the outcome of the "Temple of Restoration" or "Second Temple" period are those of Haggai-Zachariah-Malachi. In Ezra 5:1-2, the prophets, Haggai and Zachariah are connected with the reconstruction

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of the second temple. Efforts toward the rebuilding task of the temple are presented in a predictive manner and the reconstruction process is described as a widespread venture in Haggai (Carroll 1994:37).

Clines (1994:66) observes that the Temple of Restoration was not simply a building constructed by the Judeans; but in addition, it was an intellectual piece built by prophet Haggai. The rebuilt temple in Haggai's construction links with 'glory', and 'glory' links with silver and gold, silver and gold connects with national disorder and national disorder in turn links with the appropriate time for the reconstruction of the temple. The 'temple' in Haggai is conceived as the 'the place of Yahweh's presence', a symbol of Yahweh's glory with an eschatological significance, a centre of God's self-manifestation, a centre of divine worship, a place of human meeting with the divine, a social centre, required for both Israel's survival and a focus of a universal religion, thus a religious center of the world (cf. Isa. 2:2-4). It is further conceived as a channel of salvation, an emblem of, or a channel for the community's autonomy and distinctiveness as well as the economic and administrative centre of the post-exilic Judean community (Clines 1994:67-70).

Haggai, having clearly announced the critical mission of the reconstruction of the temple (1:2-7, 14), shows no defence for self-interest in the light of the situation of the temple of Yahweh. While lack of resources on account of the harsh economic situation has been noted as an excuse for the people's neglect or refusal to rebuild the temple, the curses of Haggai 1:5-11; 2:15-17 are interpreted to be the result of cultic or ethical infractions (Bedford 1995:74). In his diagnosis and explanation on why there was a delay or neglect in the reconstruction of the temple, the simple causal explanation, namely; poor economic situation as a factor responsible for the neglect or delay to reconstruct the temple (1:6), is turned into neglect or delay to reconstruct the

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temple as a reason for the poor economic situation (1:9-11). Thus Haggai's theological presuppositions reflect the religious idea of his time. Japhet corroborates this understanding when he says:

> Since all misfortunes are perceived as punishment, the depressed economy is to be seen similarly as punishment for a sin. Against the general background of this view, however, Haggai's way of understanding the sin represents a significant innovation. The national sin of Israel, according to him, is the failure to build the Temple! It is this sin which is responsible for all the calamities, and a change in the people's fortune hinges entirely upon its correction (Japhet 1991:229).

Another inventive dimension of the prophecy of Haggai is the declaration that the survival of the temple guarantees the economic prosperity of the nation. Assis says in his explanation:

> This point is reiterated several times in the book. In his first prophecy, Haggai attributes the two central economic problems - the drought (1:10-11) and the failing agriculture and economy (1:6) - to the nation's failure to build the Temple. This would seem to suggest that the building of the Temple would solve these two problems. Until now the people have postponed the building out of a need to achieve first economic stability. Haggai takes the opposite view: the harsh economic conditions are the result of the absence of a Temple and, therefore the economic situation cannot be improved without building the Temple. In his third prophecy, Haggai goes so far as to assert that the connection between Temple and economy is direct and immediate: There will be a dramatic improvement from the very day of the laying of the foundations (2:15, 18) (Assis 2008:6).

In chapter 2 of the book of Haggai, the prophet's essence of the divine house is that of a stock market, or centre of the creation of wealth. It appears more like a royal taxation centre than a holy house. In this regard, the absence of a divine house is explained to mean the reason for the nation's economic hardship and deprivation and thus the function of such a rebuilt divine temple must be seen in terms of its ability for wealth creation (Carroll 1994:41). Thus at the moment the temple's foundation was laid, the blessings

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of Yahweh were assured (Hag. 2:18-19). Additionally, the temple's reconstruction is associated with the coming back of the rule of Yahweh, in Jerusalem (Hag. 2:20-23; cf. Meyers and Meyers 1987:68). Thus the rebuilding of the temple will bring near economic prosperity and political revitalisation. Here lays the prophet's understanding of the temple, namely that of an emblem of the restoration of the Judean community that extends to the future in an eschatological manner (Ahn 2011:81).

The prophet Zachariah is also considered in close connection with Haggai as one who promoted the building of the second temple. Both prophets appeared together in the book of Ezra (5:1-2; 6:14). Marinkovic (1994:96) argues that in his message, Zechariah only advocates an idea of the living community in Jerusalem. "In short the basic issue of Zechariah 1-8, concerns the renewed establishing of the relationship between Yahweh and his people in Jerusalem." While Haggai emphasises the restoration of the temple, Zechariah on the other hand is concerned with the building of Yahweh's community in Jerusalem (Marinkovic 1994:102). Stressing further on the internal reason behind the building of the temple in Zechariah's message, Marinkovic (1994:103) states:

> The rebuilding of the temple does not serve as an end in it self . . . Rather; it is a symbol and visible sign of the relatedness of God and God's people and their living together as a community in Jerusalem. Thus, the temple will become a visible sign of the renewal of the Covenant, the relationship between YHWH and his people, but the actual goal is the renewed community itself, the community that exist between God and God's people and not the mere building of the temple

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While Zechariah's visions[3] give little attention to the temple itself (Petersen 1991:92) viewing its completions as a future event (cf. Zech. 6:15) (Japhet 1991:219), in Zachariah (8:9-13) Carroll (Carroll 1994:43) notes that the prophet, describes the temple of the restoration as a focal point of economic activities, and that the economic expansion and growth of the nation is directly connected with the temple's construction.[4] According to Zechariah (1:12-17), the delay in the rebuilding of the temple was on account of the fact that Yahweh had been absent from Jerusalem after the tragedy of 587 BCE and was now set to return to Jerusalem (Zech. 2:14, 16). Bedford states that: "Yahweh's return to Jerusalem precipitates the rebuilding of the temple and the renewal of the divine presence in Jerusalem will ensure prosperity for the whole land (Zech. 2:10-17)" (Bedford 1995:82).

The expression of hope and confidence that such a day would witness the termination of business in the temple (14:21), is simply symptomatic of the fact that the temple is a type of commercial city, known for trade and commercial operations. The sacred language of 14:20-21 may represent a hope for the alteration of Jerusalem (the temple city) from being a business centre to solely a cult centre (Carroll 1994:43). While eschatological features do not manifest in Zechariah as they were in Haggai, however, the reconstruction of the temple implies the restoration of Yahweh's community followed by both economic and political aspects.

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[3] Carroll (1994:41) examines the literary device of the prophet's night visions which focuses on the rebuilding of the temple in various ways and is a highly reflective construction.

[4] Other facets of the temple language and routine are used in Zachariah. For example; Yahweh's mountain of hosts, the sacred hill (8:3) or the clothing of Joshua the High Priest (3:1-5), visions or oracles about the day of Yahweh, when all parts of Judah and Jerusalem would be sacred, hardly afford any concrete information about the temple (Zach. 14:20-21) (Carroll 1994:43).

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In the study of the temple and its role in the corpus of Isaiah 56-66,[5] it is argued that the attempts to gain control of the temple by competing groups plays a dominant role in the Trito-Isaiah's material. The temple construction serves as an incentive for the development of the Isaianic prophecies, with the central issue being that of the possession of the temple (Middlemas 2007:164-165). While the temple has already been completed and the round of sacrifices are being offered, there appears to be a population of the people who are engaged in apostate worship practices (57:3-13; 58:1-5), of illicit cultic rituals (Smith 1995:155-59), and a crisis of faith in the absence of the manifestation of promised wealth by the earlier prophets following the completion of the temple (66:6), thus giving rise to the observation that the temple does not symbolise the full measure of significance which had been expected of it by the people (Peterson 1991:93).

While one can observe the prophetic pronouncement of judgement (57:13; 65:11-15) on the one hand, Yahweh's consolation of his people is celebrated in the temple's mount in Jerusalem (66:10-14), on the other hand. In the nucleus material (60:1-63:6), the prophet considers the sanctuary in Jerusalem as only a mirror detail within the greater scheme of the advent of Yahweh's planned redemption. The message of this section radiates with themes of salvation, joy, celebration and blessing which are described differently as the wealth of nations flow into Jerusalem. There is no trace of indictment here since the focus is basically on the fulfilment of the anticipation of the earlier promises of Second-Isaiah and through it, the turnaround of the awful predictions of Proto-Isaiah (cf. 60:1-2, 17-19 and 9:1-3; 60:3, 5, 14, 17 and 2:1-4; 60:14 and 12:6; 62:4 and 1:7; 62:10-12 and 11:10). Thus as Yahweh's people are being blessed

[5] Usually referred to as, *Trito-Isaiah*, see Berges (2009:575-596 (578).

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through his intervention, the temple will be blessed as well (Middlemas 2007:169-170).

In these core sections, the temple serves as a medium of expressing the restoration of the economic buoyancy of the people. These restoration blessings of the new era result in the rebuilding of the temple and the recommencement of ritual activities in it (Middlemas 2007:171). As the place of the righteous ruling of the transcendent and the occupant of a cosmic throne; of the God of Israel who is concerned with the poor and oppressed, 66:1-2, and locus of the divine intervention in history, the prophet thus seeks to exhort the people to align their attitude to the ethical demands of Yahweh in preparation for his imminent advent (Middlemas 2007:182). The temple thus, functions as both a symbol of divine judgment and consolation in Trito-Isaiah. An innovative aspect of the temple in Trito-Isaiah however, is the recognition given to foreigners and the eunuch within his (56:3-8); the question about the human temple (66:1-2) and the imaginative idea of the temple as the prayer house for every nation (56:7), which invariably goes outside the narrow confine of ethnic traditions and national cult (Ahn 2011:89).

In the book of Joel (1:9, 13, 16), the prophet is obsessed with a termination of cultic activities from the temple. The explanation given with respect to the interruption of the temple ritual acts were teeming and swarming grasshoppers (1:4, 7, 10) and a terrible famine (1:11-12). In this regard, the critical and urgent problem of the people was the obstruction of the offerings to Yahweh in the temple, since the ritual ceremonies in the temple were intimately connected with the fate of the community. In this however, one still sees the same post-exilic prophetic heritage that treats the temple as an emblem of the revival of the people (Ahn 2011: 82).

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The eschatological vision of the restoration of the community is expanded into several facets. The day of Yahweh (*yôm yhwh*) is underscored as the day of judgment and destruction (1:15; 2:1-11). Nevertheless, Yahweh's residing in Zion, his sacred mountain is a shield and protection for his own people (3:16-17). Despite the fact that the temple had been a place of sorrow and disappointment, lacking in offerings or the shouts of joy and gladness (1:13-16), it would be turned into the centre and well-spring of gladness, from which the divine benedictions are made manifest (Ahn 2011:82-83).

In Malachi, the prophet's references to the temple deal with questions about altar pollution and acceptability (or otherwise) of offerings on the altar (cf. 1:6-14; 2:13; 3:4). The explanations given for this are not only hard economic reality but more critically, disillusionment and gloom arising from the lack of confirmation of the words of the prophets, that a new, more prosperous and glorious, messianic age was about to manifest itself at any moment. The tidal waves of enthusiasm that had been created by the preaching of earlier prophets had by then crashed on the rocks of reality. The disillusionment of the postexilic Jewish community was prompted by several theological misunderstandings, including the expectations for wealth that Haggai had promised once the second temple was rebuilt (Hag. 2:7, 18-19), the restoration of the Davidic covenant predicted by Ezekiel (Ezek. 34:13, 23-24) and the implementation of Jeremiah's "new covenant" (Jer. 31:23, 31-32) (Hills 2012:527; Blenkinsopp 1996:210).

Strong and harsh denunciations are directed against priests (2:1-9) but they will be purified by the "messenger of the covenant" (3:1-4). Yahweh is represented as coming 'suddenly to his temple' (3:1), for an eschatological judgment. In this regard, the temple is discerned as an emblem of eschatological hope, wherein Yahweh's last judgment is determined and the

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triumph of Yahweh's people is declared and granted (Ahn 2011: 83). The day of Yahweh as envisioned by Malachi which will alter the realities of life for Judah. The Israelites expected a day that will bring divine deliverance from their enemies. They hold, of course, that their enemies were Yahweh's enemies but they were themselves Yahweh's enemies, by reason of their covenant violation. So, why they eagerly await the messenger of the covenant to come (Mal 3:1), in fact his coming would not be delightful for them.

In the decisive events of the day, the prophet discerns with particular simplicity the awesome presence of Yahweh in the world in his ongoing activity of judging those who have violated the covenant, and who invariably are no longer under its protection with a future day of renewal and restoration of the fortunes of those who fear the Lord. It is this eschatological dimension of the Day of Yahweh that intensifies the ethical uniqueness of the book of Malachi. As Clendenen (2004:238) says, "God's faithful love in the past as elaborated in 1:2–5 and the coming day of Yahweh announced in 3:16–4:6 together were to be the motivating factors for all the exhortations in the book."

According to Carroll (1994:43-44), the figure of *kᵉkhāl* is not developed further and no references of the temple appear anywhere in Malachi. In Malachi 3:10, Yahweh's house (i.e. the temple) is associated with a storehouse (*bêth hā'ôtsār*). The exhortation to bring all the tithes into the storehouse will secure the prosperity of the land by giving 'food' for the temple. The relationship that exists between the temple and fecundity of the land may indicate older relationships of land and hallowed reserve; however in Malachi it "seems to represent the same point made in Haggai and Zachariah about the temple as an economic centre of the community" (Carroll 1994:44)

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So far, the temple's concepts of post-exilic prophets have been explored. In this exploration, it is observed and noted that the second temple served as restoration and revival of the people economically and reign of Yahweh in an eschatological fashion. In Ezra, the significance of the temple is underscored not as a building as such, but as the place for the correct celebration of the Passover-festival. This system of reflection is seen as having divine (Ezr. 5:1-2) and imperial (Ezr. 6:1-5) support. The 'temple' in Haggai assures economic wealth; an emblem of the restoration of the Judean community that extends to the future in an eschatological manner. The reconstruction of the temple, for Zechariah, implies the re-establishment of Yahweh's people and community followed by both economic and political aspects.

The temple, serves as both a symbol of the divine judgment and consolation of his people in Trito-Isaiah. In Joel, the temple as an emblem of the restoration of the community; a restoration that would turn the temple into the centre and well-spring of gladness, from which divine benedictions are made manifest and in Malachi the temple is discerned as an economic centre of the community and an emblem of eschatological hope, wherein Yahweh's last judgment is determined and the triumph of Yahweh's people is declared and granted. These prophetic conceptions of the temple are used by the prophets in their respective contexts to challenge people to move towards their aim. Attention will now be drawn to the prophetic criticism of the temple within Israel's prophetic tradition.

3.2. PROPHETIC CRITICISMS OF THE TEMPLE RITUALS WITHIN ISRAEL'S PROPHETIC HERITAGE

There has been serious debate regarding the prophets and the cult in Israel. From both pre-exilic and post-exilic prophetic writings on the subject of their

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criticism of the rituals of the temple, the evidence leans toward two opposite directions (Barton 2007:111). Heaton (1977:64) notes that this debate will likely not come to an end because of the lack of substantial evidence. Some of the tension can be reduced if one recognises that the pre-exilic prophets, with the exception of Micah, who speaks clearly against sacrifices for sin and not for general religious ritual observances concerned with sacrifices following feasts and celebrations (Barton 2007:119).

3.2.1. Temple Ritual Statements in Prophetic Biblical Texts outside Malachi

While scholars have yet to fully explain the phenomenon of criticism of the cult in prophetic writings, there is much scholarly precedent for studying pre-exilic and post-exilic prophetic criticism and or approval of the cult. The prophetic writings attributed to the pre-exilic prophets particularly of the eight and seventh centuries are presented as being hostile to the cultic religious practices of the temple, especially the sacrificial services in it. On the other hand, some post-exilic prophetic writings record prophetic approval of the sacrificial cult, and yet sometimes condemning its existence (Barton 2007:111-112).

In the following paragraphs, I shall present a few observations from the biblical text and then reflect the views of scholars on the prophetic criticism of the rituals of the temple. The attempt here is to briefly consider what comprises the prophetic critic of ritual, noting their arguments and why they make them. The texts that are frequently cited are those in which the prophets oppose the cultic and ritual practices of their contemporaries. They are mostly treated as an indictment of established principles, an analysis of why these kinds of ritual acts and specific cultic circumstances are dishonest. In their appeal to principles that are usually described as one's 'personal' relationship

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with God or the 'moral' or 'ethical' dimensions of religion, the prophets can be seen as casting doubts on the whole cultic enterprise.

First, Amos ridicules the sacrificial cult at Bethel and Gilgal by ironically asking the people to pile up their sacrifices (4:4-5). Later on in another paradigmatic text, one sees him denouncing the festivals (5:21-24). An upshot of this cultic expression is found in Hosea, who criticises mainly what he considers to be a highly Baalized cult (6:6; Barton 2007:111). In Micah, the prophet in opposition to sacrifice presents a proposal for accommodation between Yahweh and Israel, the groups that were having discrepancies at the opening of the chapter. When tried, judgment is issued against Israel; they are condemned of injustice and ungratefulness towards Yahweh, the crimes with which they stood charged. The guilt of their crime is too clear to be denied, too great to be discharged, and thus, they express their plea to be at peace with Yahweh (6:6-8). Isaiah announces the same message of dislike of their festivals and sacrifices in his first chapter (1:11-14).

As already noted in Jeremiah, the prophet's message assumed an undesirable and pessimistic posture with respect to the temple. He is recorded as drastically opposed to some aspects of the sacrificial cultus, maintaining that it did not form any part of Yahweh's worship (Barton 2007:112). As noted by the author of the text, God asks derisively through the prophet when he says:

> For what purpose does frankincense come to me from Sheba, And the sweet cane from a distant land? Your burnt offerings are not acceptable, and your sacrifices are not pleasing to me (6:20). For I did not speak to your fathers, or command them in the day that I brought them out of the land of Egypt, concerning burnt offerings and sacrifices. But this is what I commanded them, saying, 'Obey My voice, and I will be your God, and you will be My people; and you will walk in all the way which I command you, that it may be well with you' (7:22-23; NASB).

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In his theological assessment of the cult as the place and activity of public worship, Brueggemann (1997:650) notes that the cult plays an essential role in the faith and life of the ancient Israelite community. OT scholarship must therefore reckon with the fact that the community which creates testimonies about Yahweh is, in principle and in practice, a worshipping community. He contends that in worship Israel deals with the person, character, will, purpose, and presence of Yahweh in a much regularised, stylised kind rather than by history as much modern OT scholarship contends. The textual traditions about Israel's worship are rich and varied. These texts seek to articulate and make accessible real presence. More importantly the concrete practice of "rituals and sacraments" fashioned Israel as a community that is intensely and definitely related to Yahweh. He rejects the general Christian concept toward OT theology deriving from classical Protestantism with its profound aversion to cult, regarding cultic actions as archaic, magical and manipulative and thus finding value only in the OT 's prophetic-ethical traditions (Brueggemann 1997:651).

In the ritual criticism of the prophets, Brueggemann points out that the cult does become a place of self-indulgence and satiation and that Yahweh a function of a religious enterprise that was manipulative and self-satisfying, which in itself has totally parted with any reference to the sovereign God of the core testimony. He maintains that the prophets were concerned with the gross abuses in the cult and would not have entertained the notion of abolishing the cult. The cult in these prophetic polemics should be a witness to and embodiment of the practice of communion with Yahweh, in his true character as sovereign and merciful. So he concludes that the cult beyond its instrumental use as a necessary support for ethical intentions, is a place where in Israel might be in the presence of Yahweh, the Holy One, and thus no

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evidence that the prophets opposed public worship itself, as long as that worship focused on the peculiarity of Yahweh, the true God of Israel (Brueggemann 1997:678). What is very special about Brueggemann's assessment is his identification of Israel's cult as a direct witness, or testimony about one who is behaving in an ethical manner.

Barton (2007:119) in his explanation on the pre-exilic prophets, who are opposed to sacrifice, notes that only Micah (6:6) speaks unequivocally with hostility against sacrifice *for sin.* The other pre-exilic prophets seem more interested with sacrifices following feasts and other celebrations.

> . . . overwhelmingly concerned with the kind of sacrifice which accompanies feasting, probably the s^{e}l*amîm* type, offered with rejoicing and thanksgiving in mind . . . that could mean that at least some of the anti-sacrifice polemic in, say Amos and Isaiah is linked to their disapproval of feasting and self-indulgence, rather than to questions of what for us would be strictly questions of religious ritual observance.

He addresses the issue of contradictory attitudes of the pre-exilic and post-exilic prophets toward the sacrificial (including offering) aspect of the cult, asking what the prophets thought about the practice of the cult in both pre- and post-exilic times and how involved they were in the Israelite cult during various periods. As Barton proceeds, he addresses the argument of scholars who deny the sustainability of the rituals in ancient Israel and who promote the idea of religion which has right at its heart of social interaction more than mere observance of ritual stipulation (Barton 2007: 116-121).

Barton however, could not explain the postexilic prophetic statements in favor of the cult, which are far more than the statements against the cult from pre-exilic prophets. While he could not further address the question of how far the prophets opposed the cultic rituals and how far they considered it improper for those who were engrossed in such activities which to them were

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sinful, such as the oppression of the poor and perversion of justice, he notes that the majority of prophetic criticism of the cult does appear to concern the offering of sacrifices or the practice of fasting by those who are morally compromised (as in the case of Isa. 58). To him, "The way to please Yahweh, the prophets urge, or the way to be forgiven for one's sins, is to engage in moral reform. Until that is done, practicing cultic observances compounds the insult being offered to God" (Barton 2007:120).

Wellhausen (1878, 2003:53) in his *Prolegomena to the History of Ancient Israel* emphasises the distinctive difference between the pre-exilic and postexilic praxis of the cult. He notes that the influence of the priests during and after the Exile, whose practice on the administration of the cult they centralised in the Temple, concerned specifically with sin and atonement, rendered the cult less personal than it had been in the pre-exilic period. He remarks that the stories about sacrifice in the Pentateuch offer insights into the origins of the Israelite cult. According to him, the only difference between the Israelite cult and that of other ancient cultures ' religions was that the Israelites offered gifts to Yahweh, while non-Israelites offered gifts to their gods. In the period of the patriarchs, sacrifice was personal, impulsive, and joyful. For these early sacrifices, the primary purpose was simply thanksgiving. The patriarchs were not founders of the cult, but of the holy places to which the people brought their sacrificial gifts. In the historical books, apart from the redactional material of 1-2Kings, the practice of the cult is never considered to be illegitimate as long as the Israelites offered gifts to Yahweh (Wellhausen 2003:54-55).

On the prophetic criticism of the cult, Wellhausen focuses on the prophets' distinction between the cult and religion. While the prophet Amos distinguished between worship and faith, his polemic was against the cultic

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performances of his contemporaries, not against their belief in Yahweh. Wellhausen also notes the inability of Amos's or Isaiah's having recourse to any written ritual Law because this had not yet been recorded. Thus they had no access to Mosaic instruction or traditions concerning the cult, but only to Yahweh's *tôrāh*, which dealt with matters of justice and morality (Wellhausen 2003:56-61).

Bibb (2006:31-43) addresses the rhetorical aspect of the prophetic critiques of ritual, and argue that OT theologians operating within a pervasive Christian world-view have been inspired by this fiery rhetoric and have used it to create a deceptive and perhaps defamatory demonstration of the cultic life of Israel. To him, the prophetic denunciation of cultic forms of religious expression is almost always voiced by God directly. Thus, it is not just the prophets' observation that ritual practices are not living up to God's standards, but God's own rejection of those practices. This divine 'no' is carried even further by a handful of texts suggesting that sacrificial practices were not part of God's original mandate to Israel (Bibb 2006:33).

Bibb (2006:33) notes that scholars writing within the circle of OT theologies have found in these texts a very clear message, and indeed the message seems obvious: the rituals found in the ancient Israelites cult were not only corrupt and ineffective, but were also completely abhorrent to God and indeed not even part of God's earliest and deepest requirements for the covenantal relationship. For theologians writing within a tradition that has made exactly that argument about the OT rituals, this critique is quite alluring. By transferring the prophetic voice from themselves to the deity, the prophets tap into a rhetorical stream of great flexibility and power. Their intention is to convict the audience of their sinful activities, to express God's dim view of the situation, and to explain what God plans to do about it. Most of the prophets

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also hold out a hope for salvation, though rarely in the form that the audience would have wanted to hear most: rescue from the coming punishment. As scholars have increasingly pointed out, the prophets go to remarkable lengths to express their message, utilising every rhetorical tool at their disposal. From bizarre dramatic acts to offensively sexist and brutal language, the prophets make their enigmatic, mysterious messages as clear and as powerful as they can (Bibb 2006:34).

While acknowledging that priests do have some positive role to play in worship, Bibb notes that the priesthood is an obstacle to religious development because it tends to segregate into a caste that serves as more of a 'hindrance' than a mediator of divine presence (Bibb 2006:39). The prophets take the cultic life of Israel seriously, realising its potential and power. They use a wide variety of rhetorical strategies to dislodge even if for a moment, the deep-rooted theological biases that blind their audience to the word being communicated. The same rhetorical fire that leads them to compare God to a ravenous beast, to a consuming fire, to maggots in rotting meat, and to an abusive husband and father, gives rise to the language of cultic repudiation. It is intended to shock and dismay not to lobby for a world without cultic practice. Christian theological discussion and appropriation of these texts must pay attention to the rhetorical dynamics, possibly even mirroring their strategies in order to shake up the ingrained theological commitments of modern audiences (Bibb 2006:42-43).

Similarly, Ben Zvi (2006:19-30) notes that as one turns to books explicitly set in the Persian period, one finds again a case of prophetic diatribe against priests who failed to perform their duties (Mal. 2:1-3), but even this book is certainly not anti-priestly. On the contrary it reaffirms the importance of proper priests and the centrality of the temple. This reveals that the existence of central

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temple requires the necessity of the presence of a faithful priest (Ben Zvi 2006:23). To be sure, the ideological and social centrality of the temple and indirectly, its priest, may lead to particular, time or event-bound critiques of the latter's perceived misbehaviour and of the earth-shattering consequences that it might lead to in the divine economy.

In other words, it is precisely the fact that the authorship and readership's discourse is fully permeated by the ideological assumption of the crucial role of the temple and its priest that provides the background to hyperbolic critiques of the latter by the prophetic characters that populated the world of the prophetic books that were composed and (re)read by the literati of Yehud, as opposed to any claim about an essential, non contingent opposition between 'the priests' on the one hand and construction of prophets of old, prophetic characters in the prophetic books, and above all those who give voice to them, that is the literati themselves. In other words, it is because the prophetic characters shaped in the prophetic books, and those who shaped and embodied them in readings and rereading thought highly of the offices of the priest that the presence of the so-called 'anti-priest' texts made sense (Ben Zvi 2006:26).

Klawans (2006:75-100) presents an excellent analysis of discussions on the modem study of prophetic criticism of the cult and concludes that the opposition of the prophets to sacrifice reflects the social and economic messages of the prophets themselves. In the prophetic criticism of cultic activities, Klawans advances that the prophets articulated their hostility to sacrifices and offerings, even though they did not intend to repudiate the legitimacy of cultic worship. He notes that the gifts presented for sacrifice by the people were unacceptable on the ground that the offerings themselves (the material gifts), had been stolen. "Sacrificing a stolen animal is, at one and

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the same time, both ethically and ritually wrong" (Klawans 2006:98). He bases his argument on some prophetic statements concerning sacrifices in that are line with expressions of concern over the economic manipulation of the poor and needy as seen in passages such as Amos 5:10-11; cf. Amos 5:23, or Isa 1:11-15. That the priests could accept stolen material gifts (even if they do not know) for ritual purposes implies that they presumed rightful ownership on the part of those bringing the offerings (Klawans 2006:87-88).

He based his work on biblical sacrifice on the Priestly material in Leviticus, which formalises and ritualises every act of sacrifice and highlights that purity and sacrifice were not separated Temple spheres or functions. This analysis shows that his contention originates from a postexilic context. In his brief dialogue on the prophetic criticism of sacrifice, he groups all such criticism together, such that he analyses all four eighth century prophets (Amos, Hosea, Isaiah and Micah) along with Jeremiah (seventh century) and Ezekiel (early exilic). While he does not offer reason, however, as to why the prophets of the eighth century would swiftly criticise temple ritual practices as well as explain the impact that individual prophetic criticism of sacrifice had on their respective audience, his perspective of the problem of rejection of sacrifices is a matter of urgent priority.

In his work, Zevit (2006:189-217) notes that the classical prophets of ancient Israel were individuals concerned primarily with Israel's ethical behaviour. Consequently, for them, adherence to the ethical stipulation of the covenant was deemed more important than the punctilious fulfillment of cultic minutiae. If this is true, as the consensus maintains, that prophets valued ethics more than cult, it is clear that they must have given some thought to priests, promoters of that which they felt impeded Israelites from fulfiling their ethical covenant obligations (Zevit 2006:189). In this vain, it is

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reasonable to infer that some prophets must have felt animus toward priests, and their hostility should be imprinted in the preserved literature (Zevit 2006:190).

In his position Zevit (2006:191), asserts that those known from the historical books are described variously as 'primitive' 'ecstatic' 'enthusiastic' or 'pre-classical' while the latter are known as the 'classical', 'canonical', or 'writing' prophets. Since the 'primitive' prophets appear in books whose major focus is on the history of Israel as a reflection of the policies of its leaders, their words are directed mainly to kings and nobles under concrete, historical (or historicised) time-bound circumstance.

'Classical' prophets are known from scrolls edited so that most of their addresses appear directed to the people at large as a general pronouncement; consequently the former tend to be discounted in theological discussions and the latter esteemed. These observations therefore suggest that contrary to what is commonly taught, the ethics and morality of Israel's social behaviours were not major concerns of these prophets and consequently, not of a particular interest to the collectors of their oracles and editors of books bearing their name (Zevit 2006:191).

In her prophetic critique of the priority of the cult, Lafferty (2010:4) begins with a survey and critique of the cult in ancient Israel and establishes the place and significance of the cult particularly in pre-exilic Israel and Judah. Her study affirms that Amos and Isaiah proclaim similar messages during the same time period, although in different temples, emphasising the importance of just and righteous behaviour for Israelite society. To her, pre-exilic prophetic criticism of the cult has been viewed in modern times as an appeal to abolish the cult or as a plea for social justice within the community.

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However, the 32 OT texts that criticise the praxis of the cult focus on idol worship, illicit offerings, accusations of corruption, or suggest alternative behaviour that would better align the Israelites with their God and not each other. Pre-exilic criticism of the cult, then, had in view neither an elimination of the cult nor merely a sympathetic care toward the widow, the orphans, and the oppressed. The features shared by each of the OT passages that contain criticism of the cult is a focus on the lack of proper attitudes toward, and respect for the relationship between the Israelite people and their God (Lafferty 2010:4, 108).[6]

According to her, ancient Israelites expressed their relationship with Yahweh-among other things-by their participation in the cult and festivals. Sacrifices and offerings were the primary activities at the temples. The pre-exilic prophets criticised this cultic activity, although they did not suggest that all elements of the cult should be eliminated or abandoned forever. The critique was meant to prompt the Israelites to change their focus from external events to internal impulses that would lead them to act rightly towards their neighbours (Lafferty 2010:1-2). She remarks that:

> Cultic activity is the stuff of which ancient religions were made. The praxis, the administration of the cultic establishments, the vested interests of the clergy, and the celebrations of the festivals were not mere functions of a systematic religious outlook, devoid of intrinsic

[6] In her estimation, the criticism of the cult in these texts may be categorised in five different ways. Excluding the two texts that are the topic of this dissertation, there are thirty passages in the above list that can be categorised as follows: six mention idol worship (Hos. 2:13-15; 13:2; Isa. 66:3; Jer. 7:8-10, 17-18; Ezek. 20:39); three passages cite unsolicited offerings (Am. 4:4-5; Jer. 6:19-20; 14:12); one accuses the people of performing their sacrifices only out of obedience to the laws (Isa. 29:13); six contain a rejection of Israel's cult because of the evil deeds, i.e., the sins, of the people (Isa. 43:24; Hos. 8:13: Mic. 3:4: Zech. 7:13; Mal 1:10; 2:3); and fourteen passages state exactly what Yahweh prefers to the worship that is being offered (l Sam. 15:22; Pss. 40:7; 50:7-l5; 51:18-19; Prov. 15:8, 29; 21:3, 27; 28:9; Eccl. 4:17; Isa. 58:6; Jer. 7:21-23; Hos. 6:4-6; Mic. 6:6-8) (Lafferty 2010:4)

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> importance. They are the index of religion as it was practiced in the life of a society (Lafferty 2010:2-3).

Included in her survey is the work of Ernst (1994:97-178) who in order to determine the origins of the prophetic criticism of the cult, studies and compares the texts of Amos 5:21-27 and Isaiah 1:10-17. He compares the language used in these texts to that of the Priestly texts, and determines that there are similarities (Lafferty 2010:12). However, these similarities only demonstrate the prophets' knowledge of priestly traditions; such similarities do not indicate that the prophets were priests. The first person verbs in the text of Amos 5:21-23 are indicative of prophetic speech, as opposed to the language typical of priests. The prophets' total rejection of the cult, without differentiation between those sacrifices offered by good or wicked people, contradicts what the priests would teach as the basic condition of the cult: that Yahweh is ritually attainable (Lafferty 2010:12).

According to Lafferty (2010:13), Ernst attempts to answer the question as to what role does ethical language play in light of the prophets' rejection of ritual and then establishes that their background knowledge of wisdom's ethics and of the cult enabled Amos and Isaiah to voice what Yahweh desires most of all as a matter of the people's attitude. These prophets' criticism of the cult does not judge the cultic actions, or the goodness of the sacrifices offered, or the piety with which the prayers are offered. As an alternative, the prophets charge the people to perform suitable, viable, merciful and ethical attitudes toward one another. It is such ethical behaviour that helps to establish whether Yahweh accepts the cult or declares it outrageous.

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3.2.2. Malachi's Temple Ritual Emphasis within Israel's Prophetic Heritage

Malachi sounds very different. The longest dispute in the book of Malachi is the one directed at the priest (Boda 2012:15).[7] The book is essentially about the religious questions of worship, temple and priesthood. In 1:6-14, the prophet charges the priests (*kohanim*) with shortchanging Yahweh in offerings due to him by allowing the presentation of what the prophet or the authors of the text consider inferior animals. They are not accused of profiting by this, only of violating what appears to him to be transparently obvious standards of acceptability. In the continuation of this trade, the prophet or the authors of the text contrast their behaviour with that of their ancestor Levi, who provided Israel with true instruction (Mal. 2:7).

As it were, priests and Levites played the leading role in the cultic life of Israel; the responsibility of the priests' offering sacrifices was an essential aspect of the bond between Israel and Yahweh. However, the priests in the book of Malachi despised this covenantal relationship by neglecting their functions. After rebuking Judah as a nation, Malachi confronts the priests who have despised Yahweh's name and defiled his alter. The prophet specifically dealt with the function and purpose of the priests and Levites. While priests were saddled with the responsibility of guarding the entire cultic life of the people, the teaching aspect is considered to have been an integral part of the priestly office. Thus given the fact that teaching was an important aspect of the priestly office, the prophetic critique of this area becomes very pointed. While condemning the abuse of priestly power and corrupt worship, the prophet regards himself no less than a reformer, calling both his priestly

[7] While there is ample evidence that the priests are addressed in a considerable portion of the book of Malachi (Tiemeyer 2006:17-27), textual critical issues relating to their identity, duties and or responsibilities and associated criticism by the prophet, are reserved for the exegetical chapter of this thesis.

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colleagues and the larger community for renewed fidelity to Yahweh's covenant (Brown 1996:191). The prophet or the authors of the text attempts to bring the priesthood closer to what the prophets perceived to be the ideal; priest that excelled in teaching; effective and efficient exegetes of scripture, priest that provided social justice, that worshipped Yahweh alone and whose performance of the cult satisfied the most rigorous cultic demands.

Although the prophet claims no special knowledge, he assumes his right to challenge what is done in violation of recognised standards (Zevit 2006: 207). His remedy is to predict that a messenger will come from Yahweh , purifying the officiating sons of Levi, so that they will do what is right, and not only then offering will again be pleasing to Yahweh (Mal. 3:2-4). The prophet did not treat the priests as innovators, but as people expected to follow policy, maintain standards determined by others, and to perform their duties in a conventional manner. Truly no prophet, however, except that of the book of Malachi accused them of malfeasance in office. Other prophets as noted had many extreme and uncomplimentary observations to make about observances and cultic practices of their people, but did not single out priests as targets (Zevit 2006:208).

The book's message with reference to the three kinds of reprehensible misdeed against which the prophet gave his address; the negligence of the cult, dearth of support of cultic personnel, and malpractices of mixed marriages and divorce (Blenkinsopp 1983:210) reflect aspects of violation of the social responsibility of the covenant i.e., failure to love one's brother sums up to an infringement of the devout responsibility i.e., inability to love Yahweh (Clendenen 2004:326). While the neglect of the cult is considered a religious responsibility on the one hand, it is a social problem on the other hand because involvement in appropriately recognised and reputable cultic

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action was one of the fundamentals for participation in the temple community (Blenkinsopp 1983:198). Malachi thus was on top of a societal and communal problem by condemning a religious and spiritual one. The people's failure or neglect of the temple and the priest was one other issue in the Yehudite community as it demonstrates the crisis of cohesion among them. That the Yehudites could neglect their collective identity, was enough reason and motivation for Malachi to emphasise ethnic requirements of the community, by disapproving and denouncing malpractices of mixed marriages and divorce (2:10-12; Blenkinsopp 1991:32).

Schaper (2006:177-188), tackles the problem of the identity of the priests described in the book of Malachi and of that of their opponents, namely that of the writer/s and redactor/s of the book and their allies. The association of blemished sacrificial animals with uncleanness in the polemic of Malachi reflects an ideological position that contracts with texts such as Deuteronomy, the Holiness Source, and the Priestly Writing; and functions as an effective means to underscore the inappropriateness and unacceptability of such sacrifices. Schaper (2006:185-186) observes that Malachi contains a fundamental critique of the sacrificial practices of the time and is highly independent in its views. The Prophet, to him, has taken the content of the Priestly Blessing delivered by the priests, and with its emphasis on blessing; the sanctity of the divine name, and such benefactions as protection, favourable countenance, and peace, and inverted them. The priests, the prophet contends, have despised the divine name and service and this has led to a threatened suspension of the divine blessing.

In summation, Schaper (2006:186) notes that Malachi's speech is revealed to be no less that a divine exegesis of the Priestly Blessing and divine mockery of the priests who presume to bless in His name. The sacerdotal language of the

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Priestly Blessing is thus, by further irony, systematically desecrated and inverted by Yahweh himself. The deep ironical core of Malachi's speech inheres in its destabilising liturgical mockery, a mockery which curses the forms and language of order, cosmos, and blessing as entrusted to the priesthood. This interweaving of liturgical language with prophetical discourse thoroughly transforms the positive assurances of the former into the negative forecasts of the latter.

According to Malachi, God's relationship with the people is strained by the people's expression of discontent. In 2:17, God has become weary of the people's complaints. These complaints grow out of an inner societal division. On the one hand, there are people who 'do evil', and on the other, there are the righteous. The latter are vexed by the fact that the Lord apparently lets the wicked get away with their injustice and proclamation when they say: "All who do evil are good in the sight of the LORD and he delights in them" (2:17). This radical affront to Yahweh reflects clearly the crisis which the community undergoes.

3.3. SUMMARY

The chapter has so far, presented a brief understanding of the idea of the temple as expressed by the prophets. Such understanding is necessary in the light of the prophetic criticisms of the temple. The chapter presents a brief assessment showing how temples were viewed in biblical Israel and how the prophets understood the temple in their different contexts. From the perspectives of those prophets prior to the exile, their perception and assessment of the temple was that it is an abode of Yahweh. During the exile, it is seen as a symbol of the re-establishment of the people as community of faith, and in the post-exilic era, the temple is conceived as an emblem of the

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restoration and revival of the people and, as a representation of an eschatological hope.

In Ezra, the significance of the temple is underscored not as a building as such, but as the place for the correct celebration of the Passover-festival. This system of reflection is seen as having divine (Ezr. 5:1-2) and imperial (Ezr. 6:1-5) support. The 'temple' in Haggai assures economic wealth; an emblem of the restoration of the Judean community that extends to the future in an eschatological manner. The reconstruction of the temple, for Zechariah, implies the reestablishment of Yahweh's faith community followed by both economic and political aspects. The temple, serves as both an emblem of divine judgment and consolation of Yahweh's people, in Third-Isaiah. In Joel, the temple as an emblem of the restoration of the community; a restoration that would turn the temple into the centre and well-spring of gladness from which the divine benedictions are made manifest. In Malachi the temple is discerned as an economic centre of the community and an emblem of eschatological hope, wherein Yahweh's last judgment is determined and the triumph of Yahweh's people is declared and granted. These prophetic concepts of the temple are used by the prophets in their respective contexts to challenge people to move towards their aim.

While scholars have yet to fully explain the phenomenon of criticism of the cult in prophetic writing, and there is much scholarly precedent for studying pre-exilic and post-exilic prophetic criticism and or approval of the cult, the present thesis brings the prophets and the priests closer by proposing that their concept of the rituals of the temple (the cult) is essentially the same, reflecting the same theology and co-creating one and the same religion. The one way to explain the discrepancy this study proposes is to advocate that

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these prophets could not see the importance of rituals for the improvement of ethical life.

If the cult is understood to be the vertical dimension of the Law and ethics its horizontal dimension, one would notice that these vertical and horizontal dimensions go together, both are expressions of God's will. When the vertical dimension (worship, offering, sacrifice) is experiencing some degree of dysfunction, the horizontal dimension (social justice, etc) will be affected. The prophets' interests seem far more concerned with the spiritual and ethical life of the nation. For them, the temple cult was conceived as a graceful gift from Yahweh to Israel and that understanding clarifies their statements. Isaiah and Micah contain a vision of the temple to which nations flood (Isa. 2:2-3; Mic. 4:1-2). The post-exilic prophets certainly seem concerned that the cult not only functioned, but functioned appropriately (Hag. 1:7-8; Mal. 1:6-2:8).

The fact that the cultic and/or ritual concepts of the authors of these prophetic oracles are only assumed and not explicitly stated in these prophetic books makes ones inquiry hypothetical. Since the understanding of cult and some of its concepts forms the basis of this inquiry, a more detailed discussion of these must pave the way for the exploration of cultic concepts behind Malachi's passages. The thesis is limited to the ritual passages in the book of Malachi. These passages are chosen because of their relevance to what appears to be at the heart of the controversy between the prophets and the priest; namely the role of cult and ethics in the religion of Ancient Israel. This thesis will be focused, after an introduction to the book of Malachi, on an exegetical examination of the text of the book of Malachi that deals with the criticisms of rituals, particularly within the temple and in relation to the temple. The purpose is to present such ethical implications for the contemporary practice of religious faith.

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CHAPTER IV

INTRODUCTION TO THE BOOK OF MALACHI

4.1. BACKGROUND ANALYSIS OF THE BOOK MALACHI

Since this study is an attempt to understand Malachi's view on temple rituals by situating it in a particular historical and social context, this section surveys background information aimed at achieving this goal. In the process, details of authorship, date of writing, recipients of the message, style of writing, prominent themes as well as structure of the book are undertaken.

4.1.1. Authorship of the Book

Malachi (*mal'ākhî*) in the Hebrew Bible simply means "my messenger." The identification of the form *mal'ākhî* has constituted research problems and defensible positions have emerged from several scholarly debates. On the one hand, Malachi is considered to be the proper name of the writer of the oracles and on the other hand, it is seen as a designation for the unspecified individual accountable for the compilation of the book (Hill 1998:15).

Supportive evidence formulated for considering *mal'ākhî* as a prophetic title includes the Septuagint (LXX) that translates the name in 1:1 as *en cheiri angelou autou*, "by the hand of his angel/messenger," though the book bears the title *Malachias* (Clendenen 2004:204). If *mal'ākhî* is used to designate a functionary and not as a name, then the book is anonymous. Rudolph (1976:247-48) holds that no specific evidence is presented with respect to the individual life of the writer. According to Meyers (1986:226), "Anonymity or pseudo-anonymity is a feature of late prophecy and inter- testamental writing

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that begins with Malachi."[1] In line with Blenkinsopp (1996:209), he advocates that the writer may have been either a temple prophet or a priest and as such may have witnessed the perversion and unfaithfulness of the priesthood personally (Meyers 1986:226-27).

Schuller (1996:847) though follows established convention and uses Malachi as a name in her work, declares that these oracles are essentially anonymous and function independently of the person of the prophet. Again and in defence of anonymity, Klein (1987:19) notes:

> . . . the same expression, *māśśā' dh^{e}bhar–yhwh* (The burden of the word of Yahweh), occurs in Zechariah 9:1; 12:1 and Malachi 1:1. Critical approach treats this expression as the introduction to three distinct and anonymous works, the first two of which were appended to the prophecies of Zechariah son of Iddo and the last of which was given independent status as the present book of Malachi in order to round out the number of Minor Prophets to twelve.

While the anonymity of Malachi is considered not to be a problem as such (LaSor, Hubbard and Bush 1982:501-502), it is integrally related to the perspective that Zechariah 9-11, 12-14, and Malachi which were at first three autonomous and nameless compositions (Eissfeldt 1963: 441).[2] The view is amply supported by the three-times recurrent expression *māśśā' dh^{e}bhar–yhwh* ("the burden of the word of the LORD") found in Zechariah 9:1; 12:1; and Malachi 1:1, which is usually explained and understood to imply that these three distinct units of prophetic oracles were at a time included in the same

[1] Van der Toorn (2007:31) notes, "In the ancient Near East, it was uncommon for an author to sign his or her work. Ben Sira was one of the earliest Jewish authors to put his name to his book (Sir 50:27). Until the Hellenistic era, anonymity prevailed."

[2] Cf. Glazier-McDonald (1987:26-27), who holds that the three phrases belong to their own separate and distinct settings, and which are not simply applied to the three distinct units of the prophetic collections as a mechanical formula.

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prophetic compendium which were later inserted in their current position in the canon randomly (cf. Stulman and Kim 2010:240). Eissfeldt (1963:434-443) claims that these three sections form an appendix to Zechariah and a conclusion to the first two parts of the HB: the law and the prophets. Peterson (1995:2) notes that "the three verses create an epilogue both to the three *maś'ôth* and to the minor prophets as a whole… and as such, the author offered a claim that these books may be used as one book, similar in scope to the "major" prophet books, namely; Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel."

Childs (1979:491-92) contrarily, notes that the structure of *māśśā'* ("burden, oracle") is absolutely grammatical in nature (that is, independent in its syntactical form) in Malachi 1:1. In this regard, it reduces the parallel in the three appearances of the form. He maintains that while Zechariah 12:1 is a superscription Zechariah 9:1 is not. Klein (1987:21) holds that,

> Malachi 1:1 is also a superscription sharing many points in common with other such superscriptions in the OT. . . . Zechariah 9:1 and 12:1 are verbal constructions whereas Malachi 1:1 is not, a minor point actually, but calculated to distance Malachi from the latter portions of Zechariah. . . . the problem of authorship of the book of Malachi is an independent question which cannot be decided from an alleged similarity to anonymous passages in Zechariah.

It has been suggested that even though *mal'ākhî* "my messenger" serves as a designation instead of being name of a specific person, it should not reduce the book to the category of a nameless masterpiece, in view of the fact that it might have been a designation of a stated person. For instance, "the Targum of Jonathan *ben* Uzziel . . . added to Malachi 1:1 the explanatory phrase, 'whose name is called Ezra the Scribe" (Harrison 1999:958). In his position, Calvin as quoted by Harrison (1998:459) says, "I am more disposed to grant what some have said, that he was Ezra, and that Malachi was his surname, for God had called him to do great and remarkable things."

Being a name of a specific person, *mal'ākhî* may be explained as "my angel" or "my messenger" (cf. Zech. 1:9, 11). The name *mal'ākhî* is identical to some other Old Testament names with such endings like *î*, as in Beeri, "my well" (*bᵉ'ērî*, Gen. 26:34; Hos. 1:1), Ethni, "my gift" (*ʿethnî* I Chron. 6:26) and Zacri, "my remembrance" (*zikhrî*, Exod. 6:21; I Chron. 8:19). Thus, this single occurrence of the name *mal'ākhî* should be regarded as a testimony against its use as a specific person since Habakkuk and Jonah are both unique among other names of the Hebrew prophets (Hill 1998:16). Here one can identify with Klein (1987:23), "Since the canonical prophets were otherwise not anonymous and the arguments for anonymity can be answered, it is preferable to treat the book as the only known work of the prophet Malachi."

Mal'ākhî is more or less a nameless individual in the sense that very little is recognised in relation to the prophet himself. The introduction to his oracles like Obadiah provides no ancestral legacy. Thus biographical information about the prophet can only be gleaned from deductions based upon the contents of his writings. His oracles do demonstrate a special concern in the priesthood, sacrificial worship, and the temple (Hill 1998:18). According to Blenkinsopp (1996: 209), Malachi's intense concern for the cult, along with his ferocious attack on the priesthood in addition to its carelessness in ritual ethics, divorce and above all its blasé scepticism in religious matters, suggests that he may have been either a dissident priest turned prophet or a Levite.

In connection with the study of the literary form and genre of the book of Malachi, Redditt (1994:249; 1995:152) notes that the disputations in the book Malachi epitomise a conscious literary masterpiece. This assertion is important as it is believed that the paper works of the Bible could not have come to light with the verbal communication of Israel's society if it were not

for the efforts of the professional scribes. They are the main figures behind biblical literature. This assertion is based on the assumption that oral culture depends on professional writing for the production and preservation of written records. Van der Toorn (2007:75-108) tries to locate the scribes behind the Bible primarily among the clergy of the time. This identification connects the scribes with the temple, and indicates a specialisation within the priesthood focusing on writing and scholarship. In terms of location, he identifies Judah in the Second Temple period, specifically in the Persian and Hellenistic periods as the flourishing centre of scribal culture that produced the HB.

Schaper (2005:326-342) examines the utilisation of literary documents from the late pre-exilic, exilic and early post-exilic prophetic texts against the background of the relationship that exists between prophetic and scribal activities. While writing is a significant category in the world of the divine, it appears to be very essential in exilic and post-exilic prophecy.

> Various types of prophetic activity might entail direct use of writing, whether in a non academic setting like the cult or in the context of a scribal school. And conversely, various types of scribal activity, whether in or out of an academic context, could be prophetic in the sense that documents were written and studied in order to discern divine involvement in contemporary human affairs (Schaper 2005:338).

He discusses exilic and early post-exilic prophetic passages that include Isaiah 65:6; Jeremiah 36; 51:60-64; Ezekiel 2:1-3, 10; 13:9; Habakkuk 2:1-5; Zechariah 5:1-4 and Malachi 3:16 and notes that "from the late pre-exilic period onwards, the contacts between prophets and priests/scribes became closer and closer" (Schaper 2005:338). The scribes' principle means of access to the words and acts of the prophets was memory; personal memory in some cases, but majorly collective memory as extant in the minds of the supporter and

followers of the prophets. Again, the scribe could incorporate in the collection of oracle records from the temple files (Van der Toorn 2007:188). Without their knowledge, the scribes who wrote down the oracles and composed the prophetic collections were sowing the seeds of a radical transformation of Israelite religion.

From form-critical perspectives it is suggested that the prophet responsible for the book of Malachi may indeed have been an author who was not only familiar with both deuteronomic/deuteronomistic and priestly traditions, but also with a wide corpus of Israel's historical and prophetic traditions (Weyde 2000:38; O'Brien 1990:111). Thus the author of Malachi is considered a *scribe* who merely interpreted old written traditions[3] available to him without any reference to visionary or auditory events in which Yahweh reveals himself to the prophet, or even any sign of divine communication like those found in several other prophetic books (Weyde 2000:4-5).

Weyde (2000:5) argues that the frequency of the prophetic formulas *'āmar yhwh ('ādhōnāy),* marking divine speech (twenty-four instances) while very striking and significant in the book, are used by the prophet who conveys the message to actualise the traditions he is equated with and to give him prophetic authority. However, the frequency of the formulas *'āmar yhwh ('ādhōnāy),* marking divine speech and the recurring pattern of question-and answer are very peculiar and may suggest that the book of Malachi contains a special kind of prophecy. The message may be characterised as teaching or

[3] The search for Malachi's source traditions is associated with the formation of the canon that is majorly influenced by the Documentary Hypothesis (DH) (Horton, Hoglund, and Foskett 2007) and which divides the growth of the HB in phases and documents (O'Brien (1990:109). As Wenham (1996:3-13) notes, "While the hypothesis has been increasingly challenged by other models in the last part of the 20th century, its terminology and insights continue to provide the framework for modern theories on the origins of the Torah."

instruction with prophetic authority and thus regarded as prophecy (Weyde 2000:12). While the historical knowledge of the prophetic is very limited, Mason (1990:235) believes that the book of Malachi contains a clear illustration of oral delivery in the Second Temple period.

However, it has been maintained that the book of Malachi was at least an initial paradigm of a prolonged use of the interrogative and response technique, which subsequently developed into the typical pattern for scribes and rabbis (Feinberg 1985:7, 704). While few would consider the author of Malachi a "scribe," many scholars agreed that he was a scribe who merely interpreted the written texts available to him (Redditt 1995:152). Schmid (2012:164) asserts that the books of Joel, Habakkuk and Malachi should be viewed as being completely the prophecy of scribal tradents. Gertz and others (2012:521) hold that the book of Malachi is a product of scribal prophecy, with no single individual acting as its author. The scholarly position that sees the author of Malachi as someone acquainted with scribal activity has given rise to the conclusion that the author was neither a Levite nor a layman. His office gave him an outsider's perspective on the priesthood but with full understanding of its nature and components.

Indeed, he spoke as someone who observed the priesthood from outside. Expressions such as "…O priests, but you despise my name…" (1:6; LB); But when you offer on the altar of the LORD lame animals, yes, even the sick and blind ones as a sacrifice . . . (1:8; LB); "Oh, to find one priest among you who would shut the temple doors and refuse this kind of sacrifice. I have no pleasure in you" (1:10; LB); "You disdainfully sniff at the table of the Lord" (1:13; NASB); "I will send terrible punishment upon you, and instead of giving you blessings as I would like to, I will turn on you with curses. Indeed

I have cursed you already because you have not taken seriously the things that are most important to me. Take note that I will rebuke your children, and I will spread on your faces the manure of these animals you offer me, and throw you out like dung" (2:2-3; LB), are considered too harsh for a priest to say about his fellow colleagues and brethren. Since no stronger oracle against the priests is found in the entire OT, scholars conclude that Malachi was an outsider to such a group. He in addition has an adequate understanding of the Deuteronomic (1:8; cf. Dt. 15:21)[4] and priestly (3:10; cf. 18:21)[5] legal traditions (Hill 1998:18). However, there has been no far-reaching or complete attempt yet to account for what traditions actually influenced the message in the book of Malachi (Petersen 1995:32).

