

Bellows Family

MATAN AL HAPEREK

The Six-Year Online Weekly | Tanakh Learning Program

In loving memory of my father ARTIGAS MAURICIO MOSHE KOHN

Malachi 2:10-3

In our previous study-guide we learned the first two prophecies in Sefer Malachi. We will now complete the remaining four prophecies in the book. These prophecies, as well, reflect the problems which were characteristic of the period of the return to Zion. First, the marrying of foreign women by Israelite men in violation of their covenant with Israelite women. Second, the question of reward and punishment which bothered many of the returnees because of their bitter disappointment in the difficult reality they were dealing with, which was in contrast with their high expectations.. The book ends with three general pesukim which are a conclusion for all of the books of the prophets (3:22-24)

The Third Prophecy: "Yehudah has dealt treacherously, and an abomination has been committed in Israel and in Jerusalem" (2:10-16)

The phenomenon of intermarriage among the returnees to Zion is described at length in Sefer Ezra, who fights it with all his strength and even makes a covenant to stop it. Malachi also deals with this problem, however he is looking at the other side of the issue – the Israelite women who are being divorced because of it. The prophecy can be divided into two sections, in the first section it deals with marrying foreign women, and in the second with divorcing the Israelite women.

1.

a | Language of betrayal (*b.g.d.* also translated as treachery), violation and covenant repeat several times in this prophecy: discuss the two aspects of the betrayal of the women, especially see the description of betrayal in pasuk 11. Pay attention to the unique description of the marriage covenant in pasuk 14. How is the covenant between man and wife understood and what is God's role in it?

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- b** | There are several references in the prophecy to the story of Yehudah and Bat Shua:
"For Yehudah has profaned ... and married the daughter of a foreign god." (2:11) – Yehudah married the daughter of a Caananite man whose name was Shua.
"The Lord shall cut off one of acuity (Er) or that answers (Onah) from the tents of Yaacov" (2:12) – This refers to the death of the sons of Yehudah: Er and Onen.
What is the meaning of the comparison to this story?

The Fourth Prophecy: "Behold I send My angel, and he will clear a way before Me." (2:17-3:6)

The fourth prophecy deals with the question of reward and punishment: in contrast to the people's complaints of heavenly injustice (2:17) the prophet describes the arrival of the Day of the Lord which the angel will herald (3:1-6).

2.

- a** | The prophet describes two stages (3:1-4, 5-6). What are the differences between the two stages – to whom is each stage directed, who is active in each stage and what is the purpose of each stage?

- b** | Why was the angel sent in the first stage, before God arrives at the Temple to purify the Levites? Use the commentary of **Daat Mikra**:

Clear a way – As the messenger of the king walks before him and announces to the people to clear the way, so too the angel will announce the arrival of the Lord...And He will suddenly come to His sanctuary, the Temple in Jerusalem, which he left because of the sins of the priests and the nation.

Note the similarity between the term "angel of the covenant" and the description of the Priests and Levites in 2:5-7 "My covenant was with him... for he is a messenger (also angel) of the Lord of Hosts".

The Fifth Prophecy: "Return to Me, and I will return to you" (3:7-12)

As in the previous prophecy, here too, Malachi prophesies about the future healing which will come about when the nation repents and returns their relationship with God to its normal state.

3.

What is the source of the people's repentance in this prophecy? How is it connected to Malachi's general way of thinking? Pay attention to the uniqueness of this demand as compared to the usual ways for a prophet to call for repentance.

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The Sixth Prophecy: “For the day is coming, burning like a furnace” (2:13-21)

Like the fourth prophecy, this prophecy focuses on the people’s claims about the question of reward and punishment. Malachi describes the Day of Judgment when the righteous will be separated from the sinners (19-21).

4.

What is the meaning of this description and what is the nature of the law which arises from it? What is the symbolic meaning of the sun here? See the Gemara in **Nedarim 8b**:

R. Shimon b. Lakish said: There is no Gehinnom in the world to come, but the Holy One, blessed be He, will draw forth the sun from its sheath: the righteous shall be healed, and the wicked shall be judged and punished thereby. As it is written, *But unto you that fear my name shall the sun of righteousness arise with healing in its wings.* Moreover, they shall be rejuvenated by it, as it is written, *And ye shall go forth and grow up as calves of the stall.* But the wicked shall be punished thereby, as it is written, *Behold, the day cometh that shall burn as an oven, and all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly, shall be stubble; and the day that cometh shall burn them up, saith the Lord of Hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch.*

The Conclusion of the Book (3:22-24) “Keep in remembrance the teaching of Moshe, My servant”

The conclusion of Sefer Malachi is in fact the conclusion of all the books of the prophets and it prepares the nation for the time when there will be no prophecy.

5.

a | The name “*Moshe, My servant*” appears together with the mention of the Torah in only one other place in Tanakh - at the beginning of Sefer Yehoshua (1:2,7). As such, this association forms a frame around all of the books of the prophets. What is the role of this phrase in Malachi? Pay attention to whom the commandments are directed in each case. What is the reason for the placement of these commandments at the beginning of the new period in the history of the nation?

b | “*Lo, I will send you Eliyah the prophet*” (23) In the final two pesukim the wondrous image of Eliyahu the prophet, who ascended to heaven in a whirlwind, appears and receives a new role as the herald of the Day of the Lord. What exactly is Eliyahu’s role in the future? See the varying opinions of the sages in the following Mishna from **Eduyot (8:7)**, and think about how their opinions are derived from the pesukim:

Rabbi Yehoshua said: I have received a tradition from Rabban Yochanan ben Zakkai, who heard it from his teacher, and his teacher [heard it] from his teacher, as a halakhah [given] to Moshe from Sinai, that Eliyahu will not come to pronounce unclean or to pronounce

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clean, to put away or to bring near, but to put away those brought near by force and to bring near those put away by force. Rabbi Yehudah says: to bring near, but not to put away. Rabbi Shimon says: to conciliate disputes. And the Sages say: neither to put away nor to bring near, but to make peace in the world, for it is said, *“Behold I send to you Eliyahu the prophet”*, etc., *“and he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children and the heart of the children to their fathers”* (Malachi 3:23-24).