According to Hill (1998:18), *mal'ākhî* is indeed a person of substantial individual devotion, comprehending the significance of Yahweh's holiness and the gravity of personal and community sin before Yahweh (cf. 2:17-3:4, 6-7, 13-19). His staunch convictions against the malpractice of mixed marriages and unfaithfulness to Yahweh (2:10-12), frequent divorces of Judean wives by Judean men (2:13-16) and societal inequalities (3:5) were a resemblance of the days of pre-exilic prophets. That *mal'ākhî* was a person of integrity and

[4] See Blenkinsopp (1983:242), Petersen (1995:32-33) who provide an extensive list of Deuteronomic terminology, Coggins (1987:75-76), who identifies Deuteronomic words and themes, and Achenbach (2011:437), who contends that that early postexilic editors of the prophetic scrolls referred to materials from the Deuteronomistic structure that we find in the historical account on the kingdoms of Israel and Judah. While Baldwin (1972b:225) and Verhoef (1987:212) identify Deuteronomic characteristics in Malachi; they see the father/son terminology as a general characteristic of the larger Hebrew Bible. See also Achtemeier (1986:171-72), and Smith (1984:300).

[5] Source-critical inquiries have debated the claim that Malachi speaks from an age prior to the promulgation of the Priestly Code. Glazier-McDonald (1987:78-80) and Meyers (1987:225-37), both sees evidence of P within Malachi. O'Brien (1990:96) states that "the history of Israel's cultic institutions is perhaps the most common battle ground of the struggle to prove the sources that were available to the author of Malachi." Weyde (2000:118-22) sees in Malachi 1:7-14 a clear use of the tradition found in Leviticus 22:17-25.

resolution is evidenced in his courageous upbraiding of the influential social elite and priestly rank (cf. 1:1-14; 2:1-4; 3:2-4). At the same time, he shows evidences of great compassion for his people in the words of assurance and encouragement that open and close his message.

He comprehends clearly the primacy of the inner structure and motives of the heart, of the outward nature of ritualism (1:9-13; 2:2-3; 3:16-18), and recognised that the approval and disapproval of Yahweh were grounded in either individual and collective obedience or disobedience to the provisions of Israel's covenant charter (3:16-21). Most importantly, he understood that the requirements of the covenant is contained within a moral ethic that is righteous, a system of behaviour that is coherent with the nature and character of Yahweh, who is the maker of the covenant (3:5-7, cf. Zech. 7:8-12). It is therefore in this light that Weiser (1961:277, cited in Hill 1998:18) concludes that "the book of Malachi breathes the spirit of an original, genuinely prophetic personality."

In the light of this research, I would like situate *mal'ākhî* as a proper name and study assumes that the message was initially preached by someone (a prophet most probably) known to be *mal'ākhî*. There will be no attempt any further to decipher the profession of the prophet; whether he was a scribe, a dissident priest turned prophet or a Levite, as has been proposed and defended. In this study the recipients, context, and content of the message remain the issues of major concern. The significance of this is that, this assumed prophet (*mal'ākhî*) demonstrates similar understanding of the opinion and emotional state of his colleagues just as those who were before him did. He understood the people's complaints about Yahweh's position and ways, and by divine guidance, was able to offer an appropriate and trustworthy reply to them

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(Baldwin 1972b:214). "He holds together concern for cultic needs of the present theocratic community and lively eschatological hope for the future" (Grabble 2004:90).

While the problem of oral or written still persists in scholarly debates and there is no complete attempt yet to account for what traditions actually influenced the message in the book of Malachi, oral presentation is assumed and thus the message of the book is treated as teaching or instruction with prophetic authority and as such prophecy. However, I would like to submit that the book's usages of the literary form of disputation between Yahweh or the prophet and the people/priests in the question-and-answer technique similar to that of Habakkuk or Job, but with a unique strength calls for a conscious literary masterpiece of higher critical studies.

4.1.2. Date of Writing

The book of Malachi contains no clear historical information with respect to the time of its composition. In this regard, one has the option to consider evidences within the inner surface structure of the book (Klein 1989:23). Several line of reasoning rooted on inner testimony of the book produced an estimated period of the ministry of Malachi, wherein the majority of biblical writers are in harmony. In the light of such evidence that the temple had been reconstructed (1:13; 3:1, 10), the conclusion is made that the composition of the book must have been at a time following the return from exile (Grabble 2004:89; Boice 1986:230). While the prophecy is not specifically dated, internal evidence suggests that it originated in the post-exilic period, probably in the fifth century BCE (Chisholm 2002:447).

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It is believed that the final three canonical prophets, Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi come from the time just immediately after the Judeans returned from exile. However, in contrast to Haggai and Zechariah, Malachi, which is surprisingly historical, presents no clear information about its origin, people or events, which would have one to envision the concrete historical situation in which Malachi was involved. The temple is alive and Judah has a governor, not a king; the word translated governor, *peḥāʰ* (Hag. 1:1; Neh. 5:14) could mean an imperial appointment (Kealy 2009:228-229).

This dating situates the ministerial activities of Malachi subsequent to those of Haggai and Zechariah. Since the temple was completed in about 516/515 BCE, Malachi's ministerial activities must have been subsequent to this date. Worship in the temple is believed to have been in place long enough to account for the fact that the people had become very tired of it (1:13). It is noted by Verhoef (1987:157),

> Haggai and Zechariah had stirred up the returned exiles to rebuild the temple, which was completed in 515 BCE (Ezr. 5-6). As far as Malachi was concerned, this event already belonged to the past. The book assumes the existence of the temple (1:10; 3:1, 8), and presupposes a (long) time of spiritual decline, because the temple worship had already deteriorated to such an extent that the priests and people had to be reproved by the prophet with regard to their malpractices (1:6-14; 2:1-9; 3:6-12).

The term employed for "governor" *peḥāʰ* in Malachi 1:8 being a professional title during the post-exilic era help one to situate the prophecies prior to the demise of Nehemiah, who happened to be the extant civilian leader (Boice 1986:230). Scholars dispute whether Malachi's prophetic activity prepared the scene for Ezra and Nehemiah's reforms or followed Ezra or took place

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between Nehemiah's two visits to Judah.[6] Truly there seems to be similarities between what Malachi and Ezra/Nehemiah tried to correct (Kealy 2009:229). Sincerely, Ezra and Nehemiah faced similar problems that the assumed prophet behind the oracles of the book of Malachi confronted (excluding the Sabbath), such as lack of tithing (Neh. 10:32-39; 13:10-14), mixed marriages (Mal. 2:10-16; Ezr. 9:1-18; Neh. 13:1-3, 23-31), and the subjugation of the less privileged and destitute (Mal. 3:5; Neh. 5:1-5) (Grabble 2004:89).

While there are a number of parallels in its message to the reforms of Nehemiah, the exact relationship between the two cannot be totally ascertained (Grabble 2004:90). On the contrary, Nehemiah addressed a tithing situation that was different; the people were not giving their tithes thus forcing temple personnel to quit their sacral duties. In the book of Malachi, the prophet emphasises the whole tithe since the temple personnel had taken up responsibility of their sacral duties but were not privileged to collect the whole tithes. With respect to threats from intermarriage or mixed marriages, Malachi deals with Judeans who are separating from their Judean wives, probably with the intention of marrying younger, foreign wives. However, Nehemiah deals with the prohibition of marriages to foreign wives (13:23–28). The situations are quite different; in Nehemiah there is no divorce associated (Gerstenberger 2011:22; Wickham 2009:17).

Kaiser (1984:16) summarises well the basic points of the resemblances that exists in the issues that both Malachi and Nehemiah addressed: intermarriage

[6] It is assumed that Ezra and Nehemiah probably migrated to Judah in 458 and 445 individually and in turn (Klein 1999: 664-665). There's also another dating for Ezra. Gerstenberger (2011:96) notes that "in this case, the year of the book of Ezra would be either 458 or 397 BCE."

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or mixed marriages (Mal. 2:11-15 and Neh. 13:23-27); negligence in giving their tithes (Mal. 3:8-10 and Neh. 13:10-14); disrespect for the Sabbath (Mal. 2:8-9; 4:4 and Neh. 13:15-22); perversion and contempt of the priesthood (Mal. 1:6-2:9-and Neh. 13:7-9) and reality of several societal evils (Mal. 3:5 and Neh. 5:1-13). It seems to be a period when the hopes of the returned exiles had become bitter, although Judah was enjoying a period of relative peace. Malachi shows a deep sense of honour and reverence due to Yahweh (1:6) and the capacity to tear down (1:4) even beyond the land of Israel (1:5). The oracles are focused on the key covenant demands for repentance and obedience to the revealed views of Yahweh (Kealy 2009:229).

Malachi tackled more strictly the concerns that were amended during the second term of Nehemiah's ministry in Jerusalem, precisely in the years between the first and second visits of Nehemiah to Jerusalem- i.e., immediately after 433BCE (Verhoef 1987:156-60), which positions him earlier than 445 BCE, and thereby restricting the oracles in the book to sometime subsequent to 515 BCE., but prior to 445 BCE (Cheung 2001:6). Blaising (1985:1573) has this regarding the date when the book was composed;

> Malachi's reference to a Persian governor (Mal. 1:8) shows that the book was written *after* 538 B.C. Most scholars agree that the Book of Malachi was written around 450-430 B.C., for these reasons: (1) Malachi's rebuke of the priests' malpractice in the temple shows that the temple had been rebuilt and the priesthood re-established. (2) The moral and spiritual conditions Malachi addressed were similar to those encountered by Ezra, who returned in 458, and Nehemiah, who returned in 444. These included intermarriages with Gentiles (2:10-11; cf. Ezra 9:1-2; Neh. 13:1 -3, 23-28), lack of the people's support for the Levites (Mal. 3:10; cf. Neh. 13:10), and oppression of the poor (Mal. 3:5; cf. Neh. 5:4-5). Either Malachi was addressing the same generation that Ezra and Nehemiah spoke to, or Malachi spoke to a later generation some time after Ezra's and Nehemiah's corrections.

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These oracles are fixed more precisely in the decades immediately before Ezra and Nehemiah, c. 480-450 BCE (Schuller 1996:847). Sellin and Fohrer (1960:470) give the date of the oracles of the book before the time of both Ezra and Nehemiah, about 465 BCE since the duo of Ezra and Nehemiah terminated the routines projected in the book of Malachi. However, this position fails to acknowledge the speed with which the Israelites could degenerate into unfaithfulness and underestimating the result of their transformative programs.

The separate disposition of the prophet's attack against divorcing Judean wives by Judean mean in order to marry foreign wives (Mal. 2:10–16), indicates a date of composition before the activities of Ezra (Ezr. 9:2; 10:3, 16–44). This previous date is made still more tentatively if the reproach against foreign and varied marriages in Malachi 2:11b is treated to be a later addition, that which quite mirrors the obsession of the faith and practice that Ezra and Nehemiah eventually undertook (Stuart 1998:1253). The book's concern with the neglect of the Temple and the marriage of Jewish men to pagan women suggests that it is to be set some time prior to the arrival of Ezra in Jerusalem. This suggests that the book of Malachi should be dated to the fifth century, and perhaps played a role in building the case for Ezra's placement in Jerusalem. Indeed Ezra's reforms address the issues raised in Malachi (Sweeney 2012:365).

Merrill (1994:377-378) argues that Malachi's work preceded Ezra and, "480-470 being a reasonable guess." Smith (1994:327) dates the book to about 420 BCE Blenkinsopp (1996:209) dates the book between 486 and 445 BCE. Stuart (1998:1252-1253) dates Malachi's ministry during or "slightly in advance" of the reforms of Ezra and Nehemiah. Those who places Ezra's reform after

Nehemiah's in about 428 or 398 BCE, typically date Malachi to about 450 BCE, long before the arrival of Nehemiah in 445 BCE (Clendenen 2004:206). Since the dating of a document to a specific time period must accomplish two reciprocal functions: the intellectual positions of the period to which the document is assigned ought to clarify the text, and that the text should inform readers about the period in which the document is created, Hills (1998:83) concludes that dating Malachi very early in the period of pre-Ezran decline fulfils both these criteria and he therefore proposes that,

> The despair and doubt triggered in the restoration community by apparent failure of the prophetic visions of prophets Haggai and Zechariah soon characterized the 'intellectual disposition' of the era- a disposition that pouted that Yahweh had indeed forgotten his covenant with Israel. By the same token, the text elucidates our understanding of the early postexilic period by highlighting the shift in the theological paradigm from pre-exilic (and early exilic aftermath) prophetic indictments for idolatry and the promise of "full" restoration to the postexilic prophetic indictments for improper Temple ritual and the relativizing of earlier "salvation oracles" (Hills 1998:83).

This final position appears more appropriate and may be confined more explicitly to 460BCE. In this study, while Malachi (the assumed prophet) is considered to be a contemporary of Ezra and Nehemiah, though the dating of these books is also in question, it seems likely that the final stage of the book of Malachi can be dated sometime between 475-450 BCE.

4.1.3. Malachi's Audience

The prophetic book opens with the words: *maśśā' dh^{e}bhar yhwh el yiśrā'ēl b^{e}yadh mal'ākhî* ("The burden of the word of the Lord to Israel by the hand of Malachi"). The opening word of the prophet reveals an unusual and remarkable gravity of a situation. The expression *maśśā'* "a burden" is scarce in the prophetic books: "It never occurs in the title except when it is evidently

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grave and full of weight and labor" (Wells 1987:42). The "burden" belongs to Israel. Although Israel may be contained within its scope, the book does not belong to the time when Israel and Judah were political powers on the platform of the world empires, but was actually addressed to the post-exilic period, when Judah (or Yehud, as it was often called) was subjected to a small governmental centre in the massive domain of Persia. Thus it was in "this day of small things" (Zech 4:10) when Israel had lost its king and political independence and was struggling to learn new ways to survive, that Malachi continued his prophetic tradition and initiated new perspectives for his time and the generations to come (Schuller 1996:845-46).

One finds within these four precise chapters of the book, for example rich and creative reworking and incorporation of the important covenant themes that motivated earlier prophets. It is clear that the walls, gates of Jerusalem and temple had been rebuilt, and a round of sacrifices revived. The passion for justice, the concern for the less privileged; widow, orphan and labourer of the eight-century prophets is combined with a sharp focus on temple, cult, tithes, priesthood, all which reflects and addresses the centrality of these institutions for the post-exilic community.

The post-exilic community is seen as a society with a population that is proportionally representative of all kinds of people of interest, with at least three constituent groups: The first band consisted of those who had remained in Judah after the destruction of the Kingdom in 587 BCE, the second included those who may have returned from Babylonia with Sheshbazzar early in the reign of Cyrus (Ezr. 1:7-11) and the third ones were a number of Judeans who may have returned from Babylonia with Zerubbabel and Joshua only a few years before Haggai's preaching, and thus struggling to re-establish

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themselves (Bedford 1995:72). There was, indeed, for the people who had stayed in Palestine, those who had returned from exile were a danger in that these returnees would apply their family rights and privileges to the property on which the remnants had staked their livelihood (Albertz 1994:444). Tiemeyer (2005b:178-179) with respect to Malachi's audience notes:

> The identity of Malachi's interlocutors is in several cases uncertain. Mal 1:6-2:9 clearly addresses the priests, and it is possible that the same narrow identification is true also for 2:10-16 and 2:17-3:5. In contrast, the rest of the material is probably aimed at a wider audience. I shall call the people in the above listed passages "the priests" while labeling the opponents in the rest of the material "the people." Throughout the book of Malachi, the priests and the people are found responding to the prophetic message in a variety of ways. Common to most of these responses is an expressed lack of comprehension of Malachi's accusations and a general sense of injustice directed towards God.

On the other hand, Berquist (1989:121-126) observes that Malachi addresses different groups who hold different belief systems and values. According to him, these groups were immersed in an ocean of multiple traditions. Among those traditions were the Davidic tradition, Deuteronomist tradition, Priestly tradition and Wisdom tradition, as well as others, which were supported by different social groups causing a highly fragmented society. For Berquist, Yehud's political situation particularly impacted the formation of social groups in the context of Malachi.

In the first instance was the band of returned Israelites dwelling in their home land and participated actively in the sacred rites and activities initially enacted for them by Yahweh. The book of Malachi, however, all over is an unveiling of their ethical and religious disappointment while on the surface illustrated by ceremonial belief. It was a group of sceptics who will determine their misgivings (3:13-15) on the day that Yahweh himself will act (3:17-18). It

is largely formed by the priests and also those who are influenced by their teaching and who follow their steps, thus representing the majority of the addressees in the book (Boda 2012:15; Berquist 1989:124).

Although the group appears to be longing for the messenger of the Lord (3:1), it exhibits profound scepticism (1:2, 6, 7; 2:14; 3:7, 8, 13, 14), self-righteousness (1:6; 2:14, 17, 3:7, 8, 13, 14), cynicism (3:14), disdain for Yahweh's name and for his worship (1:6-14; 3:14), complaints against the cultic duties (1:13; 2:13-14), partiality in applying the law and biased instruction (2:6-9), disrespect for the marriage covenant (2:14), robbery against God (3:8), and harsh words against Yahweh (3:13-14). While this group is highly criticised for its many sins against God, it is nevertheless not entirely condemned. The Lord offers the group's members renewal if they return to Yahweh and to the appropriate reverence of his name (3:17-4:2) (Berquist 1989:124).

Second, among Malachi's audience, were people who appear to be outside the prophet's admonitions and exhortations. The group is composed of the *zēdhîm* (proud), and *rish'āʰ* (arrogant) (4:1). There is also the inclusion of *khashshᵉphîm* (sorcerers), *nā'ăphîm* (adulterers), and *nishbā'îm* (liars), and *ōśê rish'āʰ* (evildoers or workers of wickedness). They exploit the poor, oppress the widow and fatherless, and deny justice to the alien (3:5). Above all, they do not fear Yahweh (3:5) and put him to test (3:15). They lack any faith and will be completely destroyed (2:17; 3:5; 3:14-15; 4:1).

In addition to these major groups were to be noticed a third group of personalities in ecstatic disparity with their contexts; they are presented as *yir'ê yhwh* ("those who fear the Lord") (3:16). They have exemplary faith and hold Yahweh's name in high esteem (3:16). They receive Yahweh's favour in many ways: Yahweh honours them by recording their names in a *sēpher*

zikhkhārôn "the book of remembrance" (3:16). The Lord says of them: *hāyû lî* "they will be mine," *s^{e}ghullāh* "God's special possession" and they will be spared on the day that Yahweh Himself will act to activate judgement (3:17). *shemesh ts^{e}dhāqāh ûmarpē' bikhnāphe^{y}hā* "the sun of righteousness will shine upon them with healing" (4:2), *w^{e}'assôthem r^{e}shā'îm* "and they will tread down the wicked" (4:3). This group stands in clear contrast with the second group which is cursed due to its wickedness and attitude toward Yahweh's name. Though Yahweh has not yet expelled them from the community, their actions are highly condemned.

While Malachi's perspective of reality divides the society in three groups, his depiction of it is based on religion. Malachi's picture of the community coloured his public speaking ability, and this is very important for the correct interpretation of the book of Malachi (Berquist 1989:124). Although the book commences with the expression, "The burden of the word of the Lord to Israel," the three-group scenario would have an important contribution in the present study.

4.1.4. Literary Style of Malachi

The term *genre* is a literally category that denotes the style, the form and the general content of literally production. The issue of genre is significant because understanding the genre of literature provides guidance in reading it correctly. Hill (1998:23) observes that Gunkel's division of the OT/HB into two basic literary categories: prose and poetry has implications for the study of Malachi. In this categorisation, subdivisions of poetical literary types include the prophetic oracular saying and specifically the sub-types of vision, prophetic oracle, discourse, threat or promise, invective, and exhortation.

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According to Hill (1998:23-24), scholarship (in the German tradition) on the book of Malachi has tended to treat it as poetry, noting that the oracles were initially set in a poetic form. On the other hand, American biblical scholars have by tradition assumed the oracles of the book as a prose arrangement. They elude Malachi's terse and vigorous style as fresh, lively, and even hinting of poetic rhythm. He notes further, "Statistical studies tracing the occurrence of the so-called prose particles in Malachi corroborate the view that Malachi is indeed a prose composition." He concludes with what all this imply for the oracles of Malachi:

> First, the book of Malachi is not a representative of the genre of Hebrew poetry. Second, the author of Malachi "undeniably demonstrates considerable artistic proficiency, a fluency which reflects a definite rhetorical purpose." Third, appreciation of Malachi's elevated literary style enhances both understanding of the book's macro and microstructure and the prophet's message. Fourth, in keeping with the earlier studies of genre classification in the Minor Prophets…, Malachi must be formally understood as oracular prose (i.e., the literary texture of Malachi is a combination of prosaic and rhetorical features approaching poetic discourse but distinctive of prophetic style) (Hill 1998:25-26).

With respect to the literary form of the oracles, it has been noted that Malachi has a style that is unique among the Old Testament prophetic books (Clendenen 2004:218). Many scholars have assessed the literary features of Malachi and the discussions have centred on how one can best describe the approaches Malachi uses to engage in communication with Yahweh's people: it may be described as "prophetic disputation" (Murray 1987:110), "confrontational dialogue" (Hendrix 1987:465), "covenant lawsuit" (O'Brien 1990:63),[7] sermonic (Pierce 1984:285) or oracular, but its frequent use of

[7] To account for the use of covenant terminology that many have noted in the book, she analyzes the book as comprising five "accusations" (1:6-29; 2:10-16; 2:17-3:5; 3:6-12; 3:13-21),

quotations, rhetorical questions (see, Merrill 1994:380), and polemical argument gives it a peculiar character (Clendenen 2004:218). Again, "catechetical format" has also been advanced to detect the questioning pattern used in Malachi, an approach that has also been found in Haggai as well (Braun 1977:299; Fischer 1972:315).[8] Petersen (1995:29) observes that literary style, rather than amount of text, constitutes the major difference in the book of Malachi compared to the other two foregoing *maś'ôth* of Zechariah 9-11 and 12-14. This third *māśśā'* is made up of brief dialogues between the deity and the people. One observes that instead of a persistent eschatological emphasis, immediate verbal encounter between the deity and other parties' characterise this final *māśśā'* with which the "Prophets" conclude.

The division of the book's message into six smaller sections (Pierce 1984:282) with most of these segments having a three part form namely, "frequent use of quotations rhetorical questions and polemical argument" (Clendenen 2004:218) which may itself be made up of smaller elements, that is, oracle of salvation, threat, or admonition has given rise to the classification of the book as comprising of disputation speeches (Petersen 1995: 29; Redditt 2000:849; Klein 1987:27; Clendenen 2004:218; Cheung 2001:7). Tiemeyer notes:

> In this case, the exchange of words is not to be understood as a literary feature but to reflect a normal, human, pattern of communication. It follows that many of the scholars adhering to this interpretation presuppose that the verbal exchange in Malachi mirrors an actual confrontation between the two groups of people (Tiemeyer 2005b:176).

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in addition to a "prologue" (1:2-5), a "final admonition" (3:22), as well as a "final ultimatum" (3:23-24) (O'Brien 1990:63).

[8] Boda (2000:299-300) notes, "The interrogative mood engages the audience in a powerful way, forcing them to reflect on the message in a deeper measure than in mere pronouncements. It is used by Haggai both to bring judgment (1:4, 9; 2:12-13, 19) and to express sympathy (2:3)." See also Craig (1996:244) and Pierce (1984:277) who have also developed these styles of questioning.

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These disputes which Malachi presses against Yahweh people are legal in character and content exhibiting a situation similar that of a law court, with contractual principles functioning as the basic foundation for the indictments against those who are tried before the priest in the Temple (Achtemeier 1986:172). This method of confrontation underlines the people's profound resentment toward both the prophet and Yahweh (Neil 1962:3; 229). Murray (1987: 95ff) argues that the disputation in Malachi should be defined on the basis of formal characteristics but by the presence of *thesis, counter-thesis, dispute* in the *logical deep structure*. A disputation may take various forms, for example, a Platonic dialogue, a debate, or even the use of rhetorical questions to counter potential or real objections, as in Malachi. According to him, the distinction in Malachi is such that the opening thesis of the people that the Lord is arguing against must be deduced from his first remark.

Clendenen (2004:219) identifies six disputation speeches in the book of Malachi: "(1) 1:2-5, (2) 1:6-2:9, (3) 2:10-16 (with the exception of vv.11-12 as a later addition), (4) 2:17-3:5, (5) 3:6-12, and (6) 3:13-21 (English 4:3; as the last three verses of the canonical book, 4:4-6 in English are excluded as a later addition)." However, this method was not wholly new (Baldwin 1972b:213), in the light of some obvious similarities of disputation speeches in other sections or chapters in the Old Testament. In this case, disagreement results from how the disputations in the book of Malachi connect with those of other prophets books.

Other prophetic books certainly made use of questions, very similar to those of the book of Malachi (Berry 1996:273) (e.g., Isa. 40:27-28; Jer. 2:14, 23, 29, 32; Am. 5:20; Mic. 2:7; Hag. 1:4; 2:3; some twenty-five questions in Zechariah 1-8), but in these books, the questions are not as central to the entire book as they

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are in Malachi (Schuller 1996:850). Graffy (1984:16) demonstrates that on the basis of form the dialogues in Malachi have a different structure and aim than the disputation genre. The fundamental difference exists in this fact: the goal of the styles or structures in the book of Malachi is not to discard the addressees' extracted view but to primarily persuade the hearers with respect to the stated argument (Graffy 1984:22).

Although one may not be able to make a categorical assumption that the opponents of Malachi are quoted word for word i.e., *verbatim*, it is all the same an intelligent guess that what is documented in the book characterises to some reasonable scope the general picture of their responses to the message of Malachi. Thus, as a suggestion, one must "relate to the verbal interchange between Malachi and his audience as a 'discussion' in which the two contrary opinions are recorded but where one (Malachi's) is given more space than that of his opponents" (Tiemeyer 2005b:178).

The following literary devices or rhetorical features[9] have been observed in Malachi by a variety of biblical scholars who are committed to a rhetorical reading of the book: *Alliteration* (2:10, 11, 12, 14); *Anacoenosis* (or common cause)-the appeal to others who have interests in common or share a common cause, cf. 1:6 ("If I be your father, where then is my honor?"); *Anaphora* (2:10-16); *Antithesis* (1:11); *Anthropomorphism*-examples of ascribing human characteristics to God, include: the "greatness" of God (1:14), God, "sitting" (3:3), God, as a "witness" (3:5), and God, "opening" doors/windows (3:10); *Closure* (1:6); *Chiasm* (1:2; 3:11); *Disputational style*- combative dialogue structured in the form of a declaration, followed by a refutation, and a

[9] These features are adapted from Hill (1998:38-39); Snyman (1990:173-178) as well as Wendland (1985:109)

concluding rebuttal; *Ellipsis* ("Why [doesn't he]?" posed in 2:14 (assuming the acceptance of offerings mentioned in 2:13); *Encomium*-Malachi uses this lyrical praise of an abstract quality or general character trait to indict the priests when he contrasts the "ideal" priest with those priests who are his contemporaries (cf. 2:4-9); *Epiphora* (1:12-14); *Exclamatory utterance* (1:9, 12); *Foil*-the storyteller often makes a striking contrast to emphasise key elements or significant characters in the story, like Malachi's foil of Jacob/Esau (1:2-5) and Yahweh/foreign gods (2:10-12); *Graphic diction* (2:3).

Others include, *Hyperbole*- conscious exaggeration for effect, more to convey emotional truth than factual truth (cf. the extent of Yahweh's judgment according to the prophet in 3:19 [4:1], "…leave them neither a root nor a branch"); *Idiomatic speech* (1:8-9); *Inclusion* (2:17-3:5); *Irony* (1:9, "And now, entreat the favor of the God, so that he may be gracious to us!"); *Metaphor* (3:21 [4:3], "…indeed they will be ashes beneath the soles of your feet"; *Metonymy*- this figure of speech substituting a word or phrase for similar expression occurs in Malachi 1:2, 3, where the ancestor's name (i.e., "Jacob, Esau") represents his posterity; or Mal 2:12, "…the daughter of a strange El" ("idolatrous woman"); *Panegyric appellation or the formal encomium* (Mal 2:16); *Personification* (3:19 [4:1]); *Pseudo-dialogue* (1:2); *Rhetorical question* (1:2, "Surely Esau was Jacob's brother"); *Role reversal* (3:8-9); *Satire* (Mal 1:14); *Simile* (Mal 3:19 [4:1], "…the day is coming, burning like an oven"); *Symbol* (3:20 [4:2], "a sun of righteousness"); *Synecdoche* (e.g., "abomination" for "divorce" and foreign religious influence" in 2:11); *Syntactical variation* (3:9, "…with the curse you are being cursed; yea, it is me you are robbing"); *Synonymous repetition* (3:16); *Wisdom* (2:10, "Surely we all have one father?").

Although the survey is not a comprehensive index of rhetorical features in the book of Malachi, it does demonstrate that Malachi's prophecy is a literary work of considerable artistic merit. These features primarily concentrate on form, structure, and technique in biblical texts. To this end they fail as literary approaches because they have not dealt with the human experience that is the subject matter of literature (Hill 1998:40).

4.1.5. Themes in the Book

It is vital at this point having recognised to some extent, the rhetorical devices of this Second Temple prophetic book, to identify the themes present in the book of Malachi. Malachi focuses attention on several primary theological themes as well as other minor ones. Redditt (2007:184, 188-195) observes that several principal themes appear throughout the scroll of Haggai - Malachi, and most importantly, the theme of Judah's restoration along with its institutions. He discusses other themes other than restoration to include: Lack of Wage, the Temple, God as Refiner, Divorce and God's Love, God as King and One, Law and Prophets, and Sin and Punishment. In a related development, Nogalski (2007:125) observes,

> Four themes in the Book of the Twelve: the Day of Yahweh, fertility of the land, the fate of God's people, and theodicy, have surfaced in the discussion of editorial activity, literary development, and theological perspectives. These themes deserve exploration for the role they play as a lens for reading the Book of the Twelve as a composite unity.

While it may be difficult to argue that one overall theme covers all the ideas (Smith 1987:24) the themes and motifs are interrelated and thus the present section focuses attention on the themes of covenant, priesthood and temple worship, Day of Yahweh and the justice of Yahweh (an implied theodicy).

4.1.5.1. Covenant

The Hebrew word *b*^{e}*rîth* (translated – "covenant") occurs six times in the prophetic book of Malachi (2:4; 2:5; 2:8; 2:10; 2:14; 3:1), however, the notion saturates the entire book with such a stimulating prospect of rendering the whole collection around the perception (Wallace and McKenzie 1983: 549). Nevertheless according to Wells (1987:45),

> It is of course well-established that various legal, contractual agreements were known in the ancient world, and that many of the essential features of these covenants appear in various biblical contexts. However, the biblical covenant is not merely a legal device. . . . it is a legal transaction for which there is no analogy in the circle of experience precisely because it is not, strictly speaking, legal. It is personal and relational, as well as regulative, judicial, normative, and obligatory.

It is seen as a kind of structured system of communion between man and God. It can also be described as "a medium in man's relation to God which is designed to promote reflection" (Wells 1987:45). From these lines of definitions, three distinctive features of *b*^{e}*rîth* can be gleaned: First it is the personal relationship in which the presence of Yahweh is built into its structure. Second, is a committed relationship and third, "it is a responsible relationship, that is, a relationship which has a norm by which it can be evaluated" (Wells 1987:45).

Theologically, the focal points of the content of this Second Temple prophecy were the person of God, his covenantal relationship with Israel, and the urgency of a wholehearted personal response to the truth claims of the prophetic message (Hill 1998:42). Among several themes present in the Book of Malachi is the central and key issue of covenant relationship (Redditt 1995:156). Heath (1996: 2) notes, "Covenant is the primary theme in Malachi" and Wallace and McKenzie (1983:558) observe that in Malachi, "The

patriarchal covenant is seen as the overriding covenant applying to the postexilic community." In Malachi, multiple violations of the covenant are enumerated. According to Harrison (1987:63),

> The initial criticism centers upon the failure of the contemporary priests to preserve the ideals of the covenant with Levi (1-9). The latter indictment features problems related to the family structure (10-16). In addition to the obvious abuse of the marriage covenant, charges are brought against the forsaking of "the covenant of our fathers" (v 10).

While other covenants or covenantal stipulations may be inferred from the book, there are at least three direct references to covenant in Malachi: the covenant of Levi (2:4, 8), the fathers' covenant (2:10) and the marriage covenant (2:14) (see, Harrison 1987:63).

4.1.5.1.1. The Covenant of Levi (*bᵉrîth hallēwî*, Malachi 2:1-9)

The fundamental idea and integrated thesis of this pericope is the infringement of the covenant that of Yahweh had with Levi. In these verses, the priests are reprimanded for not keeping up to the standard of the covenant of Levi as well as following Levi's example their forefather and priest-model, for they "have turned from the way and caused many to stumble against the law. They have ruined the Levitical covenant" (Mal. 2:9). The probable "historical setting for such a covenant may be found at least two occasions in the Pentateuch for a special covenant relationship with the Levites" (Harrison 1987:63).

McKenzie and Wallace (1983:550-551) in an attempt to look for a source tradition on the covenant of Levi, reject Number 25:11-13, the covenant with Phinehas (known as "covenant of peace" or "covenant of perpetual priesthood"); Deuteronomy 33:8-10, a covenant with all Israel where the duties of the Levites of the law of Moses are described; Number 18:19 and

Leviticus 2:13, the covenant of salt; Jeremiah 33:20-26 and Nehemiah 13:29 which according to them concern different matters, apart from being later than Malachi. They opt to a more plausible connection with Deuteronomy 28:1-2, 15 and Leviticus 26:3, 14-32 since the "conditional formula is followed by curses," as in Malachi 2:2-3.

In addition to passages such as Exodus 32:7-24, 27, 29; Numbers 3:5-13, 15, 40-41, Harrison (1987:63-64) notes that, "valuable insights into the ideal character and conduct of the Levitical priesthood are provided by the blessing of Moses in Deut. 33:8-11. After very brief statements concerning Reuben and Judah, a bountiful blessing is pronounced upon Levi."

> And of Levi he said, '*Let* thy Thummim and thy Urim *belong* to thy godly man, whom thou didst prove at Massah, with whom thou didst contend at the waters of Meribah; who said of his father and his mother, 'I did not consider them'; and he did not acknowledge his brothers, nor did he regard his own sons, for they observed thy word, and kept thy covenant. They shall teach thy ordinances to Jacob, and thy law to Israel. They shall put incense before thee, and whole burnt offerings on thy altar (Deut 33:8-10, NASB).

The placement of this Moses' last will and testament at the end of the book of Deuteronomy implies a canonical claim that the blessing functions in an anticipatory and efficacious willing of the future of Israel. While a properly executed will does indeed cast an influential shadow over the future of a family, this utterance, attributed to Moses, intends not only to anticipate but to create and define the future of Israel as a gift from Yahweh (Brueggemann 2001:284). Rhetorically, the appearance of Moses' blessing at this point in Deuteronomy has the twofold effect of reinforcing the function of the entire book as Moses' parting address – his final will and testament – and of balancing the harsh judgement expressed in the song (Deut. 32) with the blessing (Deut. 33) (Biddle 2003:491).

Within the framework of the blessing, one sees that the tribe of Levi is set apart from the other tribes (his brothers, v. 9a) as a reward for observing Yahweh's Torah (v. 9b), which they are entrusted, along with their priestly duties in matters relating to the offering of incense and sacrificial offerings (v. 10). The language thus suggests, in poetic fashion, that Levi's work is none other than the work of Yahweh himself, done on behalf of the tribal assembly (Christensen 2002:847). Thus proper and adequate evaluation of this benediction of Moses upon Levi, "leads to a better understanding of the priestly role in Israel. Levi is given a place of spiritual leadership with the functions of determining God's will, teaching the law, and serving at the altar" (Harrison 1987:64; Watts 1970:2, 293). This can be clearly summarised as follows:

> The blessing then indicates the three principal duties that were to be assigned to the tribe of Levi on the basis of their past actions and dedication to divine service. (i) They were to be responsible for the *Thummim* and *Urim* (v 8) by which, the Lord's will would be made known to the people in matters where decision was difficult to make. (ii) They were to have an educational role in teaching the Israelites the law of God (v 10a). (iii) They were to be responsible for Israel's formal system of worship (v 10b). The blessing of the tribe of Levi consists in the strength they would be given for these tasks and protection from their enemies which God would grant to them (v 11) (Harrison 1987:64-65).

4.1.5.1.2. Covenant of the Fathers (bᵉrîth ʾăbhōthênû, Malachi 2:10)

In this passage (Malachi 2:10), the prominence of the fatherhood of Yahweh is clearly recognised: "Do we not all have one father? Has not one God created us?" What could have been the precise ancient and notable precursor for this "covenant of our fathers?" Any hesitation with regard to the character of "one father" is elucidated using the counterpart explanation, "one God created us" (Harrison 1987:69-70). In Deuteronomy, the "fathers" refers to the patriarchs.

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McKenzie and Wallace (1983:551-52) assert that "our fathers" in Malachi could be either "the Sinai/Horeb generation," and that the passage could be deliberately ambiguous, regarding all the covenants mentioned as standing in continuity with the original covenant of election.

Baldwin (1972b:237) states that the context indicates one of the patriarchs; either Abraham or Jacob (Israel). The *'āch* (brother, translated "we") on the other hand refers to the people, among which must be included the priests, are accused of breaking the covenant of their fathers. Harrison (1987:70) expresses that the impressive ancient ceremony presided over Moses (Exod. 24:7-8), could represent the background for a revered "covenant of our fathers."

It is therefore reasonable to infer, that the understanding of Yahweh's creation of the Israelites as a nation separated unto him guarantees them an entirely new reality of life. This new reality is to be made manifest in their interpersonal relationship. In other words, any violation of the rights of an individual within this bond was in fact a breach of that individual's relationship to Yahweh; in whose fatherhood the ground of their harmony owes its existence (Bennett 1972:7, 384). Here, Malachi deals with the problem of disunity, upon the established foundation of unity. The social and basic characteristic of breaking this covenant is thus expressed: "Why do we deal treacherously each against his brother by profaning the covenant of our fathers?" In Malachi's estimation, the most serious violation of covenant among humans is divorce (of fellow Judean women in favour of foreign women). This system of life constitutes deceitfulness to one another, and it is at the same time, disloyalty to Yahweh.

> It brings into the heart of the Jewish family those who have no interest in or care for the things of Yahweh. It involves the birth of half-breed children, who will be under the dominating influence of mothers who serve not Yahweh. It means the contamination of Jewish religious life at its source, by the introduction of heathen rites and beliefs. If the worship of Yahweh is to continue in Israel, or the favour of Yahweh to be poured out upon Israel, "the intermarriage of Jews and non-Jews must cease. Israel, as the people of the holy God, must keep herself holy (Klein 1987:34).

This and other various dimensions of violation of this covenant are treated in the exegetical chapter of this study.

4.1.5.1.3. Marriage Covenant (Malachi 2:13-16)

In Malachi 2:13-16, the text focuses attention on the horizontal dimension of the unfaithfulness and deceitfulness of Judah—the violation of the covenants of marriage. While a literal interpretation of Malachi 2:10-16 has been proposed (Hugenberger 1994:339), others argue that Malachi's language should be interpreted figuratively (O'Brien 1996:249; Petersen 1995:198-200; Ogden 1988:223-30). O'Brien (1996:244) notes that though several commentators have argued that the passage refers to idolatry, most contend that Malachi 2:10-16 is concerned with human intermarriage in the postexilic community. Such an interpretation is derived from: the understanding that the "daughter of a foreign god" as a foreign woman involved in-and enticing others to-idolatry; and the relating "sending" (mostly translated as "divorce") and "the wife of your youth" to the practice of a Judean man divorcing his original (Judean) wife in order to marry a more affluent foreign woman. According to this understanding, Malachi describes the problem to which Ezra/Nehemiah's abolition of mixed marriages in the restoration community later provides the answer; it is the most common argument for situating the starting point of the book prior to Ezra's reforms (Stuart 1998:1253).

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The idea of the covenant of marriage in which Yahweh is presented as a witness (Mal. 2:14), serves enough foundation for the Judean marital relationship. Thus Harrison (1987:72) notes,

> This spiritual dimension should have contributed to the stability of home life. The loyalty of each partner to the covenant God was a uniting bond which created a lasting companionship between the partners. . . Malachi is a quiet witness to a mutually satisfying marriage relationship which, though begun in youth, does not become jaded with the passing of time.

By way of maintaining the unity of the unit, 2:10–16, the prophet dealt with the distinctive aspect of 2:11–12 and 2:13–16 separately since not all who were guilty of abandoning their wives were doing so for the purpose of intermarriage and not all who were intermarrying had to abandon their wives to do so. While Malachi was particularly concerned with problem of divorce, both intermarriage and divorce are examples of unfaithfulness (Clendenen 2004:342).

4.1.5.2. Priesthood and Temple Worship

The matters with which Malachi was primarily concerned placed him somewhere around the early part of the 5th century BCE, when the issues of the integrity of the priestly office and administrative control over the temple were prominent (Brown 1996:191). The book is essentially about the religious questions of worship, temple and priesthood. As it were, priests and Levites played the leading role in the cultic life of Israel; the responsibility of the priests' offering sacrifices was an essential aspect of the covenant relationship between Israel and Yahweh. However, the priests in Malachi despised this covenantal relationship by neglecting their functions. After rebuking Judah as a nation, Malachi confronts the priests who have despised God's name and

defiled the altar of Yahweh. The prophet specifically dealt with the function and purpose of the priests and Levites.

It seems somehow difficult to determine the origin of Israelite priesthood. There had certainly been priests before Yahweh instructed Moses to establish the priesthood for Israel (Exod. 19:22-24). God designated Aaron and his descendants as a priestly tribe (Exod. 28) (Lee 2010:65). Lee (2010:65-66) makes these statements:

> Apart from the purely temporary priesthood of Moses, held for the purpose of the solemn institution of the priesthood, Aaron was the first Hebrew priest, and all subsequent priests were descended from him. But by descent, Aaron was a Levite and therefore, in the sense that the priesthood was within the tribe of Levi, it was always Levitical: On this theory at all times all priests were Levites, though at no time were all Levites priests.

Malachi aligns himself with a particular priestly circle - the Levitical priesthood (2:4-6) - over and against a rival priesthood that had gained control over the temple after it was rebuilt in 516/515 BCE. Leuchter (2010:109) remarks:

> Reinforced by the Persian-sponsored rebuilding of the Jerusalem Temple in 516/515 BCE, the Aaronide priests strengthened their hegemony over the religious life of Jews throughout the homeland and abroad, claiming authority over a growing corpus of sacred literature and governing the observance of major festivals in the religious calendar. It was during this time as well that a distinct and definite priestly hierarchy was fixed: the high priesthood held by the Zadokite family—an Aaronide clan—stood at the apex, regular Aaronide families occupied the next level of religious and ritual authority, and Levites were relegated to an inferior position. With politics in Persian Judaism placing the Jerusalem Temple as the most important religious institution, Levites were unable to challenge Aaronide primacy therein.

While condemning the abuses of the priestly class and corrupt worship, Malachi regards himself no less than a reformer, calling both his priestly colleagues and the larger community to renewed fidelity to Yahweh's

covenant (Brown 1996:191). Malachi attempts to bring the priesthood closer to what the prophets perceived to be the ideal; priest that excelled in teaching; effective and efficient exegetes of scripture, priests that provided social justice, that worshipped Yahweh alone and whose performance of the cult satisfied the most rigorous cultic demands.

4.1.5.3. The day of Yahweh (*yôm yhwh*)

The theme of the day of Yahweh is regarded as a central feature of the prophets' message to their contemporaries. It is the most striking and prominent theme in the Book of the Twelve Minor Prophets. While Isaiah focuses on Zion, Jeremiah on the rhetoric of lament, Ezekiel on the Glory of Yahweh, so are the Minor Prophets on the theme of the day of Yahweh (Schart 2000:40-41; Rendtorff 2000:75-87; Barton 2004:68-79; Nogalski 2003:175-191; Petersen 2000:9-10). Petersen (2000:9) contends that, "the day of Yahweh is a luminal moment when Yahweh will act as regent, usually in a military manner. The day is ambiguous; it can offer weal or woe, depending on the historical circumstances. It is a day that, Israel could use to interpret all of its significant historical moments." For King (1995:31-32), the day of Yahweh is both historical and eschatological. It is both present and a future reality. The day will occur in history as well as in the final drama of history, the realisation of God's plan of salvation.

The day of Yahweh as envisioned by Malachi is an eschatological day of judgment with a future day of renewal and restoration of the fortunes of those who fear the Lord. Malachi's vision for restoration includes a covenantal messenger, a renewed temple, a land of abundance, and a community of reverence who will enjoy righteousness and healing. The construct phrase *yôm yhwh* (the day of Yahweh) is located in the sixth oracle of the last chapter

of the book of Malachi (3:13-21, MT). In Malachi 3:1, the announcement of the messenger is heard: *hinnî shōlēᵍḥ mal'ākhî ûphinnāh-dherekʰ lᵉphānāy* ("Behold, I am sending my messenger, and he will clear the way before me . . ."). This announcement is within the context of the day of the arrival of the messenger of the covenant. But it is an unbearable one, *ûmî mekhakēl 'eth-yôm bô'ô* ("But who can withstand the day of His coming?"3:2). The question, "who can bear/endure/ resist/ withstand the day?" re-echoes Joel 2:11, *kî-ghādhôl yôm-yhwh wᵉnôrā' mᵉ'ōdh ûmî yᵉkhîlennû* "For the day of the LORD *is* great and very terrible; and who can abide it?" The question presumes, when the day of Yahweh is near. The description carries the emblem of the traditional characteristics of the day of Yahweh of judgment and security. The prophet then describes what Yahweh will do on arrival on that day:

> And He will sit as a smelter and purifier of silver, and He will purify the sons of Levi and refine them like gold and silver, so that they may present to the LORD offerings in righteousness. "Then the offering of Judah and Jerusalem will be pleasing to the LORD as in the days of old and as in former years. Then I will draw near to you for judgment; and I will be a swift witness against the sorcerers and against the adulterers and against those who swear falsely, and against those who oppress the wage earner in his wages, the widow and the orphan, and those who turn aside the alien and do not fear Me, says the LORD of hosts (3:3-5) (Udoekpo 2010:228).

According to Udoekpo (2010:228), "This passage with all its various characteristics of parallelism and metaphors, narrates what Yahweh will do, no doubt forms an inclusion cases of injustices . . . This indicates not only continuity and rapport, . . . it is an adaptation and modification of this tradition from an earlier prophet, an exercise that Zephaniah took seriously." He, however, remarks that Malachi's use of the messenger formula adds to the uniqueness of this book (2010:229). The day of Yahweh is not only a judgment day for covenant violators but also the day of hope (Proctor

1993:13). In Malachi 3:16-17, God promises to write down the list of those who fear him (*sēpher zikhkhārôn*), who will become Yahweh's unique possession or property (*s^{e}ghullā^{h}*) on the day the Lord would prepare (*layyôm ʾăsher ʾănî ʿōśē^{h}*):

> On that day when I act, says Yahweh *Saboath*, they will be my most prized possessions, and I shall spare them in the way a man spares his son who serves him. Then once again you will see the difference between the upright person and the wicked one who serves God and the one who does not serve him (see vv. 17-18; Udoekpo 2010:229).

Though Malachi's audience doubts God's justice, on that day they will clearly acknowledge the distinction that exists between the righteous person and the unrighteous one. In Malachi 3:19(MT), 4:1 (English) the day of the Lord is described as burning furnace, emphasising the burning power of God's anger and evil doers would be completely destroyed. Those who fear the Lord will be rewarded on this day. The sun of righteousness will shine upon them with healing (*shemesh ts^{e}dhāqā^{h} ûmarpēʾ bikhnāphe^{y}hā*) and they will go about with joy leaping like calves from a stall (*ûphishtem k^{e}ʿeghlē marbēq*) (3:20 [4:2]). They would, on this Day trample on the wicked (*w^{e}ʿassôthem r^{e}shāʿîm*) who becomes nothing but ashes on the feet of the righteous (*Kî-yihyû ʾēpher taḥath kaphphôth raghlêkhem*) (3:21 [4:3]). The final verses of this prophetic literature are also quite remarkable:

> Remember the Law of Moses my Servant to whom at Horeb I prescribe decrees and rulings for all Israel. Look I shall send you the prophet Elijah before the great and awesome Day of YHWH come. He will reconcile parents to their children and children to their parents, to forestall my putting the country under the curse of destruction (3:22-24 [4:4-5]; Udoekpo 2010:229).

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The section of the book: Mal 3:22-24 MT (4:4–6)[10] is specially positioned in the Hebrew Bible (Snyman 2012:1). The book of Malachi does not only come to a close in Mal 3:22-24 MT (4:4–6) rather, the entirety of the *nebi'im* (Prophets), and the second portion of the HB. Thus, these verses have been understood as a thoughtful, well designed and systematised conclusion, not just to the book Malachi, but to the entire prophetic institution within the HB, moving beyond Joshua to Malachi (Jones 2000:69; Snyman 2012:1-6; Baldwin 1972:251; Floyd 2000:568–569).[11] This section certainly constitutes a kind of appendix to the book of Malachi, which was very significant for subsequent interpretation (Coggins & Han 2011:200).

The appendix served to equate the hearers of the oracles of Malachi- along with future generations who heard his words in scripture- with the disobedient, indecisive or irresolute people whose national loyalty to the God of their fathers was in danger of being dissolved (Hugenberger 1994:22). Since, in 4Q76 (4QXII^{a}) Malachi comes before Jonah 1:5, 10, 14-16 and 3:5-10, it broadens the hope from Malachi 1:11, 14 towards Malachi 3:22-24 into the expectation of salvation for the Gentile (Menken 2009:7-8). The messenger motif of Malachi 3:1 has been linked with Elijah in these verses (22-24). It is believed that Moses alongside Elijah here, are meant to reconnect the Prophets and the Torah, as well as with the Writings, which is also reminiscent of Joel 2:31-32. It reinforces the Law of Moses (v 22), alongside the

[10] Fuller (1997:221-318 cited in Menken 2009) observes that, Hebrew editions of the Minor Prophets are found in the Quran and Wadi Murabba'at, in Greek in Haḥal Ḥaver… All the twelve books are represented in the Qumran fragments (4QMinor Prophets $^{a-g}$ =4Q76-82), and most of the editions have the Masoretic order.

[11] Some scholars however, consider this concluding section of the book as the ending to a prophetic collection consisting of the books of Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi (see for example, Boda 2007:113–131; House 1990:96–97), the conclusion of the book of the Twelve (Hill 1998:364; Petersen 1995:233), Redditt (1995:185), feels that it is a fitting conclusion to the Law and the Prophets or simply the Prophets (Rudolph 1976:291).

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theme of judgment, repentance, and restoration of fortunes (Udoekpo 2010:229). Clendenen (2004:238) notes,

> This future dimension heightens the ethical impact of the book. Right behavior is grounded in the redemptive dimension as response of gratitude consistent with what God has done in the past. It is also grounded in the eschatological dimension as confidence that the God who began his work of righteous redemption will complete it, eliminating evil and vindicating the righteous, establishing justice and peace. God's faithful love in the past as elaborated in 1:2–5 and the coming day of Yahweh announced in 3:16–4:6 together were to be the motivating factors for all the exhortations in the book.

The day of Yahweh as envisioned by Malachi will alter the realities of life for Judah. In the decisive events of the day, the prophet discerns with particular simplicity the awesome presence of Yahweh in the world in His ongoing activity of judging those who have violated the covenant, and who invariably are no longer under its protection with a future day of renewal and restoration of the fortunes of those who fear the Lord. It is this eschatological dimension of the day of Yahweh that intensifies the ethical uniqueness of the book of Malachi.

4.1.5.4. The Justice of Yahweh

The problem of evil is perhaps the greatest philosophical issue that faces all human beings irrespective of their religious persuasion. It is humankind's greatest problem because every human being born on the face of the earth is always confronted with some form of evil. Evil is here understood in terms of human crises of pain, sickness, and anything that causes discomfort to human beings. When confronted with pain or sorrow, one is forced to square his or her experience with his or her religious belief and understanding (Boloje 2009:7).

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The problem of evil which appears to be a recurrent one plagues such spheres of investigation, which deal mainly with the disposition and fortune of man namely; theology, history, philosophy, art. It is not astonishing to note that all important worldviews, be it religious, social, ethical, or even political offers stimulating insights into this perplexing subject (Peterson 1982:11). Furthermore, Harold Kushner, a Jewish writer in dealing with this problem says:

> None of us can avoid the problem of why bad things happen to good people. Sooner or later each of us finds himself playing one of the roles in the story of Job, whether as a victim of tragedy, as a member of the family, or a friend / comforter. The questions never change; the search for a satisfying answer continues (Kushner 1981:143).

The postexilic community was in a difficult and disappointing situation. In their varied circumstances their religious life was very nominal, and their morality had dwindled as they asked why there was no divine judgement on wrong doing. "Their problem was indeed the problem of every monotheistic religion: the origin of evil" (Korpel 2005:136-138). Here, the theodicy problem can be discerned, specifically as expressed in Exodus 34:6-7, provokes such misgivings concerning righteousness, fairness and vengeance, and concerning benevolence and remuneration on Yahweh's perspective (Barton 1996:71; Leeuwen 1993:31-49; Crenshaw 2003:175-191).

The disillusionment of the postexilic Jewish community was prompted by several theological misunderstandings, including the expectations for wealth that Haggai had promised once the Second Temple was rebuilt (Hag. 2:7, 18-19), the restoration of the Davidic covenant predicted by Ezekiel (Ezek. 34:13, 23-24) and the implementation of Jeremiah's "new covenant" (Jer. 31:23, 31-32) (Hills 2012:527). There was great excitement in the waning years of the sixth century BEC. The people believed, based on the words of the prophets,

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that a new, more prosperous and glorious, messianic age was about to manifest itself at any moment. However, as time went by it became more and more obvious that these prophecies would not be fulfilled in the way and the time the people anticipated. The lives of the Israelites were restricted to Jerusalem and its immediate environment. They saw no evidence that God's glory had returned to the temple and perhaps most disappointing, there was no visible restoration of the kingdom promises made to David.

How could it be explained that God seemed to have abandoned and forgotten the people, the Davidic king and the priesthood He himself had chosen? Many have lost faith in the God of their fathers who in their view had punished them beyond reasonable measure. They asked,

> Why are we fasting, if you do not see it? (Why) do we humble ourselves, if you do not take note of it?' (Isa. 58:3). `We await justice, but there is none, salvation, but it is far away from us' (Isa. 59:11). `Where is he who brought them up from the sea, (where are) the shepherds of his flock? Where is he who puts his holy spirit in their midst?' (Isa. 63:11). `Where are your zeal and your might?' (Isa. 63:15). `We have become like those over whom you have never ruled, like those who are not called by your name' (Isa. 63:19). `Awake! Why do you sleep, O Lord? Awake! Do not cast us off forever!' (Ps. 44:23). Not the Israelites but God himself is held responsible for the rampant neglect of worship: `the Lord has brought to an end in Zion appointed feast and Sabbath' (Lam. 2:6). `How can we sing a song of the Lord on alien soil?' (Ps. 137:4). `It is useless to serve God. What have we gained by keeping his charge and walking in abject awe of the Lord of Hosts?' (Mal. 3:14) She wondered what evidence could be presented to verify the claim that she was in covenant with Yahweh and that he did love her (1:2). `Where is the God of justice?' (Mal. 2:17) (Korpel 2005:138).

The interrogative *'ayyēh* (where?) is mostly employed by Yahweh's foes to show their reservation with respect Yahweh's capacity to be faithful in keeping his people (e.g. 2 Kg. 2:14; Pss. 115: 2; 79:10; Mic. 7:10). However, it is in addition corroborated by the psalmist in the appeal to Yahweh who was

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almost inattentive and missing (Ps 89:50 cf. Ps 42:3, 11). In this regard, it is an expression that intensely conveys disbelief in the best interest of the spokesperson (Tiemeyer 2005:186).

It is argued that Jonah's protest against the extension of divine mercy to the wicked is an ironic reflection of the popular questioning of divine justice describe in Malachi. Although the problem of evil is noticed in Malachi among post-exilic prophetic writings, the issue of the delay of justice against the nations is also present in the other late prophetic texts, such as Haggai 1:1-11; Zechariah 1:1-12 (Jones 1995:156). Malachi attempts to justify the justice of Yahweh and to rebuild trust in Him in at least three ways:

> First, by reminding Israel that it was inconceivable she enjoys the blessings of God without fulfilling her duties, namely obedience to Yahweh's covenant . . . Second, by pointing to the recent downfall of Israel's old spiritual foe, Edom, as indicative of God's concern for His people and His present activity in history (1:2ff). Third, by reminding them about the awesome Day of Yahweh . . . (3:16ff) when all injustice would be obliterated and all meritorious service for Yahweh rewarded . . . (Klein 1987:35-36).

Yahweh was obviously slighted by Israel's several and present misconduct. The many accusations in the book all indicate the rationale why Yahweh's blessings are so far-off from His people. This first position is to act as a reproof for the spiritual weariness of Israel, while the last two positions are envisioned to quicken their faith in the Lord once again (Klein 1987:35). Malachi brings the disputations to a close and in its place, readers find a testimony:

> Then those who revered the Lord spoke with one another. The Lord took note and listened, and a book of remembrance was written before him for those who revered the Lord and thought on his name. So that they shall be mine says the Lord of hosts, my special possession on the day when I act, and I will spare them as parents spare their children who serve them. *So* that you shall again distinguish between the

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> righteous and the wicked, between one who serves God and one who does not serve him (Mai 3:16-18) (Nogalski 2007:134).

4.1.6. Structure of the Book

While it is important for readers to know the primary message of Malachi, by way of identifying the literary genre, it is also very necessary to determine how the author has arranged the message of the book in order to highlight its central concerns. The Christian OT culminates in the words found in the last book of the Prophets i.e. the book Malachi, a structure inherited basically from the translators of the Greek translation of the scriptures, the LXX. Written at a time following the return from the Babylonian captivity, the book of Malachi describes the continuing unfaithfulness of the people of Yahweh. This ending also looks to the future, but a different kind of future. The book concludes with a warning about impending judgment and the announcement of the coming of the prophet Elijah (Jackson 2004:41).

Perhaps because of the people's disillusionment and contempt for their covenant with God, Malachi uses a somewhat unique structure in trying to make God's point with the people. Although it was occasionally used by other prophets, no one else uses it to the extent that he does. Whatever labels one gives to the book's oracles: discussion, dialogue, or disputation, it is now practically self-evident in various studies on Malachi that the book contains six distinct speeches,[12] a superscription and two appendices (4:4 [MT 3:22]; 4:5-6 [MT 3:23-24])[13] (Clendenen 2004:227; Hill 1998:26).

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[12] Hill (1998:26) following other interpreters identifies six of such disputation speeches: "(1) 1:2–5, (2) 1:6–2:9, (3) 2:10–16 (excluding vv. 11–12 as a later addition), (4) 2:17–3:5, (5) 3:6–12, and (6) 3:13–21 (Eng., 4:3; the last three verses of the canonical book, 4:4–6 in English, are excluded as a later addition)."

[13] Although some would not agree (Assis 2011:208–209; Clendenen 2004:455; Floyd 2000: 568–569; Glazier-McDonald 1987:243–245; Koorevaar 2010:75; Verhoef 1987: 337–338), the

In its literary structure, the book is seen as a series of dialogues or disputes between the prophet and those he is addressing. Typically, there are three elements that go together to form a dispute: the prophet's assertion, objection from those addressed, and the prophet's response, which is a message that he gives from the Lord in the particular situation he addresses (Clark and Hatton 2002:369-70). Clendenen (2004:227) presents the six speech structure in a manner as shown below:

Speech #1—1:2–5 Yahweh's love
Speech #2—1:6–2:9 Unfaithful priests
Speech #3—2:10–16 Divorce
Speech #4—2:17–3:5[or 3:6] Divine justice
Speech #5—3:6–12 Tithe
Speech #6—3:13–4:3 [Heb. 3:13–21] Day of Judgment
Appendix #1—4:4 [Heb. 3:22] Observe the Law
Appendix #2—4:5–6 [Heb. 3:23–24] Coming of Elijah.

Clark and Hatton (2002:370) on the other hand present their dialogue outline[14] as shown below:

Title (1:1)
First dispute: The Lord's love for Israel (1:2-5)

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concluding section of Malachi (4:4–6 (MT 3:22–24) is commonly considered to be a later redactional inclusion. In this regard, it is believed that the addition applies remaining sections of the book (Childs 1979:495-96; Eissfeldt 1965:441-42; Hill 1998:363-66).

[14] This is very similar to Hugenberger (1994: 24-25) who suggested a concentric outline due to Malachi's fondness for concentric pattering within the individual disputations. But with respect to the third disputation, 2:10-16, he presents the following convincing analysis of the verses in the outline below with some modification by this researcher:

A God (Elohim) is one (*'eḥādh*) who created (*bārāa'*) his people to be one (*eḥādh*).
General sin: unfaithfulness (*bāghadh*) (v. 10)
B Specific sin: unfaithfulness (*bāghadh*) by intermarriage with unbeliever (v. 11)
C Verdict: Exclusion by Yahweh, rejection of food offering (*minḥāh*) (v. 11)
C¹ Verdict: Rejection of food offering (*minḥāh*) by Yahweh (v. 12)
B¹ Specific sin: unfaithfulness (*bāghadh*) by divorce (v. 14)
A¹ God (Elohim) is the one (*'eḥādh*) who made (*'āśāh*) husband and wife to be one (*'eḥādh*).
General sin: unfaithfulness (*bāghadh*) (v. 15
Summary: Exhortation not to be unfaithful (*bāghadh*) by Yahweh, the God (Elohim) of Israel, Yahweh of hosts (v. 16).

Second dispute: (1:6-2:9)
1. The priests worship the Lord unworthily (1:6-14)
2. The prophet warns the priests (2:1-9)
Third dispute: Mixed marriage and divorce (2:10-16)
Fourth dispute: The day of judgement is near (2:17-3:6)
Fifth dispute: The people must repent (3:7-12)
Sixth dispute: God will reward the faithful (3:13-4:3 [MT 3:13-21])
Conclusion: Warning and promises (4:4-6; MT 3:22-24).

Dorsey (1999:323) recognises the book of Malachi as having a chiastic structure:[15]

A Yahweh is just: He loves (the faithful remnant of) Israel but will utterly destroy the wicked Edom (1:2-5)
B Priests and people have cheated YHWH in their offerings (1:6-14)
C In the past Levi served in righteousness but **Levites have turned from Yahweh** (2:1-9)
D CENTER: Stop being faithless (2:10-16)
C[1] In the future Yahweh's messenger will come and the **Levites will be purified** (2:17-3:6)
B[1] People have robbed Yahweh in tithes and offerings; but if they change, God will bless them (3:7-12)
A[1] Yahweh is just: He will reward the righteous but will utterly destroy the wicked (3:13-4:3 [MT 3:13-21])
Conclusion: The Day of YHWH (4:4-6 [MT 3:22-24]).

Sweeney (2012:366) regards the book as a parenetic address to priests and people calling for proper reverence for Yahweh. He reflects the structure of the book to be as follows:

I. Superscription 1:1
II. Body of the Book: Parenetic Address Proper 1:2-3-24
A. First disputation: Yahweh loves the people 1:2-5
B. Second disputation: people and priests have mishandled cultic matters 1:6-2:16

[15] Clendenen (1987:3-17) observes three chiastic structures in the book (*a b c b a* - Motivation, Situation and Command), articulated from a linguistic perspective. Also, Stuart (1998:1251) organises the book in a chiastic scheme. See also Clendenen (2004 230).

C. Third disputation: justice will be done on the day of Yahweh 2:17-3:5
D. Fourth disputation: call for proper treatment of Yahweh's tithes 3:6-12
E. Fifth disputation: Yahweh's justice will be realised on the Day of Yahweh 3:13-31
F. Concluding summation: observe Yahweh's Torah 3:22-24(MT).

These different kinds of approaches show that the book has undergone a well-thought composition. The structures shown above indicate also a thematic unity and conformity. The various internal pattern of each dispute or oracle, all of them present a very similar pattern or outline. However, it is a pattern that serves the content, not vice versa (Stuart 1998: 1251). Each disputation starts with a statement from Yahweh immediately followed by a sceptical question or refutation from the recipients.

Clendenen (2004:227) notes that, "The disputations are identified by the prophet's declaration or charge of wrong doing, followed by his hearers' objection introduced by *wa'ămartem,* 'but you say,' and then the prophet's elaboration and argument." This pattern of declaration, rebuttal, counter-refutation and consequence is present in different degrees in all six oracles. The interrogative nature of the prophetic assertion and hypothetical audience rebuttal indicates the recursive progression of Malachi's oracle and the book's place in the wider structure of Haggai-Zechariah-Malachi prophetic corpus. The integrity therefore, of this recognised speech form of the disputation must be preserved in the microstructure of Malachi's oracles (Hill 1998:34).

This study affirms the traditional division of Malachi's oracle into six catechetical disputations. It acknowledges as well the deliberate inversion or chiastic arrangement of subject matter and the importance of the speaker's

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authority for determining the boundaries of the disputations. That Yahweh's words close the disputations by dismissing as invalid and ending the opponents' refutations indicates that Yahweh overrules their authority. The oracles validate the consistency of the same messenger formula and theological themes based on the Pentateuch. In this manner, the consistency of the book obviates any speculation about lack of integrity or multiple authorship (see Hill 1998:34; Stuart 1998:1252). Thus, the book of Malachi should be taken as a well-read scholarly and thematic agreement.

4.2. HISTORICAL CONTEXT OF MALACHI

The oracles of Malachi cannot be understood apart from at least a basic knowledge of the context in which the book originates. Like the rest of the prophets, he prophesied from God, but he did so within the backdrop of the circumstances and situations of his time. Malachi addressed Judeans of a recently founded province of Judah (formally Yehud)[16] in the Persian satrapy of Eber-Nahara probably during the reign of king Darius I (522-486 BCE). His audience included emigrants or deportees who had relocated in Judah and offspring of those Jews who had endured the Babylonian invasion of Jerusalem, but were not extradited to Mesopotamia.

[16] Stuart (1998:1253) observes that Yehud was a small province out of 120 that formed the Persian Empire. It was around 20 x 25 miles in size. The province was divided into at least six districts: Jericho, Mizpah, Jerusalem, Beth-Zur, Beth-Hacherem and Keilah (Hill 1998:62). Hill (Hill 1998:62) states that the 'residential population' can be estimated around 150,000 based on certain texts such as Malachi 3:5; Ezra 10:2; Nehemiah 13:3, 23. The population 'was very small in number, and… larger parts of the towns and villages were either completely or partly destroyed, and the rest were poorly functioning' (Stern 2001:350). The important archaeological and demographic studies of Carter (1994: 106-145) and Lipschits (2003:323-376; 2005:261-271) have clarified ones understanding of the period. Carter (1994:106-145) specifically addresses questions concerning size of the province, the number, size and distribution of the sites within it, its population, and its significance, from the perspective of contextual or social archaeology Lipschits (2005:261-71) estimates the population of Yehud to have been 30,000 at its maximal level in the later part of the Persian period. See also Kessler (2010:309-351).

The edict of Cyrus the Great in 538 BCE serves as the historical background for the ministries of the postexilic prophets Haggai-Zechariah-Malachi. Sheshbazzar, whom Cyrus appointed as governor (Ezr. 5:14), barely laid the foundation of the temple. It is noted that from Cyrus' time until Darius' rise to power, the construction of the temple was not completed (Ezr. 5:14; Lee 2011:163). According to Lee (2011:163), Sheshbazzar may have encountered at least a reluctance to assist on the part of the governor in Samaria, and somehow even direct hostility. The Second Temple was erected under the auspices of the Persian king Darius I, and the monies granted for the rebuilding took the form of "tax rebates" from the Persian royal treasury (Hill 2012:526-527). The content of Malachi's prophecy is tightly intertwined around a well planned bond of political, economic, religious and social realities. A brief exploration of these historical realities is undertaken in this section of the study.

4.2.1. Political Structure

Malachi appears to have been written at a time of relative political peace, "an uneventful waiting period" for the Persian Empire (Baldwin 1972b:211; see also Heflin 1987:8; Hill 1998:51-73). While most of the Old Testament prophets preached in times of turmoil and upheaval, as nations struggled for control of the ancient world, it was a different story, however, for Malachi. The world in which he lived was part of the powerful Persian Empire which was firmly in control of its world (Wood 1978 387-406).

Again, while it may have been a time of political peace, this does not mean that it was a particularly encouraging time for Judah. Conflict between the Jews and the nobles of Samaria appears to have been a regular occurrence. The tension between returned Jewish Exiles and the rest of the people is

portrayed through the identity and attitude of the Samaritan in general.[17] The Judeans would have been well aware of the less than prominent role they played in their world. This reality surely impacted them socially and spiritually as Heflin summarises the situation:

> For all the tranquillity of Malachi's world, it was not a particularly happy time for the chosen people. Times of international crisis bring with them their own stimulus to action and thought, but calmness can dull the spirits and destroy any sense of vitality. Israel floated on these still waters of international calm, with little sense of direction and the collapse of international discipline (1987:6).

This post-exilic Israelite community was governed by a Persian-appointed governor (Hebrew *peḥāʰ*). Before and after the time of Malachi, these were natives of the province (e.g. Sheshbazzar, Ezra 5:14; Zerubbabel, Ezra 6:7; Hag. 1:1, 14; Ezra; and Nehemiah, Nehemiah 5:15; 8:9; 10:1), but there is discrepancy as to who governed the province during the time of Malachi.[18] Clendenen (2004:212) believe that Gedeliah also served as governor of Judah under the Babylonians, though they observe that the word *peḥāʰ* is never used of him. They add that either Sheshbazzar or Zerubbabel is described by the Persian term *tirshāthā'* in Ezra 2:63, a title for governor of Judah that is as well used by Nehemiah (8:9; 10:1).

Regardless of who governed Judah, it is now believed that the governor of the satrapy of Eber-Nehara ruled over Yehud's governor and, if Malachi's satrapy

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[17] Soggin (2001:175) notes that the Samaritans are group of Jews who fled from Ezra and Nehemiah's marriage reforms from the southern part of Israel to the northern region during the fifth century B.C. This group did not want to separate from their foreign wives or alliances. So they migrated to Samaria and established their cultic life on mount Gerizim where their temple was also built.

[18] Ezra 2:1-69 (cf Neh. 7:6-68) compiles the list of the returnees to Judah (or *golah*, that is the descendants of those carried off into exile in the early sixth century), which apparently does not contain the names of one particular group of returning exiles. In 1:5, Ezra records that the individuals who were part of this first wave of returnees were "the heads of the families of Judah and Benjamin, and the priests and the Levites." The narrator describes that these were people "whose spirit God had stirred" in order to rebuild the Temple (Lee 2011:161).

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governor was similar to the one preceding him (Zerubbabel) and following him (Nehemiah), one would expect a complete lack of sympathy on his part. There is little evidence to demonstrate that the Persian king shows any further interest in the province of Yehud than the satrapy governor, after the rebuilding of the temple. Yehud and the Eber-Nehara were very vital to the Persians basically because the land serves both as a bridge for monitoring commerce between two continents and as a base for military operations against Egypt (Lee 2011:202; Petersen 1995:19-20).

The satrapy governor and his associates were most likely committed to stopping any development in the province of Yehud, as the book of Ezra testifies about periods preceding and following the time of Malachi. While such opposition would have brought unity among the oppressed people on the one hand, but on the other hand, it reminded Yehud of its little political significance and weakness in an Empire that controlled most of the world. Thus, Judah struggled for identity amidst a sea of hostile neighbouring satrapy provinces. Any difference shown to Judah by the Persian overlords, religious or otherwise, was largely a matter of political pragmatism, since the Persian army needed a base of operations for conquest and control of Egypt (Hill 2012:527).

In the event of time, Yehud had to remain under a pagan authority, a fact difficult to reconcile with the prophecies, especially the Davidic dynasty promises. The loss of confidence in the ability of the Davidic family to orchestrate the restoration of Jerusalem as announced by earlier prophets such as Ezekiel and Zechariah (implicit in the lamp stand vision Zech. 4:1-14), but postponed to an indefinite future time, polarised political power within the province as reflected in the prominence of Levitical priesthood in

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Malachi's message (Hill 1998:75). Schams (1998:45) observes that, ". . . the prevailing form of administration during the two centuries of Persian rule seems to have been a diarchy, with a governor appointed by the Persian king and the Jewish high priest sharing the authority."

For the Yehudaites, having no political hope would have caused tremendous apathy and no energy to revolt against an all-powerful Empire. They must have to struggle to define themselves in this circumstance. While they could reconcile the exile with their theology because they understood that they had been punished for their idolatry, they however, had it difficult to reconcile their continuous subjugation to Gentile superpowers with a God who had promised to never forsake David's line. How could they reconcile being an insignificant province, a small one out of many, worship the God of the heavens and the earth? These apparently irreconcilable contradictions probably caused many to doubt whether Yahweh had disappeared from the scene. These factors as well, influenced Yehudaites to adopt an attitude of scepticism and cynicism toward Yahweh, the very attitude that Malachi encountered and confronted.

4.2.2. Economic Situation

The pragmatic economic situation which the Judahite population met was very discouraging. As it were, when Nebuchadnezzar conquered the city, he sent into exile the finest of the land's inhabitants, making them captives. However, when the best ones of the land were exiled, those who remained in the land took ownership of their belongings and possessed the best of the land for themselves (Jer.39: 10; Blenkinsopp 1988:60-66). The Samaritans,[19]

[19] Williamson (2004:23) argues, "It is clear beyond a shadow of doubt that throughout the Persian period there continued to be fundamental differences of opinion within Judah

who were considered to be a miscellaneous tribe from the northern part of Israel, had come in and taken ownership of their belongings and possessed large holdings and estates, and so many of the people had become rich and were affluent (Blenkinsopp 1988:68). The returnees could not count on being welcomed with open arms and taken in by those who had been left behind, especially since economic conditions in Palestine were poor (Hag. 1:6, 9–12; Zech. 8:10). Wells (1987:40) clearly states:

> They evidently taxed the Jews (Neh 5:4), a burden that lay on top of that imposed by Persia itself. Some had to borrow money just to buy food and pay taxes (Neh 5:14-15). These neighbors accused them to the central government of Persia (Ezra 4:6; 4:7-23), and physically opposed their work, so that it had to be done in shifts, with half the men working and half standing guard (Neh 4:16-18)…The situation in Jerusalem was bleak. The extensive ruins (Neh 4:10), and the inferiority of the project compared to those of the more glorious past (Ezra 3:12; Hag 2:3), diminished whatever initial enthusiasm may have existed. And the prospects for a better life seemed no better now. Small wonder that few in Babylon wanted to return to Israel. Many had grown accustomed to life there, many knew no other life, and some had prospered.

These hard and unwelcoming economic realities of Yehud were particularly noticeable in the prophet's emphasis on certain cultic sins (e.g. the defilement of Yahweh's table - 1:7, 8, 13-14, or failing to bring the tithe - 3:8-10), which were not out of disrespect for Yahweh but because the priests were acting "on the basis of compassion or realism" particularly towards their poor Yehudite' brethren (Rogerson 1999:179). Rogerson's argument is based on the fact that Yehud experienced a change from agriculture to horticulture thus leaving the

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concerning the attitude which should be adopted towards the descendants of the former northern kingdom of Israel." Some of the newly returned exiles, including Ezra and Nehemiah, found it appalling to relate with the Samaritans in their religious life and communal living. They literally advocated separation from foreigners and encouraged purity of the post exilic community (Usue 2005:74).

land with fewer animals to offer at the temple as sacrifice. In this regard, the references to the offering of animals that were blind, lame or sick might thus indicate a crisis in animal cultivation in which animals were scarce and flocks too small. However, all this remains theoretical with respect to the background of Malachi 1:6-14 (Rogerson 1999:177-178). While Rogerson admits that his point remains conjectural, Malachi 1:14 presents a strong a strong opinion of the situation. The people were so far convinced of their duty that they would bring sacrifices; they dare not wholly avoid the duty, but they brought empty oblations (even when having a suitable and acceptable (male) one in their flock), mocked Yahweh, and invariably deceived themselves, by offering the worst they had.

It is also argued that "although Darius's policy toward the provinces approached a *laissez-faire* posture . . . encouraging local religion, and at times local altars services," the situation became radically different when Xerxes became king in 485 BCE. Support for local religion ceased, and "tax structures throughout the empire shifted to favour Persians and to increase the taxation upon all other ethnic and national groups." Huge financial resources were needed to support building projects as well as military ventures in the west. This milieu would have placed a severe strain not only on the economy of Judah but also on the temple (Clendenen 2004:215).

Whoever was the governor or administrator of Judah during this period, was either incompetent or dishonest or both. There was acute poverty due to high taxes (Neh. 5:4, 15) and inflation caused by Persian economic policies and famine (Neh. 5:3), resulting in the seizure of property (Neh. 5:5, 11) and debt slavery on a wide range (Neh. 5:5, 8). Interest rates moved from 20 percent under Cyrus and Cambyses to 40-50 percent by the close of the 5th century,

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which may have been an additional factor to the inflation (Clendenen 2004:215). As one learns from the book of Malachi itself, there existed a progression of poor crop production and difficult seasons for Israel; drought and locust attacks devastated the land that was already largely unproductive (Hag. 1:6, 10-11; Mal. 3:11) (Blenkinsopp 1988:36). Crop failure was a regular occurrence, thus leaving a great many of the people suffering poverty.

4.2.3 Social Status

Socially, Malachi confronts a population given to religious cynicism and political scepticism. Malachi's day was one of disillusionment and gloom. The tidal waves of enthusiasm that had been created by the preaching of earlier prophets had by then crashed on the rocks of reality. The disillusionment of the postexilic Jewish community was prompted by several theological misunderstanding, including the expectations for wealth that Haggai had promised once the second temple was rebuilt (Hag. 2:7, 18-19), the restoration of the Davidic covenant predicted by Ezekiel (Ezek. 34:13, 23-24) and the implementation of Jeremiah's "new covenant" (Jer. 31:23, 31-32) (Hill 2012:527). There was great excitement in the waning years of the sixth century BEC. The people believed, based on the words of the prophets, that a new, more prosperous and glorious, messianic age was about to manifest itself at any moment.

The Second Temple would be more glorious than the first (Hag. 2:9). Their land would be renewed and produce an abundant harvest (Ezek. 34:26-30; Isa. 41:18-19). The land would not be able to accommodate all the people (Isa. 54:1-3) and the population of Jerusalem would overflow its borders (Zech. 2:4). Instead of Israel being the slave, the nations of the world would serve them (Isa. 49:22-23) and then Yahweh's glory would return to the temple

(Ezek. 43:1-5). However, as time went by it became more and more obvious that these prophecies would not be fulfilled in the way and the time the people had anticipated. The lives of the Israelites were restricted to Jerusalem and its immediate environment. They saw no evidence that God's glory had returned to the temple and perhaps most disappointing, there was no visible restoration of the kingdom promises made to David.

In the events of broken dreams, lost hopes, disillusionment, sadness, and resentment the people of Judah sunk lower and lower morally and ethically. Israel's reaction was predictable. How could it be explained that God seemed to have abandoned and forgotten the people, the Davidic king and the priesthood He himself had chosen? Many had lost faith in the God of their fathers who in their view had punished them beyond reasonable measure. According to (Korpel 2004) they asked,

> (Why) do we humble ourselves, if you do not take note of it?' (Isa. 58:3). `We await justice, but there is none, salvation, but it is far away from us' (Isa. 59:11). `It is useless to serve God. What have we gained by keeping his charge and walking in abject awe of the Lord of Hosts?' (Mal. 3:14)….what evidence could be presented to verify the claim that she was in covenant with Yahweh and that he did love her (Mal 1:2). `Where is the God of justice?' (Mal. 2:17) (p. 4).

Morality seemed to have been totally forgotten. "Given the selfishness of human nature, alms for the poor and Yahweh's tithe were necessarily forfeited to maximize personal financial interests; and what better way to obtain financial standing in the community than to marry into the 'brokerages' of resident aliens"(Hills 1998:75)? One can observe that the majority of these resident aliens were non-Judeans and as such partly heathen who were worshipping strange gods, and strangers to the law of Yahweh. For the Judean men to be able to marry women who were members of those wealthy and prominent families, a lot of them had to separate from their

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Judean wives. Thus Divorce (Mal. 2:13-16) and adultery (Mal. 3:5) were so common that the total destruction of Jewish families seemed almost imminent. The less-privileged – the widows, orphans, and foreigners – were ignored and/or even persecuted (Mal. 3:5). Discrimination was the norm. Perjury was common within the court system (Malachi 3:5) as was employers cheating their employees (Mal. 3:5). It was obviously not a pretty picture. The people were corrupt and sin was publicly practiced and tolerated.

4.2.4. Religious Struggles

The attitudes of discouragement, disillusionment, and bitterness were not only revealed socially, but spiritually as well. The religious condition was disorderly. This was stimulated by the existing state of affairs in the land namely; the political, economic, and social circumstances, after their return from exile. While the Second Temple was already completed, it "was as devoid of the divine presence as it was earlier when God's glory departed from Jerusalem" (Stuart 1998:1254). In the light of apparent disappointment with respect to the assurances of earlier prophets, the delight of the Yehudites was aggrieved. Thus a distinctive situation manifested in Yehud, a condition that has never been noticed—a radical disrespect for their esteemed religion, disdain for the temple, its rituals and sacrifices, and contempt for Yahweh.

The people were not only sinning against one another, but also against God. Religion had become nothing more than ritual and while it was very formal, it was also superficial – there was no real commitment to God. Contrary to such stipulations as, "If an animal has a defect, is lame or blind, or has any serious flaw, you must not sacrifice it to the LORD your God" (Deut. 15:21) – lame and sick animals were brought to the temple to be sacrificed (Malachi 1:6-14). The Levitical priesthood was urgently in need of reformation, as the ministry

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of the dispirited priests was in fact causing people to sin, and not leading them out of it. The priests and Levites have become "powerbrokers" when Malachi preached in Judah (Hills 2012:527).

The priests were no help at all. Not only did they refuse to confront the superficiality or abuses, they set a terrible example themselves. They were indifferent and apathetic in their duties (Mal. 1:6-2:9) and even complained that their responsibility was truly a liability (Mal. 1:13). They were negligent in their teaching and training of the people (Mal. 2:7-8). They even revealed their dishonesty by playing favouritism in the administration of justice (Malachi 2:9). The people were growing increasingly sceptical about spirituality generally and God specifically (Mal. 1:2; 2:17; 3:14-15). They doubted God's love (Mal. 1:2) and were cynical about His justice (Mal. 2:17). The prevailing belief was that there were no benefits to being the children of God and therefore religion was a waste of time and effort (Mal. 2:17; 3:13-15). This led to a lack of interest in, or attention to, their unique role as the people of God.

It is clear that the people of Judah were anxious to relinquish their revered religion as immaterial remains from ancient times. If the people of Judah were not able to regain their spiritual equilibrium, they were in grave danger of totally losing sight of what it meant to be set aside as God's unique and distinct people. Not only were they in danger of losing their distinctiveness, but total collapse and destruction was a growing possibility. What was needed was a prophetic word and it was at this time and into this situation that Malachi arrived on the scene.

4.3. SUMMARY

This chapter examined background information on Malachi's prophetic corpus with the aim of situating Malachi's view on the temple rituals within particular historical, economic and socio-religious contexts. In the process, details of authorship, date of writing, recipients of the message, style of writing, prominent themes as well as structure of the book were undertaken. This research situates *mal'ākhî* as a proper name and study assumes that the message was originally delivered by a prophet named Malachi. In this study, the prophetic figure is presumed to be a contemporary of both Ezra and Nehemiah, and it seems likely that the final stage of the book of Malachi can be dated sometime between 475-450 BCE.

While the problem of oral or written material still persists in scholarly debates and there is a complete attempt yet to account for what traditions actually influenced the book's message, oral presentation is assumed and thus the message of the book is treated as teaching or instruction with prophetic authority and as such prophecy. I would like to submit that Malachi's usage of the literary form of disputation between the people and the prophet or Yahweh in the interrogative-and-response technique similar to that of Habakkuk or Job, but with a unique strength calls for a conscious literary masterpiece of advanced critical studies.

In its literary structure, the book is seen as a series of dialogues or disputes between the prophet and those he is addressing. Malachi focuses attention on several primary theological themes as well as minor ones. While it may be difficult to argue that one overall theme covers all the ideas, the themes and motifs are interrelated. The themes of covenant, priesthood and temple

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worship, fertility of the land, Day of Yahweh and the justice of Yahweh (an implied theodicy) are examined.

Finally, since the oracles of Malachi cannot be understood apart from at least a basic knowledge of the context in which he lived and ministered, a brief exploration of these historical realities was undertaken. The study notes that the book of Malachi is tightly intertwined around a well planned bond of political, economic, religious and social realities. These realities prepared the ground for the exegesis of the passages of the book dealing with cultic rituals' violations and the contextual application of its message subsequently.

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CHAPTER V

EXEGETICAL ANALYSIS OF MALACHI'S VIEW ON TEMPLE RITUALS

Since the understanding of a text constitutes a solid foundation for biblical interpretation (Bartlett 2001:7; Osborne 1991:5; Thomas 1996:247), this chapter is aimed at an exegetical analysis of Malachi's unique emphasis on the ritual aspect of the temple service. As noted earlier in the statement of problem, Malachi's ethical uniqueness is observed somehow most clearly in the preponderance of emphasis the prophet places on temple rituals and the way the language of the cult dominates his analysis of malpractices. Malachi attempts to bring the priesthood and Yahweh's worshippers closer to what the prophets perceived to be the ideal: priests that excelled in teaching; effective and efficient exegetes of scripture; priests that provided social justice; that worshipped Yahweh alone and whose performance of the cult satisfied the most rigorous cultic demands.

Here, in this chapter, a determination of the limits of the passage(s) dealing with the Temple ritual malpractices is followed by a transliteration (with translation) and exegesis of the text(s), dealing with issues of cultic ritual violations. Such analysis of historical and literary contexts, analysis of form and structure of the passage(s) as well as analysis of the grammar and lexical data of such passages will help to illuminate the theological themes: Yahweh's covenant with Israel, priesthood and temple worship, the justice of Yahweh, the fertility of the land and the Day of Yahweh that run through Malachi's prophetic oracles.

5.1. DETERMINATION OF PASSAGES DEALING WITH THE TEMPLE RITUAL MALPRACTICES

Since the book's unique conception relies on the force of the disputation to challenge current behaviour and attitudes of people and their religious leaders in matters of ritual practices, the attempt here is to identify such disputation speeches. Malachi reflects concern on the past and warns about the future. His disputations challenge syncretistic cultic practices on the one hand and fear the coming day of Yahweh on the other hand (Nogalski 2011:1002). The following oracles, namely; second (1:6-2:9),[1] third (2:10-16), fourth (2:17-3:5), and fifth (3:6-12) are selected for consideration, owing to the content of their temple ritual language components.

5.1.1. Second Oracle: Malachi 1:6-2:9

Malachi's second oracle contains the longest disputation directed towards the priests. These verses are about one third of Malachi's oracles (Schuller 1996:858; Hill 1998:173; Kealy 2009:233; Nogalski 2011:1003; Boda 2012: 15). These disputes are composed of two distinct speech-acts with Yahweh as the subject of the first (1:6-14) and the Levitical priesthood as subject of the second (2:1-9) (Hill 1998:172). Although Malachi reflects the social and religious struggles of the 5th century, however, his primary concern is the priesthood and its cultic activities.

In these verses one sees a blunt critique of two sins of the priests: The priests of Yehud are accused of disrespecting, dishonouring, despising and defiling Yahweh, and they question his accusations as if he either lied or was ignorant.

[1] Mal 1:1-5 forms a unit with a clearly discernible beginning (with the superscription in 1:1) and ending, and it is considered as a self-contained oracle against a foreign nation, one of dozens found in the prophetic books (Stuart 1998:1281). It is not included here for its lack of temple ritual language component.

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But the principal way they despise and defile Yahweh day after day is through deficient and unacceptable offerings (1:6-2:3). They are also accused of causing many to falter by their teaching (2:8) (Tiemeyer 2006:18). The Levitical priests had failed in discharging the duties of their sacred trust - teaching Israel the laws of Yahweh (cf. Deut. 33:10) and by implication, the people of Yahweh were led astray for lack of knowledge of God (cf. Hos. 4:6; Hill 1998:173).

While Malachi 1:6-2-9 clearly addresses the priests who were responsible for accepting the animals brought to them for sacrifice, the people were also culpable by choosing second-class animals and presenting them at the temple (Verhoef 1987:214), at a time when worship is conceived to take place among the nations where Yahweh's name receives proper respect (1:11-12). This failure causes Yahweh to threaten to do away with temple sacrifices altogether (1:10). The people bring inferior sacrifices which they would not dare present to their Persian governor (1:8) (Nogalski 2011: 1003).

5.1.2. Third Oracle: Malachi 2:10-16

In this third dispute considered as "the most problematic in Malachi" (Schuller 1996:864) and "a crux *interpretum*" (Kealy 2009:235), the weakening of the religious life in Malachi's day was clearly shown, and it had grave social implications. Perversity at the place of worship had resulted in perverseness on the part of those who come to worship. Wrong views of God and false forms of worship inevitably lead to fractured social relationships. As a temple ritual component, Malachi pointed out the failure of his audience to live up to covenant obligations by denouncing three widespread abuses which bear on the whole a ritual character: malpractice of mixed marriages, corrupted worship, and the heartless divorce of Jewish wives by Jewish men.

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This, in the eyes of the prophet was an abomination to the Lord (Bennett 1972:383).

The literary form of the oracle is similar to that of other oracles following the question-answer refutation pattern with the exception, as with the fifth oracle, that it is the prophet who begins the oracle and not Yahweh himself. The oracle is addressed to the greater restoration community of Yehud; leaders, priest and people, making the "one" people of Yahweh. The purpose of this is didactic (correct instruction on the topics of marriage and divorce countering the spurious tutelage of the Levitical priests, 2:1-9) and admonitory (a timely warning for circumspect self-examination as a prelude to the prophet's final indictment of Yehud in 2:17-3:5 and as a preparation for the prophet's call to repentance in 3:7) (Hill 1998:223-24).

While some scholars have argued that the passage refers to condemnation of idolatry (Zehnder 2003:229-230; Petersen 1995:198-200),[2] most contend that Malachi 2:10-16 is concerned with human intermarriage in the postexilic community (Hugenberger 1994: 339; Dumbrell 1976:42-52; Verhoef 1987:270; O'Brien 1995:57-79 cited in O'Brien 1996:244). Such scholars and commentators interpret "daughter of another god" (2:11) as a direct reference to unfaithfulness to Yahweh via worshipping of other gods. O'Brien notes:

> Such an interpretation is derived from (1) understanding "daughter of a foreign god" as a foreign woman involved in-and enticing others to-idolatry; and (2) relating" sending"(most often translated" divorce") and "the wife of your youth" to the practice of a Judean man divorcing his original(Judean) wife in order to marry a more affluent foreign woman. According to this understanding, Malachi describes the problem to which Ezra/Nehemiah's abolition of mixed marriages in the restoration community later provides the answer; it is the most

[2] Petersen (1995:198-200) for instance, amends 2:11b to read: "Judah has profaned the very holiness of Yahweh. He loves Asherah; he has married the daughter of a foreign god."

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> common argument for situating the book immediately prior to Ezra's reforms (1996:244).

These are supercilious and reprehensible misdeeds before Yahweh, an affront to the essence of covenant relationship socially and religiously- faithlessness and loyalty. The transgression and or violation defiled the people of Yehud, polluted their worship of God, and made a sacrilege of Yahweh Himself (Hill 1998:223). This confrontation involves the rejection of the people's offerings (2:3), implying that Yahweh sees through the insincerity of the ritual mourning precisely because Yahweh has seen it before (2:14) (Nogalski 2011:1042). The textual references to altar, temple and its personnel as well as inter-textual links all bear witness to ritual violation and contempt.

5.1.2.1. The Altar, Temple and its Personnel

Truly, corrupt practices are the genuine fruits and products of corrupt principles; and the wickedness of men's hearts and lives is owed to some loose notions which they have and by which they govern themselves. In Malachi 2:11, Judah is accused of defiling the sanctuary of the Lord *kî ḥillēl yᵉhûdhāʰ qōdhesh yhwh (’ādhōnāy) ’ăsher ’āhēbh.* The expression *qōdhesh* is understood to be a reference to either the temple in particular or God's holiness in general. It is the object of the relative clause *’ăsher ’āhēbh* (which [God] loves), and it appears that God loves His Temple rather than His own holiness (Tiemeyer 2006:19-20). While "the sanctuary of the Lord" may also plausibly refer to the people of Israel and more customarily a reference to the temple, in either case cultic ritual concepts are being employed as a way of underscoring the reprehensible ritual character of their sin (Hugenberger 1994:42).

Again, 2:12 refers to some extent to the officiating personnel in the sacrificial cult, namely the priests. As an extension of the preceding verse 11, the guilty persons i.e. those who are guilty of defiling the sanctuary of the Lord, together with those who married the daughter of a foreign god (*ûbhā'al bath-'ēl nēkhār*), and "those who present sacrifices to the Lord of Hosts (*ûmaghghîsh minḥāh lyhwh* (*la'dhōnāy*) *tsebhā'ôth*) shall be excommunicated (Tiemeyer 2006:20). As for Israel, worship, offerings and anything related to their cultic life and practice was an obligation of gratitude to God, not a means of controlling God's behaviour (Stuart 1998:1334). Thus the divine bribing alluded to in Malachi 2:12 and by extension v.13 shows deep deviations from a biblical understanding of Israel's God and his worship. The priests consented to this "bribing" by participating in hypocritical malpractice.

Furthermore, Malachi 2:13ff depicts frustrated Israelites grieving at the altar because Yahweh has refused to accept their offering, and the explanation given is due to their marital infidelity (Hugenberger 1994:43). It is the conclusion of the priests' attitude towards the sacrificial cult (Tiemeyer 2005b: 182). The fact that such an emotional display takes place at *mizbaḥ yhwh('ādhōnāy)* ("the altar of the Lord") implies that the crying is tied to the offering. The wording of verse 13 thus indicates that there is something very unusual happening at the altar. Malachi's usage of the term *groaning* demonstrates that temple worship in the 460s BCE went far beyond a simple (and acceptable) attitude of contrition. It was pagan worship, emphasising manipulative mourning and misery (Stuart 1998:1334). Although Malachi exhibits a special interest in cultic/ritual matters throughout his oracles, including 2:10-16, as with the work of Ezra, this may not necessarily exclude a concern with Judah's literal marital practice (Hugenberger 1994:47).

5.1.2.2. Malachi Inter-textual links

As noted by Tiemeyer (2006:21), an additional connecting factor between Malachi 2:10-16 and the preceding 1:6-2-9 is the idea of a covenant in which occurs the expression *b^{e}rîth 'ăbhōthênû* in Malachi 2:10 and in *'ēsheth b^{e}rîthekhā* in Malachi 2:14. Remarkably, the expression *l^{e}ḥillēl b^{e}rîth 'ăbhōthênû* links 2:10 with the preceding *w^{e}'attem m^{e}ḥall^{e}lîm 'ôthô* in 1:12, the idea of "seed" (*zera'*) links 2:15 to 2:3, and the motif of Yahweh's rejecting sacrifices is present both in 1:12 and 2:13.

5.1.2.3. Priestly Terminology

In Malachi 2:10-16 traces of cultic terminologies are also noticeably recognised. The verb *l^{e}ḥillēl* translated "desecrate, pollute, defile, profane" in 2:11, is a clear example of ritual vocabulary, used elsewhere in Leviticus and Ezekiel.[3] Furthermore, the expression *qōdhesh* in 2:12 is cultic term, though not confined to priestly sources, so also is the word *minḥā^{h}* found in 2:12 and 13, and the reference to God's altar *mizbaḥ yhwh* in 2:13 presupposes a ritual setting (Tiemeyer 2006:22).

5.1.3. Fourth Oracle: Malachi's 2:17-3:5

Malachi's fourth oracle (2:17-3:5) reflects the standard three-part disputation pattern of declaration: "You have wearied Yahweh with utterance" (2:17a), refutation: "How have we wearied (Him)?"(2:17b), and rebuttal: "See! I am sending my messenger…" (3:1). While the people, especially the priests, had been wearied by the services of worship (1:13), the Lord was now wearied with their utterances. This is an oracle that is both an *assertive* speech act

[3] See Lev. 1:3-11; 2:1-13; 3:16-17; 4:11, 15; 5:2-4; 6:11; 7:19-21; 18:6-19; 22:17-25; Ezek. 5:11; 16:31-34; 20:7-8; 23:16, 39-40; 36:17, 19

intended to assure the audience (2:17-3:1) and an *expressive* speech act framed as a threat to the hearer or reader (3:2-5) (Hill 1998:259).

Like the other oracles of Malachi, the fourth disputation includes a rhetorical question: "who can endure the day of his coming?" (3:2), and a pseudo-dialogue: "Yet you say" (2:17). It forecasts the eschatological arrival of "the angel of the covenant" who makes ready the people for the day of Yahweh's visitation by judging their sins and making their worship pure through the purification of the Levitical priesthood (3:1-4). The faithlessness of postexilic Yehud extends to false statements about Yahweh in that they accused him of rewarding those who doing evil and being unfair to those they considered to be right (2:17) (Hill 1998:260). Thus, the references to the temple and the cleansing of the priesthood, along with other similarities to other texts where cultic statements and practices are made suggest a temple ritual setting.

5.1.3.1. References to the Temple: Malachi 3:1

The world of the priests is described and represented by the temple and all that belongs to it. Thus, when the prophets write, their purpose is simply to maintain what the temple symbolises; namely Yahweh's self manifestation in the assembly of his people. Their (the priests) main concern is on cult and rituals (Hrobon 2010:10). In Malachi 2:17-3:5, the temple appears clearly as a place to which God is sending his eschatological messenger (3:1). This indicates that the very domain of the priests where cultic activities and worship take place will first be judged (Tiemeyer 2006:25).

5.1.3.2. Purification of the Priest: Malachi 3:3-4

Since the priests' main focus is on cult and rituals, the prophetic indictment of the cult and rituals is seen not as their repudiation but as a rhetorical feature

that forces the audience to focus on the importance of their ethical behaviour (Hrobon 2010:10). According to Schwartz, "Because Israel's God is repelled not only by physical sin, the priestly legislators created an unparalleled system of thought based on the postulate that both sin and impurity invade and contaminate the divine abode and that unchecked they drive the divine Presence away" (1995:4-5). The focal issue therefore in this fourth oracle; 2:17-3:5 is the purification of the priests, who are described as "sons of Levi" (3:3-4). They are considered as impure, probably because of sin or because of contact with impurity[4] (Tiemeyer 2006:25).

Klawans (2000:3-20) distinguishes between "ritual impurity" and "moral impurity." As stated by him, sources of ritual impurity include child delivery (Lev. 12:1-8), skin infection (Lev. 13:1-14:32), pubic emission (Lev. 15:1-33), the remains of some unclean animals (Lev. 11: 1-47), human dead bodies (Num. 19:10-22), in addition to certain purification patterns (Lev. 16:28; Num 19:8) (Klawans 2000:23). Moral impurity on the other hand includes certain sexual sins (Lev. 18: 24-30), idol worship (Lev. 19:31; 20:1-3), or shedding of blood (Num. 35:33-34). These acts contaminate the offender (Lev. 18:24), Israel's land (Lev. 18:25, Ezek. 36:17), as well as the sanctuary of Yahweh (Lev. 203; Ezek. 5:11). This contamination can consequently result in the exclusion or dismissal of the offenders from Israel's land (Lev. 18:28; Ezek. 36:19) (Klawans 2000:26).[5] "Impurity is offensive and repulsive to God's holiness; impurity and holiness are antonyms" (Hrobon 2010:19). In Malachi, the

[4] Impurity is considered as "a concept that a person or object can be in a state which, by religious law, prevents the person or object from having any contact with the temple or cult" (*Enc Jud* 1972: 13, 1405).

[5] "Moral impurity is best understood as a potent force unleashed by certain sinful human actions. The force unleashed defiles the sinner, the sanctuary, and the land, even though the sinner is not ritually impure and does not ritually defile" (Klawans 2000:29).

misdemeanours of the priests and people criticised bear both a ritual and moral character of impurity that needs divine purification.

5.1.4. Fifth Oracle: Malachi 3:6-12

The fifth oracle has been classified as an *assertive* type of 'speech act' designed to both assure and persuade the audience and or reader (Hill 1998:291). The oracle was most probably addressed to the entire people of Judah. "Its purpose is to offer hope to postexilic Yehud by stressing Yahweh's immutability, countering the community's charge of capriciousness on God's part . . . It is at this point that Malachi touches universal aspects of the human experience, coping with unfulfilled promises, shattered dreams, and hope differed" (Hill 1998:294). While the various issues covered in Malachi 3 include the eschatological visitation of Yahweh's covenant envoy (3:1), punishment of evildoers (3:5), Yahweh's timelessness (3:6) as well as an exhortation towards the repentance and return of the people to Yahweh (3:7), the focal point of this oracle has to do with verses 8-10. Here, Yahweh through His prophet brought to the people's awareness an additional and different sector where their conspiracy and revolt against Him was obvious, namely, the holding back of tithes and the hypocrisy associated with them (Clendenen 2004:414). The accusations against the people with respect to their unfaithfulness and their deceitful practices in the offering of sacrifices (3:6-12) are parallel to the accusations against the priests in 1:6-2:9. These oracles 1:6-2:9 and 3:6-12, in a sense are companion pieces, in that they focus on the neglect of the cult (Tiemeyer 2006:27).

Both oracles begin with a double-assertion-questioning pattern, followed by a denunciation of unacceptable offerings, the assurance of the turnaround of fortune, and an exaltation of the name Yahweh in all the nations. Malachi 3:6-

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12 is addressed to the whole community, not just husbands or priests, it promises blessings while the second oracle knows no such promise. Probably, the main difference is that the second oracle is a warning against disobedience, showing the consequences in full, that is, curses, while the fifth oracle is an invitation to obedience showing the benefits, that is, blessings. Similarly, the second oracle is about worship while that of the fifth is about temple support (Stuart 1998:1362). Thus, the delinquencies of the Judahite population follow those of their leaders; the priests' attitude influenced the people. Since they were responsible for teaching the people and also had the authority to reject any sacrifice brought to the temple as well as correct the people, the prophet held the leaders at least partly accountable for the sins of their flock. The substance of the critique in 3:6-12 is not only the people but includes the priests as well (Tiemeyer 2006:26-27).

Indeed, the Lord through his prophet has taken time to respond to Israel's questions by pointing out again and again their offensive supposed devotion, their betrayal of trust for one another especially their wives, their disrespect for the sanctuary of Yahweh through contaminated sacrifices and by their marriage with members of other religions, their accommodation or attempt at witchcraft, infidelity, fabrication of lies, and economic manipulation of the helpless, and their unfaithfulness and fraudulent practices in the offering of sacrifices. In this understanding, Malachi reinforces a larger argument for cultic and religious purity. To this end, this study therefore rests in the efficacy of ritual and ethics as it depends on the situation into which the various texts address. Thus the next section dwells on an exegetical study of texts that deal with the various cultic malpractices within the temple purview in Malachi.

5.2. *ETHICAL DIMMENSIONS IN MALACHI'S TEMPLE RITUAL CRITICISM*

Having determined the limits of the passage(s) dealing with the Temple ritual malpractices, the preponderance of emphasis the prophet places on temple rituals and the way the language of the cult dominates his analysis demands further examination. Thus this section shall examine Malachi's cultic malpractices as reflected in the discourse units that have been demarcated. It shall focus attention on the accusations against the priests particularly the priests' attitude towards the cult and the consequent acts of negligence. In addition, it shall examine the accusations of unfaithfulness against the people, the extent of social injustice and accusations concerning the Tithe.

5. 2.1. Accusations against the Clergy (Mal. 1:6-2:9)

This discourse unit, is evidently addressed to the priests and the people at large, who are under Yahweh's love. This unit abounds with vocabulary typical of ancient covenants: the father-son theme, the master-servant theme, the Great King theme and so forth. It can be subdivided into three units, which the prophet ties together with rhetorical patterning and verbal and thematic repetition (Schuller 1996:858). Following Pohlig (1998:34-35), a formal analysis of this discourse unit reveals the following structure:

First subunit, 1:6-11

A Honour is due Yahweh's name: *sh^{e}mî* 'my name' (6)

B The priests' sin: *mizb^{e}ḥî* 'my alter' + *nāghash* 'offer' + *leḥem* 'food' + *gā'al* sacrifice' defective offerings (7-8a)

C Result = no mercy: 'governor' = 'lift up your faces' (8b)

C' Result = no mercy: 'God' + 'lift up your faces' (9)

B' The priests' sin, defective offerings: *mizb^{e}ḥî* 'my alter'+*minḥā^{h}* 'food offering' (10)

A' Honour is due Yahweh's name: *sh^{e}mî* 'my name' (11)

Second subunit 1:12-14

As in the first subunit, the three main elements: A, B, C constitute this part but are ordered differently:

B" The priests' sin: *shulḥan 'ādhōnāy* 'table of the Lord' + *'okhel* 'food' + *nîbh* "fruit' + *leḥem gā'al* 'meal defective offering offerings (12-13a)

C" Result = no mercy: *ha'ertse^{h} 'ôthāh miyyedhkhem* 'I will not accept it from your hand' + *'ārar* 'cursed' (13b-14a)

A" Honour is due Yahweh's name: *sh^{e}mî* 'my name' (14b)

Third subunit 2:1-9

A the priests' perversion → curse (2:1-4)

B the pure priestly prototype (5-7)

A' the priests' perversion → punishment (8-9)

The following discussion will focus on the actions and character of the current priesthood, who are accused of polluting the altar of Yahweh by offering polluted food on it.

5.2.1.1. Disdain for God and His Altar 1:6-9

In the Book of Malachi, the first prophetic accusation against the priests (*kōhănîm),* charges them with the ones who all the time (participle) are despising (*bôzê*) the name of Yahweh. This is made clear through their acts of bringing sacrifices of unclean animals to the altar (7-8, 12) which invariably results in God's preference of the sacrifices of others (11) (Tiemeyer 2006:109). Thus, employing direct speech, Yahweh specifies what the sin is: contempt for Yahweh's name, disrespect and dishonour. He also clarifies who the guilty

party is: the priests, who are followed by the people. The rest of the book then builds on this second oracle in the sense that this is Israel's main sin which then manifests itself in multiple ways (unfaithfulness to the marriage covenant (2:14-16), bad teaching [2:6-8], injustice and oppression (3:5), and failure to tithe (3:8-12).

5.2.1.1.1. The Priests' Attitude 1:6

In verse 6,[6] the prophet opens with a proverbial statement that leads to an accusation against the priests of not having honoured God enough. They are addressed in the vocative *hakhkhōhănîm bôzê shᵉmî* ("the priests who despise my name") and once addressed in the vocative, the *kōhănîm* (priests) are immediately referred to as "you" (O'Brien 1990:30). The opening statement establishes the framework for the entire unit and brings together the language of both familial and covenantal relationship.

The discussion of right relationship between father and son and master and servant is rooted in the specific commandment of the Decalogue (Schuller 1996:859; Weyde 2000:114).[7] In this vital relationship, Yahweh in his mercy, adopts Israel as a child. He chose them not because of anything special in

[6] The transliteration/translation of the text that leads in the attitudes of the priests is shown below: *bēn yᵉkhabhbhēdh 'ābh wᵉ'ebhedh 'ădhōnāyw wᵉ'im-'ābh 'ānî 'ayyēʰ khᵉbhôdhî wᵉ'im-'ădhônîm 'ānî 'ayyēʰ môrā'î 'āmar yhwh ('ādhōnāy) tsᵉbhā'ôth lākhem hakhkhōhănîm bôzê shᵉmî wᵉ'ămartem bammeʰ bhāzînû 'eth-shᵉmekhā* ("A son honors *his* father and a servant his master. Then if I am a father, where is my honor? And if I am a master, where is my respect?' says the LORD of hosts to you, O priests who despise my name. But you say, 'How have we despised Thy name?" NASB).

[7] The first allusion of Yahweh's fatherhood is (given a synchronic reading of the HB) in Exodus 4:22, "Israel is my son, my firstborn" but the relationship is not fully established (assumed by both parties) until the covenant at Sinai (Exod.20ff.). Following the event at Sinai, the relationship is directly attested several times throughout the OT (2 Sam 7:14; 1 Chr. 17:13; 22:10; 28:6; Pss. 68:5; 89:26; Prov. 3:11-12; Isa 63:16; Isa. 64:8; Jer. 3:4, 19; 31:9. See also; Exod. 4:22; Deut 8:5; 14:1; 32:18; Jb. 5:17; Pss. 27:10; 103:13; Isa 1:2; Hos. 11:1-4).

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them, but because of his grace and love. It is essentially, ". . . the Lord's election of Israel for a special and exclusive relationship, redeeming them from Egypt and from exile in Babylon, and continuing acting in faithfulness to that relationship (cf. Deut. 7:6; Amos 3:2)" (Clendenen 2004:247).