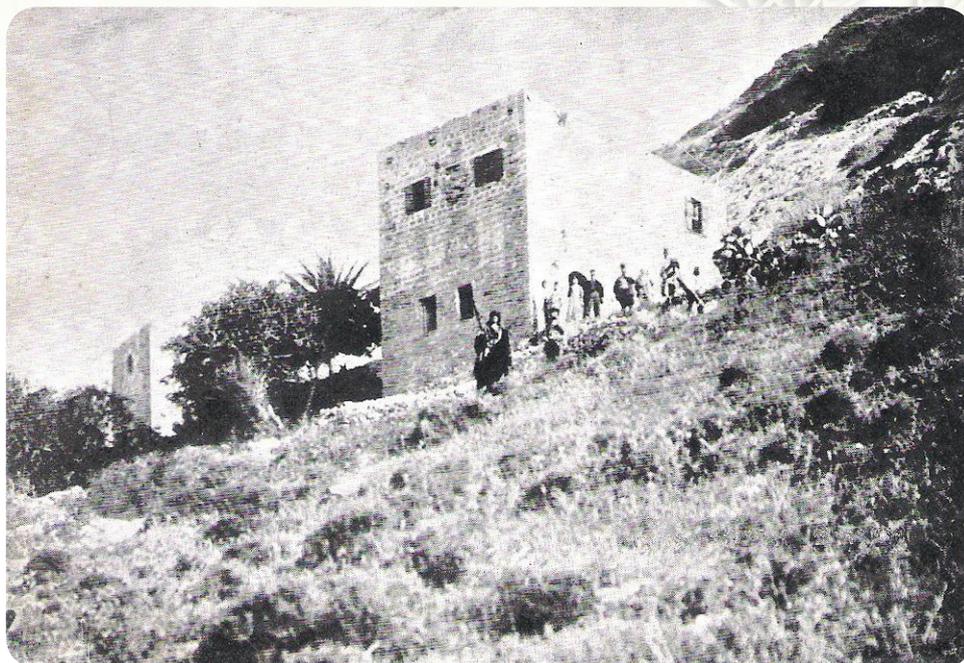
APPENDIX: **“Lo, I will send you Elijah the prophet” – The Character of Eliyahu in Sefer Malachi**

It is as if he has two personalities, different from each other, which do not have anything to do with each other: the Eliyahu in the Tanakh and the one in the Aggadah. Eliyahu in the Tanakh is an angry prophet, a great zealot ... Already at the end of the books of the prophets we start to see a different picture of Eliyahu, similar to that in the later Aggadot: *“Lo, I will send you Eliyah the prophet”*...This Eliyahu is fundamentally different...In the time of the ancient Mishna, at the end of the Second Temple period he is like an angel from God...who is ready to bring peace to the whole world...Are these really two different images - the zealous prophet in the Tanakh and the Aggadic, merciful Eliyahu, who is good and does good and only reminds us of Israel's merits? We cannot say that they are really different, for already at the end of Malachi we find the connection between them, in the promise that Eliyahu will come to *“turn the heart of the fathers to the children and the heart of the children to their fathers”*. There is no doubt that this is one personality, both historical and Aggadic. Eliyahu's one-sided zealotry, as it is expressed in its first and central revelation in Sefer Melachim, is a cause for criticism and reservation. These are expressed in the Tanakh and highlighted by the Sages...² The role of the prophet in Israel is a double role: to defend the honor of the father in his role as messenger to the sons, as a prophet of God, but no less to defend the honor of Israel and its benefit when he stands before God... Eliyahu lived in a generation of spiritual crisis. In Eliyahu's generation the king allowed his pagan, foreign wife to dominate him and his kingdom. Eliyahu chose to be prophet in this generation because of his extreme zealotry for God and he ignored the other side of the mission: showing mercy to the people of his generation and defending them ... He was not chosen for this purpose (to ignore the people of his generation) and since he did not fulfill his role completely – his prophetic mission was cut off prematurely. And therefore, just as Eliyahu appears in the Tanakh suddenly ‘in the middle’ of his activity, so too, he disappears surprisingly, with no explanation. Eliyahu did not complete his mission and he is taken in the midst of activity. The story of Eliyahu's prophecy is therefore the story of an unfinished life... Eliyahu's words of accusation against the nation of Israel reflect the perspective of a prophet who lived in a specific generation. However a prophet only sees a narrow section of historical reality. The truth about the nation of Israel is revealed to Eliyahu only over the course of history,

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through many generations to the end of time, as he meets up with Israel in all of its future reincarnations. Then Eliyahu will admit how unjust his accusations were and his admission will be expressed in the actions which he will do in the future, in the very reversal of his behavior... Eliyahu's renewed appearance reveals that his heart burns with love for Israel. His hidden love rises to the surface, and retroactively purifies his image and his motives become clear.
(Free Translation from Pirkei Eliyahu, Rav Elchanan Samet)



A photograph from 1899 of the area identified as Eliyahu's cave on the Carmel Mountain

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