What was it that God expected from these priests, and with what good reason he expected it: *bēn yᵉkhabhbhēdh 'ābh wᵉ'ebhedh 'ădhōnāyw* ("a son honours his father and a servant his master," v. 6). As observed in OT times with respect to the regulations on the relationship between children and their parents, a son was to obey, respect, honour and submit to his father (See Exod. 20:12; 21:15, 17; Lev. 20:9; Deut. 5:15; 21:18-21; 27:16). Both son and servant owe honour to their father and master respectively. These relationships are not equal, but the father-son relationship was well defined as one full of duty, governed by obedience and respect.

The word *kābhôdh* (honour) is parallel to *môrā'* (fear) in 1:6. The root *kābhadh* almost always in the Piel form means 'to be weighty, to respect, heavy, burdensome, honoured' (BDB 457). It is used in the fifth commandment, 'Honour your parents' (Exod. 20:12; cf. Deut. 27:16). This might have been the basis of the premise of 1:6. Since it was a common expectation that a son would honour his father, especially the heavenly father, the priests' failure thus breaks both religious (covenantal) and social expectations.

In line with the same principle of the father-son relationship, they are as well accused of not relating to Yahweh as a servant should relate to his master. Here, *'ebhedh* is used as servant or subordinate, not slave (BDB 713; Hill 1998:174). The formal plural of *'ădhôn* denotes intensity or majesty and here in Malachi, it refers to Yahweh (Pohlig 1998:35). Yahweh is regarded as Israel's master and this is very well attested in the OT (Gen. 18:27f; Exod. 4:10; Josh.

7:8; 1 Kgs. 3:10; Pss. 2:4; 66:18; Isa. 6:1, 8, 11; 29:13). That a servant owes *kābhôdh* to his master is implied in the omission of the verb, a device common in the OT (Hill 1998:174).

kābhôdh does not only mean honour but it also means 'glory' which is a characteristic of priestly theology that stands for the awe-inspiring presence of God (Exod. 14:4 17-18; 24:16-17; 33:18; 40:34-35) (Smith 1984:311). Thus if *kābhôdh* is a priestly terminology, *shēm* (name) is a Deuteronomic word. In Deuteronomy the name of God stands for His presence (Deut. 12:5, 11, 21). The word *shēm* occurs frequently in this part of Malachi (1:6, 6, 11, 12; 2:2, 5) and thereby becomes a theme in it. Often the object and name entails a relationship such that to lose a name is to cease to exist (Pohlig 1998:36).[8]

Yahweh pushed forward by asking about the *môrā'* (fear) (BDB, 432) due to Him as a Master. The affixed pronoun *î* is translated 'my.' Otherwise the objective genitive relationship of the pronoun to the noun is expressed as noun + 'due (to) me.' Although *môrā'* generally denotes 'dread,' in Malachi it ought to be viewed in the context of Yahweh's covenant with Israel which denotes reverence, respect, and trust, close to honour. In the OT, *môrā'* does not denote 'dread' but rather honour, respect. Although parallel with *kābhôdh* (honour), *môrā'* has to do not so much with inward feelings, as with outward

[8] Within the context of the OT, the name of Yahweh does what Yahweh does: it dwells in a sanctuary (Deut. 12:5, 21), protects people (Ps. 20:2) and jealously guards his reputation (Ezek. 36:22, 23). When one fights in the name of Yahweh, he fights with God's power. When prophets were on assignment in the name of Yahweh (Deut. 19:20), they acted in a manner that appeared as if Yahweh was the one working. Yahweh's name is essential to worship in the sense that it stands for Him. The name of Yahweh can be declared (Ps. 22:22), proclaimed (Isa 12:4), praised (Joe. 2:26), loved (Ps. 5:11), feared (Mal. 4:2), waited on (Ps. 52:9). But it can also be blasphemed (Isa. 52:5), polluted (Jer. 34:16), or profaned (Ezek. 36:21- 23) as people rebel against God himself. In this respect, Yahweh's name represents Yahweh's indispensable character manifested to those who are in living functional relationship with Him as a dynamic influence in their lives (TWOT 2:934).

expression, particularly with respect to worship and morals (Pohlig1998:36-37). Every Israelite is expected to fear the Lord. In fact Wisdom itself is defined as the fear of the Lord (Jb. 28:28; Pss. 69:4; 110:10) and those who fear Yahweh keeps His covenant and remain loyal to Him through it (e.g., Deut 5:29; 6:2, 13, 24). In Malachi, both honour and fear, which are qualities due to Yahweh, are missing in the attitude of the priests.

Yahweh calls Himself the Father and Creator of Israel, in the sense that He formed the nation and made it His own. Thus, He had all rights to accuse Israel on failing as sons and servants. Malachi accuses the priests of despising (*bāzāʰ)* and polluting (*gā'al*) the reputation of Yahweh i.e., Yahweh's name (1:6, 7, 12; 2:9). The word *bāzāʰ* means "to despise" (BDB, 432) or to scorn, to treat wickedly, unrighteously, to show contempt for. It is clear that the pseudo-dialogue pattern found in each oracle is the expected in response from the priest which was one of doubt and scepticism. In their refutation, they ask: *wᵉ'ămartem bammeʰ bhāzînû 'eth-shᵉmekhā* (How have we despised Thy name? v. 6). This may indicate either that they had lost their sense of judgment or conviction or lowered their standards to the point of not realising their dishonour toward Yahweh. The failure of the priest to acknowledge the *kābhôdh* of God is to treat Him as nothing or as important, the main sense of *bāzāʰ* (Pohlig 1998:36).

5.2.1.1.2. Faulty Animals for Sacrifice 1:7-9

In verse 7,[9] the elaboration of the accusation against the priests is followed by another quotation of the addressees: *bammeʰ ghē'alnûkhā* ("How have we

[9] *maghghîshîm 'al-mizbᵉḥî leḥem mᵉghō'āl wa'ămartem bammeʰ ghē'alnûkhā be'ĕmorkhem shûlḥan yhwh ('ādhōnāy) nibhzeʰ hû'* ("You are presenting defiled food upon my altar. But you say,

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defiled you or polluted you?"). This question shows that it is not yet clear to the addressees (the priests) that to present polluted food (defiled offerings) implies that Yahweh's name is despised as the motivated accusation in verse 6 argues (Weyde 2000:123). Their response carries connotations of scepticism, surprise and challenge. They disagree with Yahweh's accusations or are absolutely blind to their own actions and attitudes. Following the priests' attitude towards the reputation of Yahweh, the prophet turns his focus to their failure in the performance of their ritual duties as functionaries in the sacrificial system of the Temple. When Malachi spells out how the priests have despised Yahweh's name, he specifically points out:

> They are accused of offering defiled food (1:7); they offer improper animals for sacrifice (1:8). These include animals that are blind, lame and sick; the deity wishes that they no longer kindle fire upon the altar vainly (1:10); the deity will not accept *minḥāh* from them (1:10); they profane the altar by thinking that it is despicable (1:12); they disdain the altar (1:13); they bring seized, lame and sick offerings (1:13); they bring *minḥāh* (1:13). All these accusations/descriptions attribute to the priests altar functions (O'Brien 1990:30-31).

Here, the priests were disobeying the fundamental Mosaic Law that God gets the best as his possession. The Deuteronomy and priestly laws (Lev. 1; 2:3, 10; 6:9 11, 19, 22; 22:17-25; Deut. 15:19-23), which require that animals be free of defect and blemish, are assumed or even expanded (for example, to include sick animals, something not specified in any of the legal codes) (Stuart 1998:1300; Schuller 1996:859).

The word *maghghîshîm* (v. 7) employed here with the meaning *offering* which is consistent with its usage in the Pentateuch (e.g., Lev. 2:8) and elsewhere in Malachi (1:8, 11; 2:12; 3:3) (Stuart 1998:1300) is from the verb *nāghash* (to offer)

'How have we defiled Thee?' In that you say, 'The table of the LORD is to be despised," NASB).

(BDB, 621). It is a Hiphil active participle meaning a continuous or habitual action of the priests when approaching the altar for offerings (cf. Mal 1:8, 11; 2:12; 3:3). The participle helps to describe the situation which needs to be changed (Pohlig 1998:38). In Malachi, it has a special feature, since it specifically refers not only to cult objects (1:12), but to Yahweh: *bamme^{h} ghē'alnûkhā* (1:7b) (Weyde 2000:122-123). It is believed that in Judean law contact with something defiled renders the person defiled, so God would be seen to have been defiled by accepting defiled and unacceptable sacrifices (Pohlig 1998:37).

The type of offering referred to is explained by the word *leḥem.* In its primary sense, *leḥem* denotes bread (BDB, 536) and in general food. In the OT, *leḥem* appears sometimes when referring to food offerings (e.g. Ezek. 44:7; Num. 28:2; Lev. 3:11; 21:6, 8, 21; 22:25). In the Priestly Source (P) and Holiness Code (H) (Lev. 17-26) animal sacrifices are usually called *leḥem 'ĕlōhîm* ("the food of God") (Lev. 21:6, 8, 17, 21, 22; 22:25) (Weyde 2000:123). In the post-exilic prophetic tradition of Haggai-Zechariah-Malachi corpus, the only reference to *leḥem* is in Haggai 2:12 meaning sacrificial meat (Hill 1998:178). These offerings and or sacrifices are described as *leḥem m^{e}ghō'āl*. The word *m^{e}ghō'āl* is the Piel participle of the verb *gā'al* 'to pollute, desecrate' (BDB 146). The participle is also translated as an adjective meaning 'worthless' and 'to be ritually defiled' in the Pual stem. It is a technical cultic language for something unfit to be sacrificed. This implies that the sacrificial animals were blemished or otherwise in imperfect physical condition and thus not suitable for sacrifice according to Levitical law (Pohlig 1998:338, 40). While the term means that these animals were physically unsuitable for sacrifice on the one hand, it indicates that the sentiments of the priests rendered the sacrifices unfit on the other hand (Pohlig 1998:40).

Again, these *leḥem mᵉghō'āl* are associated with *mizbᵉḥî* ("my altar") and *shûlḥan yhwh* ("the table of Yahweh"). The expression *'al-mizbᵉḥî* ("on my altar") appears frequently in Leviticus, always meaning the altar of burnt offerings, i.e., the bronze altar, rather than the incense altar or the table of the bread of the presence (Weyde 2000:126). The *shûlḥan* denotes a table, whether for personal or cultic use (BDB 1020). It does not refer to the table upon which the bread of Presence (*leḥem haphphānîm*)[10] was placed. It refers rather to the tables referred to in Ezekiel 40:38ff, located at the gates of the inner court, where sacrifices were to be slaughtered (Weyde 2000:126).

The word refers to the altar and it is parallel to *mizbᵉḥî* ("my altar"). Both expressions: *mizbᵉḥî* ("my altar") and *shûlḥan yhwh* ("the table of Yahweh") are synonymous pairs and do not indicate different concepts. This is a remarkable parallelism in the Hebrew Bible (Stuart 1998:1301; Weyde 2000:127). The use of *shûlḥan* agrees with the analogy of the governor's table. It also reminds one of the common practices of sealing the establishment of covenants with meals. In this light, the construct relationship between *shûlḥan* and *yhwh* may be understood to refer to the image of Yahweh as the host at a banquet to which the guests brought food (see 1 Sam. 20:29; 2 Sam. 9:7-13). The table indicates a symbol of the hospitality and loyalty of the host extended toward his guest. Thus to slight the table was to slight the host (Pohlig 1998:39).

The recurring structure of verse 8[11], *wᵉkhî-thaghghishûn…'ên rā'* is composed of two parallel clauses. Both the terminology and content of these clauses are

[10] The phrase *leḥem haphphānîm* ("bread of Presence") occurs in Exodus 25:30; 35:13; 39:36; 1 Samuel 21:7; 1Kings. 7:48. As for *shûlḥan* with this reference, see, for example Exodus 25:23, 27f, 30; 26:35 30:27; Numbers 3:31; 1Kings. 7:48 (Weyde 2000:126).

[11] *wᵉkhî-thaghghishûn 'iwwēr lizbōªḥ 'ên rā' wᵉkhî thaghghîshû pissēªḥ wᵉḥōlehʰ 'ên rā' haqrîbhēhû nā' lᵉpheḥāthekhā hăyirsᵉkhā 'ô hăyiśśā' phāneʸkhā 'āmar yhwh ('ādhōnāy) tsᵉbhā'ôth* ("But when you

closely linked to verse 7. The repeated verb *nāghash* (Hiphil) in verse 8a alludes clearly to the clause *maghghîshîm 'al-mizbᵉḥî* in verse 7a, and the objects of that verb in verse 8a (*'iwwēr pissēᵃḥ wᵉḥōleʰ* – 'the blind, lame and sick') seem to interpret the phrase *leḥem mᵉghō'āl* in verse 7b. While this verse does not continue the quotation of the addressees in verse 7b, it however elaborates the accusation in it (Weyde 2000:128). The expression *wᵉkhî-thaghghishûn* ("but when you present") parallels the beginning of v. 7 *maghghîshîm* ("when you present"), serving as a further specification of what the defilement is. The adverb *kî* as a connective should be understood as temporal (when) rather than causal or conditional (Weyde 2000:129). This again indicates a continuous action and it clearly refers to sacrifices at the altar of bronze since it has been observed that blemished animals are the object of the offering.

The OT sacrificial laws clearly prohibit offering animals that are faulty physically (Exod. 12:5; 29:1; Lev. 1:3; 22:18-25; Num. 6:14; 19:2; Deut. 15:21; 17:1). It clear in these laws that one or two types of physical deficiencies, such as blindness or lameness, are typically mentioned in the manner of synecdoche, but the implication is that imperfections of whatever kind cannot the tolerated. This would include sick animals (*ḥōleʰ*) (Stuart 1998:1301). Of all the categories of technical cultic terms used in the description of animals disqualified for offerings as found in Leviticus 22:22-24; matching the twelve defects in a priest, cf. Leviticus 21:18-20, Malachi chooses five defects in animals that render them unfit for sacrifice: *'iwwēr* (blind; Mal. 1:8), *ḥōleʰ* (sick; Mal. 1:8, 13), *phissēᵃḥ* (limping; Mal. 1:8, 13), *gāzûl* (injured or stolen; Mal 1:13, also "loot") and *māshḥāth* (damaged; Mal 1:14) (O'Brien 1990:92-93). It is

present the blind for sacrifice, is it not evil? And when you present the lame and sick, is it not evil? Why not offer it to your governor? Would he be pleased with you? Or would he receive you kindly? says the LORD of hosts" NASB).

however noted that only Malachi uses *ḥōleh* and *gazûl* (though a similar idea may underline Lev. 7:24; 17:15 and 22:18-19) for describing sacrificial blemishes, but these blemishes are implicit in the sacrificial regulations.

The *lamed* preposition prefixed to the verb *lizbōaḥ* expresses purpose (BDB 510); it is a dative of goal or objective and implies that the prophet is referring to animal sacrifice generally. In fact, Malachi has in view all sacrifices on the altar (Hill 1998:179). The expression, *'ên rā'* ("is it not evil?") offers several possible translations. The construct of *'ayin* in its absolute form denotes 'nothing, the absence of something'; in the construct state, it functions as a negation, hence *'ên rā'* (nothing bad, no evil). A rhetorical question is employed by the LXX, Syriac and Arabic versions such that other commentators and versions translate: 'is that not…?' (NIV, NLT, NRSV), 'is it not…?' (NASB, KJV ASV), 'is this not…?' (NJB) (Pohlig1998:41). Some modern translations prefer 'wrong' for *rā'*, and indeed the word can be translated 'bad,' 'unpleasant,' and the like; it needs not have moral overtones. However, since the word can describe in its range of meaning moral failure, 'evil' (namely, the defilement of Yahweh's altar) surely fits the context very well (Stuart 1998:1301).

There appears to be an obvious ironic slant to the challenges and charges against the priests in this verse (8). What the priests are doing is so unacceptable and unsatisfactory that there is no way it could be called right, if only they would be honest about it. The proof is to be found in the fact that they know very well that a human they desire to please (the Persian appointee governor) would reject what they are presenting to God, whom they should much more desire to honour. Their governor would consider the imperfect sacrifice as an insult and would thus not accept or show favour to

those bringing it (Stuart 1998:1301). The Hiphil imperative *haqrîbhēhû* from the verb q*ārabh* 'to offer, give, present, bring' (BDB 897) is part of the Hebrew technical cultic vocabulary. Its reference here could be either to the payment of compulsory taxes or to some voluntary gifts (Pohlig1998:42-42).

The enclitic particle of urgency *nā'* ('now, indeed, please') (BDB 609) enforces the imperative by adding an element of irony to the unacceptable nature of the sacrifices in question: "try giving, if you offer, just offer it, just try giving those, do offer them, why not offer it"(Pohlig 1998:42-43). It is obvious that neither priest nor layman would even dream of treating their *peḥāh* (Persian governor of Yehud whose identity and nationality are unknown)[12] in the same way as they were treating Yahweh, and this demolishes any theory arguing that the priests lacked knowledge of sacrificial laws. The Hiphil imperative *haqrîbhēhû* is sarcastic, for implicit is the understanding that no one would ever offer such gifts to the governor. How ironic, then, that the priests could think that God should be willing to accept or show favour to them and the worshippers they represent.

Similarly, the double question *lᵉpheḥāthekhā hăyirśᵉkhā* ("would he be pleased with you?") and *hăyiśśā' phāneʸkhā* ("would he receive you kindly?") is best understood as a rhetorical one, for a negative answer is understood by both parts. Thus the imperative is underlying a condition, and the following double question underlying encodes an unreal consequence. The Qal

[12] Pohlig (1998:42) remarks that *peḥāh* is probably a loan word from Akkadian, used here to show that Samaria and/or Judah were under the rule of a governor who had been placed there by the king of Persia. It denotes 'lord of a district' a position lower than 'satrap for the Persians. While one is able to know the identity of any Judean governors in the fifth century prior to Nehemiah's arrival (444 BCE), one remains in the dark as to the governor that Malachi's original audience would have had in mind when they heard these words preached if the dating of Malachi around 460 BCE is correct (see Stuart 1998:1303).

imperfect verb *yirśᵉkhā* means 'to be pleased with, to be gracious to, to accept, take pleasure in, and to be favourable to someone.' It is also translated in the active voice as 'that certainly wouldn't please him'. The word *'ô* translated 'or' is a conjunction expressing choice (Pohlig1998:42). The idiom *hăyiśśā' phāneʸkhā* (to receive one graciously, to show one favour, to be gracious towards one, grant you a cordial reception) (BDB 815) is an ironic echo of the language of the Aaronic blessing, *yiśśā'yhwh pānāyw 'êleʸkhā* ("May the Lord lift up His countenance on you" Num. 6:26) (Stuart 1998:1303).

Thus, in verse 9,[13] the prophet introduces a conclusion based on what has been previously stated with the use of *wᵉ'aththāʰ* 'and now, now therefore' (BDB 774). The expression *ḥallû-nā' phᵉnê-'ēl* ("will you not entreat God's favour…?") is an idiom employed in the OT for seeking the favour, mercy, blessing of God.[14] It means 'to implore, to entreat, to try to appease, to supplicate, to petition' (BDB 318). The Piel of *ḥālaʰ* here echoes, probably more accidentally than purposefully, the adjectival *ḥōleʰ* (sick) in verse 8 but with the different meaning that the Piel verb form carries (literally, to make soft, weak, to fall sick, thus more abstractly to appeal, implore) (Stuart 1998:1303; Stuart 1998:1303). The plural imperative undoubtedly refers to the priests as a group. The sentence is in fact, "a common liturgical expression, here employed ironically to bring home the fact that the priests are no more in good standing with God, and thus can no longer fulfill their role as intercessors for themselves or for the nation" (Pohlig 1998:44). Here, the

[13] *wᵉ'aththāʰ ḥallû-nā' phᵉnê-'ēl wîḥānēnû miyyedhkhem hāythāʰ zō'th hăyiśśā' mikhkhem pānîm 'āmar yhwh ('ādhōnāy) tsᵉbhā'ôth* ("But now will you not entreat God's favor, that He may be gracious to us? With such an offering on your part, will He receive any of you kindly?" says the LORD of hosts" NASB).

[14] (Exod. 32:11; 1 Sam. 13:12; 1 Kgs. 13:6; 2 Kgs. 13:4; 2 Chr. 33:12; Jb. 11:19; Pss. 45:12;119:58; Jer. 26:19; Dan. 9:13; Zech. 7:2; 8:21, 22).

exhortation comes from Malachi who includes himself in the community of Yehud. Since both verse 8 and certainly the end of verse 9 are full or irony, *ḥallû-nā'* can best be understood as Malachi's ironic and emphatic exhortation to appease God with polluted and unworthy sacrifices. The argument may then be simplified as follows:

> What a governor would reject, God certainly wouldn't accept, so why don't you priests stop thinking that God is accepting (*hăyiśśā' phāne^{y}khā*, again satirically echoing Num. 6:26) your inferior offerings and repent of the practice, appealing for mercy? The national favour is jeopardized by your behaviour (Stuart 1998:1303).

While the *waw* conjunction prefixed to *wîḥānēnû* is best understood as conjunctive sequential, the apodosis to a condition 'so that, that, i.e., denoting purpose or result, the verb *ḥānan* means 'to be gracious, to be merciful, to take pity' (BDB 335). The phrase *miyyedhkhem hāythā^{h} zō'th* ("with such an offering on your part") is understood differently:

> As a circumstantial clause; as long as the priests bring unacceptable sacrifices, God cannot accept them, 'with such offerings from your hand'…, a parenthesis; 'of your hand has this [the unacceptable sacrifices offered by the priest] occurred'…, an assertion from which flows the following phrase; 'you have sinned'…, a condition to be fulfilled by the Jews in return for God's favour; 'if you do this [placate God]'…, a comment on the fact that God will refuse to show favour to the Jews; 'it will be your fault' (Pohlig 1998:45).

Indeed, disrespect for Yahweh has come through those who were supposed to speak from God. Thus it would be wrong to assume that God was ready to allow the priests go free from punishment by merely praying for forgiveness for despising him *w^{e}'aththā^{h} ḥallû-nā' ph^{e}nê-'ēl wîḥānēnû* ("Now will you not entreat God's favour, that He may be gracious to us?"). The rhetorical question directed to the priests at the end of this verse *hăyiśśā' mikhkhem pānîm* ("will he show you favour?") implies a curse of anger and rejection from

Yahweh, anticipating the more overt curse against the priests yet to come (Stuart 1998:1303).

5.2.1.1.3. An Imperative to stop Vain Offerings 1:10

In verse 10,[15] Malachi expresses a personal wish on behalf of Yahweh that someone among the priests would have the courage and fortitude to shut the doors of the temple and not light the fire on Yahweh's altar, because the ritual that was being carried out there was not pleasing to God. The interrogative pronoun *mî* literally means 'who?'. Here followed by the imperfect, it functions to express a wish (BDB 566). *gham* is regarded as an intensifying particle, and is said to express addition (BDB 168). The expression *mî gham-bākhem* is translated (one among you, someone among you). The proclitic *b*^{e} denotes 'among a group'. Thus the expression *mî gham-bākhem* (who among you), idiomatically expresses a wish in Hebrew.

The Qal Imperfect *w*^{e}*yisgōr* from the verb *sāghar* 'to shut, to close' amounts to a clear expression of wish or desire (Pohlig1998:47). Similarly the wish expressed in 1:10 may as well simply a question expecting a negative answer for none of the priests will shut the doors. This desire thus gives a very negative impression of the priests, and serves to elaborate the accusation against them (Weyde 2000:141-42). The dual of *deleth* 'door' (BDB 195) appears several times in the OT, in every instance referring to city or street gates. In 1:10, the context points to gates related to the temple that had two doors (Ezek 41:23) where the offerings were actually offered on the altar by the priests on behalf of the worshippers, or the outer courtyard, where the worshippers

[15] *mî gham-bākhem w*^{e}*yisgōr d*^{e}*lāthayim w*^{e}*lō'-thā'irû mizb*^{e}*ḥî ḥinnām 'ên-lî ḥēphets bākhem yhwh ('ādhōnāy) ts*^{e}*bhā'ôth ûminḥā*^{h} *lō'-'ertse*^{h} *miyyedhkhem* ("Oh that there were one among you who would shut the gates, that you might not uselessly kindle *fire on* my altar! I am not pleased with you," says the LORD of hosts, "nor will I accept an offering from you" NASB).

gathered while the offering was done for them (Stuart 1998:1305; Hill 1998:184).

The desire of Yahweh in 1:10a is followed by the clause *wᵉlō'-thā'irû mizbᵉḥî ḥinnām* ("that you might not uselessly kindle *fire on* my altar"), which probably functions as a final clause. The doors should be closed to prevent the priests from kindling Yahweh's altar. This clause could also be translated 'that you not fruitlessly light fires', since *ḥinnām* modifies the verb (Stuart 1998:1305). The *ḥinnām* has different meaning in the HB: 'uselessly, in vain, to no purpose' (BDB 336) and 'in vain seems most appropriate in Malachi. This adverbial expression is also translated as an adjective modifying 'fire.'

Preparing the fires on the altar was part of the priests' responsibility in worship, while the killing of the sacrificial animals was the work of those who brought sacrifices to the Temple. Here Malachi condemns the entire Judeans' worship ritual, as had done Amos, Hosea, Micah, Isaiah, and Jeremiah before him, because the worshippers have rejected all that Yahweh stands for (Pohlig 1998:48). The final clause in 1:10 thus says, "To kindle the altar is useless because of the priests' disobedience to the offering laws; it is better to stop offering by closing the admittance to the place of sacrifice" (Weyde 2000:143).

While the poetic section posed dissatisfaction of Yahweh mainly in the form of questions (verses 7-9), verse 10, which is prose, bluntly states that Yahweh is not pleased and will not accept the polluted offerings being brought to him. The noun *ḥēphets* means 'pleasure or joy or delight (BDB 343). The expression *'ên-lî ḥēphets bākhem* literally means 'there is no joy to me in you,' and it underscores Yahweh's displeasure and repugnancy for the priests' activities in spite of their outward fulfillment of the traditional cult responsibilities. The position of *minḥāʰ* (refers in general terms to offering of any kind, BDB 585) at

the front of its clause indicates that the idea of 'offering' is re-established as the topic, after its last occurrence in 1:8. While the verb *rātsāh* 'to accept' (BDB 953) is part of the technical cultic vocabulary in Hebrew; it concerns how effective the sacrifices are with Yahweh (Pohlig 1998:49; Weyde 2000:144).

The expression *miyyedhkhem (from you),* which is plural, emphasises the guilty party by the repetition of the pronouns *bākhem* and *miyyedhkhem.* This constitutes a spell of denial and obliteration of the cultic rituals. The priests and people may have tried to fool themselves into thinking that what they offer would earn God's favour. But Malachi was moved to say there was no chance for that (Stuart 1998:1305). The crux of his message was that Yahweh wants no more useless sacrifices.

5.2.1.1.4. Worship that Profanes Yahweh's Name 1:11-14

Within the broad discourse unit of Malachi 1:6-2:9, this sub-unit: 1:11-14, realises a semantic constituent of worship that profanes Yahweh's name (Pohlig 1998:49). The sub-unit begins with the prophecy of Gentile worship, continues with accusations and evidence against the priests and ends with Yahweh's greatness.

5.2.1.1.4.1. Worship of the Nations 1:11

Malachi 1:11 has puzzled many a scholar as surveys of different opinions abounds in commentaries and articles.[16] In the expression *kî mimmizraḥ-shemesh wᵉ'adh-mᵉbhō'ō* ("For from the rising of the sun, even to its setting"), the particle *kî* may be understood in a causal sense (because) indicating that

[16] See for example, Snyman (2004:80-95); Weyde (2000:146-49); Viberg (1994:297-319); Hugenberger (1994: 37-9); Glazier-McDonald (1987:55-61); Verhoef (1987:222-32); Coggins (1987:77ff); Baldwin (1972a:117-24).

verse 11[17] provides the reason why Yahweh has no pleasure in the offerings the people are bringing (Snyman 2004:82). It is also understood alternatively as a logical conjunction (for), an adversative conjunction (but) or as an emphatic adverb (verily) (Hill 1998:186). Taken as a logical conjunction, *kî* serves as the logical conclusion of the previous verse. The connection implies that Yahweh's rejection of the offerings is due to the priests' insults to his widely recognised great name. The phrase *mimmizraḥ-shemesh wᵉ'adh-mᵉbhō'ō* ("from the rising of the sun, even to its setting")[18] could be misunderstood to refer to the length of a day rather than to the breadth of the earth. The phrase is a merism indicating totality of place via polarity (Stuart 1998:1306; Hill 1998:186; Glazier-McDonald 1987:55). This clarifies the fact that the prophet has in mind the geographical expansion of the nations, at least of the known world.

In the repeated phrase *gādhôl shᵉmî baghghôyîm* ("my name is great among the nations"), the adjective *gādhôl* (great) serves as a predicate in the verb less clause and when used in association with the name of God, the term *gādhôl* forms the nucleus of the sentence. The omitted verb has caused a fair amount of discussion among scholars as to whether it should be translated in a present ('my name *is* great among the nations'; NLT; NRSV) or a future tense ('my name *will be* great among the nations'; NIV; NASB; KJV). "When

[17] *kî mimmizraḥ-shemesh wᵉ'adh-mᵉbhō'ō gādhôl shᵉmî baghghôyim ûbhᵉkhol-māqôm muqtār mughghāsh lishmî ûminḥāh thᵉhôrāh Kî-gādhôl shᵉmî baghghôyim 'āmar yhwh ('ādhōnāy) tsᵉbhā'ôth* ("For from the rising of the sun, even to its setting, My name *will be* great among the nations, and in every place incense is going to be offered to My name, and a grain offering *that is* pure; for My name *will be* great among the nations," says the LORD of hosts" NASB).

[18] Stuart (1998:1306) and Viberg (1994:301) note that the expression has parallels both to the OT (Pss 50:1; 113:3; Isa 59:19; Isa. 45:6; 59:19) and to ancient writing. The Amarna letter 288:5-7, which was written by the king of Jerusalem to Pharaoh (14th century BCE), contains the expression "my lord has set his name at the rising of the sun and at the setting of the sun." It occurs as well in Mari letters (17th century BCE).

participles are used as predicates, the time is often future, (but not always; vv. 7, 12) and the stress is on the certainty of the event" (Clendenen 2004: 276-77). While it is possible to read this phrase in the future tense, Hill (1998:188-89) rightly points out that, "Understanding the participle in the future tense not diminishes the ironic force of Malachi's rebuke in the disputational format, but also indicates 'immanency' when the prophet uses the so-called *futurum instans* participle with *hinnēh* (3:1, 19[14:1])."

The *bêth* preposition prefixed to *baghghôyîm* is understood to be spatial in meaning i.e., marking location 'within an area or 'amid a domain' (Petersen 1995:174). The term *gôy* is translated 'nation, Gentiles, people, people of other nations'. The term refers to the peoples and ethnic groups around Israel [Gentile nations], with emphasis upon their paganism (Pohlig 1998:50-51). Thus the repetition of the emphatic expression is designed to remind the Yehudites of a truth they have somehow forgotten; namely, "Great is Yahweh." This epithet echoes the sentiments of Jeremiah 10:6, *gādhôl 'aththāh wᵉghādhôl shᵉmkhā* ("you are great and your name is great")[19] which may constitute a liturgical refrain of a kind (Hill 1998:187).

Ironically, Yahweh's dealings with His people Israel were orchestrated in order that the 'nations' might comprehend that He is truly Yahweh, since the time of Abraham (Gen. 12:2-3; cf., Ezek. 37:28; 38:16; 39:7, 23). God has ordained that Israel was chosen to be holy among the nations, a special priestly kingdom that will glorify Him in all the nations of the world (Exod. 19:5-6). However, the priests, along with the people of Israel, who were responsible for exalting Yahweh's name and testifying to His greatness, are seen tragically in Malachi as the opposite: "the nations now instruct postexilic

[19] Examples of such liturgical refrains from the Psalms includes: Pss. 47:9; 48:1; 48:1; 49:2-9; 89:18; 93:1-2; 96:10; 97:1; 99:1.

Yehud in the 'greatness' of God" (Hill 1998:187). The expression *ûbhᵉkhol-māqôm* (and in every place) underscores the fact that Malachi means an entire geographical expansion. The *bêth* preposition marks location (in) while the quantifier *kol* is genitive of measure and have a universal distributive meaning; 'every' (BDB 481). The noun *māqôm* denotes 'place'. In conjunction with the previous entry, means 'everywhere'. It is often translated 'place' or 'location' whether specified or not; it could mean 'sanctuary' here, i.e., a place of worship (Pohlig 1998:51). Here, Malachi calls upon his audience to know that the worship of Yahweh extends beyond the nation of Israel.

The middle section of verse 11 is controversial. In the expression *muqṭār mughghāsh lishmî ûminḥāʰ thᵉhôrāʰ* ("incense is going to be offered to my name and a grain offering *that is* pure") the two Hophal participles next to each other, *muqṭār* and *mughghāsh,* have caught the interests of many a scholar with various emendations to the text in order to remove its perceived awkwardness (Hill 1998:188). The term *muqṭār* is a general one indicating 'offerings that are burnt,' the root *qāṭār* 'incense' (BDB 883) also means the rise of smoke coming from a sacrifice (Lev. 1:9; 2:11; 6:15; 8:21), hence the alternative translation of "incense" or "burnt offering" (Snyman 2004:83). Stuart (1998:1307), argues that the root *qāṭār* refer to offerings that are allowed to burn up in their entirety rather than those eaten after cooking. This can include, but is not limited to, 'incense'.

On the other hand, the participle *mughghāsh* is understood to be an intransitive passive of the verb *nāghash* (to offer) (BDB, 621), 'is being offered' (Hill 1998: 188). The verb *nāghash* bringing an offer is familiar in this pericope (verse 7 and twice in verse 8) and also occurs in the remaining section of the book (2:12; 3:3). While *nāghash* is not commonly used for presenting sacrifices,

it is never used to refer to the presentation of offerings of incense, for which the Hiphil of *qārabh* is the proper term (Viberg 1994:302).

While *minḥāh* refers in general terms to offering of any kind (BDB 585), the *waw* connective is translated as additive, 'and'. In its connective translation, it places *minḥāh* 'offering' in apposition with *muqṭār* 'incense/sacrifice', usually with an intensive particle such as 'indeed': 'and indeed, a pure sacrifice' (Pohlig 1998:51-52). The use of *theḥôrāh* in this text is distinctive. It is only in Malachi 1:11 that *theḥôrāh* refers offerings as well to the purity of sacrifices. In other places it is used of cultic purity (Lev. 10:10; Deut. 12:15; Jb. 14:4) (Viberg 1994:302-303).

This unusual use of terminology indicates that *ûminḥāh theḥôrāh* should be translated as a final interjection, emphasising and intensifying the idea of the kind of offerings brought—not any kind of offering; but pure offerings (Snyman 2004:83). Thus *theḥôrāh* indicates the ceremonial acceptability of the sacrifice, a sincere motivation of the worshippers, and the physical and moral perfection of the sacrificial animals (Pohlig 1998:52-53). This 'pure offering' that Malachi envisions, anticipates the cultic rejuvenation and stands in sharp contrast to the defiled and unacceptable sacrifices offered by the priests of postexilic Yehud (Hill 1998:189).

5.2.1.1.4.2. Accusations against the Priests 1:12

The indictment against the priests in verse 12[20] is a prose restatement of the important points of verse 7, re-emphasising that what the priests are doing is illegal and not accidental (Clendenen 2004:279; Stuart 1998:1307). Here, the

[20] *weʾaththem meḥallelîm ʾôthô beʾĕmorkhem shulḥan ʾādhōnāy meghōʾāl hûʾ weʾnîbhô nibhzeh ʾokhlô* ("But you are profaning it, in that you say, 'The table of the Lord is defiled, and as for its fruit, its food is to be despised'" NASB).

waw connective is translated adversatively as 'but' (BDB 251), and Malachi, following his discourse pattern uses the personal pronoun *'aththem* (2mp), as in the past (Mal.1: 6, 7), to highlight the subject of the action, the priests. The combination of the *waw* connective with the pronoun *aththem*, changes the focus from the "pure offerings" of the nations; present and future, to the unacceptable worship of the priests.

The Piel participle *m^{e}ḥall^{e}lîm* from *ḥālal* 'to profane, desecrate, defile, insult' (BDB 320; TWOT 661) denotes a continuous action: 'you are profaning.' The verb *ḥālal* is synonymous to *gā'al* (1:7) 'to pollute, desecrate' (BDB 146). The word also appears in 2:10 (Piel inf. Constr.) *l^{e}ḥallēl b^{e}rîth 'ăbhōthênû* ("profaning the covenant of our fathers") and 2:11 (Piel) *kî ḥillēl y^{e}hûdhā^{h} qōdhesh yhwh ('ādhōnāy) 'ăsher 'āhēbh* ("for Judah has profaned the sanctuary that Yahweh loves"). What are the priests profaning in verse 12? The word *'ôthô* can mean 'it' as the object of (are profaning) or 'me' (Pohlig 1998:54). According to Hill (1998:189), the suffixed marker of the definite direct object *'ôthô refers* to the name of Yahweh mentioned three times in verse 11. To profane Yahweh's name is commonly mentioned elsewhere in the OT to mean 'insult God' in any of a variety of ways (Stuart 1998:1307).[21] Priests could profane the name of Yahweh by;

> Failing to keep themselves holy (Lev. 21:6), by coming into contact with or practicing mourning rites for the dead (Lev. 21:1-5, 10-12), or by marrying a prostitute, a divorced woman, a widow (i.e., anyone but virgin; Lev. 21:7, 13-14). A priest's failure to marry properly would also 'defile (*ḥālal*) his offspring among his people' (Lev. 21:15) . . . According to Lev. 21:17-23 a priest who had a "defect" was not to 'come near to offer food of his God', or he would desecrate (*ḥālal*) the sanctuary and apparently also profane the Lord's name (Clendenen 2004:281).

[21] See (Isa. 48:11; 56:6; Jer. 34:16; Ezek. 20:9, 14, 22, 39; Am. 2:7).

The expression *be'ĕmorkhem shulḥan 'ādhōnāy mᵉghō'āl hû'* ("by your saying 'the table of the Lord is defiled'") is simply a restatement of its parallel in verse 7, and *wᵉnîbhô nibhzeʰ 'okhlô* ("its food is contemptible") is the sacrificial food prepared on the altar for eating by the priests and worshippers (Stuart 1998:1307). Thus in Malachi, the effect of bringing blemished sacrifices and defiling the altar amount to treating it with contempt and thus disgracing the name of Yahweh. The synonymous words *ḥālal* (profane), *gā'al* (pollute) and *bāzāʰ* (despicable) all help to clarify further the intensity of the idea of ritual pollution.

5.2.1.1.4.3. Evidence for the Accusation 1:13-14a

Again, verse 13[22] is a prose restatement of the important points of verse 8, and as such it shares several vocabulary connections with verse 8. The derogatory actions of the priests listed in this verse constitute the evidence for the indictment of profaning Yahweh's altar given in the preceding verse. According to the previous quotations in verse 7 and 12 the priests, when confronted, declared that Yahweh's altar is polluted and despised, and that the animals offered in sacrifice are despicable. In the light of this depreciatory attitude it is likely that the priests also consider the sacrificial cult as hardship or weariness, and a nuisance (Weyde 2000:152).

The opening statement reveals the words the priests would utter, quietly or maybe in secret to one another, *hinnēʰ maththᵉlā'āʰ* ("what a hardship!"). This exclamation consists of two Hebrew words, *hinnēʰ* (a demonstrative

[22] *wa'ămartem hinnēʰ maththᵉlā'āʰ wᵉhiphphaḥtem 'ôthô 'āmar yhwh ('ādhōnāy) tsᵉbhā'ôth wahăbhē'them gāzûl wᵉ'eth-haphphissēªḥ wᵉ'eth-haḥôleʰ wahăbhē'them 'eth-hamminḥāʰ ha'ertseʰ 'ôthāh miyyedhkhem 'āmar yhwh ('ādhōnāy)* ("You also say, 'My, how tiresome it is!' And you disdainfully sniff at it,' says the LORD of hosts, 'and you bring what was taken by robbery, and *what is* lame or sick; so you bring the offering! Should I receive that from your hand?' says the LORD" NASB).

interjection or particle translated 'behold' BDB 243) and another that combines the interrogative particle *māʰ* (what, how, BDB 552) used as an exclamation with the noun *tᵉlāʾāʰ* (burden, hardship, weariness, plague, and nuisance) (Pohlig 1998:57-58).

In Exodus 18:8 and Number 20:14 *telāʾāʰ* refers the hardships that Israel had to endure under the oppression of Egypt. From a cultic perspective, there is perhaps an allusion to the Lord's words at a time when Yahweh complained about the burden that Israel's sacrifices were for him. "Your New Moon festivals and your appointed feasts my soul hates. They have become a burden to me; I am weary (*lāʾāʰ*) of bearing them" (Isa 1:14). The same situation is recalls as in Malachi when Yahweh declares: "You have become weary (*lāʾāʰ*) of me, O Israel!" (Isa. 43:22; NASB; Clendenen 2004:282).

Another piece of evidence for the profanation of the Lord's name is expressed in the statement *wᵉhiphphaḥtem ʾôthô* (and you sniff at it contemptuously or disdainfully). The verb *nāphaḥ* appears in the Hiphil stem only here and in Job 31:39, where it means "to cause the death" of someone. It may be translated as 'to sniff scornfully at, to sniff at in contempt, disdain, to turn up one's nose at, to degrade or enrage (BDB 656; Pohlig 1998:58; Clendenen 2004:282). Whatever translation one chooses at this point, it is clear by the context that the priests were fulfilling the sacrificial duties without passion. They did not esteem or value the cult of Yahweh. Thus the expression *wᵉhiphphaḥtem* is a gesture of disrespect and derision.

The use of *ʾôthô* is considered to be one of the *Tiqqune Sopherim* (scribal corrections) in the OT. The ancient rabbis understood the text as saying either 'you sniff at Yahweh' (appeared to be in danger of blaspheming God to use "it" in reference to Yahweh) or "you sniff at the sacrificial system"

(considered too harsh against the Levitical priesthood) (Pohlig 1998:57). The pronoun antecedent could refer to the Lord's 'table' from verse 12, or his 'name' from verse 11 and so parallel to 'you profane it' in verse 12 (Clendenen 2004:282; Hill 1998:191).

The rest of verse 13 continues to re-echo phrases from 1:6-10. In verse 8 the sacrifices were unacceptable because the animals were *'iwwēr* (blind), *ḥōle^{h}* (sick), and *phissē^{a}ḥ* (limping). Here in verse 13, the sacrifices are described by three adjectives similar to those in verse 8 except for the first. In place of *'iwwēr* (blind), they are described as *gāzûl* (injured or stolen; also 'loot'). The Qal passive participle *gāzûl* comes from the verb *gāzal* meaning 'rob, seize violently, and loot' and with regard to the sacrificial animal; the word may describe that which has been 'stolen' (Hill 1998:192).

In verse 8, mention is made and interpretation given of *phissē^{a}ḥ* (limping) and *phissē^{a}ḥ* (limping). Since such animals could not even be eaten in everyday, nonreligious settings (See, Exod. 22:30 [31]; Lev. 7:24; 17:15; 22:8; Ezek. 4:14; 44:31), they certainly could not be presented legitimately as sacrifices. But this was exactly what the priests were doing. Whether the ones robbing the animals were the priests themselves or the people of Yehud, Malachi's reprimand did not surprise the priests (Stuart 1998:1308). The expression *ha'ertse^{h} 'ôthāh miyyedhkhem 'āmar yhwh* ("Should I receive that from your hand? Says the LORD") is parallel to verse10*'ên-lî ḥēphets bākhem… ûminḥā^{h} lō'-'ertse^{h} miyyedhkhem* ("I have no pleasure in you… and I will accept no offering from you"), making verses 10-13 a literary subunit. The interrogative particle *he' in ha'ertse^{h}* is used both in the rhetorical sense ("Shall I accept it…?") and the exclamatory sense (And I will accept no offering…!). Thus according to Hill (1998:193), "Tragically, and ironically, Zerubbabel's Temple

was erected so that Yahweh 'might be pleased with it' (*w^{e}'ertse^{h}-bô*, Hag 1:8). By the time of Malachi, Yahweh can take no pleasure in his Temple because the ritual sacrifices offered to him by the corrupt priesthood are unacceptable (*lō'-ertse^{h}*, v. 10)."

In verse 14a, the indictment is directed against the lay worshippers or anyone who brings the inferior animals to the priests rather than the priests. The fault was primarily with the priests since they take responsibility for the whole cultic life; leading in temple worship and also teaching the people about the Lord and his Law. However, the worshippers who were defrauding Yahweh with their sacrifices are also said to be 'cursed' (cf. Deut. 27:16) (Clendenen 2004:284).

The Qal passive participle *'ārûr* of *'ārar* 'to be cursed, to be inflicted with a curse, accursed' (BDB 76; TWOT 168) is "part of Hebrew covenant vocabulary, e.g., the ritual curses upon covenant breakers in Deut. 27:15-26" (Pohlig 1998:61). The participle here describes the participle *nôkhēl* from *nākhal* (to be crafty, deceitful). It is also translated as a simple noun: 'cheat, hypocrite, rouge, deceiver, swindler' (BDB 76), *w^{e}yēsh b^{e}'edhrô zākhār* ("one who has a male animal in his flock").[23] The worshipper pledges to sacrifice (*w^{e}nōdhēr w^{e}zōbhē^{a}ḥ*)[24] it to the Lord if he answers his prayer; but when the Lord answers

[23] Male animals were specifically required for Passover sacrifices (Exod. 12:5), burnt-offerings (Lev. 1:3, 10), sin-offerings (Lev. 4:3, 23) and votive sacrifices or free-will offerings (Lev. 22:18-20).This last offering is the one the verse mentions since it involves a vow. However, when the petition was granted the worshipper was often tempted to offer a cheap substitute for a sacrifice (Ps. 76:11).

[24] Vows in the OT were promises to give God a particular gift or offering in the future, whether because of economic depression or because of other circumstances. These gifts could not include what Israelites were already obliged to give to their God, e.g., the tithe. There were vows of people (Lev. 27:1-8), animals (Lev. 27:9-13), houses (Lev. 27:14-15), inheritances or family land (Lev. 27:16-21) and any land or non-family land (Lev. 27:22-25). On vow offerings see also, Num. 30:2; Deut. 23:21-23.

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his prayer, the worshipper breaks his vow, goes back on his promise and substitutes a worthless (blemished, damaged) animal (*māshḥāth*) (Clendenen 2004:285).

The person who resorted to such a scheme was a 'cheat' and was placed under the curse of Yahweh (Deut. 27:26) (Smith 1984:316). As Clendenen (2004:285) summarises, "the intention of the speaker was to vigorously keep himself aloof from that person and his action." This is because; it spoke of separation from God, being expelled from a community relationship and from the "security, justice, and success" that he had enjoyed there. To them, being cursed by God meant being "delivered over to misfortune."

5.2.1.1.4.4. Declaration of Yahweh's Greatness 1:14b

The last part of verse 14 brings to climax a theme that has appeared already in verse 11 and which ended the first oracle in verse 5: the greatness of Yahweh. Two points are made clear about him here: he is a great king (*melekh gādhôl*) and he is a source of fear among the nations *ûsh^{e}mî nôrā' bhaghghôyim* ("his name will be feared among them"). The claim *kî melekh gādhôl 'ānî* ("for I am a great king"), invokes the vocabulary of ancient Hittite covenants, in which the conquering king is called the 'Great King.' The vassal parties to such treaties were obliged under threat of punishment to observe the treaties' conditions (Pohlig 1998:63). These words are not just stating that Yahweh is a great king, but something like "I am the royal suzerain and all other kings and people are my vassals" (Stuart 1998:1310).[25]

[25] The universal kingship of Yahweh is a common theme in the Psalter (e.g., Pss. 10:16; 47:3[2]; 95:3) as is the idea that he ought to be feared by other nations (Pss. 9:21 [20]); 102:16) (Stuart 1998:1310).

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The main verb in the sentence is a participle *nôrāʾ* translated 'is to be feared.' Whereas here Yahweh's reputation is going to be "feared among the nations," according to verse 11 it will be "great among the nations" and will arouse the offering of incense (cf. Jon. 1:16) (Clendenen 2004:285-86). Though the Gentile nations have heard of the renown and power of Israel's God, which however, is distinct from trusting and serving Him, the time is coming when all nations will worship him. That Israel's priests who should have known this and feared, failed to act as if they did, is the reason for the criticism, and the curses they are bound to receive in the next sub-unit.

5.2.1.2. *Results of the Priests' Impurity 2:1-3*

This discourse unit shall focus on the accusations of impurity against the priests as well as their subsequent cleansing. This unit specifies the terms of the judgment on the priests (*hakhkhōhănîm*); their persons, blessings and perhaps their offspring will be cursed (2:3). It is no surprise that the first lines of this second disputation are probably the hardest in the entire OT against the priests, introducing the oracle's judgment sentence (Stuart 1998:1310). The reason for this punishment lays in the priests attitude toward Yahweh and his service; their slackness and failure to give God the very best.

In 2:1[26], the *kōhănîm* are addressed in the second person plural: *wᵉʿatthāh ʿălêkhem hammitswāh* ("and now to you this commandment"). The noun, *mitswāh* here refers to a warning, and then to the resulting sentence of punishment which Yahweh is passing upon the priests. It refers to implicitly to God's requirement that the priests acts in a worthy manner (Pohlig 1998:64-65). There are grave consequences for anyone stupid enough to disregard

[26] *wᵉʿatthāh ʿălêkhem hammitswāh hazzōʾth hakhkhōhănîm* ("And now, this commandment is for you, O priests" NASB).

God's admonitions (cf. Lev. 26:14-39; Zech. 1:4-6; 7:12-14). As a punishment for failing to honour Yahweh's reputation, the *kōhănîm* in 2:2-3 receive Yahweh's punishment. The following section shall exegete the curse pronouncements on the priests; their persons, blessings and perhaps their offspring.

5.2.1.2.1. Cursing their Blessings 2:2

In verse 2[27], the prophet declares that unless the priests begin to hear (*im-lō' thishm^{e}'û*) and set it upon their heart to honour (*we'im-lō' thāśîmû 'al-lēbh lāthēth kābhôdh*) Yahweh, He will set calamities upon them (*w^{e}shillaḥtî bhākhem 'eth-hamm^{e}'ērā^{h}*). The expression, *thāśîmû 'al-lēbh* ("set it upon the heart") implies, to clarify a curse of one's behaviour in reply to his/her understanding or consciousness of something (Clendenen 2004:288). Malachi declares that Yahweh will direct a spell upon them and afflict their blessings: *w^{e}'ārôthî 'eth-birkhôthêkhem w^{e}gham 'ārôthîhā* ("I will curse your blessings, and indeed, I have cursed them"). The precise meaning of *birkhôthêkhem* in 2:2 is variously interpreted. It may refer to either the material agricultural resources that the priests received from Yahweh through the people as tithing (Num. 18:21) or to the blessings that they pronounce upon the people (O'Brien 1990:32).

Given the fact that not only the priests but also the people are to blame for the current situation (cf. 3:6-12), lack of agricultural productivity could be an appropriate punishment since it affects both parties (Glazier-McDonald 1987:67-68). Since the priests and some worshippers were motivated by greed

[27] *'im-lō' thishm^{e}'û we'im-lō' thāśîmû 'al-lēbh lāthēth kābhôdh lishmî 'āmar yhwh ('ādhōnāy) ts^{e}bhā'ôth w^{e}shillaḥtî bhākhem 'eth-hamm^{e}'ērā^{h} w^{e}'ārôthî 'eth-birkhôthêkhem w^{e}gham 'ārôthîhā kî 'ênkhem śāmîm 'al-lēbh* ("If you do not listen, and if you do not take it to heart to give honor to My name," says the LORD of hosts, "then I will send the curse upon you, and I will curse your blessings; and indeed, I have cursed them *already*, because you are not taking *it* to heart" NASB).

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to relax their standards on the quality of sacrifices, it is proper that they should receive as part of their punishment an economic blow. According to Stuart (1998:1311), the present verse contains two types of curses: rejection/ destruction of the cult and a futility curse. The function of a general curse is to emphasise that the miscreant will not get away with his or her sin (Lev. 26:41, 43: 'they will pay for their sin'). A futility curse focuses on the frustration of one's plan and efforts as a divine punishment (Deut. 28:29: 'you will be unsuccessful in everything you do').

Precisely, blessing was a priestly business. They acted as the mediators between Yahweh and his people (Exod. 28-29; 1 Sam. 2:28). In this regard, they were empowered to announce upon Yahweh's people His benediction. The Aaronic benediction was probably the climax as well as the closing point of the worshippers' encounter at the sanctuary or temple. It is therefore argued that all of Malachi 1:6-2:9 is a post-exilic exegetical reworking of the Aaronic blessing (Num. 6:23-27) in which the prophet ironically inverts the priests language, hopes and actions; their special prerogative of pronouncing blessings (O'Brien 1990:33; Tiemeyer 2006:242; Stuart 1998:1311). Thus just as lack of agricultural productivity would hurt the rest of the people, so also would lack of a benediction: if it had failed, withheld, or even reserved in efficiency in order that it served as a malediction (that is, such that the worshippers returned after a benediction only to suffer disaster of numerous kinds), there would be ritual consequences that would affect the recipients of the blessing (Tiemeyer 2006:243).

5.2.1.2.2. Rebuking their Seed 2:3

The second aspect of the punishment strikes the priests, more personally. Two curse types are pronounced against the priests here: decimation/infertility of

the family and dishonour (Stuart 1998:1312). Just as *birkhôthêkhem* in 2:2 refers to at least two possible meanings, so also does *zera'* of 2:3.[28] It may mean that Yahweh will rebuke either agricultural seed or human progeny (O'Brien 1990:33). The first curse is given in the expression: *hinnî ghō'ēr lākhem 'eth-hazzera'* ("behold, I am going to rebuke your offspring").

The verb in this clause *ghō'ēr* in its primary sense means 'to cut off, hew down or off'. The MT of *ghō'ēr* reads 'rebuking', while the LXX reads *aphorizō* 'cut off, separate, take away', which in turn appears to be based upon a reading either of *ghō'ēr* 'to diminish, take away' or of *ghō'ēr* 'to cut off' (Pohlig 1998:68-69). In the final word of the clause, the bulk of the LXX tradition, followed also by the Vulgate, read *ton ōmon* (shoulder, arm) for what is seen in the MT as *hazzera'* (the offspring, descendants, seed) (Stuart 1998:1312). *hazzera'* (the seed) may be a reference to agricultural produce, a view which is combined with an agricultural interpretation of the blessings in verse 2. In this regard, the rebuking of the agricultural seed would punish the famers rather than the priests. This interpretation however does not hold weight since *zera'* does not elsewhere denote fruit or crops (Verhoef 1987:241-42; O'Brien 1990:33).

Contrarily, the suggestion has been made that *zera'* (seed) refers to the offspring of the priests (cf. Jer. 31:27), since the cutting off of crops would harm the farmer and not the priests, and as priests did not plant (Verhoef 1987:241). The removal of progeny strikes at the heart of the covenant between God and the priests and as such lack of continuity of the priestly

[28] *hinnî ghō'ēr lākhem 'eth-hazzera' wᵉzērîthî pheresh 'al-pᵉnêkhem peresh ḥaghghêkhem wᵉnāśā' 'ethkhem 'ēlāyw* ("Behold, I am going to rebuke your offspring, and I will spread refuse on your faces, the refuse of your feasts; and you will be taken away with it" NASB).

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lines would mean an end to the covenant (Petersen 1995:189). Thus a prediction of extinction of line to the priests meant to them not only a loss of their personal reputations and standing, but a loss of the distinct family office of honour as well (Stuart 1998:1313). *zera'* (seed), usually describes future offspring who will share in the privileges bestowed on the original recipients, just as it the descendants of Aaron and Phinehas were given the responsibilities of the priesthood (Exod. 28:43; Num. 17:5; 25:13; Lev. 21:17; 22:4) (O'Brien 1990:34).

But could this be primarily a rhetorical threat or a literal promise from God of the elimination of the priesthood? The answer from Stuart's (1998:1313) perspective must be that it was both. It was a rhetorical threat precisely because it was conditional ("If you do not listen and if you do not take it to heart to give honor to my name" v. 2). On the other hand, while one cannot with confidence assume that Malachi or his hearers would have thought that these inspired words were meant to predict the complete extermination of the descendants of the priests, whether immediately or slowly as time goes by, everyone hearing this curse knew that God was going to punish the priests, but the extent and exact nature would be more in doubt. The parallel in Hosea 4:6-8 along with the next phase in the elaboration of the punishment implies that Yahweh was threatening to forget the sons of sinful priests (O'Brien 1990:34; Clendenen 2004:291).

5.2.1.2.3. Spreading Dung upon their Faces 2:3

The final phase in the elaboration of the punishment is in the sequence, *wᵉzērîthî pheresh 'al-pᵉnêkhem peresh ḥaghghêkhem wᵉnāśā' 'ethkhem 'ēlāyw* ("and I will spread refuse on your faces, the refuse of your feasts; and you will be taken away with it"). The term *peresh* 'dung, refuse', (BDB 831) always

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appears in contexts of ritual animal sacrifice, though there are only five more instances in the OT (Num. 19:5; Lev. 4:11, 8:17, 16:27; Exod. 29:14). The term means in the technical sense, the 'inedible animal innards, especially the undigested contents of the stomachs of ruminants, and intestines and their faecal contents which were removed from the sacrificial animals prior to roasting on the altar (Stuart 1998:1314). The victims' intestine and contents were disposed of before the sacrifice was offered. The *peresh* "from the sacrificed animals had to be taken 'outside the camp' because it was unclean and otherwise would defile the Lord's dwelling place with his people (cf. Lev. 10:4-5; 13:46; 24:14; Num. 5:3; Deut. 23:10, 12)" (Clendenen 2004:292). Thus one can infer that dissemination of the contaminated excrement on the faces of the priests (*pānîm*) and casting them away as epitome of rubbish themselves was a metaphorical means of expressing that they would be dismissed from office in an unreserved humiliation; targeting their sacramental duties (Clendenen 2004:292; Tiemeyer 2006:246).

The word *ḥaghghêkhem* is a compound of the noun *ḥagh* and the 2nd masculine plural possessive pronoun. It refers to 'festival, feast, sacrifice, offering, festal sacrifice'. It is used here as a metonymy to refer to the animal offerings at the festivals (Pohlig 1998:70). Yahweh was not merely intending to spread some dung on their faces, but, metaphorically speaking, He would wait for the festivals during which the amount of excrement was by far the most voluminous. Here is a picture of priests' faces spattered with animal dung, and it is God who is doing it. Dung was about as unholy as a substance could, and thus their humiliation and disgrace were complete (Stuart 1998:1314).

The employment of such kind of graphic metaphor enforces mutually the magnitude of repugnance Yahweh had for the clergy's attitude toward the

sacrificial cult and His disposition with regard to their deceitful ceremonial rituals. Because of their treatment of Yahweh with disdain (1:6), their pollution of Yahweh's altar with corrupted offerings (1:7), in the same way Yahweh would handle them with disdain. He would pollute and make them very unserviceable. Because they felt it was an inconvenience to serve Yahweh's interest (1:13), He would set them free from their encumbrance by disconnecting them along with their offspring from all the services of His interest in the temple (Clendenen 2004:292).

5.2.1.3. The Priests' Failure to Fulfil their Teaching Obligations 2:4-9

The teaching aspect is considered to have been an integral part of the priestly office. Mention of the priests' pedagogical functions and or obligations is found in several biblical materials: priestly,[29] Deuteronomy,[30] prophetic literature[31] and historical texts of Ezra-Nehemiah and Chronicles[32] (Tiemeyer

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[29] In the priestly material, the command to the priests to teach is found in Lev. 10:10-11, where the Aaronite priests are instructed to distinguish between pure and impure and between the unclean and the clean (*ûlăhabhdîl bên haqqōdēsh ûbên haḥōl ûbên haṭṭāmē' ûbên haṭṭāhôr*), and to teach the Mosaic Law to the people of Israel (*ûʰhôrôth 'eth-binê yiśrā'ēl 'ēth kol-haḥuqqîm 'ăsher dibhbhar yhwh('ādhōnāy) 'ălêhem biyadh mōsheʰ*).

[30] In Deuteronomy, within the context of Moses' blessing, the tribe of Levi is praised for its loyalty to the fulfillment of their teaching obligations, having taught God's precepts to Jacob and His instruction (*tôrāʰ*) to Israel (*yôrû mishpāṭeʸkhā le'ăqōbh wᵉthôrāthᵉkhā lᵉyiśrā'ēl*) (Deut. 33:10).

[31] In the prophetic literature, Ezekiel combines the two tasks in the corresponding text of Lev. 10:10-11, probably on the ground of familiarity when he declares: "Moreover, they shall teach my people *the difference* between the holy and the profane, and cause them to discern between the unclean and the clean" (Ezek. 44:23). However, from a negative point of view, Ezekiel declares that at one point of the coming destruction will be the priests' lost of their ability to instruct (*wᵉthôrāʰ tō'bhadh mikhkhōhēn*) (Ezek. 7:26). Jeremiah also testifies to the idea that the priests were responsible for the instruction of the people (see, Jer. 18:18).

[32] Ezra 7:10 attests to how Ezra the priest "prepared his heart to seek instruction and to do and to teach statutes and ordinances in Israel" (*kî 'ezrā' hēkhîn lᵉbhābhô lidhrôsh 'eth-tôrath yhwh('ādhōnāy) wᵉl'ăśōth ûlᵉlammēdh bᵉyiśrā'ēl ḥōq ûmishpāṭ*). See similar attestations in Nehemiah 8:1-8, 11; 2 Chronicles 17:7-9.

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2006:113-115). Van der Toorn (2007:166-167) notes that in the book of Deuteronomy, the scribes express some ideas about themselves in their depiction of Moses: they are considered as the recipients and heirs of Moses. In Deuteronomy (31:9, 25-26), the chapter believed to have been set aside for the inheritors of the Moses' tradition, labels the priests as the guardians as well as the administrators of the Torah he has written. They are to read Moses' Torah to their contemporaries (Deut. 31:10-13) as he instructed the people in his day. In line with Deuteronomy 17:18-19 the priests have exclusive access to the Torah and are proficiently trained for writing. They are instructed to keep (31:25-26), copy from (17:18) and to read the Torah (31:11) (Watts 2007:322). It appears feasible therefore to interpret such statements as the self-application of the scribes. They are entitled to the prerogatives of Moses (Van der Toorn 2007:167). In the closing strata of the Pentateuch, Revelation was overwhelmingly under careful debate (Otto 2006:939).

In accordance with the post-exilic theory of the Pentateuch in relation to covenant and revelation, the revelation of God came to an end with the death of Moses (Deut. 34:10-12), and as such there was no other access to the Torah of Yahweh other than the clarification of His Torah (Chapman 2000:127-131; Nihan 2010:22; Schmid 2007:244ff.). According to Deuteronomy a final interpretation of the Torah had been made and applied to the life of Israel just as it was documented by Moses (Deut. 1:1-5; 31:9-13) (Otto 2006:939). To these scribes, Moses served not only as Yahweh's last prophet who received direct revelation from Him but both as the final scribe who documented Yahweh's Torah and as the pioneer interpreter of the Torah that came with Yahweh's people into the land of promise after the death of Moses (Otto 2006:939).

Thus given the fact that teaching was an important aspect of the priestly office, the prophetic critique of this area becomes very pointed. In Malachi 2:4-9, the prophet highlights the shortcomings of the corrupt priesthood of his day with respect to their teaching potential by way of what is expected of them, as demonstrated by the ideal of the ancient Levites. The following analysis shall focus on the identity of Levi and the nature of God's covenant with him elaborating on his excellent ability to teach and concluding with the corruption and contempt of the priests with respect to their lack of the same ability.

5.2.1.3.1. The Identity of Levi and God's Covenant with him 2:4-5

God has spoken so critically and threateningly to the priests on account of the fact that their disobedience threatens the continuity of the Levitical covenant. It must be noted that in verses 4-7 the priests are personified in the singular ('Levi,' 'he,' 'him,'). This is a means of emphasising their corporate identity and responsibility, as well as their guilt under the covenant they have with God (Stuart 1998:1314-15). Verse 4[33] of the passage is seen as a transitional statement, bringing to a close the discussion of the curse on the priests (2:1-3) and then introduces the issue of the covenant with Levi. In verses 5-7, Malachi describes the faithfulness of Levi and the proper conduct of the priests.

What could the priests have understood by the expressions *b^{e}rîth 'eth-lēwî* ("my covenant with Levi," 2:4) and *b^{e}rîth hallēwî* ("covenant of Levi," 2:8) to mean? It is not clear whether this label denotes a particular person or serves a

[33] *wîdha'tem kî shillaḥtî 'ălêkhem 'ēth hammitswāh hazzō'th lihyôth b^{e}rîth 'eth-lēwî 'āmar yhwh ('ādhōnāy) ts^{e}bhā'ôth* ("Then you will know that I have sent this commandment to you, that My covenant may continue with Levi, says the LORD of hosts" NASB).

collective term referring to the priests and/or Levites. While many a scholar has argued for a distinction between priests and Levites[34] however, these verses can be understood as a comparison between the ideal priest, personified as Levi, and the contemporary clergy of Malachi's day (Tiemeyer 2006:127). O'Brien (1990:27-48, 101-106) carefully examines the various labels assigned by the prophet to the people with clerical connection and emphasises that Malachi 2:4ff portrays the ideal priest on the basis of several traditions. She contends that both priests and Levi/sons of Levi (*kōhănîm* and *lēwî/b^{e}nê-ēwî*) have the same function (altar duties and proper instruction) according to 1:6ff; 2:1; 3:3. Priests and Levi/sons of Levi ((*kōhănîm* and *lēwî/b^{e}nê-ēwî*)) are treated in the same way; and it seems difficult to make a distinction between them. Thus Levi in Malachi 2:4-5 is best understood as another name for priests; namely, the clergy in an abstract sense (Tiemeyer 2006:129). Taken Levi as a personified individual, the relationship between this individual and Yahweh is described in terms of covenant. In verse 5,[35] the clause *haḥayyîm w^{e}hashshālôm wā'eththe^{e}nēm-lô* ("life and peace — I gave them to

[34] On the one hand, Mason (1990:244) suggests as one possible explanation, that the priests addressed "are to be judged in order that the covenant with Levi might stand (Deut. 33:8-11). The very favourable reference Levi (vv. 5f) might be a pro-Levitical, anti-priestly piece of polemic…." Petersen (1995:191-93) holds that the priests addressed and criticised are "Aaronide priests", contrasted to the Levites; the latter are given "an almost quasi-prophetic role;" they have true instruction in their mouth (2:6), which reminds of the description of the prophet who had Yahweh's word in his mouth. On the other hand, Redditt (1995:151f.) contends that the temple priest are designated as "Levites," and for this reason a distinction is implicitly denied between Zadokites (priests) and non-Zadokites (Levites). Verhoef (1987:245) notes that it is a clear fact that no distinction is made between priests and Levites; the priests are under the covenant of Levi; they are the sons of Levi (Mal. 3:3). Glazer-McDonald (1987:77-80) contends that the terminology in Malachi 2:4ff only reflects the fact that in post-exilic times the entire priesthood was subsumed under one genealogy with Levi as its first ancestor. The terms 'priest' and 'Levite' were virtually interchangeable and all the priests had to claim Levitical descent.

[35] *b^{e}rîthî hāythā^{h} 'iththô haḥayyîm w^{e}hashshālôm wā'eththe^{e}nēm-lô môrā' wayyîrā'ēnî ûmiphp^{e}nē sh^{e}mî niḥath hû'* ("My covenant with him was *one of* life and peace, and I gave them to him *as an object of* reverence; so he revered Me, and stood in awe of My name" NASB).

him") probably has an interpretative function in relation to the previous clause *b^{e}rîthî hāythāh 'iththô* ("my covenant was with him"). That is Yahweh's covenant with Levi manifested in *ḥayyîm* (life) and *shālôm* (peace, welfare, well-being), which Yahweh gave him as a reward for his faithfulness and obedience (Weyde 2000:186).

Levi's acts of reverence are described in the expression: *môrā' wayyîrā'ēnî ûmiphp^{e}nē sh^{e}mî niḥath hû'* ("fear and he feared me and bowed in awe of my name – reputation"). These words: *yārā'* (fear, reverence) *ḥāthath* (terror) imply considerably the feeling of being terrified. They are means of showing the seriousness of the responsibility of the priests in the supervision of worship, enforcement of the several requirements of the covenant, and keeping holy, the nation of Israel (Num. 25:13) (Stuart 1998:1317). According to O'Brien (1990:41) *yārā'* in the diplomatic vocabulary of ancient Near East, signifies the "attitude of exclusive allegiance;" in Deuteronomy and elsewhere in the HB describes loyalty and one's observance of its covenant stipulation. Thus the intensity of this word pair serves to emphasise Levi's extreme devotion and loyalty to Yahweh.

5.2.1.3.2. The Idyllic Priestly Pedagogical Responsibility 2:6-7

In verse 6,[36] Malachi presents in several phrases how Levi revered Yahweh and stood in awe of his name. Here Levi is depicted by three principal elements that constitute what a priest who truly fears God is supposed to be like. First, true teaching and accurate interpretation of the law and rendering of legal decisions: as the ideal teacher, true instruction was in his mouth

[36] *tôrath 'ĕmeth hāythāh b^{e}phîhû w^{e}'awlāh lō'-nimtsā' bhiśphāthāyw b^{e}shālôm ûbh^{e}mîshôr hālakh 'iththî w^{e}rabhbhîm hēshîbh mē'āwōn* ("True instruction was in his mouth, and unrighteousness was not found on his lips; he walked with me in peace and uprightness, and he turned many back from iniquity," NASB).

(*tôrath 'ĕmeth hāythāh bephîhû*) and on whose lips no wickedness was found (*we'awlāh lō'-nimtsā' bhiśphāthāyw*). Here the term *tôrāh* ('instruction, law- a derived secondary sense' BDB 435) stands in parallelism to *'awlāh* ('perversity, iniquity, unrighteousness, wickedness' BDB 732). Again, the terms *peh* (mouth) and *śephāthāyim* (lips) are paralleled in 2:6 and in 2:7 but in reverse order. The point of emphasis here is that the instruction in Levi's mouth was true and accurate such that no wrong was found on his lips. Since obedience to Yahweh's *tôrāh* defined Israel's faithfulness to their covenant with him, the life of Israel depended largely on the priests' faithfulness in discharging their duties of instruction (Clendenen 2004:312).

Second, Levi was full of consistent obedience in various duties: he served with God in peace and uprightness (*beshālôm ûbhemîshôr hālakh 'iththî*). Here again, *shālôm* carries with the inherent idea of completeness and perfection. The term for 'uprightness' *mîshôr* refers elsewhere either to level ground (Pss. 26:12; 27:11; Isa. 40:4; 42:16) or to fairness (Isa. 11:4; Ps. 67:5). However, it most basic sense is that of consistency; hence the translation 'perfectly and consistently' (Stuart 1998:1321). Third, he (Levi) preserved the holiness of God's people: he turned many away from iniquity (*werabhbhîm hēshîbh mē'āwōn*). The word *'āwōn* refers to any kind of sin, iniquity, unrighteousness, and the like. It refers broadly to what is wrong and displeases God. Levi is credited with providing proper religious instruction and by maintaining his own integrity, fulfils his responsibility of leading others (O'Brien 1990:42).

Verse 7,[37] continues the description of how Malachi envisioned the ideal priest. Here, consideration turns from the figure of Levi to that of the *kōhēn*.

[37] *Kî-śiphthê khōhēn yishmerû-dha'ath wethôrāh yebhaqshû miphphîhû kî mal'akh yhwh ('ādhōnāy)-tsebhā'ôth hû'* ("For the lips of a priest should preserve knowledge, and men should seek instruction from his mouth; for he is the messenger of the LORD of hosts" NASB).

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However, the shift in names does not affect the shift in description. The priest in 2:7, like Levi in 2:5-6, is responsible for speaking true *tôrāh* and for guarding knowledge (*kî-śiphthê khōhēn yishmᵉrû-dha'ath wᵉthôrāh yᵉbhaqshû miphphîhû*). Here is a picture of an ideal priest who fulfils all the duties of priesthood; a teacher *per excellence*, who lives a life in complete loyalty to God's will and in harmony with his own teaching: "he lives as he teaches and when these things are combined they are redemptive for the rest of the people"(Tiemeyer 2006:131).

This priest is given an elevated title; namely, that of being an intermediary *per excellence* between God and the people (Glazer-McDonald 1987:71; Stuart 1998:1321). This is the only passage in the HB in which the priest is called a *mal'akh* (messenger). The term elsewhere refers either angelic beings (e.g. Gen. 19:1; 21:17) or prophets (Hag. 1:13; Isa. 44:26). This description represents the highest estimation of the responsibility of the priesthood in the OT. Malachi's description of the priest rather than the prophet as the *mal'akh yhwh* ("Lord's messenger") is understood as an investiture of the priest with the stature previously enjoyed by the prophet. In this case, it renders the work of the prophets to be superfluous (O'Brien 1990:43).

5.2.1.3.3. Corruption and Contempt of the Priests 2:8-9

The discontentment with the actual priesthood comes immediately. The focus on the Levitical covenant in Malachi 2:4-9 turns in 2:8-9 from professed ideal picture of past obedience to present disobedience. In verse 8,[38] they are lambasted with three main accusations of corruption and contempt. First,

[38] *wᵉ'aththem sartem min-hadhdherekh hikhshaltem rabhbhîm baththôrāh shᵉḥatem bᵉrîth hallēwî 'āmar yhwh ('ādhōnāy) tsᵉbhā'ôth* ("But as for you, you have turned aside from the way; you have caused many to stumble by the instruction; you have corrupted the covenant of Levi, says the LORD of hosts" NASB).

they are living in disobedience: instead of walking with Yahweh 'in peace and uprightness' (*bᵉshālôm ûbhᵉmîshôr hālakh 'iththî*, 2:6), they have 'turned from the way' (*sartem min-hadhdherekh*). The disappointment they had in the service of Yahweh started with the breakdown in their personal lives. The noun *derekh* denotes in its primary sense 'way, path'; and a secondary sense carries the meaning of conduct or habitual pattern of living expected by God (Pohlig 1998:84). The phrase *sartem min-hadhdherekh* is used in Deuteronomy and related literature to denote disloyalty (Deut. 9:12, 16; 11:28; 31:29; Exod. 32:8; Jug. 2:17).

Second, they have caused others to stumble and sin: instead of turning 'many from sin' (*wᵉrabhbhîm hēshîbh mē'āwōn* 2:6), their instruction (*tôrāʰ*) had 'turned many to stumble' (*hikhshaltem rabhbhîm baththôrāʰ*). The Hiphil of *kāshal* ('to cause to stumble, lead to do wrong, lead to do sinful things,' BDB 505) is used causatively. The priests, by neglecting their instructional duties; whether it is by priestly regulation, prophetic oracle, or educational instruction have caused others to stumble (O'Brien 1990:35-36). The third and most serious indictment in this text is that, they have violated the covenant that made them priests: "you have corrupted the covenant with Levi" (*shᵉḥatem bᵉrîth hallēwî*).

The verb *shᵉḥatem* ('to violate, annul, break ruin, corrupt, BDB 1007; TWOT 2370) is used both in the Piel and Hiphil stem with and without a direct object. When used without an object, it denotes the act of disloyalty (Hos. 9:9; Gen. 6:11; Deut. 4:16, 25; Ezek. 16:47; 2 Chron. 26:16). *shᵉḥatem* takes a direct object in Malachi 2:8 and in Hosea 13:9, Isaiah 14:20, Jeremiah 48:18, signifying total devastation. However, none of the verbs in the HB that describe covenant violation joins Malachi in describing the breaking of a covenant as *shᵉḥatem* (O'Brien 1990:37). While the covenant will continue

because God is committed to it, the priests who have morally corrupted it have lost their part in it (Pohlig 1998:85).

Verse 9[39] brings the oracle to a close and adds a further dimension to the priests' failure to provide instruction: *kᵉphî 'ăsher 'ênkhem shōmrîm 'eth-dᵉrākhay wᵉnōś'îm pānîm baththôrāh*. In the announcement of judgement against the priests which follows the accusation: *wᵉgham-'ăni nāthaththî 'ethkhem nibhzîm ûshᵉphālîm lᵉkhol-hā'ām* ("and so I have made you despised and debased before all the people"), the subject is strongly stressed by the pronoun *'ăni* ('I') and the preceding particle *gam* ('thus, therefore, so'; BDB 168). The expression *nāthaththî 'ethkhem nibhzîm* ("I have made you despised") recalls the terminology in the pronouncement of punishment against Edom: *kî-hinnēh qāṭōn nᵉthaththîkhā bagôyim bāzûy bā'ādhām* ("For behold, I have made you small among the nations, despised among men," Jer. 49:15).

The use of *nāthan nibhzîm* in 2:9 is important because the verb *bāzāh* occurs also in the accusations in 1:6, 7, 12, and in both 1:7, 12 and 2:9 in Niphal participle. It is thus against this background that an idea of retribution appears in 2:9; the priests who despised Yahweh's name (1:6) and allow the altar of Yahweh (1:7) and the sacrifices on it (1:12) to be despised, will themselves be despised by Yahweh (Weyde 2000:206).The participle *nibhzîmi* is co-ordinated with *shᵉphālîm* ('abased, humiliated, degraded' BDB 1050; TWOT 2445), which "can refer to something that is, or even should be, contemptible and to be avoided" (Stuart 1998:1324).

[39] *wᵉgham-'ăni nāthaththî 'ethkhem nibhzîm ûshᵉphālîm lᵉkhol-hā'ām kᵉphî 'ăsher 'ênkhem shōmrîm 'eth-dᵉrākhay wᵉnōśᵉ'îm pānîm baththôrāh (p)* ("So I also have made you despised and abased before all the people, just as you are not keeping my ways, but are showing partiality in the instruction" NASB).

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The motivation for their humiliation in 2:9 is terminologically linked to the two accusations in 2:8: *sartem min-hadhdherekh* ("turn aside from the way") and *kᵉphî 'ăsher shōmrîm 'eth-dᵉrākhay* (not keeping my way) seems to be parallel. The first clause in 2:9: *kᵉphî 'ăsher 'ênkhem shōmrîm 'eth-dᵉrākhay* ("in as much as you are not guarding my way") probably alludes synthetically to the first clause in 2:7: *kî-śiphthê khōhēn yishmᵉrû-dha'ath* ("for the lips of a priest guard knowledge"), but the priests addressed are charged with not keeping (*shāmar*) the ways of Yahweh. The phrase *shōmrîm 'eth-dᵉrākhay* (keep my way)[40] is used in an accusation in 2:9 alone (Weyde 2000:207).

The meaning of the second clause: *wᵉnōś'îm pānîm baththôrāh* ("but rather showing partiality in the instruction") depends on the sense of the idiom *nōśᵉ'îm pānîm*.[41] While both positive and negative connotations are possible in the rendering of the *nōśᵉ'îm pānîm*, the expression *wᵉnōś'îm pānîm baththôrāh* is most likely governed by the negative *'ênkhem* thus the translation "because you show partiality in judicial decisions" (Tiemeyer 2006:133). Glazier-McDonald (1987:73) concludes that the point of these words is that the priests "resorted not to legal precedent but looked to themselves only." The priests do not only oversee and pronounce blessings (2:1-4) but also provides moral leadership and instruction to others. Their failure was indeed grounds for the

[40] To keep the way of the Lord is used in various places throughout the HB to describe loyalty (Gen. 18:19; 2 Sam. 22:22; Jb. 23:11; Pss. 18:22; 37:34; Prov. 8:32), since *shāmar* has to do with a slave who carefully follows the instructions of his master (O'Brien 1990:38; Clendenen 2004:318).

[41] Tiemeyer (2006:133) O'Brien (1990:38-39) and Clendenen (2004:318-19) observe that study of the various occurrences of *nōśᵉ'îm pānîm* (lift up the face) in the HB reveals its various meanings. It is used positively as 'to show someone favour, to show one's pleasure and affection' (Gen. 32:21; Num. 6:26; Deut. 28:50; Job 42:8; Lam. 4:16, and Mal. 1:8, 9). But there are also instances where this idiom has a negative connotation: 'to show partiality, display favouritism' (Deut. 10:17; Lev. 19:15; Jb. 32:21; Ps. 82:2; Prov. 18:5).

humiliating judgment pronounced on them by Yahweh in the inspired words of Malachi 1:6-2:9.

5.2.2. Accusations of Unfaithfulness against Covenant Members 2:10-16

It has been noted earlier in the process of demarcating the various passages that deal with ethical issues in Malachi that in this third oracle, the weakening of the religious life in Malachi's day had given rise to grave social implications. Perversity at the place of worship had resulted in perverseness on the part of those who come to worship. Wrong views of God and false forms of worship inevitably lead to fractured social relationships. As a temple ritual component, Malachi pointed out the failure of his audience to live up to covenant obligations by denouncing three widespread abuses which bear on the whole a ritual character: malpractices of mixed marriages, unfaithfulness to God (corrupted worship), and the heartless divorce of Jewish wives by Jewish men. This, in the eyes of the prophet was an abomination to the Lord.

The accusations rest partly on the connection Israel had as a people, namely; the creature and offspring of one God (2:10a).[42] Understanding that Yahweh gave them life as a family expected to be united in covenant relationship to him ought to have engendered fidelity and trust both to him and to one another. Thus, to motivate their obedience, Malachi reminded them of their spiritual and covenant unity by the use of such repeated ideas as: unfaithfulness (*bāghadh*), one (*'eḥādh*) which appear between five and four times respectively. In it, Yahweh is called the one father and creator of everyone: *hălô' 'ābh 'eḥādh lᵉkhullānû hălô' 'ēl 'eḥādh bᵉrā'ānû* (2:10a). Here in 2:10a, the Lord's fatherhood is used to rebuke unfaithfulness. This section

[42] *hălô' 'ābh 'eḥādh lᵉkhullānû hălô' 'ēl 'eḥādh bᵉrā'ānû madhdhûᵃ' nibhgadh 'îsh bᵉ'āḥîw lᵉḥallēl bᵉrîth 'ăbhōthênû* ("Do we not all have one father? Has not one God created us? Why do we deal treacherously each against his brother so as to profane the covenant of our fathers?" NASB).

shall examine the peoples' unfaithfulness along these lines: mixed marriages, unfaithfulness to God (corrupted worship) and divorce.

5.2.2.1. Malpractices of mixed Marriages and Unfaithfulness to God 2:10b-12

The second question in 2:10b: *madhdhû[a]' nibhgadh 'îsh b[e]'āḥîw l[e]ḥallēl b[e]rîth 'ăbhōthênû* ("Why – if we have one father – do we deal treacherously each against his brother so as to profane the covenant of our fathers?") introduces an unusual communal self accusation. The interrogative *madhdhû[a]'* introduces the accusation against Judah for their unfaithfulness against fellow covenant partners. Such infidelity is considered to defile or disregard Yahweh's covenant with Israel, even as the attitude of the priests was disrespecting the covenant with Levi (2:8). In this regard, the infringement of the communal and social responsibility of the covenant i.e., inability to love one's brother constituted infringement of the religious responsibility i.e., inability to love God (Clendenen 2004:326).

The verb *bāghadh*[43] ('to act faithlessly, deal faithlessly, be treacherous, cheat, break one's promise') denotes human instability in contrast to the stability of God's covenant, as well as treacherousness in the context of marital relationship (Pohlig 1998:94). It is used of a man who does not honour an agreement, or commits adultery, or breaks a covenant or some other ordinance given by God (TDOT 1:470). It is most likely that Malachi carefully chose this term as his inspired thinking shaped the wording of 2:10. As

[43] The verb *bāghadh* and its related words appears many times in reference to Yahweh's covenant with Israel (Mal. 2:11), usually in contrast to unfaithfulness. In Hosea 6:7, it is used synonymously with covenant transgression. The word connotes shattered hopes and often suggests deceit (Jer. 9:2) and disaster (Prov. 11:3, 6; Isa. 24:16; 33:1). These ideas can best be applied to acts of marital unfaithfulness such as adultery, desertion, and divorce (cf. Exod. 31:8; Prov. 23:28; Jer. 3:8, 11, 20; Hos. 5:7) (Clendenen 2004:327).

noticed by him, it was not only that Judean men were culpable of perpetrating treacherous acts such as infidelity of the covenant of marriage, however their attitude had to do with infringement and invariably a violation of Yahweh's covenant with them, identified here as *b^{e}rîth 'ăbhōthênû* ("covenant of our fathers").[44]

The indictment of profaning the covenant is expressed by the use of the verb *ḥālal* ('to desecrate, break, violate, defile, despise' BDB 320). The verb occurs in 1:12 and 2:11 with the respective ideas of profaning Yahweh's name and desecrating the sanctuary. In other words, "to profane a covenant would be to disregard it or treat it with contempt by violating it. Since it was a covenant made not only before God but with God, profaning it involved the most serious repudiation of faith" (Clendenen 2004:328).

Verse 11,[45] communicates the fact that in Malachi's day the people of Judah were committing widespread, serious covenant violation and thus profaned Israel's relationship with her God; namely, religious intermarriage.[46] In 2:11a,

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[44] The reference could be to the covenant Yahweh had with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the patriarchal or Abrahamic covenant. But the accusation of unfaithfulness to one's brother fits the context of the Mosaic covenant, which constituted Israel as a nation. See discussion the covenant of our fathers in chapter four of the thesis as well as Petersen (1995:197), and Verhoef (1987:267).

[45] *bāghdhāh y^{e}hûdhāh w^{e}thô'ēbhāh ne'ĕsthāh bh^{e}yiśrā'ēl ûbhîrûshālāim kî ḥillēl y^{e}hûdhāh qōdhesh yhwh ('ādhōnāy) 'ăsher 'āhēbh ûbhā'al bath-'ēl nēkhār* ("Judah has dealt treacherously, and an abomination has been committed in Israel and in Jerusalem; for Judah has profaned the sanctuary of the LORD which He loves, and has married the daughter of a foreign god" NASB).

[46] As portrayed by the OT, intermarriage is a marriage between an Israelite man and a non-Israelite woman. The opposite case is seldom more than a theoretical possibility (See Tiemeyer 2006:177-193). While a literal interpretation of Malachi 2:10-16 has been proposed (Hugenberger 1994: 339), others argue that Malachi's language should be interpreted figuratively (O'Brien 1996:249; Petersen 1995:198-200; Ogden 1988:223-30). O'Brien (1996:244) notes that though several commentators have argued that the passage refers to idolatry, most contend that Malachi 2:10-16 is concerned with human intermarriage in the postexilic

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the accusation, *bāghdhāh yehûdhāh* ("Judah has been faithless or has dealt treacherously") is elaborating the coordinated clause: *wethô'ēbhāh ne'ésthāh bheyiśrā'ēl ûbhîrûshālāim* ("and an abomination has been committed in Israel and in Jerusalem"). That it damaged Israel's favour with Yahweh is expressed in the reference to harming Yahweh's sanctuary which he loves (*kî ḥillēl yehûdhāh qōdhesh yhwh ('ādhōnāy) 'ăsher 'āhēbh*), and that religious intermarriage was the problem is clearly reflected in the final clause: *ûbhā'al bath-'ēl nēkhār* ("and has married the daughter of a foreign god").

The term *tô'ēbhāh* ('abomination, something detestable') denotes in its primary sense something detestable in the cultic realm, that is, in respect to what is related to Israel's worship of Yahweh. Its secondary senses carry the idea of detestation into moral and then general senses (Pohlig 1998:97). The term was employed to describe immoralities of various kinds, in addition to the ones prominent among the Canaanites, such as human sacrifice, prostitution, sorcery, violence, dishonesty, and miscarriage of justice.[47] Malachi's use of *tô'ēbhāh* sends a signal that Judah's misdeeds are bringing her into the same kind of idolatry mentioned in Deuteronomy 18:9-13. *yiśrā'ēl* here is synonymous to *yehûdhāh* and refers to Yahweh's covenant people without any reference to the former northern kingdom (Pohlig 1998:99).

Situating the scandal in Jerusalem implies that the desecration and infringement was done right "in the spiritual center of the nation" (the heart-

community. The interpretation here is in line with the majority of scholars who understand this section in the context of inter-faith marriage and not idolatry. This position is clearly articulated from the evidence in the Books of Ezra and Nehemiah (Ezra 9:1-2; Neh. 13:15-17), a problem that continued in the postexilic community, even among the priests.

[47] See passages such as, Lev. 18:22-30; Deut. 12:31; 18:9-12; 22:5; 23:17-18; 1 Kgs. 14:24; 2Kgs. 16:3; Prov. 3:31-32; 6:16-19 Jer. 6:13-16; Ezek. 18:5-13; 22:2-12; 33:25-16, 29, as well as Petersen (1995:198), O'Brien (1990:68), Glazer-McDonald (1987:77-90).

centre of God's covenant people, their religious capital, and the place of God's presence among his people), thereby desecrating 'the sanctuary the Lord loves' (*qōdhesh yhwh*) (Clendenen 2004:331). The phrase which seems to elaborate and motivate the accusation *qōdhesh yhwh* (Yahweh's holiness which he loves) occurs here and only elsewhere in Leviticus 19:8 where it refers to an offering that has been consecrated to Yahweh. While *qōdhesh yhwh* (the sanctuary the Lord loves)[48] in Malachi, may probably refers to the newly built temple that Judah's attitude had defiled, a reasonable alternative may be that it refers to the people of Yahweh which was formed by Yahweh himself to be cherished by himself, and which was therefore set apart for himself, with the intended backward reference to his declaration of love for them in 1:2 (Stuart 1998:1332; Clendenen 2004:333; Pohlig 1998:99; Weyde 2000:230-234).

The interpretative crux is the clause: *ûbhā'al bath-'ēl nēkhār* ("and has married the daughter of a foreign god"). It is most likely that *bath-'ēl nēkhār* implies jointly to women who are outside the narrow bound of the community of Yahweh's people, foreigners who worshipped a god that is different from Yahweh (Clendenen 2004:336).[49] The probable motives that prompted this intermarriage could have been money and sex (Stuart 1998:1331-1333). According to Stuart (1998:1332-33);

> Money was probably the main motive. It came from the establishment of marriage ties with landed non-Israelites, who would favour their in-laws in business dealings in general and the granting of jobs in

[48] The Targum translates: "because the house of Judah desecrated themselves, who have been sanctified by the Lord, and whom he loves." Thus by intermarriage, the men of Judah profane Yahweh's people, whom he loves (Verhoef 1987:268f).

[49] Clendenen (2004:336-37) observes further that the sin of Judah was simply literal marriage outside the border of the Israelite faith community. While Malachi does not give an indication of how many were guilty of this treachery, the problem and the guilt could be described collectively as Judah's.

> particular. Sex was probably less often dominant…especially in those cases where a man had become tired of his first wife (2:14-16). Pagan practices allowed for women to be treated as sex objects…(Num. 25; Hos. 4:6-14; Am. 2:7-8) and many Israelite men must have found it easier to marry outside their people and faith into pagan families who would not insist on monitoring their daughter's welfare in the home of her husband as Israelite families would. Pagan families would also tolerate marriages after divorce – marriages based on physical attraction.

Van der Woude (1986:66) suggests that, "by marrying foreign women Judaeans tried share in the privileges of the alien overlords." In the same vein, Hugenberger (1994:103-104) adds, "In a world where property frequently was inalienable and where wealth and status were primarily in non-Israelite hands, the temptation for the retuned exiles to secure these through intermarriage must have been significant." The punishment for violating *qōdhesh yhwh* ("Yahweh's holiness which he loves") is the same as it is in Leviticus 19:8; namely, the sinner must be cut off from his people. Verse 12[50] is Malachi's prayer to Yahweh about excommunicating from the community of Yehud the man who marries a foreign woman (*ûbhā'al bath-'ēl nēkhār*). It is clear from the context that the expression *lā'îsh 'ăsher ya'ăśennāh* ("the man who does this") refers to anyone who is guilty of illicit divorce and remarriage.

The precise meaning of this curse is unclear. The curse is complicated by a phrase that consists of two coordinated participles namely, *'ēr we'ōneh* that are

[50] *yakhrēth yhwh ('ādhōnāy) lā'îsh 'ăsher ya'ăśennāh 'ēr we'ōneh mē'ohŏlê ya'ăqōbh ûmaghghîsh minḥāh lyhwh (la'dhōnāy) tsebhā'ôth (p)* ("As for the man who does this, may the LORD cut off from the tents of Jacob *everyone* who awakes and answers, or who presents an offering to the LORD of hosts" NASB).

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variously derived and translated to include everyone.[51] In line with probable intention of those supporting the illicit marriage (witness and answerer), whether in a legal or cultic sense, Hill (1998:235) argues that, "the idiom probably has legal connotations, perhaps related to the juridical procedure requiring two witnesses…" The implication is that the "culpability extends beyond those who have divorced their Hebrew wives and remarried non-Hebrews," that is, to the "aiders and abettors of those in Yehud practicing intermarriage with non Hebrews." Thus, the text refers to the act of illicit marriage and it involves all the people supporting the legal contraction, including witnesses, priests and the grooms. The term *yakhrēth* from the verb *kārath*[52] ('to cut off, remove, deprive; BDB 503; TWOT 1048), describes radical removal or eradication and the phrase *mē'ohŏlê ya'ăqōbh* ("from the tents of Jacob") echoes the penalty formula found mainly in the Pentateuch (Gen. 17:14; Exod. 12:15, 19; 31:14; Lev. 7:20, 21, 27; Clendenen 2004:340).

Malachi thus concludes verse 12 with the words: *ûmaghghîsh minḥāh lyhwh (la'dhōnāy) tsebhā'ôth* ("though he brings offering to the LORD of hosts"). The message of the noun clause in this verse is that the evildoer brings an offering to Yahweh in vain; his offering is useless, for he is violating the law by

[51] Among the various derivations and translations are: 'him that waketh and him that answereth,' 'he that calls and he that makes reply', 'the master and the scholar', 'the aroused and the lover', 'protector and appealer', 'protector and oppressor', 'whether nomads or settlers', 'hostile witness and defending counsel', 'any to witness or answer', 'witness and advocate', 'root and branch', 'nakedness and improper cohabitation' (Pohlig 1998:100; Hill 1998: 234-35; O'Brien 1990:69; 2004:337-338; Weyde 2000:241-246; Petersen 1995:194-95; Stuart 1998:1334).

[52] The term as defined by Jewish exegesis include the ideas: (1) childlessness and premature death, (2) death before age sixty, (3) death before age fifty-two, (4) extirpation, that is, termination of one's line of descent, or (5) loss of life in the hereafter, that is exclusion from 'resting' with one's father or from being 'gathered' to one's people after death (e.g. Gen. 15:15; 47:30; 49:29; Num. 20:24; Deut. 31:16; Judg. 2:10; 2 Sam. 7:12), (6) excommunication or (7) human execution (Clendenen 2004:340).

intermarriage.[53] The negative evaluation of the offering of the evildoer here in 2:12b, reminds one of the rejection of the offering of the priests in 1:10, 13, where references to their offering are made using the same term *minḥāh* as in 2:12b (Weyde 2000:249). This is, by implication, the language of rejection of the cultic rituals.

5.2.2.2. Divorce of Jewish Wives by Jewish Men 2: 13-16

While 2:10b-12 focus attention on instances of Judah's violation of their covenant with God, involving marriage to pagan women 2:13-16[54] concentrates on violations of the marriage covenant. It may simply be that both intermarriage and divorce are examples of unfaithfulness. The prophet by way of maintaining the unity of the unit 2:11-16 dealt with the distinctive aspect of 2:11-12 and 2:13-16 separately since not all who were guilty of abandoning their wives were doing so for the purpose of intermarriage and not all were intermarrying had to abandon their wives to do so. It was however, the problem of divorce that Malachi was particularly concerned with (Clendenen 2004:342).

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[53] Stuart (1998:1334) believes that this phrase is a reference to pagan influences in post-exilic Israelite worship community. He argues that the idea of appeasing a god in order to gain his favour, regardless of what crimes or sins the worshipper had committed, belonged to pagan understandings of a god that needed to be fed by human offerings and thus owed the worshipper some benefits. The god would overlook any immorality of ethical misbehaviour and grant forgiveness or blessing to the offered. Admittedly, this departs drastically from the biblical teaching of offerings. For Israel, worship, offerings and anything related to the cult was "an obligation of gratitude to God, not a means of controlling God's behaviour (Amos 5:21-27; Mic. 6:6-8; Mal. 2:13).

[54] In his study, Zehnder (2003:224-259) argues that the main thrust of the passage (Mal. 2:13-16) is against those men considered to be within the congregation of Yahweh's people in Yehud, those who divorced their original, "Israelite", wives so as to marry wives of other religion. From a perspective of a renewed interpretation of the texts, a reassessment of the complicated verse, 15a is presented. In its position, the Massoretic Text is best and sufficiently translated as: "And no one who has acted that way has a remnant of spirit."

In verse 13[55] the Qal imperfect *ta'ăśû* from *'āśāh* means 'you do' or 'you are doing' and conveys the idea of an ongoing, progressive action (BDB 793; TWOT 1708). This conjugation may thus indicate an ongoing iterative situation and may well be translated thus: 'and another thing that is taking place constantly and repeatedly among you' (*wezō'th shēnîth ta'ăśû*) (Zehnder 2003:231). The entire scenario seems to refer to a situation of lament: the addressees are caricatured by Malachi as flooding Yahweh's altar with tears, weeping (*bekhî*) and groaning (*'ănāqāh*), because Yahweh has rejected their offering (Weyde 2000:252; O'Brien 1990:72). The Piel infinitive construct *kassôth* comes from the verb *kāsāh* and means 'to cover, flood, drown' (BDB 491; TWOT 1008). It is used here figuratively, in conjunction with *dim'āh* 'tears' (BDB 199) to describe a notorious crying over the altar of Yahweh. According to O'Brien (1990:71), "the weeping and groaning described in 2:13 probably do not reflect ritual mourning . . . but rather the response of God's refusal of their offerings . . . The people in 2:14a inquire of the reasons of His displeasure, a fact suggesting that their transgression has not yet been named."

As to what weeping (*bekhî*) and groaning (*'ănāqāh*) could refer, Pholig (1998:107) says:

> They might refer to syncretistic practices among the Jews, perhaps especially to fertility rites . . . They refer to ostentatious lamentation, probably of Jews who wanted God to come to their aid in time of drought, sickness, . . . They refer to the sincerity of those who sought God's help and who honestly wondered why it did not come . . . They refer to the Jews' realization that their worship and sacrifice had no effect with God. . . . They refer to the lamenting of the divorced wives in Yahweh's sanctuary.

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[55] *wezō'th shēnîth ta'ăśû kassôth dim'āh 'eth-mizbaḥ yhwh ('ādhōnāy) bekhî wa'ănāqāh mē'ên 'ôdh penôth 'el-hamminḥāh welāqaḥath rātsôn miyyedhkhem* ("And this is another thing you do: you cover the altar of the LORD with tears, with weeping and with groaning, because He no longer regards the offering or accepts *it with* favor from your hand" NASB).

Malachi's use of the term *'ănāqāh* according to Stuart (1998:1334) reveals that temple worship in about 460s B.C.E went far beyond a simple (and acceptable) attitude of contrition. It was pagan worship, emphasising manipulative mourning and misery (Hos. 7:14). The fact that the practice is rejected by Yahweh, when it should be one of the honest and most humble expressions of repentance before a compassionate God, tells one that such a practice was evil or wrong in itself. Indeed, what makes better sense is that the offenders of the marriage covenant were influenced by foreign rituals and were using them to appease God for their actions. That is the import of 2:13b.

Since the connection with presenting offerings fits well with 2:12, as an attempt to appease Yahweh and seek his blessing for disobeying marital laws, the offenders tried their best to show Yahweh how much zeal they had for him. The reason why the worshippers are laying such an emphasis on seeking Yahweh with great zeal and emotion is that they are perfectly aware of the significance of their actions in divorcing Hebrew women in order to marry pagan women (Hill 1998:237). Why should Yahweh honour pagan, manipulative worship? He will not regard (*pᵉnôth 'el*) or accept with favour (*wᵉlāqaḥath rātsôn*) the people's offerings (*minḥāh*). They could not get Yahweh's blessing through worship yet sinning; that is, violating the ancient divine covenant against religious intermarriage, and thus the first commandment (Stuart 1998:1335).

The response to the question of the people and grievances as stated earlier is that the Judean men have been unfaithful to their wives. In verse 14,[56] Yahweh

[56] *wa'ămartem 'al-māh 'al kî-yhwh ('ādhōnāy) hē'îdh bênkhā ûhên 'ēsheth nᵉ'ûreyᵏhā 'ăsher 'aththāh bāghadhtāh bāh wᵉhî' ḥăbhertᵉkhā wᵉ'ēsheth bᵉrîthekhā* ("Yet you say, 'For what reason?' Because the LORD has been a witness between you and the wife of your youth, against whom you have dealt treacherously, though she is your companion and your wife by covenant" NASB).

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stands as a witness against the people's violation of the covenant. The reference to Yahweh acting as a witness is given at least two interpretations: it indicates that Yahweh is a witness to the faithlessness of the addressee to his wife (Glazer-McDonald 1987:100) and others hold that Yahweh is conceived of as acting as a witness to marriage, which in this verse is understood as a covenant (*b^{e}rîth*) between husband and wife (Verhoef 1987:274; Mason 1990:248).

Hugenberger (1994:27-15) systematically and convincingly demonstrates that *b^{e}rîth* (covenant) here in Malachi 2:14 refers to marriage. He draws four significant implications from the fact that marriage was viewed as a covenant relationship that connects a husband and his wife, and which is formed before the Lord.[57] The nature of this covenant which obviously has religious significance (Weyde 2000:254) is defined by the phrases: *'ēsheth n^{e}'ûre^{y}khā* ("the wife of your youth") *ḥăbhert^{e}khā* ("your companion") and *'ēsheth b^{e}rîthekhā* ("your wife by covenant").

This expression *'ēsheth n^{e}'ûre^{y}khā* reminds one that marriage in Biblical times (and still in some parts of the world) was arranged (Judg. 14:1-10). Sometime before the birth of children, virtually prior to the period of sexual maturity, and not very common, when they were grown up (Jdg. 14: 1–10), their parents would go into agreement with parents of a suitable marriage partner in anticipation of the period in which the two would be given in marriage.

[57] These implications are: (1) If a covenant existed between a husband and his wife, any offence against the marriage by either the husband or the wife may be identified as sin , perfidy, or infidelity against the other (2) If a covenant existed between a husband and his wife, because God is invoked in any covenant-ratifying oath to act as guarantor of the covenant, any marital offence by either the husband or the wife may be identified as sin against God (3) any marital infidelity ought to prompt God's judgment against the offending party and (4) Intermarriage with pagans ought to be prohibited" (Hugenberger 1994:282-94).

Before the time of their marriage, they were engaged indicating a legitimate status. According to Stuart (1998:1338), "upon marriage, contracted probably in writing, solemnised by vows, witnessed by ceremony and celebration, and enforced as a covenant by God himself, they certainly were obligated to one another." In this regard, the translation of *'ēsheth ne'ûreykhā* as 'your childhood wife' would make sense here. Men were permitted to get married to other women subsequently but these married women could not be addressed *'ēsheth ne'ûreykhā '*. Marrying a second wife was never an excuse for divorcing a first one. Thus a man's first wife, *'ēsheth ne'ûreykhā*, was his wife under God's law, and to break the marriage covenant was to be *bāghadh* (unfaithful, treacherous or faithless) to one's *ḥăbhērāh* (companion) (Stuart 1998:1338).

Malachi uses *ḥăbhertekhā* ("your companion") and *'ēsheth berîthekhā* ("your wife by covenant") appositionally, as essentially synonymous terms. Because the behaviour of Judah was an affront and disgrace to Yahweh in whose very presence they have made their covenants of fidelity, they were challenged, warned, and indeed threatened, that they had not the slightest right to divorce their covenant partner. In the marriage covenant, they were only equals, not superior. These men's treatment of their wives was another act by which Judah was profaning Yahweh, like the insulting offerings described in 1:6-9 (Clendenen 2004:349). The noteworthy thing about the last two verses of this oracle 2:10-16 (vv. 15-16)[58] is the fact that they both end with the language

[58] 15. *welō'-'eḥādh 'āśāh ûshe'ār rûaḥ lô ûmāh hā'eḥādh mebhaqqēsh zera' 'ĕlōhîm wenishmartem berûḥăkhem ûbhe'ēsheth ne'ûreykhā 'al-yibhgōdh* * 16. *kî-śānē' shallaḥ 'āmar yhwh ('ādhōnāy)'ĕlōhê yiśrā'ēl wekhissāh ḥāmās 'al-lebhûshô 'āmar yhwh ('ādhōnāy) tsebhā'ôth wenishmartem berûḥăkhem welō' thibhgōdhû (s)* ("But not one has done *so* who has a remnant of the Spirit. And what did *that* one *do* while he was seeking a godly offspring? Take heed then, to your spirit, and let no one deal treacherously against the wife of your youth." 16. "For I hate divorce, says the LORD, the God of Israel, and him who covers his garment with wrong, says the LORD of hosts. So take heed to your spirit that you do not deal treacherously" NASB). The interpretation of these verses is considered to be extremely problematic by many a scholar. In

associated with an ultimatum: *w^{e}nishmartem b^{e}rûḥăkhem* ("be on guard for your life") and caution the people not to be unfaithful (*bāghadh*) (O'Brien 1990:73).

Malachi invites the people to covenant fidelity because as Judeans they all had access to one father, namely Yahweh. Marital relationship involves covenant between the husband and his wife in that Yahweh planned for a man and his wife to become one flesh (*'eḥādh 'āśā^{h} ûsh^{e}'ār rû^{a}ḥ*) for the benefit of a godly offspring (*m^{e}bhaqqēsh zera' 'ĕlōhîm*). Thus and as a conclusion, if a man and woman form a unity in their marital relationship that is established in creation itself, "this unity and consequently the marriage covenant is not to be dissolved either by taking another woman in addition to the first one or by divorce" (Zehnder 2003:259). For Malachi, marriage with foreign women, infidelity, and divorce were, above all, violations of the fundamental covenant relationship of the Judahite community.

5.2.3. Cultic Restoration and Punishment of Evildoers 2:17-3:5

Malachi's fourth disputation introduces a new topic namely, the coming of the divine messenger to cleanse Yahweh's people and restore true worship and obedience to the ethical standards of the law. Earlier Malachi had castigated the priests and people for their attitude and actions toward sacrifices and the altar. Now in the light of the lawlessness alluded to in 2:17, the corruption of the priesthood in 3:3, the inadequacy of worship in 3:4 and the corruption of personal and civil morality in 3:5, readers are introduced to three urgent issues: the necessity of the intervention of the messiah, the

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contradistinction to many cases, the problem is not due to questions about the historical setting of the text or to its literary layers; the decisive factor is rather to be found in the insecurities about the textual transmission of verse 15 on the one hand and the linguistic obscurity of verse 16 on the other"(Zehnder 2003:224). See also, (O'Brien 1990:72; Weyde 2000:258; Smith 1980:54; Hugenberger 1994:127f)

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necessity of the day of judgement and the necessity for justice. In the discussions that follow, this study shall examine these needs, revolving around the justice of God, the reform of the priesthood and restoration of acceptable worship and Yahweh's righting of past wrongs and the reversal of sinful societal order.

5.2.3.1. Questioning the Justice of God 2:17

The postexilic community is believed was in a difficult and disappointing situation. In their varied circumstances their religious life was very nominal, and their morality had dwindled as they asked why there was no divine judgment on wrong doing. Their problem was indeed the problem of every monotheistic religion: the origin of evil (Korpel 2004:138). Here, the theodicy problem can be discerned, remarkably as expressed by Exodus 34:6-7, proposes such questions concerning vengeance and justice, and concerning charity and remuneration from Yahweh's perspective (Barton 1996:71; Leeuwen 1993:31-49; Crenshaw 2003:175-191).

In 2:17,[59] the prophet accuses the nation of two sins: practicing evil as if it were acceptable and practicing injustice as if Yahweh would never intervene in their affairs (Stuart 1998:1346). The expression *hôgha'tem* the Hiphil form of the verb *yāgha'* ('to weary, wear out, and tire out' BDB 388) generally means to tire from physical exertion as a result of prolong labour, travel, or other activity. It can as well refer to emotional disturbance or exhaustion from

[59] *hôgha'tem yhwh ('ādhōnāy) bᵉdhibhrêkhem wa'ămartem bammāʰ hôghā'nû be'ĕmorkhem kol-'ōśēʰ rā' ṭôbh bᵉ'ênê yhwh ('ādhōnāy) ûbhāhem hû' ḥāphēts 'ô 'ayyēʰ 'ĕlōhê hammishpāṭ* ("You have wearied the LORD with your words. Yet you say, 'How have we wearied *Him*?' In that you say, 'everyone who does evil is good in the sight of the LORD, and He delights in them,' or, 'where is the God of justice?'" NASB).

persistent stress, sorrow, and trials of life. It is used figuratively of God and implies a prolonged and often unpleasant activity that is soon to end (Pohlig 1998:129; Clendenen 2004:371-71).

These complaints grow out of an inner societal division. While the act of unfaithfulness that was rampant in Judah was a case of injustice, Judah could not acknowledge her state of dishonesty and perversion. Instead, she saw the current socio- economic struggles as signs of Yahweh's dishonesty towards them. They expected divine benediction but instead they were receiving divine misfortunes of an unbearable kind. The expression *kol-'ōśēʰ rā' ṭôbh bᵉ'ênê yhwh ûbhāhem hû' ḥāphēts* ("Everyone who does evil is good in the sight of the LORD, and He delights in them") is clearly that of frustration and probably also of resignation. To them, the degree of corruption, crime, and other sins appeared to be what Yahweh himself permitted and was encouraging (Stuart 1998:1348). On the one hand there are those who practice evil, and on the other, there are the righteous. The latter are angry by the fact that Yahweh apparently allows the wicked to get away with injustice. This indeed was a radical affront to Yahweh and reflects clearly the crisis which the community undergoes (Finitsis 2011:29).

While the first expression: *kol-'ōśēʰ rā' ṭôbh bᵉ'ênê yhwh ûbhāhem hû' ḥāphēts* is more a venting of emotion, the second: *'ô 'ayyēʰ 'ĕlōhê hammishpāṭ* ("or where if the God of justice?") introduced by the rare clausal coordinating conjunction *'ô* and the adverbial interrogative *'ayyēʰ* is more a call for explanation, which, of course, the rest of the oracle will provide. Yahweh does not let the challenge to his justice go unanswered. The God of Justice replies: *wᵉqārabhtî 'ălêkhem lammishpāth* ("surely, I will draw near to you for judgment," 3:5).

5.2.3.1.2. Purification of Priesthood 3:1-4

The announcement of the coming of Yahweh in 3:5 which answers the frustrations expressed in 2:17 is preceded by an announcement that Yahweh will send His messenger 3:1 whose duties will be that of the restoration of cultic worship and judgment of evildoers (O'Brien 1990:74). As has been noted earlier in the demarcation of texts dealing with ethical issues, the focal point in this fourth oracle; 2:17-3:5 is the purification of the priests, who are described as "sons of Levi" (3:3-4). They are considered as impure, probably because of sin or because of contact with impurity. Again I will briefly examine the medium, method and motive of their purification exercise.

5.2.3.1.2.1. The Medium of Purification 3:1-2

As 3:1[60] stands, *mal'ākhî* (my messenger)[61] is considered to be the agent who instigates and carries out the purification. This messenger is described from Yahweh's point of view as "one whom Yahweh is 'sending', identified as *mal'ākhî* (my messenger), and from the point of view of the people as *hā'ādhôn* (the Lord), *yābhô' 'el-hêkhālô* ("the one who is coming to his temple") as well as *ûmal'akh habhbhᵉrîth* ("the messenger of the covenant") (Stuart 1998:1350; Tiemeyer 2006:257). This promised messenger of restoration of positive events is described by two clauses as someone whom the audience, including the priests, has asked for: *hā'ādhôn 'ăsher-'aththem mᵉbhaqshîm* ("the Lord

[60] *hinnî shōlēᵃḥ mal'ākhî ûphinnāʰ-dherekh lᵉphānāy ûphith'ō yābhô' 'el-hêkhālô hā'ādhôn 'ăsher-'aththem mᵉbhaqshîm ûmal'akh habhbhᵉrîth 'ăsher-'aththem ḥăphētsîm hinnēʰ-bhā' 'āmar yhwh ('ādhōnāy) tsᵉbhā'ôth* ("Behold, I am going to send My messenger, and he will clear the way before Me. And the Lord, whom you seek, will suddenly come to His temple; and the messenger of the covenant, in whom you delight, behold, He is coming, says the LORD of hosts" NASB).

[61] See discussions on the identity of the three figures mentioned in the passage as well as the duties of Malachi's eschatological messengers in chapter of this thesis.

whom you are seeking") and *ûmal'akh habhbh^{e}rîth 'ăsher-'aththem ḥăphētsîm* ("the messenger of the covenant whom you seek"). This indeed, falls within the overall context of the expectation of the messianic age where good things will happen when the messiah comes. Within the prophetic corpus, and following the usual assumption that the Day of Yahweh would be positive for Israel (Amos 5:18-20), they awaited the arrival of the divine messenger (Stuart 199:1350).

The expression *ûphinnā^{h}-dherekh l^{e}phānāy* ("and he will clear the way before me") recalls the great roads in Babylon which were levelled and adorned from the triumphal entry of kings and gods. Unlike these pagan gods and kings, whose glory dwells in their images, Yahweh shows His splendour in that He rescues His people. The expression also recalls the celebratory worship processions in Jerusalem (cf. Ps. 84:6; Pohlig 1998:134). The characteristic feature of 'the day of Yahweh' (*yôm yhwh*) in the Old Testament is indicated by the expression: *ûphith'ō yābhô' 'el-hêkhālô hā'ādhôn* ("the Lord will suddenly come to his temple").

As the first of the "Day of Yahweh's" passage in Malachi (the second being in the sixth oracle in 3:19 [4:1]), the prophet assigned various elements about Yahweh's decisive intervention in history: the swiftness and suddenness of the arrival of the Day, its profound bleakness for Yahweh's enemies, Yahweh's flawless victory over his foes (including Israel if their sins so warrant), and his judgment, resulting in the righting of past wrongs and the reversal of sinful societal order (Stuart 1998:1347; Pohlig 1998:135). Verse 2[62]

[62] *Ûmî m^{e}khalkēl 'eth-yôm bô'ô ûmî hā'ōmēdh b^{e}hērā'ôthô kî-hû' k^{e}'ēsh m^{e}tsārēph ûkh^{e}bhōrîth m^{e}khabhbh^{e}sîm* ("But who can endure the day of His coming? And who can stand when He appears? For He is like a refiner's fire and like fullers' soap" NASB).

introduces two rhetorical questions about the day of Yahweh: *ûmî mᵉkhalkēl 'eth-yôm bô'ô* ("who will survive the day of his coming") *ûmî hā'ōmēdh bᵉhērā'ôthô* ("and who can stand his appearance") and a description of His character: *kî-hû' kᵉ'ēsh mᵉtsārēph* ("he is like a refiner's fire") and *ûkhᵉbhōrîth mᵉkhabhbhᵉsîm* ("like a fuller's soap"). The two questions which are considered to be synonymous present the imagery of one who does not fall in battle but rather who holds His own in a courtroom and thus those who can stand are those who have faithfully kept Yahweh's covenant in contrast to those who are no longer under its protection. The two similes: *'ēsh* (fire) and *bōrîth* (soap) characterise Yahweh's role on His day and indicates that He will make His covenant people morally better (Pohlig 1998:140).

5.2.3.1.2.2. The Method of Purification 3:3a

As the agent of the covenant, the *mal'ākhî* of 3:1, will not only punish covenant violators (act as judge) but will also purify the priests to restore cultic worship to its former purity. In 3:3[63] the actual method of the purification is then described. The primary sense of *tsāraph* ('to smelt'); a secondary sense ('to refine'); of *ṭāhēr* ('to cleanse, purify' in physical manner) and *zāqqaq* ('to strain out, filter'); the Piel stem denotes the smelting of metals, for the impurities remain in the crucible, while the refined metal flows away (Pohlig 1998:140-141).

This verse suggests the skill and attentiveness of the divine artisan seated at his work. Here Yahweh is depicted as one who refines, and who is sitting over a pitcher with silver ore contents so to purge it completely of all external

[63] *wᵉyāshabh mᵉtsārēph ûmᵉṭahēr keseph wᵉṭihar 'eth-bᵉnê-lēwî wᵉziqqaq 'ōthām kazzāhābh wᵉkhakhkhāseph wᵉhāyû lyhwh (la'dhōnāy) maghghîshê minhāh bitsdhāqāh* ("And He will sit as a smelter and purifier of silver, and He will purify the sons of Levi and refine them like gold and silver, so that they may present to the LORD offerings in righteousness" NASB).

elements. As a silversmith purifies, Yahweh will purify and refine the sons of Levi (*bᵉnê-lēwî*) that is the priests like gold and silver. To explain the priority of silver over gold Smith (1984:329) notes:

> In Egypt before the establishment of the New Kingdom in the sixteenth century B.C., silver was more highly prized than gold. But at the time of Malachi, gold was surely more valuable than silver… silver was still mentioned first because the process of refining silver is more delicate and anxious than the process of refining gold…. When the silver becomes molten it gives off some twenty times its own volume of oxygen with a noticeable hissing and bubbling. This phenomenon is known as 'spitting.'...Unless the molten silver is treated with carbon…the silver re-absorbs oxygen from the air and loses its sheen and purity.

If there will be purification of Yahweh's people at all, it must start with the temple and priesthood, those who were accountable for the religious degeneration of the people. Their need for their purification was made clear in 2:3, where Yahweh threatened to 'spread dung of their faces' (Clendenen 2004:389). The purification process will begin with the priests (*bᵉnê-lēwî*) because they serve to mediate the relationship between Yahweh and the other Israelites. The whole people will, however be later included, as made explicit in 3:4.

5.2.3.1.2.3. The Motive of Purification 3:3b-4

The essence of this purification exercise is to enable the priests to bring pure offerings again to Yahweh (*wᵉhāyû lyhwh (la'dhōnāy) maghghîshê minhāh bitsdhāqāh 3:2b*) with the result that the Judahites offerings would please Yahweh anew (*wᵉ'ārbhāh lyhwh (la'dhōnāy) minḥath yᵉhûdhāh wîrûshālāim 3:4*[64]).

[64] *wᵉ'ārbhāh lyhwh (la'dhōnāy) minḥath yᵉhûdhāh wîrûshālāim kîmê 'ôlām ûkhᵉshānîm qadhmōniyyôth* ("Then the offering of Judah and Jerusalem will be pleasing to the LORD, as in the days of old and as in former years" NASB).

The phrase *minhāʰ bitsdhāqāʰ*[65] means that the sacrifice will be in accordance with the requirements of the law and by it, the very presentation of the right offering, the action is emphasised (Weyde 2000:3000). The purified people will continuously offer sacrifices in a way described.

The acceptable offering in the restored cult is called: *minḥath yᵉhûdhāʰ wîrûshālāim* ("the offering of Judah and Jerusalem"). Jerusalem here refers to the capital of the nation, Judah; thus the whole nation is referred to in 3:4 (Pohlig 1998:144). The announced restoration of the cult implies that the presentation of offerings will be as it were in 'ancient times' (*kîmê ʾôlām*) and in 'previous years' (*shānîm qadhmōniyyôth*). Although *kîmê ʾôlām* is not definite, it most probably refers here to the Mosaic era, which was characterised by Israel's complete reliance upon Yahweh, perhaps the Davidic era, and the early year of Solomon's reign are included also (Stuart 1998:1355; Pohlig 1998:145). The purification will enable the priesthood as a whole to function anew and the future sacrifices of Judah will be pleasing to Yahweh, as they were of old.

5.2.1.2.3. Punishment of Evildoers 3:5

While Yahweh is pictured as a prosecutor in Malachi 2:17, he is portrayed as both a witness and judge in 3:5.[66] This verse rounds out the disputation/oracle

[65] The right sacrifice reminds one of the sacrifices in Psalm 51:19 that conform to the norm of what sacrifices should be. Objects which conform to a certain type are called *tsdq:* just balances, just weights, just measures are objects in conformity with what they ought to be (Lev. 19:36; Ezek. 45:10). Sacrifices of righteousness or sacrifices offered according to the accustomed rites (Smith 1984:329).

[66] *wᵉqārabhtî ʾălêkhem lammishpāth wᵉhāyîthî ʾēdh mᵉmahēr bamkhashshᵉphîm ûbhamnāʾăphîm ûbhannishbāʿîm lashshāqer ûbhᵉʿōshqê śᵉkhar-śākhîr ʾalmānāʰ wᵉyāthôm ûmaththê-ghēr wᵉlōʾ yᵉrēʾûnî ʾāmar yhwh (ʾādhōnāy) tsᵉbhāʾôth* ("Then I will draw near to you for judgment; and I will be a swift witness against the sorcerers and against the adulterers and against those who swear falsely, and against those who oppress the wage earner with his wages, the widow and the

by enumerating some of the types of practices that caused people to say: *kol-'ōśēʰ rā' ṭôbh bᵉ'ênê yhwh ûbhāhem hû' ḥāphēts* ("Everyone who does evil is good in the sight of the LORD, and He delights in them") or ask: *'ayyēʰ 'ĕlōhê hammishpāṭ* ("where is the God of justice?"). The drawing near of Yahweh for judgement is expressed by the verb *qārabh* ('to draw near, come, appear, and step forward' BDB 897; TWOT 2065). The verb is used in a forensic sense as often in Isaiah, but it is always others who are called to come before God (Isa. 34:1; 41:1, 5; 48:16; 57:3). It is only here that God is referred to as the one who comes (Clendenen 2004:392; Stuart 1998:1356). The phrase: *ēdh mᵉmahēr* (swift witness) indicates that when the time comes for Yahweh to judge, He will do so quickly, without hesitation; in passing sentence on the evildoers and executing the sentence (Pohlig 1998:149).

In this juridical function of the day of Yahweh, several violations of the Mosaic covenants are emphasised. They are mainly infractions of Yahweh's covenant with his people or simply the Mosaic Law. These infractions are all expressed in the participle, thereby denoting habitual actions (Pohlig 1998:148). The first enumeration of law breakers is the *khashshᵉphîm* (Sorcery or witchcraft).[67] The verbal expression *kāshaph* is translated by many as a noun: 'sorcerer' (KJV, NASB, NIV, NLT NJB, and NRSV). It is also translated as 'to practice sorcery' (BDB 506), 'to practice witchcraft' (CEV). The fact that

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orphan, and those who turn aside the alien, and do not fear Me, says the LORD of hosts" NASB).

[67] This is an attempt to control the physical and the spiritual world through magical means such as incantations, charms, and rituals. The practice was an abomination to God (Deut. 18:19-22), borrowed from pagan religion (2 Kgs. 9:22) and, though widely practiced in Israel (2 Chron. 33:6 where they are lumped together with those who sacrificed their children in the fire, who practice divination, gave oracles, interpreted omens, cast spells, were mediums or spiritualists, or who consulted the dead. See also Jer. 27:9), deserved execution (Exod. 22:17-18) (Clendenen 2004:393).

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sorcery was going on in Malachi's day reveals the severe level of disregard for the Mosaic Law and covenant in Judah (Stuart 1998:1357). What may be, especially in view of the context of Malachi, was probably the use of sorcery to harm people (cf. Ezek. 13:18-20) (Clendenen 2004:393).

Another example of the violation of law is those who commit adultery (*bhamnā'ăphîm*).[68] Adultery in the OT and in ancient Israel is defined as "sexual intercourse between a married or betrothed woman and any man other than her husband. The marital status of the woman's partner is inconsequential since only the married or betrothed woman is bound to fidelity. The infidelity of a married man is not punishable by law but is criticized" (Mal. 2:14-15; and Prov. 5:15-20) (Clendenen 2004:392). Adultery appears to have been a regular event, if one takes seriously the many divorces in Malachi which the Jewish husbands committed against their wives. Adulterers were violators of the Mosaic covenant (Exod. 20:14; Deut. 5:18) and were thus certainly illustrations of moral decadence that set aside the covenant and called for divine punishment. Both sorcery and adultery were regular in pagan religious practices. Isaiah calls idolaters, children of the sorceress (*b^enê 'ōn^{e}nā^h*) and offspring of the adulterer (*m^enā'ēph*) (Isa.57:3) (Stuart 1998:1358).

Again, on Malachi's list of law breakers are those who swear dishonestly by Yahweh's name (*ûbhannishbā'îm lashshāqer*) i.e. perjurers, those who swear to a lie (*sheqer*).[69] In Zachariah, there is the prediction of judgement for the

[68] The seriousness of the sin of adultery is nowhere pronounced than in Job. Here, it is described as 'indecent and disgusting sexual conduct and a criminal offence'. It is also called 'a destructive, hellish fire consuming everything I have' (Jb. 31:11-12).

[69] Stuart (1998:1358) observes that swearing falsely is considered to be a specialised, elevated form of lying, done in a context designed to avoid lying. Yahweh's name was invoked in

perjurers: God sends a curse to rectify the situation (Zech. 5:4) and in Malachi, God's theophany is imminent. This crime is followed by 'those who defraud labourers of their wages' (*ûbh^{e}'ōshqê śe^{e}khar-śākhîr*), 'those who oppress the widows and fatherless' (*'almānā^{h} we^{e}yāthôm*) and 'those who mistreat foreigners' (*ûmaththê-ghēr*). It was recognised, not only in Israel, but also in the rest of the ancient Near East, that widows and orphans needed divine and governmental protection (Ps. 82). Thus to mistreat widows and orphans was to show gross contempt for Yahweh's will (see Exod. 22:22-24; Zech. 7:10) (Pohlig 1998:149). Like orphans and widows, foreigners are listed as examples of dependent people who need the justice of others. Exploitation of aliens was clearly an act of covenant violation (Exod. 20:21; Deut. 10:18-19) (Glazer-McDonald 1987:167-68).

As a summary statement, the final clause: *we^{e}lō' ye^{e}rē'ûnî* ("those who do not fear Me – Yahweh") may be taken to encompass all the various covenant violations that the Israelites of Malachi's day are guilty of. "This is so, because the fear of Yahweh denotes reverence for him which obligates one to follow his covenant and adopts Yahweh's concern as his own, including Yahweh's social concerns, which are in focus in this verse" (Pohlig 1998:149). The concern for the less fortunate ones in Malachi, stresses the significance that the prophet assigned to social justice.

5.2.4. Accusations of Hypocrisy Concerning the Tithes 3:6-12

The central focus of the fifth oracle concerns verses 8-10. Here, Yahweh through his prophet brought to the people's awareness an additional and different sector where their conspiracy and revolt against him was obvious,

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oaths taking, which were legal (Lev. 19:12; Deut. 6:13; 10:20) but swearing falsely, perjury, was a serious crime (Lev. 19:12). Jeremiah calls it an abomination (Jer. 7:9-12).

namely, the holding back of the tithes and the hypocrisy associated with them (Clendenen 2004:414). The accusations against the people with respect to their unfaithfulness and their deceitful practices in the offering of sacrifices (3:6-12) are parallel to the accusations against the priests in 1:6-2:9. These oracles 1:6-2:9 and 3:6-12, in a sense are companion pieces, in that they focus on the neglect of the cult (Tiemeyer 2006:27).

Both oracles begin with a double-assertion-questioning pattern, followed by a denunciation of unacceptable offerings, the assurance of the turnaround of fortune, and an exaltation of the name Yahweh in all the nations. Some of the major differences between these oracles are: Malachi 3:6-12 is addressed to the whole community, not just husbands or priests, it promises blessings while the second oracle knows no such promise. Probably, the main difference is that the second oracle is a warning against disobedience, showing the consequences in full, that is, curses, while the fifth oracle is an invitation to obedience showing the benefits, that is, blessings. Similarly, the second oracle is about worship while that of the fifth is about temple support (Stuart 1998:1362).

Thus, the delinquencies of the Judahite's population follow those of their leaders; the priests' attitude influenced the people. Since they were responsible for teaching the people and also had the authority to reject any sacrifice brought to the temple as well as correct the people, the prophet holds the leaders at least partly accountable for the sins of their flock. The substance of the critique in 3:6-12 is not only the people but includes the priests as well (Tiemeyer 2006:26-27).

Verse 6[70] is understood by scholars in different ways: the beginning of the fifth oracle (Stuart 1998:1361; Smith 1984:331), the conclusion to the previous section (Pohlig 1998:151; Clendenen 2004:399), or it serves as a link between the previous verses and the accusations which follows in 3:7 (Weyde 2000:324; Schuller 1996:870). However, Malachi 3:6-12 follows perfectly well the repeated pattern of Malachi's oracles. The particle *kî is* translated as a marker of emphasis, 'indeed, truly, indeed' (Pohlig 1998:151). The premise is that Yahweh has not changed.

Evidently some sceptics had become tired of awaiting Yahweh's promised return as Ezekiel and Haggai had promised. They had insinuated that Yahweh had adjusted his point of view and had been unfaithful to his promise. But Yahweh says he has not changed. The first-person *'ănî yhwh* ("I am the Lord") statement about Yahweh's unchangeable nature (*lō' shānîthî*) and the designation *bᵉnê-ya'ăqōbh* ("children of Jacob") who have not changed, ties this verse very closely to 1:2-5 (Schuller 1996:870). This verse reveals that Yahweh, in his kindness, fairness, fidelity and commitment to Israel, has remained unchangeable. This in turn is the very reason why Israel has not been consumed (*lō' khᵉlîthem*). However, in their disloyalty and revolt the Judeans have not stopped to follow the rebellious ways of their ancestors.

In verse 7,[71] the prophet reiterates the fact that Israel's covenant violation has a long history. The reason he has not returned (*shûbh*) in glory to them is the

[70] *kî 'ănî yhwh ('ādhōnāy) lō' shānîthî wᵉ'aththem bᵉnê-ya'ăqōbh lō' khᵉlîthem* ("For I, the LORD, do not change; therefore you, O sons of Jacob, are not consumed" NASB).

[71] *lᵉmîmê 'ăbhōthêkhem sartem mēḥuqqay wᵉlō' shᵉmartem shûbhû 'ēlay wᵉ'āshûbhāʰ 'ălêkhem 'āmar yhwh ('ādhōnāy) tsᵉbhā'ôth wᵉ'ămartem bammeʰ nāshûbh* ("From the days of your fathers you have turned aside from My statutes, and have not kept *them*. Return to me, and I will return to you,' says the LORD of hosts. 'But you say, 'How shall we return?'" NASB).

general accusation in 3:7: *l^{e}mîmê ’ăbhōthêkhem sartem mēḥuqqay w^{e}lō’ sh^{e}martem* (“From the days of your fathers you have turned aside from my statutes, and have not kept them”) as in the accusation against the priests in 1:6-10. This accusation characterises the present and the past as a history of apostasy (Weyde 2000:328). Yahweh accuses the people of not keeping his ordinances, of not repenting, and of robbing him. However, the accusation is followed by an exhortation to return to Yahweh (*shûbhû ’ēlay*), and a promise (*w^{e}’āshûbhā^{h} ’ălêkhem* – “and I will return to you”), the fulfillment of which depends on their obedience. This motivating promise is followed by a response from the addressees: *bamme^{h} nāshûbh* (“How shall we return?” Or as the NLT puts it; “how can we return when we have never gone away?”).[72]

While one may be tempted to think that the main issue addressed in Malachi 3:6-12 is tithing, the prevailing issue is that of apostasy. “Judah is charged here with abandoning the God who had chosen and blessed them and turning away from the statutes he had given them to test their loyalty and to mark the path of life he would bless. By retaining for themselves the tithes and offerings they owed to God, the people showed their idolatrous hearts in placing themselves before God” (Clendenen 2004:429). Rather than accepting Yahweh’s offer, in verse 8,[73] the people immediately question his words: *hăyiqba’ ’ādhām ’ĕlōhîm* (“Will a man rob God?”).

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[72] The interrogative word *bamme^{h}* also translated as a verb phrase (‘what must we do, in respect of what [sin]? Brown, Diver and Briggs 1997:553) occurs twenty-nine times in the HB. In Malachi’s six appearances of the term, these insensitive and disorderly people ask: “How have you loved us?” (Mal 1:2), “How have we shown contempt for your name?” (Mal 1:6), “How have we defiled you?” (Mal 1:7), “How have we wearied you?” (Mal 2:17), and now, “How are we to return?” (Mal 3:7), and “How do we rob you?” (Mal 3:8). Yahweh’s patience with his people is very amazing (Clendenen 2004:413).

[73] *hăyiqba’ ’ādhām ’ĕlōhîm kî ’aththem qōbh’îm ’ōthî wa’ămartem bamme^{h} q^{e}bha’ănûkhā hamma’ăśēr w^{e}hathth^{e}rûmā^{h}* (“Will a man rob God? Yet you are robbing me! But you say, 'How have we robbed Thee?' in tithes and offerings” NASB).

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This rhetorical questioning which expects the answer 'no' leads to a further indictment: *kî 'aththem qōbh'îm 'ōthî* ("yet you are robbing me – Yahweh"). The verb *qōbh'îm* from *qābha'* 'to defraud, rob, deceive, cheat' (BDB 867; TWOT 1980:1981) is a Qal participle. As in previous accusations, the audience's fault is described in ongoing present terms. Similarly, the pronoun *'aththem* is once more used to emphasise the identity of the guilty party (see Mal. 1:12; 2:8; 3:9). Hill (1998:305) notes, the Qal participle indicates a progressive action with an existing state of being, "'you continue to rob me' or 'you are still robbing me'."

As soon as the people heard this indictment, and in line with the stylistic and linguistic pattern of the passage, responded once again in an attempt to know exactly how they were carrying out the robbery, that is, precisely in which way they were culpable: *bamme^{h} q^{e}bha'ănûkhā* ("how have we robbed you?"). Yahweh may have replied to them by pointing again to their hypocritical worship (Mal 1:4); their covenant violations against one another (2:10, and especially their wives 2:14); their defilement of Yahweh's sanctuary (2:11); or the corruption of personal and civil morality (3:5). Here, he however replies: *hamma'ăśēr w^{e}haththe^{e}rûmā^{h}* ("in your tithes and offerings"). The fact that both nouns: *hamma'ăśēr w^{e}haththe^{e}rûmā^{h}*, carry the definite article in front of them shows that the prophet has specific types of offerings in mind rather than generic offerings of all sorts; that is, the tithes and offerings recommended by Moses to Israel (Verhoef 1987:303).[74] The term for *tithe* is *ma'ăśēr* and means 'a

[74] In Deuteronomy, Moses commanded Israel saying, "You are not allowed to eat within your gates the tithe of your grain, or new wine, or oil, or the first-born of your herd or flock, or any of your votive offerings which you vow, or your freewill offerings, or the contribution of your hand. But you shall eat them before the LORD your God in the place which the LORD your God will choose, you and your son and daughter, and your male and female servants, and the Levite who is within your gates; and you shall rejoice before the LORD your God in all your undertakings. Be careful that you do not forsake the Levites as long as you live in your land" (Deut. 12:17-19).

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tenth part' or 'one tenth.' The tithe was an offering (ten percent of one's earnings), to Yahweh (Pohlig 1998:157).[75] If Yahweh owns the tithe and requires it to be given back to him at a particular seasons of the year, suppressing it then will amount to stealing (Stuart 1998:1367; Clendenen 2004:415).

But what was the specific tithe in this verse? Two types of tithes were mandated: the yearly tithe and the triennial one, which was set apart to be distributed to the less privileged: orphans, widows, and aliens (Deut. 14:22-27; 28f). This verse denotes the tithe that is set apart for the maintenance and sustenance of the temple personnel (Sweeney 2001:743). It could also refer to the tenth just as the usual tithe, assembled together in native outbuildings and set aside for the welfare of the temple personnel, that is, the Levites (Petersen 1995:215). According to Wretlind (2006:22), the idea of the tithe in verse 8 includes the whole of the Mosaic regulation concerning the tithe. While one will support the view that Levites are treated here as the major beneficiaries, this view does not exclude the other usages of the tithe. For instance, in Malachi 3:5 the book highlights other established beneficiaries of the tithe who are refused access. This could be as a result of the unfaithfulness of the people in remitting their tithes.[76]

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[75] In the OT, prior to the time the Law was given, tithes are mentioned in Genesis 14:20 when Abram gave voluntarily his tithe to Melchizedek and in Genesis 28:22 when Jacob promised the tithe of everything he has to God. It was only after the Law that tithes became compulsory for every Israelite, thus acquiring a different connotation and usage than during the patriarchs' lifetime. Moses instructed the Israelites that, "all the tithe of the land, of the seed of the land or of the fruit of the tree, is the LORD's; it is holy to the LORD" (Lev. 27:30). Also, in Leviticus 27:32 it is stated, "Every tenth part of herd or flock, whatever passes under the rod; the tenth one shall be holy to the LORD." After the settlement of Israel in the land, the people also benefited directly when they ate with the priests and Levites at the place of worship (Num. 18:21; Deut. 12:4-9; 14:22-27).

[76] It is noted that the relevant stipulations of the Law were enthusiastically carried out only fitfully, and that often tithing almost completely lapsed. Nehemiah instituted a full program

Again, in verse 8 it is noted that the people are defrauding Yahweh of the offerings. Here, it is uncertain as to what types of *t^{e}rûmāh* the text refers. The word used here *t^{e}rûmāh* is translated as 'contribution, offering, heave offering, levy, tribute' (Pohlig 1998:157).[77] The word was used in connection with *rûm* and translated as 'heave offering' which suggests that the offering was lifted up to God. A similar word that often accompanies *t^{e}rûmāh* is the word *t^{e}nûphāh*, which has also been understood as an offering that is moved forward and backward (wave offering) (Clendenen 2004:416-17).

Hill (1998:291) translates the paired words: *hamma'ăśēr w^{e}haththerûmāh* as "the tithe, the tithe tax" and points out that *t^{e}rûmāh* is not just a general term for offerings, since it "extends the notion of offering to include gifts of material goods (e.g., construction supplies, garments), valuables (e.g., gold silver, precious stones), personal services, booty, etc" (Hill 1998:306). The offerings in the text could be equated with first fruits (Feinberg 1990:263), or the tax of tithe or simply tithe of the tithe dedicated to the maintenance and sustenance of the temple personnel as well as temple ministries (Petersen 1995:216). In this regard, the tithes, then, were treated as specific kind of *t^{e}rûmāh*. Probably the allusion to the *t^{e}rûmāh* signifies that not only were the people failing to provide the Levites with the tithes, but also the Levites were failing to tithe in order to sustain the priests. One can conclude then that Yahweh's clarification to the people in the book of Malachi in all probability implies that they were

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of tithing among the returned Jews in Jerusalem, only to find it in ruins on his second visit (Pohlig 1998:158).

[77] The term *t^{e}rûmāh* is well known to the Old Testament, especially Exd. 29:27-28; Lev. 7:14, 32; Num. 15:19-21). It is used in several ways in the Old Testament; from its use as a broad term (Lev. 22:2, 3, 12, 15; Num. 5:9; 15:17-21; 18:8-20) to a more specific offerings set aside for the priests (Exod. 25:1-7; 29:27, 28; 30:11-16; 35:4-36:11; Lev. 7:14, 32, 34; 10:12 15; Num. 6:20; 31:25-54; Deut. 12:6-17; 2 Chr. 31:12; Ezr. 8:25).

with-holding the offerings that were his, particularly the tithes, which were intended to be given to sustain temple personnel as well as the temple ministries.

What could have led to this unawareness on the part of the people? Could such have been caused by the lack of adequate instruction in the Law? What could have made the priests not want to instruct the people of Yehud to give their tithe? Above all, the priests had access to the Law and the authority to teach the laymen about cultic matters and they were the ones who benefited most economically from the tithe. It seems that the reason why the people were not tithing is not so much because they were not told to do so by the priests, but because of their contempt for Yahweh. The "people's attitude toward and use of their possessions was" only a clear "indication of the health of their relationship" namely with Yahweh (Clendenen 2004:414).

In verse 9,[78] before the accusation is repeated, it is immediately stated: *bamm^{e}'ērāh 'aththem nē'ārîm* ("you are cursed with a curse"). The use of the noun *m^{e}'ērāh* ('curse') (BDB 1997:76) and the Niphal participle *nē'ārîm* of *'ārar* ('cursed, inflicted with a curse') which expresses an action begun in the past but with continuing effect in the present (Pohlig 1998:158) suggests that this expression refers to a present condition; a curse is in force. The relationship between the two clauses in verse 9, which are linked by *w^{e}*, appear obscure; it is either the robbing of Yahweh by the addressee is presented as the reason why the curse is in effect, or the meaning is: "You are cursed with a curse, but you continue to rob me" (Weyde 2000:326).

[78] *bamm^{e}'ērāh 'aththem nē'ārîm w^{e}'ōthî 'aththem qōbh'îm haghghôy kullô* ("You are cursed with a curse, for you are robbing me, the whole nation *of you*!" NASB).

Malachi 3:11 provides hints that the curse might have been related to lack of produce from the land ('it shall not damage the produce of the land for you, nor will the vine of your field be barren for you'). The socio-economic problems in the post-exilic period of the 5th century BCE have already been noted earlier; namely, that the returned exiles grappled with many difficulties. There existed a progression of poor crop production and difficult seasons for Israel; drought and locust attacks devastated the land that was already largely unproductive, thus leading to poverty and years of internal conflict and struggle (cf. Hag. 1:6, 10-11). In line with the curses described in Deuteronomy (Deut. 28: 20-21, 38, 42), it is observed that the components of this curse include a devastated and barren land (Sweeney 2001:744).

In the second clarification of the accusation the addresses are identified as: *haghghôy kullô* ("the whole nation of you"). The noun *kōl* denotes a totality of something (BDB 481). It signifies completeness (Mounce 2006:12) and it is used here substantively as 'all of it' that is the entire nation was culpable before Yahweh and thus was in a perilous situation (Clendenen 2004:414). Although, in the OT Israel is typically referred to as *gôy* in a derogatory sense (Zeph. 2:1), the term is generally reserved for heathen nations.[79] Malachi's use of the term as a reference to Israel may suggest that Yahweh in his anger is comparing Israel to a pagan nation, thus rejecting their attitude (Pohlig 1998:158; Stuart 1998:1369; Clendenen 2004:420).

Verse 10[80] gives an answer to the situation which if they accept will lead them to experience the favour of Yahweh again and again. As observed by Stuart

[79] *haghghôy* is repeatedly used for Israel in the Old Testament in a positive way (Gen. 15:14;17:20; 18:18; 21:13, 18; 46:3; Exod. 19:6; 32:10; Num. 14:12; Deut. 9:14; 26:5; Josh 3:17; 5:6-8; Isa 9:3; 26:2,15).

[80] *hābhî'û 'eth-kol-hamma'ăśēr 'el-bêth hā'ôtsār wîhî ṭereph bᵉbhêthî ûbhᵉḥānûnî nā' bāzō'th 'āmar yhwh ('ādhōnāy) tsᵉbhā'ôth 'im-lō' 'ephtaḥ lākhem 'ēth 'ărubhbhôth hashshāmayim wahărîqōhî lākhem*

(1998:1369),[81] this verse is a combination of imperatives and promises. It starts with commands and ends with conditional imperfects describing what can happen if the addressee obeyed the command. The Hiphil imperative *hābhî'û* means 'bring' (BDB 1997:97) and is used in similar ways with respect to the tithe (Deut. 12:6, 11; Am. 4:4; Neh. 10:38; 2 Chr. 31:5, 6, 12). The first important matter of concern in this verse is the precise meaning of the idea: *'eth-kol-hamma'ăśēr* ("the whole tithe"). Were the people only bringing a portion of their tithe and holding back the rest, or does the idea refer to a specific kind of tithe already mentioned?

The idea of the passage brings to mind references to tithing: "all the tithe of the land" (Lev. 27:30) and "the entire tithe in Israel" (Num. 18:21). Specifying the 'the whole tithe' indicates that many were either bringing a portion of their tithe or were bringing nothing at all. This as well, echoes the guilt of the whole nation in verse 9 (Clendenen 2004:420). Since the whole tithing structure appears to have been disregarded by those who returned from exile and succeeding generations, as can be deduced from the efforts of both Nehemiah and Malachi toward its restoration, it appears as if in this present context the prophet is attempting to get the whole system started all over again. This time however, with support for the temple personnel as a priority in the light of their significant role in the (temple) cultic life of both worship

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b^{e}rākhāh 'adh-b^{e}lî-dhāy ("Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, so that there may be food in My house, and test Me now in this, says the LORD of hosts, if I will not open for you the windows of heaven, and pour out for you a blessing until it overflows," NASB).

[81]Stuarts makes six observations in connection with this verse: (1) It does not constitute a promise that individual believers become prosperous if they tithe; (2) Partial tithing is a contradiction in terms; (3) God here subjects himself to testing, but not of the sort prohibited elsewhere as ungodly; (4) Malachi was not a narrow ritualist who valued preservation of the cultus over moral living; (5) The actual kind of blessing promised is a combination of abundant rain and freedom from crop pests, used as a synecdoche for restoring blessings of all sorts; and (6)There is an eschatological overtone to the promise.

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and sacrifices. Thus the major emphasis is that, even in their unfavourable and undesired situations, the people are motivated to dedicate themselves to the fulfilment of their covenant responsibilities with respect to the tithe. They are to bring the whole of their tithe and not holding back any portion.

The expression *bêth hā'ôtsār* refers to the public storehouse (cf. Neh. 13:10-13), for the goods tithed by the people for the priests, Levites, and the less privileged of the nation. Nehemiah called the storehouse 'a great chamber' (Neh. 13:5) (Pohlig 1998:161). A literal Hebrew meaning of "house of supplies" has been suggested (Verhoef 1987:305). There are several passages that give one a clearer and broader picture of what the Temple storehouse looked like. Hills (1998:310) notes, "depending on the kinds of goods stockpiled, the *'ôtsār* may have constituted a 'wardrobe' (Jer. 38:11) or an 'arsenal' (Jer. 50:25), an official 'treasury' (cf. 1 Kgs. 14:26; 15:18) or simply some type of 'warehouse' or 'storehouse' (Joe. 1:17)."

These rooms are identified to be "additional halls that were located around the main temple" (Hill 1998:310). A difference between "storehouses" and "chambers" has also been established. On the one hand, the "storehouses" are considered to be local accommodation reserved for the "general" tithe, and on the other hand, the "chambers" were quarters located within the complex of the temple that were used for the purpose of storing the "tithe tax" that was taken along by the priests to Jerusalem (Petersen 1995:216).

The primary emphasis of the verse then is on the motif of bearing the tithes to the storehouse; namely, *wîhî ṭereph* ("so that there may be food in my house"). This meaning of the term *ṭereph* is 'food, provision, consumption, meat, nourishment' (Pohlig 1998:161) or 'fresh food' (Petersen 1995:217). The parallelism of *bêth hā'ôtsār* with *bᵉbhêthî* ("in my house") in this verse allows

the deduction that the Temple complex could indeed store large amount of contributions. Yahweh then makes an offer: *ûbhᵉḥānûnî nā' bāzō'th* ("test me now in this"). As O'Brien (1990:75) puts it thus "if you will honour what is due me, I promise to make you prosper."

The Qal imperative *bhᵉḥānûnî* from *bāḥan* ('to test, prove try') (BDB 103) gives the explicit idea that these words constitute a challenge (Pohlig 1998:161). The idea of testing Yahweh in the text appears to be very uncommon and has an undesirable meaning in certain passages of scripture. For instance in Exodus 17:2 one reads, "Therefore the people quarrelled with Moses and said, 'give us water that we may drink.' And Moses said to them, 'Why do you quarrel with me? Why do you test the LORD?'" (NASB, cf. Num. 14:22). In several occurrences, the word is employed to mean Yahweh's assessment of a man (Clendenen 2004:422).

However, according to Mounce (2006:718) the term also carries idea of trying to describe something appearing to be real, "especially in the context of a covenant relationship." The result of the test is made very clear; Yahweh will accomplish what he had declared to do. The promise approximates the language of the covenant blessings.[82] Profound fruitfulness and felicitations lie in wait for the nation once the people come back to Yahweh. It is the nation as a whole that will reap the blessings. The point of emphasis however is that, "the promise is, however, corporate, not individual, as are virtually all Old Covenant promises of abundance" (Stuart 1998:1369).

[82] In Deuteronomy 28:11-12, God promises to bless the faithful by "opening the heavens" and sending abundant blessing. Here in Malachi, the Lord promises to rebuke the devourer, and the fruit and the vine will thrive. Moreover, all nations will affirm the blessedness of the land (O'Brien 1990:75-76).

Yahweh's response to the people's dedicated loyalty is found in the expression: *'im-lō' 'ephtaḥ lākhem 'ēth 'ărubhbhôth hashshāmayim wahărîqōhî lākhem bᵉrākhāh 'adh-bᵉlî-dhāy* ("If I will not open the floodgates of heaven and pour out for you a blessing until it overflows"). The phrase *'ărubhbhôth hashshāmayim* ("floodgates of heaven") is basically taken to be an indication of rain, the key to agricultural prosperity at almost all times and places in world history (Stuart 1998:1370; Clendenen 2004:424). For the rain to descend, heaven's floodgates (*'ărubhbhôth hashshāmayim*) had to be opened (cf. Gen. 7:11-12). Their closure was threatened by Yahweh as a punishment for disobedience of Him (Deut. 11:16f) (Pohlig 1998:164).

The promise of rain indicates that Malachi and his contemporaries may have been experiencing a want of it, which invariably is an indication of a covenant curse (Lev. 26:19; Deut. 28:22-24) (Stuart 1998:1371). The Hebrew verb *rîq* translated 'pour out' refers to being empty. Here it is understood basically to mean the abundant blessings that would answer the people's submission to Yahweh (Clendenen 2004:425). The critical word *day* ('sufficiency, enough') (Brown, Diver and Briggs 1997:191) in the final phrase *'adh-bᵉlî-dhāy* may render the whole phrase to mean, "I will pour out a blessing until there is no sufficiency, i.e., until my abundance can be exhausted, or as this can never be, forever" (BDB 191).

The anticipated reply to the obedience of the people begins and this further specifies in 3:11–12.[83] Here the focus of the promise lay in the physical

[83] *wᵉghā'artî lākhem bā'ōkhēl wᵉlō'-yashḥith lākhem 'eth-pᵉrî hā'ădhāmāh wᵉlō'-thᵉshakhkhēl lākhem haghghephen baśśādheh 'āmar yhwh ('ādhōnāy) tsᵉbhā'ôth* ("Then I will rebuke the devourer for you, so that it may not destroy the fruits of the ground; nor will your vine in the field cast *its grapes*, says the LORD of hosts," NASB). 12 *wᵉ'ishshᵉrû 'ethkhem kol-haghghôyim kî-thihyû 'aththem 'erets ḥēphets'āmar yhwh ('ādhōnāy) tsᵉbhā'ôth (s)* ("And all the nations will call you blessed, for you shall be a delightful land, says the LORD of hosts," NASB).

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condition, fitness and productiveness of the land. Abundant rain is not the sum total of what is needed for agricultural productivity. Absence of crop pests and crop diseases is needed as well. Yahweh then promises further to 'reproach the destroyer' and restrain it from wrecking havoc on their fruit (*pᵉrî*) and vine (*gephen*) (3:11). The verb *gā'ar* 'to rebuke, reproach, forbid, banish to retrain' (BDB 172) is part of the vocabulary of cursing in the OT. It denotes the retraining of something, in other words, that it will not work as it should or that it will be destroyed (See 2 Sam. 22:16; Isa. 50:2; 51:20).

According to Keil and Delitzsch (2002:660), the devourer probably refers to locusts which could destroy any crops, and then leaving barren the land in the process. Mounce (2006:916) observes that the verb *gā'ar* could also be interpreted as reprimand or prevention, with special allusion to insects. As he had been against them in the past for their wickedness (Lev. 26:17-25; Deut. 11:17; 28:20), so Yahweh promised to be for them: in the opening of the floodgates of heaven, in pouring out of blessing, and in rebuking whatever was destroying their crops, in protecting their agricultural harvest from destruction and their vines from unfruitfulness (cf. Joe. 2:19, 23-25; Zech. 8:13-15; Mal. 4:2) (Clendenen 2004:426).

The restoration of blessing upon Israel is made manifest in verse 12: Israel will be so impressive that all nations of the world (*kol-haghghôyim*) will call her blessed and as a nation, Israel will be to the general recognition of all, delightful (*'erets ḥēphets*) (Stuart 1998:1371). While the expression *'ishshᵉrû* ("call you blessed") could be translated as "will congratulate you" (Deutsch 1987:106), the *'erets ḥēphets* indicates that the land will be an object of pleasure, both to the nations and to Yahweh who created, graciously bequeathed, and beautified it (Clendenen 2004:428). Thus the people will no longer be able to

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say 'God delights in the wicked' (2:17), for it will be obvious that they, the righteous, are the *'erets ḥēphets* (land of delight).

5.3. *SUMMARY*

This chapter aimed at an exegetical analysis of the book of Malachi's unique emphasis on the ritual aspect of the temple service. The book of Malachi's ethical uniqueness is observed somehow most clearly in the preponderance of emphasis the prophet (the prophetic book) places on temple rituals and the way the language of the cult dominates his analysis of malpractice. Malachi attempts to bring the priesthood closer to what the prophets perceived to be the ideal; priest that excelled in teaching; effective and efficient exegetes of scripture, priest that provided social justice, that worshipped Yahweh alone and whose performance of the cult satisfied the most rigorous cultic demands.

In this chapter, a demarcation of the limits of the passage(s) dealing with the Temple ritual malpractices was made and it was followed by an exegesis of the text(s), (with transliterations and translations at footnotes) dealing with issues of cultic ritual violations. Such analysis of historical and literary contexts, analysis of form and structure of the passage(s) as well as analysis of the grammar and lexical data of such passages has helped to illuminate Malachi's ethical uniqueness around the theological themes: Yahweh's covenant with Israel, priesthood and temple worship, the justice of Yahweh, the fertility of the land and the Day of Yahweh runs through Malachi's prophetic oracles.

Beginning with the second disputation oracle (1:6-2:9) the study examined the various accusations against the priests. Priests are expected to offer sacrifices upon the altar and to insure that the animals for sacrifice are neither blind nor

lame, and neither sick nor seized. The kindling of the altar fires and their presentation of *minḥāh* should be done religiously. However, the actions and character of the current priesthood contradicted the ideal. They are found to be polluting the altar of Yahweh by offering polluted food on it. The accusations are followed by motivated curses: their persons, blessings and perhaps their offspring were to be cursed (2:3). The reason for this punishment lies in the priests' attitude toward Yahweh and His service; their slackness and failure to give Yahweh the very best. In Malachi 2:4-9, the prophet highlights the shortcomings of the corrupt priesthood of his day with respect to their teaching potential by way of what is expected of them, as demonstrated by the ideal of the ancient Levites. The analysis focused on the identity of Levi and the nature of God's covenant with him elaborating on his excellent ability to teach and concluded with the corruption and contempt of the priests with respect to their lack of the same ability.

In the third oracle (2:10-16), the study examined accusations of unfaithfulness against covenant members. The weakening of the religious life in Malachi's day had given rise to grave social implications. Perversity at the place of worship had resulted in perverseness on the part of those who came to worship. Wrong views of God and false forms of worship inevitably led to fractured social relationships. As a temple ritual component, Malachi pointed out the failure of his audience to live up to covenant obligations by denouncing three widespread abuses which bear on the whole a ritual character: malpractices of mixed marriages, unfaithfulness to God (corrupted worship), and the heartless divorce of Judean wives by Judean men. This, in the eyes of the prophet was an abomination to the Lord.

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Malachi's fourth disputation (2:17-3:5) introduced the coming of the divine messenger to cleanse Yahweh's people and restore true worship and obedience of the ethical standards of the law. In the light of the lawlessness alluded to in 2:17, the corruption of the priesthood in 3:3, the inadequacy of worship in 3:4 and the corruption of personal and civil morality in 3:5, readers are introduced to three urgent issues: the necessity of intervention of the messiah, the necessity for the day of judgment and the necessity for justice. In the discussions that followed, this study examined these needs, revolving around the justice of God, the reform of the priesthood and restoration of acceptable worship and Yahweh's righting of past wrongs and the reversal of sinful societal order.

The fifth oracle (3:6-12) is a sketch of a people in a covenant relationship who have become conceited and very disobedient in the light of hard economic realities, and who are now condemning Yahweh, their covenant partner of desertion and unfaithfulness. Here, Yahweh through His prophet brought to the people's awareness an additional and different sector where their conspiracy and revolt against him was obvious, namely, the holding back of the tithes and the hypocrisy associated with them. The accusations against the people with respect to their unfaithfulness and their deceitful practices in the offering of sacrifices (3:6-12) are parallel to the accusations against the priests in 1:6-2:9.

These oracles 1:6-2:9 and 3:6-12, in a sense are companion pieces, in that they focus on the neglect of the cult. The people's perspective with respect to and use of their wealth and/or personal effects was simply a symptom of the viability of their covenant relationship with Yahweh. Their attitudes indicate a lack of love, commitment and depth. To the community that would truly

return and reform, the divine promise is declared to be theirs, ushering in a time when the curses of dissension and fraud will be turned into the blessings of unity and justice. In the prosperity that is promised based on the payment of the tithe, the people will no longer be able to say 'God delights in the wicked' (2:17), for it will be obvious that they, the righteous, are the *'erets ḥēphets* (land of delight) (3:12).

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CHAPTER VI

ETHICAL IMPLICATIONS OF MALACHI'S VIEW ON TEMPLE RITUALS

This chapter affords the study an opportunity to step back and reflect on the ethical implications of Malachi's view on temple rituals for contemporary church experience, the larger human society and religious communities, particularly in Africa. The basic reason is that the socio-political, religious, cultural, economic and moral problems encountered by Malachi (the assumed prophet who initially delivered the message of the book) and / or the authors of the text and their contemporaries are also experienced by Christian communities in Africa. If one takes as a basic assumption that the biblical text is the authoritative word for the church, then the appropriate setting within which to do ethical readings will be the ecclesial community. In this regard ethics cannot be simply an academic exercise removed from the life of the church.

As observed by Davies (1995:165) the OT[1] is not much of a resource for ethics in that it usually resorts to invoking obedience to commands (where ethical living amounts to obedience to the prescriptions), whether they are from a deity, a prophet or a parent. This is so because its literature reflects a system of communal rather than individual ethics. Davies focuses attention on the Garden of Eden narrative in Genesis 3, in which the woman's choice is between two propositions: whether or not to obey the divine command not to eat the fruit of the tree of knowledge, to illuminate his point (Davies 1995:165-

[1] Davies (1995:164) uses this term 'Old Testament' because the reception history which influences this reading is a Christian one. The Hebrew text underlying his discussion however is the Masoretic Text, i.e. the (Jewish) *Tanakh*.

170). Although he calls into questions whether the Bible can be normative for ethics in the light of such obedience to the prescriptions, he however, admits that it does provide a basis for ethical reflection (Davies 1995:165).

In her attempt to grapple with the role of the HB in contemporary Christian ethics, Arndt (2011:5) observes, "To remark that the Hebrew Bible is important for Christian ethics is both to state the obvious and to make a claim fraught with countless complications." While biblical scholarship and ethicists continue to grapple with how to articulate and overcome the complexities of accounting for the HB in Christian moral theology,[2] this experience of reading and the concerns it creates must be accorded more importance in moral theology if the HB is to be claimed as significant, and at the same time authoritative for the ethical lives of those who hold it to be a sacred text and thus authoritative for present day Christian ethical scholarship (Arndt 2011:7). While stressing the significance of the HB as a crucial (re) source of Christian moral theology, Arndt (2011:7) notes:

> While biblical reading certainly involves personal and communal engagement and interpretative moments, exegetical work that takes advantage of the contributions of biblical scholars, modern and postmodern, can and should make an important contribution to the ethical appropriation of these texts. But beyond this, Christians *as* Christians have a basic imperative to be attentive readers, re-readers, and re-tellers of the biblical story. The Christian ethicist must consider what it means to our moral lives to be this kind of reader.

[2] Arndt (2011:6-7) identifies a vast array of challenges and pitfalls facing contemporary Christian ethicists to include: the interdisciplinary hurdles of working with the HB itself, the challenges of relating to this sacred text in a pluralistic context and the problem of relating to an ancient and strange text as a twenty-first century person. She notes that the complexity of the problems requires that the Christian ethicists collaborate more closely with biblical scholars and other critical disciplines (Arndt 2011:21).

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In dealing with certain tendencies in contemporary ethical treatment the biblical texts, Arndt chooses the biblical account of the aborted sacrifice of Isaac by his father, Abraham (Gen. 22), and provides a particularly apt locus for contending with the challenges of Christian ethical interpretation of the HB, and for addressing methodological consideration (Arndt 2011:20). She demonstrates in her ethical reading of Genesis 22, how the power of even the most alarming and sometimes unpleasant and embarrassing OT narratives communicate and impart basic ethical lessons for a contemporary Christian life. Her illustrative reading of this text helps to realise a significant and authentic role biblical texts play in ones ethical scholarship and in his or her moral life as the individual places himself or herself in relationship to such difficult, thought-provoking and imaginably, such indeterminable biblical texts.

Similarly, in his attempt to make Christians read the OT and find in it ethical values, Sloane (2008:29) remarks that the best framework for understanding the OT in Christian ethics is what Christopher Wright outlines in three key "angles," as he refers to them: God, Israel and the Land, or the theological, social and economic angles. OT ethics is considered to be always theological and God centred in nature. In this regard, ethics is viewed as a response to God's grace, which stimulates, patterns, and empowers the action of God's people. The ethics of the OT is in addition addressed to Israel as a faith community and thus seeks to shape them as God's people. Israel is called to be a model of God's purpose to a watching world; they are "a 'paradigm' of God's purpose for human community as a whole" (Sloane 2008:30).

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Israel is assumed and portrayed throughout the HB as an ethical community.[3] Israel's focus as an ethical community as expressed in the HB is understood in her relation to God. Since the existence of the canon implies that the story of Israel as an ethical community in relation to God is intended to play a crucial role in the modelling of successive generations of ethical community in continuity with biblical communities themselves (Birch 1995:119), recent scholarship on biblical ethics has become more conscious of the biblical text as both proof for the establishment of an ethical community in Israel or the early church, but also as intended to model the ethical development of future generations of the communities of faith in relation to God (Birch 1995:124). Thus an understanding of Israel's ethics emanating from Israel's relationship to God, and encompassing character and conduct leads to a broader set of categories for understanding the source of Israel's moral norms namely, moral norms arising from knowing God, moral norms arising from imitating God and moral norms arising from obeying God. Attention to these dimensions of moral relationship between God and Israel is basic to a full understanding of the ways in which the HB plays its role as an ethical resource (Birch 1995:134-135).

Ones reading of the text should be able to ask questions about its function theologically, socially, economically, and relationally. This properly personal perspective ought to govern the individual and communal reading of the whole Bible, as a Christian canon. As one reads the Bible, he or she should be able to ask what its theological and relational message is. How does a

[3] The term 'Israel' connects diverse socio-political or organised forms, some historical, some framed by the canonical traditions (wilderness wanderers, tribal federation, nation, socio-cultural group, religious community). However, in all of the different traditions, these forms reflect that Israel is the community which serves as the galvanising force of ethical identity, the guardian of ethical tradition, the power point of ethical discussion and the provocateur of ethical deed (Birch 1995:119).

particular text describe God's person, character, and actions, and what does that mean? How does it describe human beings, God's purposes and plans, human community and life, the consequences of human actions and so on, and what does that mean? One is expected to look for the theological and ethical function of the text. How would it have modelled its original recipients, their beliefs and behaviour and how then does one understand those purposes in the light of the larger picture of the story of God and the world (Sloane 2008:30-31).

Ethics and theology are undividable in the HB/OT. Houston (2007:1) notes that the main character in the ethics of the OT is primarily God. The principal figure is God; He is the prominent figure, the prominent character concerning whom essential accounts of key figures and activities are determined. Thus significant ideas rooted in the Bible are obligated to involve moral consideration with respect of the behaviour of this essential figure as well as the concerns of others (cf. Arndt 2011:135ff; demands of the text, demands of the others). In the OT, ethics are fundamentally theological. They are at almost every point related to God; namely, His character, His will, His actions and His purpose (Wright 1983a:21).[4] OT ethics focuses on the understanding of Israel's moral character, the opportunities it gives in addition to its validation (Groenewald 2009:421). Thus the best way for one to appreciate OT ethics is for one to attempt to identify with Israel's stand-point and seek to

[4] While there may be no single, simplified construct of God in the HB/OT, its writings offer a blend of different accounts on Yahweh and His people (Römer 2013:18). My primary concern in this thesis is to analyse the internal surface structure of the book of Malachi as part of the Christian canon. This approach does not intend to solve all inherent problems of interpretation which are contained in the text. The significance of the text is essentially the application or contextualisation of the principles of the text. In this thesis, Malachi's construct of God provides the ground for the contextual application of its message and or of the development of an ethical relevance of Malachi's message for a contemporary Christian audience.

appreciate how they comprehend and lived out their affiliation with Yahweh, and how that perspective shaped their ethical standards as a community of faith and practice (Wright 2006:17).

The ethics of the OT/HB is rooted on insight into the character of God. Yahweh demands ethical behaviour from his worshippers. Obedience and commitment to the declared will of God is a strong justification for ethical obligation in the books of the OT/HB. The justification for ethical deeds is furthermore rooted in the festive cultic community. The scribes writing the biblical books regarded 'the good' as that *'way* of life' (Ps. 16:11) which God instructed and demanded of human beings. In this regard, ethical behaviour becomes noticeable when fully established through experience and reason, and relayed through teaching (Groenewald 2009:430-31).

What characterised moral action in ancient times particularly of near Eastern Mediterranean was an artificial understanding of life; namely, it takes on a communicative correspondence between the experience of people in life and in their deeds (Otto 2004:84). Here, the interrelationship between sapiential thought and the ethics of the OT/HB, becomes very clear, when it embraces the idea of orderliness of life in terms good moral behaviour in agreement with ethical standards which should give rise to a high-quality of life (Groenewald 2011:1).

It is however stated that the ethical instructions found in the wisdom literature are quite different from those of the law codes. The literary account of the wisdom literature was basically linked to the theological dialogue that concerns the legitimisation of these instructions and the implications of moral behaviour. While it is noted that the fundamental of ethics of the Hebrew Bible should rather be hunted in a proper framework and structure which

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legitimises its worth and standards (Groenewald 2009:422),[5] the theological traditions that undergirded prophetic ethics in the OT/HB during the first three-quarters of the twentieth century scholarship are considered to be primarily the covenant, law, clan wisdom and creation. However, prophetic messages that focused on ethical issues cannot be confined to certain traditions with theological emphasis. The Old Testament prophets possibly will have been influenced and thus declared prophetic oracles within an ethical society that was obsessed with a diverse and manifold range of theological emphases (Carroll 2012:186-87).

In his survey, Carroll (2012:191) demonstrate that, "the prophetic literature is a rich resource for ethics, whether the goal is to describe the ethical thinking and moral behaviour of ancient Israel (or of the authors of the books), or the purpose is to probe the Prophetic Books for contemporary ethical guidance." The meaning of Malachi for Christianity and/or the Christian tradition must be found therefore, within the limitations of the text's basic orientation. Since Malachi was about the failure of both priests and the people to worship God, the Christian meaning of the text cannot depart from these themes into, say, flights of allegory. One must attempt to discover what an exegete thought the text meant as part of the Christian Scripture/canon for his community (O'Keefe 1996:142-43).

As noted earlier, Malachi as the conscience of his people was skilful and creative in adapting the older prophetic traditions to the advantage of their

[5] It is clearly of note that with respect to the constitution of the code of conduct of the HB, the emphasis is essentially on the Pentateuch which serves as the major foundation of information for its basic framework (cf. Otto 1995:162; Otto 2007:26; Jensen 2006:20). Accordingly, Groenewald (2011:1) says, "the legal collections in the Torah form one of the pillars of a study of the ethics of the HB, specifically the system of legal and ethical rules which we find in the Decalogue (Exod 20:1–17; Deut 5:6–21), Covenant Code (Exod 20:22–23:33), Deuteronomic Law (Deut 12–26) and the Holiness Code (Lev 17–26)."

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religious, economic and socio-cultural context. For their generation, the oracles of Malachi in addition to the events they experienced, cast various misgivings on the covenantal relationship that implied several obligations and assurance for them as Yahweh's people and on which they have rested their safety and well-being. As they believed, the covenant relationship was expected to secure the fortitude of the triangular bond rotating around the dimensions: Yahweh (theological facet); Israel-his people as a restored community of faith (social and political aspects) and their land (economic conditions) (cf. Block 2006:35).

To have come back to the land of their fathers after the tragedy that befell them and the difficulties they experienced in the land of bondage, with hearts yearning for the fulfilment of earlier prophetic visions of the establishment of Yahweh's new kingdom, the reconstruction of the temple wherein Yahweh will once again make himself manifest to them, and in addition, the assurance that they have been delivered from the shameful and reprehensible servitude of the adversaries of Yahweh, and thereafter, not to witness any of these anticipations, was no doubt devastating. While they could reconcile the exile with their theology because they understood that they had been punished for their idolatry, they however, found it difficult to reconcile their continuous subjugation to Gentile superpowers with a God who had promised to never forsake David's line. How could they reconcile being an insignificant province, a small one out of many, worship the God of the heavens and the earth? These apparently irreconcilable contradictions probably caused many to doubt whether Yahweh had disappeared from the scene. The resultant implication was a watershed for the faith of the Yehudites. The situation opened up for them a crisis of faith and also endangered the reputation of Yahweh. It cast misgivings and uncertainty on the reliability and authenticity

of Yahweh's words and promises as well as His capacity to sustain them (Block 2006:36).

The following sections are devoted to a synthesis of the implications of the Malachi oracles along the ethical dimensions of Yahweh (theological dimension); His people as a restored community of faith (social and political aspects) and their land (economic conditions) as seen in the book of Malachi. This will no doubt obviously make ethical proposals for the Church as an eschatological people in dealing with every theological, socio-political, and economic issue within the larger human society.

6.1. THEOLOGICAL IMPLICATIONS

The first attempt in developing OT ethics in the light of the triangular bond rotating around the dimensions: Yahweh (theological facet); Israel-His people as a restored community of faith (social and political aspects) and their land (economic conditions) as observed in the book of Malachi, is to determine the category of Israel's theological self understanding. If theology is the reasoned statement of biblical understanding and/or interpretation, in specific places and time, it makes possible the transmission of biblical faith for future generations. Theology is not theology unless it has to do with contemporary life. The interpreter must be able to bridge the gap between the realities of the past and those of the present. Thus it is a reflective response to the interpretive process placed upon the biblical text (Boloje 2009:85). Theological understanding of a biblical text should be able to provide justification and response to such difficulty as the basic thrust of the text (Block 2006:36). Ethical constructs should start with who Yahweh is and then who the individual is, in relation to Yahweh. What does Malachi teach us about Yahweh and human relation to him?

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6.1.1. Malachi's Prophetic Narrative in Relation to Yahweh

Since the ethical teachings of the OT are at every point related to Yahweh, the God of Israel – His character, His will, His action and purpose, the following observations are important in any contemporary theological reflection on Malachi's oracles about Yahweh.

6.1.1.1. Yahweh's Faithfulness to His Covenant

The commitment and faithfulness of Yahweh to the covenant relationship between him and his people, Israel is essential to the theology of the book of Malachi. The continued existence of Israel as a people and nation belonging to Yahweh rested primarily on the abiding fidelity and trustworthiness of Yahweh's own reputation, word and promises as well as His capacity to sustain them and not on Israel's ability and feat in the possession and protection of His law (Wright 1983a:23). Within the entire covenant framework of the book of Malachi, the fundamental issue is that of Israel's election – God has chosen Jacob (Schuller 1996:855-56). In demonstrating this principle, Malachi, at the outset, firmly follows the outlines of the ideal community in which he reduces the whole symbolic enterprise to matters of covenant and community relationships (Hill 1998:41). The affirmation of divine affection and fidelity to the Torah-abiding community is the first phrase: *'āhabhtî 'ethkhem* ("I have loved you," Mal.1:2). In this regard, the book reaches back to the saving events of ancient times in which Yahweh, the God of Israel prefers Jacob over Esau as well as Yahweh's subsequent, committed, constant and favourable dealing with the Israelites (Judah) regardless of their mischievous attitude in contrast to His handling of the Edomites (Esau's descendants) for their evils (Clendenen 2004:233).

The imagined audience of Malachi has endured more disappointment than encouragement, more dissension than unity. Thus, to respond to Israel's doubts about divine favour, Malachi points to Edom's destruction and by implication, Judah's survival (Stulman & Kim 2010:241). In the light of the fact that Israel's misfortunes had not been inadvertent or were they ordinarily caused by men, this same fate can also be said about the destruction of Edom. Yahweh had placed a curse on Edom; an indefinite one for that matter, as an illustration of His fair and objective government of the whole world (Mal. 1:4, 5).

While they would be known and addressed as *gᵉbhûl rish'āʰ* ("a territory of wickedness") as a result of Yahweh's fairness (Mal. 1:4), Israel on the other hand, would be known and addressed all over the world as *'erets ḥēphets* ("a land of delight") (Mal. 3:12). This is not based on any merit on their part, not because they had pleased Yahweh but simply because Yahweh has been very committed to His covenant (Clendenen 2004:233). Malachi shows that Yahweh, in His goodness, justice, faithfulness and commitment to His people, has not changed; this is the reason why His people have not been destroyed (*lō' khᵉlîthem*).

6.1.1.2. Yahweh's Sovereignty over History

Malachi, in the light of deteriorating circumstances, clearly constructs a coherent apology for divine sovereignty (Yahweh's uniqueness) and justice, which manifests itself in harsh allegations against both priests and people (Stulman & Kim 2010:243). The book of Malachi, familiar with earlier prophetic traditions, proclaimed the theology of Yahweh alone as the sovereign of all creation, universalism, judgement, justice and punishment, covenant renewal and restoration of fortunes (cf. Exod. 3:14; 14:14; Zeph. 1:2-

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3, 7, 14-18; 3:8; Udoekpo 2010:275). The temple theology in Jerusalem was firmly connected to the theme of ethical norms and values, and had its origin in Yahweh as the divine king (Groenewald 2009:424). Yahweh, the liberating God of justice, is portrayed as the sovereign king. Faithful Israelites knew this (Mal. 1:5, 11 and 14). Their God was universal in His sovereignty, and had proved it by eliminating for their good their most stubborn and persistent national enemy (Stuart 1998:1293).

However, in their bitter attitude toward Yahweh the community has lingering questions about divine favour and justice. In their opening question they asked: "How have you loved us"? (Mal. 1:2).[6] In their failure to acknowledge their disobedience and dishonesty, they felt that the present socio-economic realities of their time were simply evidences of Yahweh's injustice and lack of commitment to their well-being. All they expected was Yahweh's blessings and abundance but they were reaping divine afflictions and scarcity as an alternative. In Malachi, the various questions of the sceptic and disillusioned are not met with silence but rather elicits a divine response. Absolutely at home in the prophetic tradition, Malachi speaks from the centre of that tradition against every form of societal ills, prevalent at that time (Mal. 3:5). Yet the world of the priests and the Temple and meticulous observance of cultic norms are treated with equal attention (Schuller 1996:861).

Malachi, in order to demonstrate Yahweh's sovereignty over history, places the blame on their shoulders – priests and people. Yahweh was presented as the father of Israel (*'ābh*) in light of the fact that Yahweh brought Israel into

[6] In Malachi, these insensitive and disorderly people asked other similar questions: "How have we shown contempt for your name?" (1:6), "How have we defiled you?" (1:7), "How have we wearied you?" (2:17), "How are we to return?" (3:7), "How do we rob you?" (3:8) (Clendenen 2004:413).

existence, and as such has become their Master (Mal. 1:6; cf. Mal. 2:10). This was the ground upon which He required *kābhôdh* (honour) and *môrā'* (fear) from them (1:6). The *kōhănîm* were accused of their failure to act in response in this manner to Yahweh's supplies at His *mizbeḥî* (my altar) and *shûlḥan yhwh* (the table of Yahweh) (Mal. 1:7). Their failure to provide moral leadership and instructions to others truthfully and faithfully (Mal. 2:6-7) and in supervising and protecting the integrity of Israel's worship, impugn the integrity of Yahweh and set the whole community in severe danger.

They have no right whatsoever, to request for or expect Yahweh's favours because of their wrong treatment of Yahweh's blessings to them (Mal. 1:9). In reality, Yahweh declared that His delight in them was over; threatened to do away with their sacrifices, for their continued rituals were altogether unserviceable (*ḥinnām*) (Clendenen 2004:234). Malachi specifies the terms of the judgement on the priests (*khōhănîm*); their persons, blessings and perhaps their offspring will be cursed (2:3). The reason for this punishment lies in the priests' attitude toward Yahweh and His service; their slackness and failure to give God the very best.

Malachi stresses Yahweh's control of history by stating that the Day of Yahweh will be a day of the Lord's covenant by which He establishes His sovereign Lordship over human beings, either by instituting the covenant or by enforcing the provisions of the covenant (Mal. 3:3-4) (Udoekpo 2010:276). The promise of a future restoration which includes a covenantal messenger, a renewed temple, and a community of reverence who will enjoy righteousness and healing is another fundamental ethical aspect of Yahweh's sovereignty over history in Malachi. The Lord Almighty would come as the sovereign Lord of the nation to enforce His covenant (3:1). Yahweh is to come

unexpectedly, and His day is to bring judgement upon the godless; but for those who fear God, 'the sun of salvation' will shine forth.

The Day of Yahweh as envisioned by Malachi will alter the realities of life for Judah. The Israelites expected a day that will bring divine deliverance from their enemies. They hold, of course, that their enemies were Yahweh's enemies but they were themselves Yahweh's enemies, by reason of their covenant violations. So, why they eagerly await the messenger of the covenant to come (Mal 3:1), in fact His coming would not be delightful for them. In the decisive events of the day, the prophet discerns with particular simplicity the awesome presence of Yahweh in the world in His ongoing activity of judging those who have violated the covenant, and who invariably are no longer under its protection with a future day of renewal and restoration of the fortunes of those who fear the Lord. It is this eschatological dimension of the Day of Yahweh that intensifies the ethical uniqueness of the book of Malachi. As Clendenen (2004:238) observes, the steadfastness of Yahweh, manifested in the saving events of ancient times and expounded by Malachi (1:2-5), and the announcement of the day of Yahweh's (3:1-5; 3:16-4:6) were collectively the stimulating and encouraging features of the message of the book.

6.1.1.3. Yahweh's Unqualified Moral Character

The structure of the ethics of the OT was mainly ascertained by the character of Yahweh: what Yahweh is like is to be seen in what He does or has done. This was a practical axiom of Israel's belief about Yahweh's self-manifestation. The clearest expression of this principle is seen in Leviticus (Wright 1983b:26). Malachi reveals that Yahweh is not only dependable and trustworthy but conscientious and unrelenting in His dealings (Mal. 2:4; 3:6,

17) (Clendenen 2004:234). As a holy God, he expects His people to be holy as well (cf. also Lev. 11:44-45; 21:8; Deut. 10:12-19). And more precisely, Leviticus 19 shows that "God's own holiness is thoroughly practical." This of course is the most significant idea of the OT faith. Yahweh as the Holy one stands out in contrasts to all other gods (Exod. 15:11), and in opposition to all that is created. God is holy (Isa. 40:25). He makes Himself available in relationship with this world. He created the world and all creatures live by His power and grace. He is therefore the giver of life. He is loving and merciful. He communes with humanity (Exod. 34:6; Isa. 49:15; Gen. 24:27). He also commands humankind to love (Lev. 19:18).

This holiness includes generosity to the poor at harvest time, justice for all and integrity in judicial process, considerate behaviour, impartiality, and honesty, and other necessary earthly social matters (Wright 1983b:227). Yahweh was obviously slighted by Israel's several and present misconducts which were obviously on account their failure to recognise and appreciate what Yahweh has done for them. Several accusations in the book all indicate the rationale of why Yahweh's blessings are so far-off from His people. They could not obey His law and thus had lost both motive and model for obedience to Yahweh. In this regard, Malachi continues with by emphasising the manner in which Yahweh was perceived, regarded, as well as depicted by the teaching staff of Judah (Clendenen 2004:234).

6.1.2. Expectations from Yahweh's People in Faith Communities

An individual's personal experience of whom Yahweh is must be translated into motivation for consistent ethical behaviour. What shape, then, should Israel's obedience as well as Yahweh's people in faith communities today take? What should be the substance and quality of their ethical behaviour in

response to Yahweh's revelation of Himself? The following reflections represent ethical ideals and practical expectations for Yahweh's people living as a community.

6.1.2.1. Reverential Obedience to Yahweh's Commandments

Malachi reiterates that covenant is neither an entitlement nor a blank check: "Yahweh's covenant demands reverential obedience to the divine commandments and reverential dealings with one another" (Stulman & Kim 2010:243). While one may live in an age and lived situations when faith is not self-evident and the simple affirmation of fundamental statements like "God loves you" may not guarantee assent, as a faithful covenant partner, Yahweh's chosen people in all ages can count on His faithfulness in all their disillusionment, intense suffering and brokenness, calculations and imagination, and consider possibilities with it (Schuller 1996:856-57). For Malachi, the ideal community is a Torah-observant community, one that acknowledges Yahweh's justice and sovereignty and in response lives as a reverential covenant community (Stulman & Kim 2010:240).

Malachi reveals that the secret to living as God's covenant people is, by preserving and practicing the laws of Yahweh. The divine exhortation to God's people (Mal. 3:7) (cf. Hos. 2:7; Joel 2:12; Am. 4:6-11; Hag. 2:17; Zech. 1:2-3) echoes the significance of returning to Yahweh and Yahweh's statutes. No matter how impressive the map of the future might be such a future is absolutely deficient without definite and sincere commitment to Yahweh, His teaching, and His people. Thus, Torah obedience is absolutely crucial for both the Jewish as well as the Christian faith (Stulman & Kim 2010:243).

6.1.2.2. Exhortation to Moral Integrity of Religious Leaders

The realities of Christian churches today provide the best atmosphere for the application of the truth of these indictments. While the understanding of the *priesthood of all believers* may be familiar in some Christian communities, few laypeople, on hearing the accusations "O priests, who despise my name" will immediately think of themselves. What may naturally come to mind is the latest scandal about some pastors, priests, or televangelists. While it is relatively easy to apply this passage to the priests and other religious leaders of the Christian community, the sins of the priests are paralleled by, indeed may even be implicitly supported by the larger lay community. Thus this passage invites reflection on the interdependence of priests and laity in our communities. The exposure of the abuse, corruption and sins of the leaders calls the entire community to conscious and careful self-evaluation and mutual accountability (Schuller 1996:862).

Consequently, Malachi's remarks offer Yahweh's people and contemporary religious leaders at every level of Christian ministry a glimpse into the nature of the priesthood. Priests had to be men of profound moral character both because they are messengers of God who make known divine commands to the faithful, and because they have the privilege to offer sacrifices. Integrity of character is an eternal prerequisite for transformation. While integrity may not be perfection in all attitudes, Yahweh recognises as His only those who are pure in their character. The minister's honesty concerning his/her character guarantees effective and productive movement towards ethical maturity in ministry (Swears 2000:38).

The grade of membership in the Church depends on moral character. The distinguishing feature of the Church is not wealth, ability, or social

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distinction, but high moral character which qualifies for exalted services. Since the position of the priestly leader in a community is a very noble one with a high anticipation, the Christian minister is expected to be a person of integrity in life and in ministry. He/she must be able to demonstrate a clear and evident coherence between word and deed. Such a person must avoid all irregular and sensual desires, pride, ambition, and, above all, the lust of power, which can twist and destroy the ministry. The minister's comportment, walk, language, his/her outward behaviour, ought to at every situation confirm the integrity of his/her vocation. He/she should be one who possesses a functional knowledge of Yahweh; confident of His power, committed to His word, commissioned by His will, compelled by His knowledge, and consumed with his glory (MacArthur 1995:22-28; Wright 1983b:204).

Just as the actions of a ruler should serve as an example for his people, so also the religious leaders should work to live well so that the people under their care become imitators of their own upright actions. Malachi's oracle implies an exhortation to Christian clergy to live in a way worthy of their status. It is necessary that those chosen for holy work or those called to the priesthood live in a holy way and conduct themselves morally in the church (O'Keefe 1996:149). Although priests in the OT and throughout the ancient Near East were not often times innovators and revealers of new knowledge, they acted as faithful custodians who transmitted the accumulated lore and rules of behaviour. In this regard, the priesthood functioned as conservative force in Israel's life (Nelson 1993:88-93). Malachi's emphasis on the role of the priest as a teacher (2:5-7), as both the repository and transmitter of the traditions of the community, invite Yahweh's people in faith communities to look anew at the

institutions within the church and their society that can serve as carriers of ethical instruction (Schuller 1996:862-63).

6.1.2.3. Exhortation to Moral Perfection of Worshippers and Inner Character of Worship

Malachi's prophetic narrative includes a scolding of the entire people as well as the inner quality of their worship, not just the priests alone. Although he does not state it explicitly, one can imply a contrast between the lack of virtue in Israel at the time of Malachi and the great virtue of the Christian people and their way of life, especially as manifested in ascetical practice. Acceptable worship is inseparably linked with acceptable living. It is in worship that the demands of the covenant with the entire nation confront afresh the individual, even in the secret places of the heart and with respect to sins hidden from public view or observation. It is in worship that the moral perspectives are sharpened and readjusted to see clearly issues from Yahweh's point of view rather than through the confusion, hopelessness and discouragement of outward appearances (Wright 1983b:204-208).

The liturgy of Israel is saturated with moral information.[7] In Malachi, the link between morality and worship is of major concern. It was a link that was broken by the people. The most stinging vehemence is directed at those who presume to perform the rituals of worship while living in blatant wickedness. The rampant social injustice made a blasphemous mockery of it. Malachi's words, thus, become an exhortation to all Christian people to a life of virtue and piety. The mandate to live a life of virtue constitutes the true meaning of

[7] The Psalms (15, 25) are clear illustrations of entrance requirement liturgy. More very clearly is Psalm 24, which presents outward act and inward motive in the phrase, "He who has clean hands and a pure heart" (Ps. 24:4) (Wright 1983b:207).

Malachi's warning about a swiftly approaching judgment (Mal 3:5). Thus, it is absolutely necessary to reject wicked actions with all our might, to be eager for what is better, and to strive to perform fully the actions through which one might become full of virtue and every praiseworthy quality. For such an individual will be free of the charges coming from God's wrath issued against those accustomed to sin (O'Keefe 1996:151). Malachi's warning to the people of ancient Israel must be transformed into both an everlasting indictment of their transgression and a legitimate application of the Christian values of the twenty first-century faith community. In the prophetic words of Malachi, not only divine commands ordering the people to lead lives of virtue are heard, but also a prediction of actual virtues associated with the Christian way of life (O'Keefe 1996:152).

On the other hand, Malachi's prophetic narrative includes a scolding of the inner quality of the people's worship. In Malachi, the issue of flawlessness in sacrificial animals is emphasised. Garner observes that offerings made for Yahweh and given to Him in whatever form must be pure, presented without pretence and in meekness, and offered in recognition that it is an unsurpassed sacrifice for Yahweh. Imperfect and blemish sacrifices must therefore not be presented to Yahweh (Garner 2003:13). There is something very important and down-to-earth about the discussion of the physical condition of the animals brought for sacrifice.

Malachi's insistence that sacrifices must be without blemish (Mal 1:8, 13, 14), exhorts Yahweh's people in faith communities to inspect their own souls for blemishes and to live in virtue. The prophetic narrative insists that the requisite inward religious reality and concrete physical regalia of worship cannot be totally separated. Christian communities today in Africa and all

over the world may not be concerned about imperfect sacrifices of animals. However, what would prophetic narratives of the book say about the worthiness of songs, books, physical surroundings, art, and second-rated-items (vehicles, cell phones, shoes, etc.,) brought forward as seed-faith offerings and for use in worship today (cf. Schuller 1996:862).[8]

Religious leaders in faith communities must assume responsibility of guarding and protecting the purity and authenticity of the entire cultic life of the Church in their various contexts of ministry. While one may not say that the need of the times is for eloquent, learned, able, or popular preachers, but one believes that one of the greatest needs of every faith community in this age is Christians who are grounded in the words of the Bible and especially its prophetic witness and seek to make it the sum of their teaching and preaching (cf., McMickle 2005:7).

6.2. SOCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Anytime humans in any culture consider primary ethical concepts, justice will be to the fore. Much seems to hinge upon it if human society is to function with any semblance of civil order, security, and harmony. When justice is pervasively trampled upon, the very fabric of live-able society crumbles. The apprehension for justice is clearly reflected in almost all of the OT. It is an

[8] The above observation is an apt description of the Nigerian Church, which seems to be a befitting context for the interpretation and application of Malachi's prophetic narrative. Today, it is not uncommon to witness across denominational lines various items that are brought forward as seed-faith offerings during preaching. I am aware of the diversity of the Christian community in Nigeria. Obviously, no one can be so presumptuous to claim to describe Christianity in Nigeria in the singular. My perception of the Church bears the stamp of the part of the Church I have experienced and into which I minister as a pastor and teacher. The rest of Nigeria and Africa may not be too far from this description.

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important theological motif in the OT. This is found in such OT literature as historical, legal, prophetic and wisdom. This evidence thus, reveals that the apprehension for the issue of justice was one of the many ways by which Israel's many-sided social life was bound together throughout its various ancient historical developments. No aspect of the life of Israel was excluded from this kind apprehension for justice, and Yahweh was understood to be actively involved in its entire phase (Wright 2006:253).

For the purpose of theological interpretation, understanding justice in the context of covenant, where every covenant member is obligated to love God and love their neighbour is a useful approach. Additionally, justice is an ethical term used to describe people who live generously in the community in order to develop, sustain and enhance the community's well-being. "The just person is characteristically seen as one who invests in the community, showing special concern and attentiveness to the poor, helpless and the needy. Such a communitarian ethic is amply sketched out by the prophets" (Brueggemann 2002:177).

At this point, one's ethical understanding of the OT must take into account the fact that so much of its ethical uniqueness is social in its essential character. It does not only assist a person to live a secretly righteous life in the presence of Yahweh although this is not out of place, but then again it advances and safeguard the spiritual and moral well-being of the entire human society with such individuals who are expected to exemplify such virtues of justice, equity, truth, love and righteousness which reveal Yahweh's own nature (Wright 1983b:34). The relevance of the social angle is that one must study the OT passage in its own social environment of the life of Israel and be able to ask what it says to him or her within its community and then,

proceed to what social impact it will have in the larger human society (Wright 1983b:35).

The prophets have long been understood as champions of social justice. In both the former and latter prophets, prophets demonstrate broad social concern, which is rooted in the person of God, who is committed to humanity and deeply moved by injustice and the suffering that it causes (Carroll 2012:185). In his attempt to answer the question: Is a prophetic dimension appropriate to discourse ethics? Rogerson (1995:25-26) affirms that the prophetic witness in the OT (in addition to portions of Leviticus and Deuteronomy) is categorical and inflexible in its promotion of social and ethical arrangements that are in the interests of all members of society, including the poor and the powerless.

While they seldom accuse Israel of breaking specific laws, rather, they "appeal to known norms of humane conduct of 'justice and righteousness' norms which are exemplified in the 'apodictic law,' but cannot be limited by it" (Houston 2006:70-71). In their advancement of the course of justice, equity and truth, the prophets were fundamentalists with respect to Israel's ancient religious traditions. They followed the established heritage of Israel as well as the essential principles of Yahweh's covenant relationship, upon which they challenged Israel to give attention to urgent and pressing concerns for justice in the best interest of the downtrodden and needy (Fretheim 2008:159).

As has been stated earlier, socially, Malachi confronts a population given to religious cynicism and political scepticism. Malachi's day was one of disillusionment and gloom. Morality seemed to have been totally forgotten. The weakening of the religious life in Malachi's day was clearly shown, and it had grave social implications. Perversity at the place of worship had resulted

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in perverseness on the part of those who come to worship. Wrong views of God and false forms of worship inevitably lead to fractured social relationships. "Given the selfishness of human nature, alms for the poor and Yahweh's tithe were necessarily forfeited to maximise personal financial interests; and what better way to obtain financial standing in the community than to marry into the 'brokerages' of resident aliens"(Hills 1998:75)?

One can observe that majority of these resident aliens were non-Judeans and as such partly heathen who were worshipping strange gods, and strangers to the law of Yahweh. For the Judean men to be able to marry the women who belonged to these wealthy and influential families, many had to separate from their Judean wives. Thus divorce (Mal. 2:13-16) and adultery (Mal. 3:5) were so common that the total destruction of Jewish families seemed almost imminent. Yahweh's established system of ordered community was subverted (Barton 1995:90–91). The resultant implications were the various social offenses: the less-privileged – the widows, orphans and foreigners – were ignored and/or even persecuted (Mal. 3:5). Discrimination was the norm. Perjury was common within the court system (Malachi 3:5) as was employers cheating their employees (Mal. 3:5). It was obviously not a pretty picture. The people were corrupt and sin was publicly practiced and tolerated. What moral demand does Malachi's prophetic narrative make at this point upon personal Christian ethics in the individual's own course of life and in his or her daily living and the Christian community in the larger human society?

6.2.1. Moral Demands on Yahweh's People in Human Society

Personal experience of who Yahweh is must be translated into motivation for consistent moral behaviour. The individual as part of the community lives

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such that his or her life exemplifies such virtues of justice, equity, truth, love and righteousness which reveal Yahweh's own nature and which sanitises and safeguards the spiritual and moral well-being of the entire human society. What shape, then, do individual's ethics take as Yahweh's people in human society? What should be the substance and quality of their moral behaviour in response to Yahweh's revelation of Himself? The following reflections represent ethical ideals and practical moral demands on Yahweh's people living in human society.

6.2.1.1. Fidelity and Commitment to Family Values

While Malachi is a relatively short book, it makes a great deal of ethical contribution to biblical revelation. In his narrative one sees the mutual relationship between lived reality and true faith. In Malachi's day, it was indeed a situation in which the Judeans could not understand their relationship to God and His role in their lives. They were at a crossroads of seeking relevance. They were substituting Yahweh's design for life for self gratification, ease or better still financial opportunities (Wells 1987:54).

Today, we live in a community and society filled with many assumptions that marriage and divorce are private matters of the persons' concerned (Schuller 1996:866). This has given room to negligence on the part of some who feel that God is unconnected with their lives (Wells 1987:44). The predicament relating to marital relationship and family life is undeniably a social predicament that requires urgent attention. No society can fully function with the exclusion of the family. This is why Well (1987:51-52) carefully describes the home as the centre of human and societal development.

Marital relationships and family life can be very marvellous and splendid; it can as well be depressing and gloomy. The various changes and ambiguities that marital life creates for people recurrently entertain so many undesirable and damaging interests in the news media. Today, marital relationships and family life has undergone a terrible experience in the face of established and fundamental cultural perspectives. Malachi's prophetic oracle is thus an urgent motivation and challenge to Yahweh's people in faith communities and society in general to be a living embodiment of the ideals of fidelity, commitment and steadfastness.

Christians should understand and appreciate the fact that children are God's heritage and godly children are the upshot of healthy, viable and godly marriages. The health of the family itself is dependent on the vitality of the marital bond. It is therefore useless to emphasis raising good, robust and sustainable families apart from healthy marriages (Wells 1987:53). What a wonderful challenge Malachi is to all couples in faith communities and society (religious or not), to, assume such responsibilities that will revitalise their marital expression and experience (Bryan 2001:8).

6.2.1.2. *Social Responsibility, Pursuit of Truth and Justice*

The defence of widows and orphans against oppression (cf. Exod 22:21-22; cf. Jer 7:6) and the defence of their land also represents prominent aspects of ancient Israelite law (Deut 19:14) and wisdom tradition (Prov 15:25; 22:28; 23:10-11; Job 24:2-4). This issue is also given particular attention in the prophetic critique of the major administrators of Israel or Judah (Hos 5:10) (Achenbach 2012:123). Yahweh's concern for widows and the fatherless

(*'almānāh weyāthôm*)[9] and aliens (*ghēr*)[10] as indicated by Malachi, calls for Christian social responsibility. God invites human responsibility, "responsibility is the greatest overarching theme of Yahweh's call in the Bible" (Sacks 2005:135). In prophetic literature such as Isaiah (1:17) and others,[11] the prophets charged people to endeavour to carry out benevolent deeds; to seek justice, alleviate the plight of the needy and downtrodden, plead for the orphans and widows. The Bible requires that the whole of humanity's economic structure be established on the firm foundation of social accountability and justice (Friedman 2011:299).

Again, Malachi's prophetic narrative calls Christians to be committed to the quest for justice, truth and equity. The significance of justice and truth is emphasised almost everywhere in the Torah; it is an overarching theme of the Bible.[12] Obedience to the laws was an important issue of grateful response for

[9] According to Achenbach (2012:122), "The oppression of inheritance rights of widows and orphans has always been a central issue for ancient courts. . . It was part of the Egyptian ethics of Administration to protect the integrity of the lands of widows and the heritage of orphans."

[10] Throughout the Bible, it is very much clear that Yahweh has interest in the *ghēr*. The word *ghēr* is mostly rendered as foreigner or guest and clearly fits well with the word immigrant. Yahweh expects that the Israelites provide these guests or foreigners in their community with similar privileges, rights, and other benefits as natives. In the Torah, one can find such statements as loving strangers as one would love him/herself (Lev. 19:33-34). Zechariah expresses deep concern for the widow, orphan, foreigner and the poor (Zech 7:10). Jeremiah temple's message includes a similar concern (Jer 7:6). See also similar examples, Exod 20:10; cf. Deut 16: 11, 14.

[11]In the book of Amos, the prophet during his generation reproached the people for treading upon the poor, subjugating the upright , being enticed, and overtly oppressing the poor and needy at the gate (5:11-12). He addressed the excessive, wasteful women of Israel, criticized lazy spouses of the upper class as they indirectly responsible for the oppression of the poor as well as trampling upon the needy by demanding from their husbands the provision of every form every luxury (4:1). In the book of Ezekiel, the prophet indicts Israel for being so corrupt (16:49).

[12] In his argument with Yahweh, Abraham, has the boldness to ask: "Shall not the Judge of all the earth deal justly?" (Gen. 18:25). The Lord made it so obvious that he choose Abraham in

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the saving acts of Yahweh. Having experienced justice; the Israelites were to practice justice in every area of their life (Wright 1995:278-79). The quest for justice, truth and equity also includes commercial and judicial ethics. Operating a business enterprise in a manner that is unscrupulous and immoral is unfair to clients.[13] Friedman says: "the Torah is concerned with such issues as ensuring accuracy in weights and measures, environmentalism, paying wages and rent on time, providing fringe benefits for employees and treating them fairly, providing an honest day's work, caring for the poor, and not discriminating against the stranger" (Friedman 2011:299). Yahweh who is the God of justice, truth and equity passionately demands scrupulous truth and honesty in all human dealings (Lev 19:35-36).

The Bible requires that Christians as well as human beings in general be preoccupied with the concern for justice and be willing to do all things in their ability to guarantee that foreigners are handled with sympathy by the lawful and legitimate structure of their society (Exod. 23:1-8; Lev. 19:35f; Deut. 16:18-28).[14] Any form of corruption and dishonesty is by definition and

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order that that "he may command his children and his household after him to keep the way of the LORD by doing righteousness and justice; in order that the LORD may bring upon Abraham what He has spoken about him" (Gen. 18:19). In Deuteronomy it is said: "Justice, and only justice, you shall pursue, so that you will live and possess the land which the Lord your God is giving you" (NASB; Deut. 16:20).

[13] In the book of Amos, the prophet was disturbed by various ways the poor were being manipulated or taken advantage of in business: "Hear this, you who trample the needy, to do away with the humble of the land, saying, 'When will the new moon be over, So that we may sell grain, and the sabbath, that we may open the wheat *market*, To make the bushel smaller and the shekel bigger, And to cheat with dishonest scales, so as to buy the helpless for money And the needy for a pair of sandals, And *that* we may sell the refuse of the wheat?'" (NASB; Am. 8:5-6; cf. 8:7).

[14] In the book of Isaiah, the prophet indicted Israel which was likened to Sodom (Isa. 1:21-23), and was particularly disturbed by the height of unfairness against the oppressed and needy (Isa. 10: 1-4). Jeremiah decried the same concern with vehemence: "Woe to him who builds his

implication a denial of the character of the God we claim to worship (Wright 1995:279; Friedman 2011:299). Since a moral and just society is that which respects a foreigner and uplifts those who are oppressed and demoralised, the book of Malachi challenges Christians, religious leaders, political leaders and business leaders to be embodiments of integrity, to be more interested in alleviating the plight of the downtrodden and doing what is best for their country. The characteristic of a worthy leader is his/her encouragement of people to making such sacrifices that would be of great benefit for upcoming generations as well as the weak, vulnerable and defenceless (Friedman 2011:301-302).

6.2.2. Moral Expectations from Yahweh's Faith Communities in Larger Human Society

What is natural for every Christian community, like every religious organisation, is the disposition to familiarise its testimony of faith to what it sees as its maximum urgent desires people. In an attempt to do this, such a community may face the danger of complicating the gospel's comprehensive scope, especially those extensive consequences of Yahweh's requirements for truth, justice, uprightness, equity, and fairness. What is essentially needed in this kind of situation is a gospel ministry that seeks to salvage this comprehensive scope and enlightens the manner in which such a community may have complicated them (Ward & Ward 1995:11). The following reflections represent ethical ideals and practical moral expectations from Yahweh's Faith Communities in the larger human society.

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house without righteousness and his upper rooms without justice, Who uses his neighbour's services without pay And does not give him his wages," (NASB; Jer. 22:13).

6.2.2.1. Empowering Families for Growth and Change

Since Malachi consistently roots his narrative of marriage within the framework of a community that shares an essential relationship and fellowship based on a common father and creator, the larger community obviously has a stake in the individual's marriage partner, the maintenance of fidelity to the marriage bond and in what happens when the bond is sundered in divorce. Infidelity, the failure of a marriage and divorce are essentially concrete and visible manifestations of a breakdown in the ideals. The larger community is rightly concerned with the emotions and needs, the freedom and the value of the individual. In honouring the values and ideals of fidelity, commitment and steadfastness, Yahweh's faith communities are challenged to seek concrete ways of affirming, strengthening, empowering and supporting persons and families in their efforts to live in faithfulness to the values they recognise and esteem (Schuller 1996:866).

The text (Malachi 2:10) does not in any way advocate a polygamous way of life as a tradition but endorses the monogamous ideal for real marital relationships. This has been God's order or plan for every marriage as one can deduce from Genesis 2:18-24. Similarly, while it illustrates the many divorces that were taking place at this time, it says nothing to suggest that divorces are criminal, but denounces divorce on account of its ethical implications, an illustration of unfaithfulness or infringement of the covenant which is prone to divine judgement. A marriage that endures for life is one that is well integrated with webs of relationships. It is a marriage covenanted in order to enrich relationships and integration within the family, home and society. The marriage covenant is that which rests on vital principles of fidelity, trust, love, respect, obedience and mutual encouragement by spouse. Any time these essential components are disregarded by way of violence, neglect, or some

other cases of infidelity to the marital vows, the essential core of the marital relationship is in danger of extinction (Flowers & Flowers 2001:86). Thus Malachi's prophetic narrative is a call to God's faith communities (the church) in all ages to an engagement in family ministries.

6.2.2.2. Motivation for Justice Mission and Commitment to Social Responsibility

Preservation of order and justice was a chief responsibility of kings in the ancient Near East (Patterson 1973:226; Saggs 1962:198; Wilson 1956:133). The responsibility of kings to uphold the rights of the poor and oppressed is well known in the OT, as well as prophetic denunciations of the failure of kings to do this, and the confidence that ultimately God will defend the defenceless in default of humans meeting their obligations (Rogerson 1995:23). Since Yahweh is unchangeable in his character,[15] so is the essence of His ethical requirements. Yahweh in his righteousness has ordained specific system of order in the world that must be adhered to. However, when people from their own choice deliberately contravene this established order, they will be punished, so that God's reputation will not be called into question. In Psalm 58:6, the psalmist says, "Break their teeth, O God, in their mouth." However, this prayer is followed by the purpose clause which says: "So that men will say, truly there is a reward for righteousness; truly there is a God who is judge on the earth" (v.11).

[15] It must be acknowledged here that though the book of Malachi states that Yahweh is unchangeable (Mal. 3:6), the biblical representation of Yahweh presents some obvious contradictions with respect to the character of God which is invariably problematic. Carroll (1991:34ff) describes Yahweh as "the hidden problematic" and lists examples of statements about the deity repenting of actions and intentions (Gen. 6:6; cf. 1 Sam 2:20; Jonah3:9-10), about divine deception (1 Sam. 15:29; 1 Kgs. 22:19-23; Ezek. 14:9; Jer. 4:10), and as creator of evil (Isa. 45:6-7; Jb. 9:13-24), to illustrate the biblical contradictions of the problem. According to Römer (2013:1ff), in his *Dark God* (a volume devoted to the treatment of the God of the OT), references to Him can provoke a whole range of negative images: one who is primitive, angry, jealous, and unpredictable.

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Similarly, Yahweh, while He is conceived to be a God of love, is at the same time a God of vengeance who metes out justice to His creature's trespasses against His holiness. Since Yahweh is unchangeable in His nature and perfection, the principle of divine justice rooted in that very nature must also remain very persistent. Malachi demonstrates concern for the integrity of Yahweh and for the universal acclamation of His sovereignty. If Yahweh, the God of Israel was indeed the just ruler of the universe, then He must intercede on behalf of the innocent and oppressed. Malachi's prophetic narrative reveals that the infringement of social dimensions (horizontal) of the covenantal relationship and responsibilities amounts to infringement of the religious aspects (vertical) of the same the covenantal relationship and responsibilities (Clendenen 2004:236).

For Christianity to be a living experience of transformation in any human society, a transformative process of personal and communal engagement with the biblical text is crucial for genuine authentic Christianity within the ecclesial community and the larger human society. The book of Malachi's ethics serves as enough motivation for Yahweh's faith communities for an engagement and commitment to the mission of justice and affirmation of Christian social responsibility. Mission therefore is any endeavour aimed toward the goal of reaching beyond the needs of the local congregations for the purpose of fulfilling Yahweh's concern in the world (Oladeji 2004:206). Christians should be compelled by Yahweh's concern for the innocent, poor and oppressed to go to every nook and cranny of the world to relieve these needy elements in human society. The attitude of Yahweh's faith communities must not be that earthly justice is either of no significance or unattainable and that the ultimate judgement is the one and only justice that is worth striving and waiting for (Mcllroy 2011:182).

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While any meaningful formulation of biblical theology of justice would require that one takes his/her time to examine the biblical data for such narratives dealing with Yahweh's redeeming intentions and procedures for a just society, the significance of justice is clearly obvious, however, in the prophetic literature of the Old Testament.[16] A growing awareness to the anguish of the less-privileged who are susceptible to social isolation, economic exploitation, poverty, oppression should lead Christians to an appreciation of the value of justice, and to be specific the employment of standard regulations to administer entitlements and privileges, as basic companions of Christian mission in the world (Mcllroy 2011:183). The Church's and/or Christian mission in the world cannot be divorced from issues of social justice, and real understanding of people and their problems. Pobee (1997:31) says:

> Authentic theology includes education of the ear to hear the cry of the people, of the heart to heed and to feel, of the tongue to speak to the weary and the broken a word that rebuilds them and kindles in them a fire of hope, and of the hands to work with the lowly to build a human world which the wealthy, the mighty and the clever have shown themselves incapable of envisioning and fashioning.

The special mission of the church in the world therefore, calls for a covenant affirmation of Christian social responsibility. Malachi's prophetic narrative challenges faith communities to recognise God's redemptive concerns. It motivates and thus places a necessity upon faith communities to identify with people in their various situations namely, their social condition, their pains and joys, grief and sorrow, and in their efforts to attain equity and fairness in the face of oppression. If Christian mission in the world is not associated with

[16] The apprehension for equity and fairness in the OT is not in any way immaterial. It is built around certain susceptible individuals within human society. Yahweh's special objects of concern include: *ghēr* is mostly rendered as foreigner or guest, the fatherless and the widow (Lev. 19:33-34; Job 22:9; Prov. 15:25) (Mcllroy 2011:184).

a deep passion and commitment to alleviating if not eradicating people's needs, it may simply be unbelievable. Thus as Christians proclaim the reign and rule of Yahweh in the world, it is necessary that they be devoted to the requirements of peace and justice.

Christian mission in the world must involve ministry to the weak and or sick (physically and spiritually), giving food to the hungry, taking care of those who are convicted i.e., prisoners, assisting the underprivileged and those who are physically and mentally challenged, and setting free the burdened. It must also include the condemnation of wickedness wherever it is found including established violence, injustice and oppression, dishonesty and all forms of human exploitation. Since God has commissioned the Church with the responsibility of making Him known; His ethical requirements for justice and righteousness, it must therefore make it a point of duty to impact human society with its culture of negligence and not invest in it.

6.3. ECONOMIC IMPLICATIONS

The economic angle of the OT ethics focuses on the land that was considered an important theological category and not merely a platform for the unfolding of events (Wright 1983a:50). The land was an important category as well as a defining theme in OT tradition (Brueggemann 2002a:120). Although Yahweh graciously gave the land to Israel as their heritage, they were to live on it with total reliance on Him (Lev. 25:23). Thus the manner in which the land was considered and treated by Israel along with its yield was a key feature of their assignments under Yahweh's covenant. Brueggemann (2002b:50) says: "The gift of land provides secured people with dangerous alternatives . . . Israel knows very early that the need to rework identity in the land can lead to a new identity that perverts the land, distorts Yahweh, and destroys Israel . . ."

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The land along with all its produce was to serve as a constant reminder and declaration of Israel's reliance and Yahweh's trustworthiness, as evidence of the relationship between God and Israel.

This historical land-gift heritage engendered personal property rights in Israel and the follow-up to the Naboth incident opens up the prophets' preoccupation with economic exploitation (Wright 1983b:51-55). The sterility of the land in Malachi, presumes that although the reconstruction of the temple has been achieved, once again, the people are attempting to defraud Yahweh by keeping back their contributions and tithes as well as the appropriate sacrifices. Unless they have a change of attitude and return to Yahweh, Yahweh will not bring back the fortunes and abundant fruitfulness of the land for them to experience and enjoy. The prophet then assures the return of rain and the elimination of the destroyer as soon as the people return to Yahweh and with their full tithe to the temple (Mal 3:10-11). Alden (1985:721) remarks that in the light of the fact that he was concerned with a society that was dominated by agricultural activities, the promised blessing simply applied to farm produce. The anticipated blessing is treble: (1) Yahweh will open the windows of heaven; (2) He will restrain the devourer from destroying their crops; and (3) the vines will not fail to be fruitful. The restoration of abundant fruitfulness after chastisement (cf. Amos 9:13-14; Joel 2:12-27) is an obvious indication that their covenant affiliation with Yahweh has once again, been re-established (Nogalsk 2007:129-130).

One must acknowledge, at this point, though space will not allow for an elaborate discussion, the fact that there are issues that limit the ways in which the text (Mal. 3:6-12) can be made useful to a contemporary Christian community of faith. The limitations involved are both theological and

practical. Theologically, one sees a clear argument against the situation of subjecting Christians to the requirements to the Mosaic regulations,[17] especially those regulations that are directly connected to the sacrificial system of the temple. For example, if a Christian is a cattle famer, is he or she obligated to come to Church on Sunday with every tenth animal as his or her tithe? With respect to the practical dimension, the tithe was basically limited to farm produce, there were restrictions as to its recipients, and its execution was subjected to certain and changing regulations.

Kostenberger and Croteau (2006a:70) in their opinion notes that it appears as if the text should be regarded as an erstwhile, particular deed from the perspective of Yahweh to ignite the hope and expectation of the Yehudites in a period of uncertainty and apathy. Consequently, the text should not be seen as flexible assurances from Yahweh to approve and bless those who give a tithe of what they have. The text as it is does not categorically resolve the contention as to whether to continue or discontinue the practice of tithe giving in a New Testament era. The difficulty revolving around the applicability of

[17] As has been noted earlier, according to the text of Leviticus, Moses instructed the Israelites that, all the tithe of the land, of the seed of the land or of the fruit of the tree, is the LORD's; it is holy to the LORD (Lev. 27:30). Verse 31 however states that the tithe of the grain may be redeemed by the owner, at a price higher than its market value. In Numbers, there is the specification concerning the harvest's tithe and that of the animal which should be given to the officiating personnel, i.e. the Levites (Num. 18:21-32). After Israel's settlement in the land the people also benefited directly when they ate with the priests and Levites at the place of worship (Num. 18:21; Deut. 12:4-9, 5-18; 14:22-27). In these passages, it is also specified that the tenth part was to be gathered into an approved sanctuary every year for a festive ceremony. However, if there was a long distance to the designated sanctuary, a monetary exchange was to be made for the tithe and such exchanged money would be used to buy anything that was important for the festive ceremony as soon as the offerer arrives (cf. Deut. 14:22-27). This distinctive kind of tithe was to be preserved in one's native town, while the foreigner, the orphans and the bereaved, including the Levites were all taking part in the distribution of the goods as much as required(cf. Deut. 26:12-15).

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the regulation concerning the tithe is an issue that cannot be resolved easily (Kostenberger & Croteau 2006a:70).

In considering the practicability of Malachi 3:6-12 in a contemporary Christian context, with respect to the regulation of the Old Testament, one can state that while specific legislations do not all apply, the principles involved certainly do (Alcorn 2003:181). Blomberg (1999:80) notes that one must be able to recognise and appreciate the unique importance of the relationship that existed between the contributions in terms of offerings and tithes and the cult of the temple.

In the absence of a similar centre for sacrifices today, it becomes very difficult for one to simply attempt to transfer all the various rules for giving in the OT to church giving principles in the NT category. Christian communities as well as their leaders may freely apply the regulations to fit the prevailing context by way of protecting the intent of the regulations and adjusting the application (Goldingay 2003:739-740). What ethical challenge does reflection on Malachi's prophetic dialogue on the economic angle present Yahweh's people with - their attitude toward and use of their possessions? The following underlying principles and reflections represent ethical ideals and practical moral demands that may be appropriately applied to Christians; that is, Yahweh's people living in faith communities.

6.3.1. Acknowledgment of Yahweh's Ownership and Motivation for His Honour

In the Old Testament, the economic angle concerns Israel's attitude and treatment of their material possessions. This to a large extent is what constitutes the concern of Malachi in this last disputation (MT 3:24 [3:7–4:6]) (Clendenen 2004:236). The central emphasis of the message of the book was to

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once again, ignite the flames of hope and confidence in the hearts and minds of a depressed Judeans. The reality that these people were holding back their required contributions was an indication of a greater disloyalty of the entire nation. Thus, it might be said that the essence of this aspect of the oracle is to invite them to return to Yahweh in repentance, which in the book of Malachi then applies to the major concern of tithing. Irrespective of their disloyalty and unfaithfulness, Yahweh still loved them and unwearyingly waited for their return. Kostenberger and Croteau say that the Lord awaits the return of his people to show them kindness. However, the release of His kindness is dependent on the willingness of those who will be beneficiaries of his grace (Kostenberger & Croteau 2006a:68).

The focus on the tithe in the book of Malachi particularly in the fifth disputation oracle (3:6-12) is closely associated with the issue of disrespect for the Lord. The people's perspective with respect to and use of their wealth and or personal effects was simply a symptom of the viability of their covenant relationship with Yahweh (Clendenen 2004:414). It is believed that an individual's opinion toward personal effects and belongings is a kind of measuring device that regulates the well-being of his or her relationship with Yahweh and with his or her neighbour (cf. Wright 1983a:59-62). Thus their inability to dignify Yahweh with and in their material acquisition will have no compensation or any form of remuneration with any attempt to be religious in the spiritual dimension. Since Yahweh casts Himself in the role of the land owner and the Israelites as the dependant tenants, He is praiseworthy and commands respect; His reaction to the behaviour of His people would be coherent as well as trustworthy (Wright 1983a:53). The divine ownership generated a wide range of responsibilities. Wright says:

> Responsibility to God for the land which included such things as tithes and first-fruits of harvest, other harvest laws, and the sabbatical legislation. . . . Responsibility to the family included the fundamental law of inalienability . . . redemption procedures, inheritance rules and levirate marriage. Responsibility towards one's neighbours included a host of civil laws and charitable exhortations concerning . . . respect for integrity of boundaries, generosity . . . , fair treatment of employees and, indeed, of working animals (Wright 1983b:58-59).

The basic and essential principle of the tithe was simply an acknowledgement on the part of the Israelites that all their belongings evidently and eventually belonged to Yahweh. This kind of recognition of Yahweh's ownership and or proprietorship was to be followed through the giving of the tithe, in the sense that such submission represented the dedication of all (Davis 1987:86). The reservation of a certain percentage of their income or produce to be consecrated unto Yahweh indicated His ultimate ownership of all that they owned as a people, in addition to Yahweh's provision in granting them the land to farm.

Thus, the unproductiveness of the produce of the land served as a direct indication of their inability to surrender the specified contributions, namely the tithes and offerings. Yahweh's proprietorship is exercised in His gracious bestowal to His people, of the land (Gen. 12:7). It is also manifested in His ability to apportion a tenth to temple personnel, that is, the Levites in Israel (Num. 18:21), and in His ability to pronounce blessings or to curse the produce of the ground (Mal. 3:10-11).

The submission of the tenth in this manner was simply an indicative of reverence that acknowledges Yahweh as the sovereign LORD over the earth and the only supplier and sustainer of Israel (Hill 1998:305). Positively, then, the book of Malachi's ethics is a powerful and robust notice that motivation

for Christian stewardship should emanate from, first and foremost, an acknowledgement of Yahweh's ownership of all the Christian's resources and a high regard for His honour. Thus, having a disposition towards wealth and or personal effects that incorporates this understanding that all evidently and eventually belonged to Yahweh is very important.

6.3.2. Motivation for Total Christian Stewardship

The biblical concept of stewardship has been subjected to some misunderstanding. Each time the word stewardship is mentioned, the meaning that easily comes to mind is that of money. While it is true that one of the means through which Christians express their appreciation to God is through dedicated and trustworthy stewardship, the focus on the tithe in the book of Malachi particularly in the fifth disputation oracle (3:6-12) is closely associated with the issue of disrespect for the Lord. The people's perspective with respect to and use of their wealth and or personal effects was simply a symptom of the viability of their covenant relationship with Yahweh. Thus, if one allows his/her stewardship to fall behind, it does mean that he or she is also falling behind in his or her devotion to God. It indicates a lack of love, commitment and depth. An acknowledgement of Yahweh's ultimate ownership and or proprietorship over all things, His generosity and faithfulness in juxtaposition to the deceitfulness of the people as demonstrated by Malachi serves enough motivation for total Christian stewardship. The term *stewardship* literally denotes, "to take care of something entrusted to one, to manage another's estate or property, the charge committed to one. We have been given stewardship over our time, energy, talents, values, feelings, behaviour, money and all other things" (Van der Walt 2012:3).

Christian stewardship has to be viewed from different perspectives and with varying lenses. While it should include money, stewardship of money is only a fraction of our total Christian stewardship. Giving on the one side is only a part of our stewardship of money, and tithing and offering are only parts of our stewardship of giving. Davis says: "Christian stewardship involves the totality of the believer's life - his time, his money, his talents, his energy, his family, his business, his home, etc. When a believer begins to take total stewardship seriously, tithing is seen as only one facet of the Christian's accountability unto God. Negligence in tithing is not simply a money problem; it is a people problem" (Davis 1987:97). Thus total Christian stewardship involves consecration of the life of the individual and resources to the service of God and humanity.

Since it is true that one of the means through which Christians express their appreciation to God is through dedicated and trustworthy stewardship, all aberrant sentiments that will hinder appropriate Christian stewardship are frequently emphasised against in the Scriptures.[18] Thus denial to give of our resources in a manner that is pleasing unto God can both be considered and designated for whatever it is as a sin against the will of God. These could include, according to Valleskey: "Greed, covetousness, divided loyalties, faulty prioritization, discontentment, and lack of trust, selfishness, and materialism - all of these sins need to be clearly and boldly pointed out. A heart that is not right with God cannot produce works pleasing to God. A corrupt tree produces corrupt fruit or no fruit at all. There is no shortcut to God-pleasing stewardship of giving" (Valleskey 1989:8). The ultimate test of

[18] See (Prov. 3:9; Gal. 6:6). James denounced the wealthy for their self-centeredness and unfaithfulness (James 5:1-6).

Christian honesty is his or her willingness to take up the privilege of stewardship (Masters 1994:11).

Faithful Christian stewardship involves recognition and appreciation of the sovereignty of God over His creation, the dynamic faithful administration of one's vocation or calling, and voluntary giving of alms on a godly basis. It embraces all that one does as a Christian in his or her acknowledgement of indebtedness to the grace and compassion of Yahweh. It corresponds with such Christian actions as praise, prayer, worship, benevolence and witnessing. It is a way of expressing ones love wholeheartedly to God (Valleskey 1989:1). One can say then that the basis of this functional and viable association is love. The love of God for humanity compelled Him to give all that we ever need to us and the Christian response to this love is in following His example. Thus, open-handed and enthusiastic giving can only happen within the context of genuine love (Kostenberger & Croteau 2006b:250).

The theme of Yahweh's faithfulness and generosity in Malachi 3:6-12 has implications for contemporary Christians. Judah manifested their rebellion in their neglect and or refusal to give the tithe (an addition to other violations). This neglect and or refusal obviously had severe effects on the people and nation; since the sacrificial system of worship in the temple was related to and dependent largely upon the contributions (tithes and offerings) to support those who officiated there. The prophet had to remind the people by calling them back to the ethical requirements of their covenant obligations, namely that the maintenance and sustenance of the temple personnel and temple ministry was their ethical duty.

Malachi's prophetic narrative in 3:6-12 serves, not only as a warning to Yahweh's people in faith communities of the consequences of bitterness and arrogance towards Him, but also an encouragement and strong motivation and inspiration to persist in giving even in the midst of hard economic realities. The most reasonable deduction that one can make here is that the ministries of the Christian church should be funded by the contributions of her members. There is nothing that can be more shameful than a church which goes about organising fund raising events, lotteries and the like in order to carry on the work of the ministry. Such approaches bring shame to God's reputation and certainly can never be pleasing to and invariably honour Him (Davis 1987:93).

Since the giving of an individual is merely a noticeable means of demonstrating his or her love for God, members of faith communities are expected to give generously in reply to the generosity and grace of Yahweh, without being forced (Marshall 2004:287). The Christian stewardship of material resources does not concern itself only with what is given to the individual members of the church, but takes into account all the needs, privileges and assignments that God sets before the individual Christian. Thus, total Christian stewardship requires critical examination and evaluation of all needs, privileges and assignments, and taking note of their relative significance and necessity. It is in this light that the Christian who is a responsible steward will make proper decisions in the fear of Yahweh and inspired by His grace. This critical assessment and evaluation guides him or her to determine priorities in the allocation of scarce and available resources. Total Christian stewardship consists of serving one another by sharing our scarce and limited resources with each other as God has graciously bestowed them on us.

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6.4. SUMMARY

This chapter focuses on a synthesis of the results of the exegesis of Malachi's passages that refer mainly to the ritual aspects of the temple service. The ethical implications or relevance of Malachi's several prophetic narratives are examined along an ethical category focusing on theological, social, and economic dimensions.

Theologically, Malachi's ethics are rooted in Yahweh's faithfulness to His covenant, His sovereignty over history and are largely determined by His unchangeable character. Malachi reiterates that these theological perspectives, demand reverential obedience to the divine commandments and reverential dealings with one another. He asserts that for Yahweh's people to carry on properly, their leaders had to go through a process of reformation and or transformation. His exhortation thus invites reflection on the interdependence of priests and laity in Christian communities. The exposure of the abuses, corruption and sins of the leaders calls the entire community to conscious and careful self-evaluation and mutual accountability.

Consequently, Malachi's remarks offer Yahweh's people and contemporary religious leaders at every level of Christian ministry a glimpse into the nature of the priesthood. They serve as an exhortation for moral perfection of religious leaders. Malachi's emphasis on the role of the priest as a teacher (2:5-7), as both the repository and transmitter of the traditions of the community, invite Yahweh's people in faith communities to look anew at the institutions in the church and their society that can serve as carriers of true ethical instruction. In the prophetic words of Malachi, not only divine commands ordering the people to lead lives of virtue are heard, but also a prediction of actual virtues associated with the Christian way of life. The mandate to live a

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life of virtue constitutes the true meaning of Malachi's warning about a swiftly approaching judgment (Mal 3:5). His insistence that sacrifices must be without blemish (Mal 1:8, 13, 14), exhorts Yahweh's people in faith communities to inspect their own souls for blemishes and to live in virtue (cf. Rom. 12:1). The prophetic narrative insists that the requisite inward spiritual reality and concrete physical regalia of worship cannot be totally separated.

Socially, Malachi confronts a population given to religious cynicism and political scepticism. Morality seemed to have been totally forgotten. The weakening of the religious life in Malachi's day was clearly shown, and it had grave social implications. His social ethics challenges Yahweh's people in communities of faith and society in general to be living embodiment of the ideals of fidelity, commitment, and steadfastness. They call for Christian social responsibility, and commitment to the pursuit of truth and justice. They challenged Yahweh's faith communities (the church) to seek concrete ways of affirming, strengthening, empowering, and supporting persons and families in their efforts to live in faithfulness to the values they recognise and esteem.

Yahweh's concern for the less-privileged as indicated by Malachi, calls for the enactment of communal ethic such as Christian social responsibility and an engagement in the pursuit of truth and justice. Thus in the light of the special mission of the Church in the world, Malachi's ethics serves as a enough motivation for Yahweh's faith communities' engagement and commitment to the mission of justice and affirmation of Christian social responsibility. It motivates and thus places a necessity upon faith communities to identify with people in their various situations namely, their social condition, their pains and joys, grief and sorrow, and in their efforts for equity and fairness against tyrannical forces that are in power. If Christian mission in the world is not

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associated with a deep passion and commitment to alleviating if not eradicating people's needs, it may simply be unbelievable.

Thus as Christians proclaim the reign and rule of Yahweh in the world, it is necessary that they be devoted to the requirements of peace and justice. Christian mission in the world must involve ministry to the weak and or sick (physically and spiritually), giving food to the hungry, taking care of those who have been convicted i.e., prisoners, assisting the underprivileged and those who are physically and mentally challenged, and setting free the burdened. Since God has commissioned the Church with the responsibility of making Himself known; His ethical requirements for justice and righteousness, it must therefore make it a point of duty to impact human society with its culture of negligence and not invest in it.

Economically, OT ethics are rooted in the historical land-gift tradition. The economic angle concerns Israel's attitude and treatment of their material possessions. This to a large extent was the book of Malachi's preoccupation in the last disputation (3:7–4:6). The theme of Yahweh's faithfulness and generosity in Malachi 3:6-12 has implications for contemporary Christians. The Judeans manifested their rebellion in their neglect and or refusal to give the tithe (and in addition to other violations). This neglect and or refusal obviously had severe effects on the people and nation; since the sacrificial system of worship in the temple was related to and dependent largely upon the contributions (tithes and offerings) to support those who officiated there. The prophet had to remind the people by calling them back to the ethical requirements of their covenant obligations, namely that the maintenance and sustenance of the temple personnel and temple ministry was their ethical duty.

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Positively, then, this study notes that the book of Malachi's ethics is a powerful and robust notice that motivation for Christian stewardship should emanate from, first and foremost, an acknowledgement of Yahweh's ownership of all the Christian's resources and a high regard for His honour. Thus, having a disposition towards wealth and/or personal effects that incorporates this understanding that all evidently and eventually belonged to Yahweh is very important to Christian stewardship. Again, Malachi's ethical narrative in 3:6-12 serves, not only as a warning to Yahweh's people in faith communities of the consequences of bitterness and arrogance towards Him, but also an encouragement and strong motivation and inspiration to persist in giving even in the midst of hard economic realities.

CHAPTER VII

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter affords the study a final opportunity to draw some conclusions; that is on reflecting on the status of the research objectives, design, methodology, questions and findings and then making some recommendations.

7.1. CONCLUSION

7.1.1. Status of Research Objectives, Design and Methodology

This study is simply an attempt to understand Malachi's ethics by situating them firmly in a particular historical, religious and socio-economic context. Thus it was the purpose of this study to examine Malachi's view on Temple rituals and its ethical implications for the contemporary Church experience. For the purpose of enacting a communal ethic, the thesis aimed at stressing the theological values and ethical relevance of the enduring message of Yahweh alone as the sovereign of all creation and thus of humble trust and hope in him, of repentance, of commitment to the ideals of fidelity and steadfastness, of judgement, truth and justice, and of covenant renewal and restoration of fortunes which Malachi offers people who yearn for them irrespective of their religious and cultural background and nationality.

Since the study is concerned with the faith and experience of ancient Israel in its contemporary post-exilic context, and what emerges is simply a contemporary testimony to the faith by which these people lived by at that particular time, then in this thesis, an analysis of the historical conditions of that faith and life coupled with an attempt at a conversation with the urgent demands of life today are necessary. My primary concern was to analyse the

internal surface structure of the book of Malachi as part of the Christian canon. This exercise was a text-based and text-oriented approach which sought to understand the context of a given text, its basic concerns of morphology, syntax, style and semantic components rather than specific *Sitz im Leben* or the various phases of the development of the origin of the text. Thus the study adopted the exegetical-theological method of biblical interpretation. This approach has led to a better understanding of the exegetical meaning and theological/ethical significance of the texts under consideration.

While the first chapter was an introduction to this endeavour, the study in the second and third chapters, investigated the attempts to relate prophecy via its eschatological affinity; that is, the relation between prophecy and eschatology. It represented definite contributions and conclusions from some scholars who have used their intellectual abilities on the study of the prophets, prophecy, prophetic books, and eschatology for scholarly exegesis. It also demonstrated an understanding of the temple as expressed by the prophets in their criticisms of cultic rituals. It examined background information on Malachi's prophetic corpus with the aim of situating the author's view on the temple rituals within particular historical, economic and socio-religious contexts. In the process, details of authorship, date of writing, recipients of the message, style of writing, prominent themes as well as structure of the book were undertaken. Whether the book of Malachi was originally written or delivered orally, the recipients, author(s), context(s), and content of the message in its synchronic form, remained issues of a major concern. The various historical realities: political, economic, social and religious realities, prepared the ground for the exegesis of the texts of Malachi dealing with cultic rituals' violation.

The exegetical process involved a demarcation of pertinent verses (1:6-2:9; 2:10-16; 2:17-3:5; 3:6-12) which focused attention on the ritual aspect of the temple particularly the sacrifices/offerings and all that is associated with it. Transliteration of each text or verse, explanatory notes on language structure and meaning of key words used in the passage, analysis of historical and literary contexts, analysis of form and structure of the passage(s) as well as analysis of the grammar and lexical data of such passages are provided when necessary. Hebrew grammar books, lexicon, encyclopaedia and dictionary were employed to ascertain the meaning of words used in their grammatical context.

Theological analysis and canonical synthesis afforded the privilege of comparing the confession of the community of faith from generation to generation in the overall canon of the OT. The exegetical foundations of the selected oracles and or disputations in the book of Malachi provided the ground for a contextual application of its message in the sixth chapter. The theological section of the study on the other hand, elucidated and streamlined the results of the exegetical chapter, focusing them specifically on the Lord (Yahweh) and His plan for His people - particularly from the eschatological, ethical view point. In this regard, the study believed that the lived realities of the restoration community of Judah turned out to be an essential medium for communicating the prophetic and eschatological faith and confidence that Yahweh will form a remnant of holy people further than the post-exilic context or era.

7.1.2. Status of Research Questions and Findings

In order to ensure that the prospects of this study offer significant opportunity for restoring authenticity and depth to the faith communities'

private and corporate experience of ritual ethics and practices, the study raised and addressed an array of questions:

- What was the prophetic conception of the temple?
- Is Malachi's emphasis on the ritual delinquencies of the temple unique or distinct in any way for Israel's prophetic history/tradition?
- Does Malachi's pro-temple ritual emphasis contradict earlier biblical prophets?
- What was Malachi's view of the temple and how did he approach it?
- Since Malachi's prophecy is tightly intertwined within a strategic nexus of religious, socio-political and economic realities, what does Malachi teach about Yahweh-the God of Israel and what shape, then, should Yahweh's people in faith communities today take?
- Does Malachi's ethical thrust provide Christians with generally acceptable principles for understanding the Bible in theology?
- Does the level of ritual malpractices in Malachi have any implications for the priesthood and the Church today?
- What moral demand does Malachi's prophetic narrative make upon personal Christian ethics in the individual's own course of life and in his or her daily living and the Christian community in the larger human society?
- What ethical ideals and practical moral demands does reflection on Malachi's prophetic dialogue on the economic angle present Yahweh's people with - their attitude toward and use of their possessions?

The study made an assessment showing how temples were viewed in biblical Israel and how the prophets understood the temple in their different contexts. From the perspectives of those prophets who ministered before the exile, their emphasis was that the temple served as the abode of Yahweh. During the

exile, it is seen as a symbol of the re-establishment of the people as a community of faith, and in the post-exilic era, the temple is conceived as an emblem of the restoration and revival of the people and, as a representation of an eschatological hope.

The study observed that scholars have yet to fully explain the phenomenon of criticism of the cult in prophetic writings, and there is much scholarly precedent for studying pre-exilic and post-exilic prophetic criticism and/or approval of the cult. In this study, the thesis brings the prophets and the priests closer by proposing that their concept of the rituals of the temple (the cult) is essentially the same, reflecting the same theology and understanding of one and the same religion. The one way to explain the discrepancy this study proposes is to advocate that these prophets could not see the importance of rituals for the improvement of ethical life.

If the cult is understood to be the vertical dimension of the Law and ethics its horizontal dimension, one would notice that these vertical and horizontal dimensions go together, both are expressions of God's will. When the vertical dimension (worship, offering, sacrifice) is experiencing some degree of dysfunction, the horizontal dimension (social justice, etc) will be affected. The prophets' interests seem far more concerned with the spiritual and ethical life of the nation. For them, the temple cult was conceived as a graceful gift from Yahweh to Israel and that understanding clarifies their statements. Isaiah and Micah contain a vision of the temple to which nations flood (Isa. 2:2-3; Mic. 4:1-2). Jeremiah announced in the temple, "Improve your way and I will cause you to dwell in this place" (Jer. 7:3). The post-exilic prophets certainly seem concerned that the cult not only functioned, but functioned appropriately (Hag. 1:7-8; Mal. 1:6-2:8).

Malachi's concept of the temple reveals that many aspects of the cultic life were maintained on a regular basis which, however, do not differ very much from the cult at the time of Isaiah, when almost every aspect of the cult was maintained (Isa 1:10-17). However, Malachi's ethical uniqueness is observed somehow most clearly in the preponderance of the negative emphasis the prophet places on temple rituals and the way the language of the cult dominates his analysis of malpractice. In Malachi, the prophet's references to the temple deal with questions about altar pollution and acceptability (or otherwise) of offerings on the altar (cf. 1:6-14; 2:13; 3:4). This is not only as a result of the hard economic realities of the land but in addition was the non-confirmation of the expectations that were provoked by the temple's completed reconstruction and the revival of formal sacrificial worship. In 3:10 the house of Yahweh (i.e. the temple) is equated with a storehouse (*bêth hā'ôtsār*). The bringing of all the tithes into the storehouse or treasury will guarantee the prosperity of the land by providing 'food' for the temple. The connection between the temple and fertility reflects older connections of land and sacred enclave, but in Malachi, it also seems to represent the same point made in Haggai and Zachariah about the temple as an economic centre of the community.

Malachi contains a fundamental critique of the sacrificial practices of the time. In dealing with the ritual delinquencies of the temple, Malachi directed criticism against priests (2:1-9) but they will be purified by the "messenger of the covenant" (3:1-4). Malachi's criticism of the temple cultic activities was primarily conducted on the basis of covenantal principles. The ethical life of the Israelites was far from the covenantal ideal established between Yahweh and the nation. The cult was an expression of the inner life of the worshipper, i.e., an honouring, fearful relationship with Yahweh. Such a relationship was

based on and sustained by the grace of Yahweh who had mercifully chosen his people to be his own. Again, contrary to pagan religions, the rituals of the cult were never meant to have magical properties. They were never separated from the worshipper. So, for someone to approach the altar, he had to be in good terms with Yahweh whom he/she was trying to please, being submissive, repented, thankful and obedient to the *tôrāh*; that is expected from covenant stipulation.

The book's unique emphasis is also seen in its strong criticism of deceit or cheating with offerings. Worshippers were lying with regard to supplicatory offerings and the tithe. Nowhere else in the OT does one find worshippers who cared about offering sacrifices to Yahweh, who did not worship other gods, and who simultaneously cheated. Without doubt, this speaks of the lack of respect for Yahweh in those days, even though there was a general awareness of the importance of obeying Yahweh's Torah. Malachi shows where the ritual delinquencies are and how best to deal with them, either by encouraging them to bring qualified animals or including the whole tithe. This to me appears to be Malachi's most remarkable feature which appears nowhere else in the other prophet books of the OT. The book's emphases on the temple obviously helps one to see that there was nothing wrong with the cult unless it was not used appropriately and effectively to enhance the ethical life of the people as part of the wider picture of Yahweh's covenant with them as His people.

The prophet did not treat the priests as innovators, but as people who are expected to follow policy, maintain standards determined by others, and to perform their duties in a conventional manner. Truly no prophet, however, except Malachi accused them of malfeasance in office. Other prophets had many extreme and uncomplimentary observations to make about religious

observances and the cultic practices of their people, but did not single out priests as targets (Zevit 2006:208). The prophet represents Yahweh as coming 'suddenly to his temple' (3:1), for an eschatological judgment. The Day of Yahweh as envisioned by Malachi will alter the realities of life for Judah. The Israelites expected a day that will bring divine deliverance from their enemies. They hold, of course, that their enemies were Yahweh's enemies but they were themselves Yahweh's enemies, by reason of their covenant violation. So, why they eagerly await the messenger of the covenant to come (Mal 3:1), in fact His coming would not be delightful for them. In the decisive events of the day, the prophet discerns with particular simplicity the awesome presence of Yahweh in the world, His ongoing activity of judging those who have violated the covenant, and who invariably are no longer under its protection with a future day of renewal and restoration of the fortunes of those who fear the Lord. Thus in the book of Malachi, the temple is discerned as an emblem of eschatological hope, wherein Yahweh's last judgment is determined and the triumph of Yahweh's people is declared and granted.

Malachi consistently roots its prophetic dialogue on Yahweh's fidelity to the covenant. The affirmation of divine affection and fidelity to the Torah-abiding community is the first phrase: *'āhabhtî 'ethkhem* (I have loved you, Mal.1:2). Malachi, in the light of deteriorating circumstances, clearly constructs a coherent apology for divine sovereignty (Yahweh's uniqueness) and justice, which manifests itself in harsh allegations against both priests and people. Malachi, familiar with earlier prophetic traditions, proclaimed the theology of Yahweh alone as the sovereign of all creation, universalism, judgement, justice and punishment, covenant renewal and restoration of fortunes. Malachi reiterates that covenant is neither an entitlement nor a blank check:

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Yahweh's covenant demands reverential obedience to the divine commandments and reverential dealings with one another. For Malachi, the ideal community is that which obeys the instructions of Yahweh, one that acknowledges Yahweh's justice and sovereignty and in response lives as a reverential covenant community.

Employing direct speech, Malachi levels harsh indictments against the priests who engage in practices that impugn the integrity of Yahweh and set the whole community in severe danger (Stulman and Kim 2010:241). The accusations are followed by motivated curses: their persons, blessings and perhaps their offspring were to be cursed (2:3). In Malachi 2:4-9, the prophet again highlights the shortcomings of the corrupt priesthood of his day with respect to their teaching potential by way of what is expected of them, as demonstrated by the ideal of the ancient Levites. Malachi's remarks offer Yahweh's people and contemporary religious leaders at every level of Christian ministry a glimpse into the nature of the priesthood. Malachi's insistence that sacrifices must be without blemish (Mal 1:8, 13, 14), exhorts Yahweh's people in faith communities to inspect their own souls for blemishes and to live in virtue (cf. Rom. 12:1). The prophetic narrative insists that the requisite inward spiritual reality and concrete physical regalia of worship cannot be totally separated.

Malachi confronts a population given to religious cynicism and political scepticism. Morality seemed to have been totally forgotten. The weakening of the religious life in Malachi's day was clearly shown, and it had grave social implications. Perversity at the place of worship had resulted in perverseness on the part of those who come to worship. Wrong views of God and false forms of worship inevitably lead to fractured social relationships. Divorce (Mal. 2:13-16) and adultery (Mal. 3:5) were so common that the total

destruction of Jewish families seemed almost imminent. Yahweh's established system of ordered community was subverted (Barton 1995:90–91). The resultant implications were that the less-privileged – the widows, orphans, and foreigners – were ignored and or even persecuted (Malachi 3:5).

The focus on the tithe in the book of Malachi particularly in the fifth disputation oracle (3:6-12) is closely associated with the issue of disrespect for the Lord. The people's perspective with respect to and use of their wealth and or personal effects was simply a symptom of the viability of their covenant relationship with Yahweh. The theme of Yahweh's faithfulness and generosity in Malachi 3:6-12 has implications for contemporary Christians. Judah manifested their rebellion in their neglect and or refusal to give the tithe (in addition to other violations). This neglect and/or refusal obviously had severe effects on the people and nation; since the sacrificial system of worship in the temple was related to and dependent largely upon the contributions (tithes and offerings) to support those who officiated there.

The prophet had to remind the people by calling them back to the ethical requirements of their covenant obligations, namely that the maintenance and sustenance of the temple personnel and temple ministry was their ethical duty. Positively, then, this study notes that the book of Malachi's ethics is a powerful and robust understanding where the motivation for Christian stewardship should emanate from, first and foremost, an acknowledgement of Yahweh's ownership of all Christian's resources and a high regard for His honour. Thus, having a disposition towards wealth and or personal effects that incorporates this understanding that all evidently and eventually belonged to Yahweh is very important for Christian stewardship.

7.2. RECOMMENDATIONS

The ethical dimensions of Yahweh (theological dimension); His people as a restored community of faith (social and political aspects) and their land (economic conditions) as seen in the book of Malachi obviously makes ethical proposals for the Church in dealing with every theological, socio-political, and economic issue within larger human society. In this light the study makes the following recommendations.

7.2.1. The Individual Christian

An individual's personal experience of who Yahweh is must be translated into motivation for consistent ethical behaviour in faith communities and larger human society. Christians are challenged to acknowledge Yahweh's justice and sovereignty over the events of their lives. Since acceptable worship is inseparably linked with acceptable living and the mandate to live a life of virtue constitutes the true meaning of Malachi's warnings about a swiftly approaching judgment (Mal 3:5). Christians are exhorted and challenged to reject wicked actions with all their might, to be eager for what is better, and to strive to perform fully the actions through which they might become full of virtue and every praiseworthy quality. Malachi's insistence that sacrifices must be without blemish (Mal 1:8, 13, 14), exhorts Yahweh's people in faith communities to inspect their own souls for blemishes and to live in virtue.

Malachi's prophetic oracle is an urgent motivation and challenge for Yahweh's people in communities of faith and society in general to be living embodiment of the ideals of fidelity, commitment, and steadfastness. The prophetic narrative compels Christians be in pursuit of truth and equity and to live out justice in every area of their life as; a people. Finally, since all

resources come from and are owned by Yahweh God; He expects that all resources be channelled toward the good in everyone and to the honour and glory of His name. Thus Malachi's ethical narrative in 3:6-12 serves, not only as a warning to Yahweh's people in faith communities of the consequences of bitterness and arrogance towards Him, but also an encouragement and strong motivation and inspiration to persist in giving even in the midst of hard economic realities.

7.2.2. The Church as a Community of faith

Since the Church is considered to be an appropriate setting with which to implement the result of the exegesis of the various texts of the book of Malachi, it thus serves as a channel through which the ethical demands of God for a well-ordered community can be mediated within herself and the larger human society. Malachi's words, should serve an exhortation for all Christian people to a life of virtue and piety. The prophet's warnings to the people of Judah should be transformed into a legitimate application of the Christian values of the twenty first-century church. In the prophetic words of Malachi, not only divine commands ordering the people to lead lives of virtue are heard, but also a prediction of actual virtues associated with the Christian way of life.

Thus in teaching and preaching, the Church must seek concrete ways of affirming, strengthening, empowering, and supporting persons and families in their efforts to live in faithfulness to the values they recognise and esteem. Since a moral and just society is that which respects a foreigner and uplifts those who are oppressed and demoralised, the book of Malachi challenges Christians to be embodiments of integrity, to be more interested in alleviating the plight of the downtrodden and doing what is best for their country. It

motivates and thus places a necessity upon faith communities to identify with people in their various situations namely, their social condition, their pains and joys, grief and sorrow, and in their efforts to attain equity and fairness against tyrannical forces that are in power.

Christian mission in the world must be associated with a deep passion and commitment for alleviating if not eradicating people's needs. Thus as Christians proclaim the reign and rule of Yahweh in the world, it is necessary that they be devoted to the requirements of peace and justice. Christian mission in the world must involve ministry to the weak and or sick (physically and spiritually), giving food to the hungry, taking care of those who are convicted i.e., prisoners, assisting the underprivileged and those who are physically and mentally challenged, and setting free the burdened. It must also include the condemnation of wickedness wherever it is found including established violence, injustice and oppression, dishonesty and all forms of human exploitation.

7.2.3. Religious Leaders

Since Malachi contains a fundamental critique of the sacrificial practices of the time - ritual delinquencies of the temple, and that his criticism (which were conducted on the basis of covenantal principles) are directed against priests (2:1-9), religious leaders at every level of Christian ministry are invited to take a glimpse into the nature of the priesthood. Malachi's oracle implies an exhortation for Christian clergy to live in a way worthy of their status. It is necessary that those chosen for holy work or those called to the priesthood live in a holy way and conduct themselves morally in the church and in human society. The Christian minister or pastor is challenged to be a person

of integrity who in order to be believable and trustworthy in the ministry, must first be believable in daily life.

Christian ministers or pastors (religious leaders) in faith communities must assume responsibility of guarding and protecting the purity and authenticity of the entire worship life of the Church in their various contexts of ministry. They are challenged to teach God's word (the Bible) in such a way as to make it the sum and substance of their preaching. They must be leaders that excel in teaching; effective and efficient exegetes of scripture, who will go through church and society with the Law of the Spirit of Christ, not simply in their hands and heads, but in their hearts and lives, graven there with a pen of fire. They must be priests that provided social justices, that worshipped Yahweh alone and whose performance of the cult satisfied the most rigorous cultic demands.

7.2.4. Further Research

Malachi's unique emphasis on the ritual aspect of the temple service has for a long time caught my attention particularly because of the book's emphasis on the excellence that is required from the Israelites when presenting their sacrifices and such ethical requirements as justice and righteousness. The various interpretations of the different oracles in the book of Malachi served as basis for this study to evolve ethical proposals for contemporary Christian application, at least within an ecclesia community. While some important facets of the problem have been examined to some extent, the weakness of this study however, lies in the application of the evolved ethical proposals. It is my belief that this study will be enriched when taken beyond the limit of the biblical text and literature on the subject. An empirical study of the quality of music, books, offerings, bread and wine, physical surroundings, art, and

second-rated-items (vehicles, cell phones, shoes, etc,) brought forward as seed-faith offerings and for use in worship today would be beneficial to faith communities. Again, a study of Malachi's outstanding positive eschatological features such as: the promise of universalism in which Yahweh's name will be great among the Gentiles, the coming of Yahweh to the His temple (3:1), the judgment aspect of Yahweh's advent namely; "day of wrath" (3:2; 4:1), and the rising of the "Sun of *ts^{e}dhāqā^{h}*" (4:2) could equally be researched further.

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APPENDIX

TRANSLITERATION OF ORACLES IN MALACHI

Second Oracle: Malachi 1:6-2:9

Chapter 1 *Verse 6*

בֵּן יְכַבֵּד אָב וְעֶבֶד אֲדֹנָיו וְאִם־אָב אֲנִי אַיֵּה כְבוֹדִי
וְאִם־אֲדוֹנִים אֲנִי אַיֵּה מוֹרָאִי אָמַר ׀ יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת לָכֶם
הַכֹּהֲנִים בּוֹזֵי שְׁמִי וַאֲמַרְתֶּם בַּמֶּה בָזִינוּ אֶת־שְׁמֶךָ׃

bēn yᵉkhabhbhēdh ’ābh wᵉ’ebhedh ’ădhōnāyw wᵉ’im-’ābh ’ānî ’ayyēʰ khᵉbhôdhî wᵉ’im-’ădhônîm ’ānî ’ayyēʰ môrā’î ’āmar yhwh (’ādhōnāy) tsᵉbhā’ôth lākhem hakhkhōhănîm bôzê shᵉmî wᵉ’ămartem bammeʰ bhāzînû ’eth-shᵉmekhā

Verse 7

מַגִּישִׁים עַל־מִזְבְּחִי לֶחֶם מְגֹאָל וַאֲמַרְתֶּם בַּמֶּה גֵּאַלְנוּךָ
בֶּאֱמָרְכֶם שֻׁלְחַן יְהוָה נִבְזֶה הוּא׃

maghghîshîm ʿal-mizbᵉḥî leḥem mᵉghō’āl wa’ămartem bammeʰ ghē’alnûkhā be’ĕmorkhem shûlḥan yhwh (’ādhōnāy) nibhzeʰ hû’

Verse 8

וְכִי־תַגִּשׁוּן עִוֵּר לִזְבֹּחַ אֵין רָע וְכִי תַגִּישׁוּ פִּסֵּחַ וְחֹלֶה אֵין
רָע הַקְרִיבֵהוּ נָא לְפֶחָתֶךָ הֲיִרְצְךָ אוֹ הֲיִשָּׂא פָנֶיךָ אָמַר
יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת׃

wᵉkhî-thaghghishûn ʿiwwēr lizbōᵃḥ ’ên rāʿ wᵉkhî thaghghîshû pissēᵃḥ wᵉḥōleʰ ’ên rāʿ haqrîbhēhû nā’ lᵉpheḥāthekhā hăyirśᵉkhā ’ô hăyiśśā’ phāneʸkhā ’āmar yhwh (’ādhōnāy) tsᵉbhā’ôth

Verse 9

וְעַתָּה חַלּוּ־נָא פְּנֵי־אֵל וִיחָנֵנוּ מִיֶּדְכֶם הָיְתָה זֹּאת הֲיִשָּׂא
מִכֶּם פָּנִים אָמַר יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת׃

wᵉʿaththāʰ ḥallû-nā’ phᵉnê-’ēl wîḥānēnû miyyedhkhem hāythāʰ zō’th hăyiśśā’ mikhkhem pānîm ’āmar yhwh (’ādhōnāy) tsᵉbhā’ôth

Verse 10

מִי גַם־בָּכֶם וְיִסְגֹּר דְּלָתַיִם וְלֹא־תָאִירוּ מִזְבְּחִי חִנָּם אֵין־לִי
חֵפֶץ בָּכֶם אָמַר יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת וּמִנְחָה לֹא־אֶרְצֶה מִיֶּדְכֶם׃

mî gham-bākhem wᵉyisgōr dᵉlāthayim wᵉlō’-thā’irû mizbᵉḥî ḥinnām ’ên-lî ḥēphets bākhem yhwh (’ādhōnāy) tsᵉbhā’ôth ûminḥāʰ lō’-’ertseʰ miyyedhkhem

Verse 11

כִּי מִמִּזְרַח־שֶׁמֶשׁ וְעַד־מְבוֹאוֹ גָּדוֹל שְׁמִי בַּגּוֹיִם וּבְכָל־מָקוֹם
מֻקְטָר מֻגָּשׁ לִשְׁמִי וּמִנְחָה טְהוֹרָה כִּי־גָדוֹל שְׁמִי בַּגּוֹיִם
אָמַר יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת׃

kî mimmizraḥ-shemesh we'adh-mebhō'ō gādhôl shemî baghghôyîm ûbhekhol-māqôm muqṭār mughghāsh lishmî ûminḥāh thehôrāh Kî-gādhôl shemî baghghôyîm 'āmar yhwh ('ādhōnāy) tsebhā'ôth

Verse 12

וְאַתֶּם מְחַלְלִים אוֹתוֹ בֶּאֱמָרְכֶם שֻׁלְחָן אֲדֹנָי מְגֹאָל הוּא וְנִיבוֹ נִבְזֶה אָכְלוֹ׃

we'aththem meḥallelîm 'ôthô be'ĕmorkhem shulḥan 'ādhōnāy meghō'āl hû' wenîbhô nibzeh 'okhlô

Verse 13

וַאֲמַרְתֶּם הִנֵּה מַתְּלָאָה וְהִפַּחְתֶּם אוֹתוֹ אָמַר יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת
וַהֲבֵאתֶם גָּזוּל וְאֶת־הַפִּסֵּחַ וְאֶת־הַחוֹלָה וַהֲבֵאתֶם
אֶת־הַמִּנְחָה הַאֶרְצֶה אוֹתָהּ מִיֶּדְכֶם אָמַר יְהוָה׃ ס

wa'ămartem hinnēh maththelā'āh wehiphphaḥtem 'ôthô 'āmar yhwh ('ādhōnāy) tsebhā'ôth wahăbhē'them gāzûl we'eth-haphphissēaḥ we'eth-haḥôleh wahăbhē'them 'eth-hamminḥāh ha'ertseh 'ôthāh miyyedhkhem 'āmar yhwh ('ādhōnāy) s

Verse 14

וְאָרוּר נוֹכֵל וְיֵשׁ בְּעֶדְרוֹ זָכָר וְנֹדֵר וְזֹבֵחַ מָשְׁחָת לַאדֹנָי כִּי
מֶלֶךְ גָּדוֹל אָנִי אָמַר יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת וּשְׁמִי נוֹרָא בַגּוֹיִם׃

we'ārûr nôkhēl weyēsh be'edhrô zākhār wenōdhēr wezōbhēaḥ māshḥāth la'dhōnāy kî melekh gādhôl 'ānî 'āmar yhwh ('ādhōnāy) tsebhā'ôth ûshemî nôrā' bhaghghôyim

Chapter 2

Verse 1

וְעַתָּה אֲלֵיכֶם הַמִּצְוָה הַזֹּאת הַכֹּהֲנִים׃

we'aththāh 'ălêkhem hammitswāh hazzō'th hakhkhōhănîm

Verse 2

אִם־לֹא תִשְׁמְעוּ וְאִם־לֹא תָשִׂימוּ עַל־לֵב לָתֵת כָּבוֹד לִשְׁמִי
אָמַר יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת וְשִׁלַּחְתִּי בָכֶם אֶת־הַמְּאֵרָה וְאָרַרְתִּי
אֶת־בִּרְכֹתֵיכֶם וְגַם אֲרַרְתִּיהָ כִּי אֵינְכֶם שָׂמִים עַל־לֵב׃

'im-lō' thishme'û we'im-lō' thāśîmû 'al-lēbh lāthēth kābhôdh lishmî 'āmar yhwh ('ādhōnāy) tsebhā'ôth weshillaḥtî bhākhem 'eth-hamme'ērāh we'ārôthî 'eth-birkhôthêkhem wegham 'ārôthîhā kî 'ênkhem śāmîm 'al-lēbh

Verse 3

הִנְנִי גֹעֵר לָכֶם
אֶת־הַזֶּרַע וְזֵרִיתִי פֶּרֶשׁ עַל־פְּנֵיכֶם
פֶּרֶשׁ חַגֵּיכֶם וְנָשָׂא אֶתְכֶם אֵלָיו׃

hinnî ghō'ēr lākhem 'eth-hazzera' wezērîthî peresh 'al-penêkhem peresh ḥaghghêkhem wenāśā' 'ethkhem 'ēlāyw

Verse 4

וְיָדַעְתֶּם כִּי שִׁלַּחְתִּי
אֲלֵיכֶם אֶת הַמִּצְוָה הַזֹּאת לִהְיוֹת
בְּרִיתִי אֶת־לֵוִי אָמַר יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת׃

wîdha'tem kî shillaḥtî 'ălêkhem 'ēth hammitswāh hazzō'th lihyôth bᵉrîth 'eth-lēwî 'āmar yhwh ('ādhōnāy) tsᵉbhā'ôth

Verse 5

בְּרִיתִי הָיְתָה אִתּוֹ הַחַיִּים וְהַשָּׁלוֹם וָאֶתְּנֵם־לוֹ מוֹרָא
וַיִּירָאֵנִי וּמִפְּנֵי שְׁמִי נִחַת הוּא׃

bᵉrîthî hāythāh 'iththô haḥayyîm wᵉhashshālôm wā'eththᵉnēm-lô môrā' wayyîrā'ēnî ûmiphpᵉnē shᵉmî niḥath hû'

Verse 6

תּוֹרַת אֱמֶת הָיְתָה
בְּפִיהוּ וְעַוְלָה לֹא־נִמְצָא בְשִׂפְתָיו
בְּשָׁלוֹם וּבְמִישׁוֹר הָלַךְ אִתִּי וְרַבִּים
הֵשִׁיב מֵעָוֹן׃

tôrath 'ĕmeth hāythāh bᵉphîhû wᵉ'awlāh lō'-nimtsā' bhiśphāthāyw bᵉshālôm ûbhᵉmîshôr hālakh 'iththî wᵉrabhbhîm hēshîbh mē'āwōn

Verse 7

כִּי־שִׂפְתֵי כֹהֵן
יִשְׁמְרוּ־דַעַת וְתוֹרָה יְבַקְשׁוּ מִפִּיהוּ כִּי
מַלְאַךְ יְהוָה־צְבָאוֹת הוּא׃

kî-śiphthê khōhēn yishmᵉrû-dha'ath wᵉthôrāh yᵉbhaqshû miphphîhû kî mal'akh yhwh ('ādhōnāy)-tsᵉbhā'ôth hû'

Verse 8

וְאַתֶּם סַרְתֶּם מִן־הַדֶּרֶךְ
הִכְשַׁלְתֶּם רַבִּים בַּתּוֹרָה שִׁחַתֶּם בְּרִית
הַלֵּוִי אָמַר יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת׃

wᵉ'aththem sartem min-hadhdherekh hikhshaltem rabhbhîm baththôrāh shᵉḥatem bᵉrîth hallēwî 'āmar yhwh ('ādhōnāy) tsᵉbhā'ôth

Verse 9

וְגַם־אֲנִי נָתַתִּי אֶתְכֶם
נִבְזִים וּשְׁפָלִים לְכָל־הָעָם כִּפְי אֲשֶׁר
אֵינְכֶם שֹׁמְרִים אֶת־דְּרָכַי וְנֹשְׂאִים
פָּנִים בַּתּוֹרָה׃ פ

wᵉgham-'ănî nāthaththî 'ethkhem nibhzîm ûshᵉphālîm lᵉkhol-hā'ām kᵉphî 'ăsher 'ênkhem shōmrîm 'eth-dᵉrākhay wᵉnōśᵉ'îm pānîm baththôrāh (p)

Third Oracle: Malachi 2:10-16

Verse 10

הֲלוֹא אָב אֶחָד לְכֻלָּנוּ
הֲלוֹא אֵל אֶחָד בְּרָאָנוּ מַדּוּעַ נִבְגַּד
אִישׁ בְּאָחִיו לְחַלֵּל בְּרִית אֲבֹתֵינוּ׃

hălô' 'ābh 'eḥādh lᵉkhullānû hălô' 'ēl 'eḥādh bᵉrā'ānû madhdhûᵃ nibhgadh 'îsh bᵉ'āḥîw lᵉḥallēl bᵉrîth 'ăbhōthênû

Verse 11

בָּגְדָה יְהוּדָה וְתוֹעֵבָה
נֶעֱשְׂתָה בְיִשְׂרָאֵל וּבִירוּשָׁלִָם כִּי חִלֵּל
יְהוּדָה קֹדֶשׁ יְהוָה אֲשֶׁר אָהֵב וּבָעַל
בַּת־אֵל נֵכָר׃

bāghdhāʰ yᵉhûdhāʰ wᵉthô'ēbhāʰ neʿesthāʰ bhᵉyiśrā'ēl ûbhîrûshālāim kî ḥillēl yᵉhûdhāʰ qōdhesh yhwh ('ādhōnāy) 'ăsher 'āhēbh ûbhā'al bath-'ēl nēkhār

Verse 12

יַכְרֵת יְהוָה לָאִישׁ אֲשֶׁר
יַעֲשֶׂנָּה עֵר וְעֹנֶה מֵאָהֳלֵי יַעֲקֹב וּמַגִּישׁ
מִנְחָה לַיהוָה צְבָאוֹת׃ פ

yakhrēth yhwh ('ādhōnāy) lā'îsh 'ăsher yaʿăśennāʰ ʿēr wᵉʿōneʰ mē'ohŏlê yaʿăqōbh ûmaghghîsh minḥāʰ lyhwh (la'dhōnāy) tsᵉbhā'ôth (p)

Verse 13

וְזֹאת שֵׁנִית תַּעֲשׂוּ
כַּסּוֹת דִּמְעָה אֶת־מִזְבַּח יְהוָה בְּכִי
וַאֲנָקָה מֵאֵין עוֹד פְּנוֹת אֶל־הַמִּנְחָה
וְלָקַחַת רָצוֹן מִיֶּדְכֶם׃

wᵉzō'th shēnîth taʿăśû kassôth dimʿāʰ 'eth-mizbaḥ yhwh ('ādhōnāy) bᵉkhî wa'ănāqāʰ mē'ên ʿôdh pᵉnôth 'el-hamminḥāʰ wᵉlāqaḥath rātsôn miyyedhkhem

Verse 14

וַאֲמַרְתֶּם עַל־מָּה עַל
כִּי־יְהוָה הֵעִיד בֵּינְךָ וּבֵין אֵשֶׁת
נְעוּרֶיךָ אֲשֶׁר אַתָּה בָּגַדְתָּה בָּהּ וְהִיא
חֲבֶרְתְּךָ וְאֵשֶׁת בְּרִיתֶךָ׃

wa'ămartem ʿal-māʰ ʿal kî-yhwh ('ādhōnāy) hēʿîdh bênkhā ûbhên 'ēsheth nᵉʿûrᵉykhā 'ăsher 'aththāʰ bāghadhtāʰ bāh wᵉhî' ḥăbhertᵉkhā wᵉ'ēsheth bᵉrîthekhā

Verse 15

וְלֹא־אֶחָד עָשָׂה וּשְׁאָר
רוּחַ לוֹ וּמָה הָאֶחָד מְבַקֵּשׁ זֶרַע
אֱלֹהִים וְנִשְׁמַרְתֶּם בְּרוּחֲכֶם וּבְאֵשֶׁת

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נְעוּרֶיךָ אַל־יִבְגֹּד׃

wᵉlō'-'eḥādh ʿāśāʰ ûsheʾār rûᵃḥ lô ûmāʰ hāʾeḥādh mᵉbhaqqēsh zeraʿ ʾĕlōhîm wᵉnishmartem bᵉrûḥăkhem ûbheʾēsheth nᵉʿûreʸkhā ʾal-yibhgōdh

Verse 16

כִּי־שָׂנֵא שַׁלַּח אָמַר
יְהוָה ׀ אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וְכִסֶּה חָמָס ׀
עַל־לְבוּשׁוֹ אָמַר יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת
וְנִשְׁמַרְתֶּם בְּרוּחֲכֶם וְלֹא תִבְגֹּדוּ׃ ס

kî-śānēʾ shallaḥ ʾāmar yhwh (ʾādhōnāy)ʾĕlōhê yiśrāʾēl wᵉkhissāʰ ḥāmās ʿal-lᵉbhûshô ʾāmar yhwh (ʾādhōnāy) tsᵉbhāʾôth wᵉnishmartem bᵉrûḥăkhem wᵉlōʾ thibhgōdhû (s)

Fourth Oracle: 2:17-3:5

Verse 17

הוֹגַעְתֶּם יְהוָה
בִּדְבָרֵיכֶם וַאֲמַרְתֶּם בַּמָּה הוֹגָעְנוּ
בֶּאֱמָרְכֶם כָּל־עֹשֵׂה רָע טוֹב ׀ בְּעֵינֵי
יְהוָה וּבָהֶם ׀ הוּא חָפֵץ אוֹ אַיֵּה אֱלֹהֵי
הַמִּשְׁפָּט׃

hôghaʿtem yhwh (ʾādhōnāy) bᵉdhibhrêkhem waʾămartem bammāʰ hôghāʿnû beʾĕmorkhem kol-ʿōśēʰ rāʿ ṭôbh bᵉʿênê yhwh (ʾādhōnāy) ûbhāhem hûʾ ḥāphēts ʾô ʾayyēʰ ʾĕlōhê hammishpāṭ

Chapter 3

Verse 1

הִנְנִי שֹׁלֵחַ ׀ מַלְאָכִי
וּפִנָּה־דֶרֶךְ לְפָנָי וּפִתְאֹם ׀ יָבוֹא
אֶל־הֵיכָלוֹ הָאָדוֹן ׀ אֲשֶׁר־אַתֶּם
מְבַקְשִׁים וּמַלְאַךְ הַבְּרִית אֲשֶׁר־אַתֶּם
חֲפֵצִים ׀ הִנֵּה־בָא אָמַר יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת׃

hinnî shōlēᵃḥ malʾākhî ûphinnāʰ-dherekh lᵉphānāy ûphithʾō yābhôʾ ʾel-hêkhālô hāʾādhôn ʾăsher-ʾaththem mᵉbhaqshîm ûmalʾakh habhbhᵉrîth ʾăsher-ʾaththem ḥăphētsîm hinnēʰ-bhoʾ ʾāmar yhwh (ʾādhōnāy) tsᵉbhāʾôth

Verse 2

וּמִי מְכַלְכֵּל ׀ אֶת־יוֹם
בּוֹאוֹ וּמִי הָעֹמֵד בְּהֵרָאוֹתוֹ כִּי־הוּא ׀
כְּאֵשׁ מְצָרֵף וּכְבֹרִית מְכַבְּסִים׃

ûmî mᵉkhalkēl ʾeth-yôm bôʾô ûmî hāʿōmēdh bᵉhērāʾôthô kî-hûʾ kᵉʾēsh mᵉtsārēph ûkhᵉbhōrîth mᵉkhabhbhᵉsîm

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Verse 3

וְיָשַׁב מְצָרֵף וּמְטַהֵר
כֶּסֶף וְטִהַר אֶת־בְּנֵי־לֵוִי וְזִקַּק אֹתָם
כַּזָּהָב וְכַכֶּסֶף וְהָיוּ לַיהוָה מַגִּישֵׁי
מִנְחָה בִּצְדָקָה׃

wᵉyāshabh mᵉtsārēph ûmᵉṭahēr keseph wᵉṭihar ʾeth-bᵉnê-lēwî wᵉziqqaq ʾōthām kazzāhābh wᵉkhakhkhāseph wᵉhāyû lyhwh (laʾdhōnāy) maghghîshê minhāʰ bitsdhāqāʰ

Verse 4

וְעָרְבָה לַיהוָה מִנְחַת
יְהוּדָה וִירוּשָׁלָ͏ִם כִּימֵי עוֹלָם וּכְשָׁנִים
קַדְמֹנִיּוֹת׃

wᵉʿārbhāʰ lyhwh (laʾdhōnāy) minḥath yᵉhûdhāʰ wîrûshālāim kîmê ʿôlām ûkhᵉshānîm qadhmōniyyôth

Verse 5

וְקָרַבְתִּי אֲלֵיכֶם
לַמִּשְׁפָּט וְהָיִיתִי עֵד מְמַהֵר
בַּמְכַשְּׁפִים וּבַמְנָאֲפִים וּבַנִּשְׁבָּעִים
לַשָּׁקֶר וּבְעֹשְׁקֵי שְׂכַר־שָׂכִיר אַלְמָנָה
וְיָתוֹם וּמַטֵּי־גֵר וְלֹא יְרֵאוּנִי אָמַר
יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת׃

wᵉqārabhtî ʾălêkhem lammishpāth wᵉhāyîthî ʿēdh mᵉmahēr bamkhashshᵉphîm ûbhamnāʾăphîm ûbhannishbāʿîm lashshāqer ûbhᵉʿōshqê śᵉkhar-śākhîr ʾalmānāʰ wᵉyāthôm ûmaththê-ghēr wᵉlōʾ yᵉrēʾûnî ʾāmar yhwh (ʾādhōnāy) tsᵉbhāʾôth

Fifth Oracle: Malachi 3:6-12

Verse 6

כִּי אֲנִי יְהוָה לֹא שָׁנִיתִי וְאַתֶּם בְּנֵי־יַעֲקֹב לֹא כְלִיתֶם׃

kî ʾănî yhwh (ʾādhōnāy) lōʾ shānîthî wᵉʾaththem bᵉnê-yaʿăqōbh lōʾ khᵉlîthem

Verse 7

לְמִימֵי אֲבֹתֵיכֶם סַרְתֶּם
מֵחֻקַּי וְלֹא שְׁמַרְתֶּם שׁוּבוּ אֵלַי
וְאָשׁוּבָה אֲלֵיכֶם אָמַר יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת
וַאֲמַרְתֶּם בַּמֶּה נָשׁוּב׃

lᵉmîmê ʾăbhōthêkhem sartem mēḥuqqay wᵉlōʾ shᵉmartem shûbhû ʾēlay wᵉʾāshûbhāʰ ʾălêkhem ʾāmar yhwh (ʾādhōnāy) tsᵉbhāʾôth wᵉʾămartem bammeʰ nāshûbh

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Verse 8

הֲיִקְבַּע אָדָם אֱלֹהִים כִּי
אַתֶּם קֹבְעִים אֹתִי וַאֲמַרְתֶּם בַּמֶּה
קְבַעֲנָוךְ הַמַּעֲשֵׂר וְהַתְּרוּמָה׃

hăyiqbaʿ ʾādhām ʾĕlōhîm kî ʾaththem qōbhʿîm ʾōthî waʾămartem bammeʰ qeʰbhaʿănûkhā hammaʿăśēr weʰhaththeʳûmāʰ

Verse 9

בַּמְּאֵרָה אַתֶּם נֵאָרִים וְאֹתִי אַתֶּם קֹבְעִים הַגּוֹי כֻּלּוֹ׃

bammeʾʾērāʰ ʾaththem nēʾārîm weʾʾōthî ʾaththem qōbhʿîm haghghôy kullô

Verse 10

הָבִיאוּ אֶת־כָּל־הַמַּעֲשֵׂר
אֶל־בֵּית הָאוֹצָר וִיהִי טֶרֶף בְּבֵיתִי
וּבְחָנוּנִי נָא בָּזֹאת אָמַר יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת
אִם־לֹא אֶפְתַּח לָכֶם אֶת אֲרֻבּוֹת
הַשָּׁמַיִם וַהֲרִיקֹתִי לָכֶם בְּרָכָה
עַד־בְּלִי־דָי׃

hābhîʾû ʾeth-kol-hammaʿăśēr ʾel-bêth hāʾôtsār wîhî ṭereph beʰbhêthî ûbhʰeḥānûnî nāʾ bāzōʾth ʾāmar yhwh (ʾādhōnāy) tseʰbhāʾôth ʾim-lōʾ ʾephtaḥ lākhem ʾēth ʾărubhbhôth hashshāmayim wahărîqōhî lākhem beʳākhāʰ ʿadh-beʰlî-dhāy

Verse 11

וְגָעַרְתִּי לָכֶם בָּאֹכֵל
וְלֹא־יַשְׁחֵת לָכֶם אֶת־פְּרִי הָאֲדָמָה
וְלֹא־תְשַׁכֵּל לָכֶם הַגֶּפֶן בַּשָּׂדֶה אָמַר
יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת׃

weʰghāʿartî lākhem bāʾōkhēl weʰlōʾ-yashḥith lākhem ʾeth-pʰeʳî hāʾădhāmāʰ weʰlōʾ-thʰeshakhkhēl lākhem haghghephen baśśādheʰ ʾāmar yhwh (ʾādhōnāy) tseʰbhāʾôth

Verse 12

וְאִשְּׁרוּ אֶתְכֶם
כָּל־הַגּוֹיִם כִּי־תִהְיוּ אַתֶּם אֶרֶץ חֵפֶץ
אָמַר יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת׃ ס

weʾʾishsheʳû ʾethkhem kol-haghghôyim kî-thihyû ʾaththem ʾerets ḥēphetsʾāmar yhwh (ʾādhōnāy) tseʰbhāʾôth (s)