

Malachi 1:14

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

But cursed be the deceiver, which hath in his flock a male, and voweth, and sacrificeth unto the Lord a corrupt thing: for I am a great King, saith the LORD of hosts, and my name is dreadful among the heathen.

Analysis

But cursed be the deceiver, which hath in his flock a male, and voweth, and sacrificeth unto the Lord a corrupt thing: for I am a great King, saith the LORD of hosts, and my name is dreadful among the heathen. God pronounces curse on **the deceiver** (נָקֵל, nokhel)—one who deals deceitfully, acts treacherously. This person has **in his flock a male** (יש בָּעֵדָר זָכָר, yesh be'edro zakhar)—a healthy male animal suitable for sacrifice. He **voweth** (נָזַר, noder)—makes a vow to God promising the best animal. But then he **sacrificeth unto the Lord a corrupt thing** (זָבֵחַ מְשֻׁחָת, zove'ah moshhat)—offers something defective, blemished, corrupted instead. **moshhat** (moshhat, corrupt) indicates something marred, spoiled, unfit.

This is deliberate deception: promising God the best, giving Him defective substitutes. The motivation: greed—keeping valuable animals while appearing pious. God's response: **cursed be the deceiver** (אָרַר נָקֵל, arur nokhel). **arur** (arur) invokes covenant curse (Deuteronomy 27-28). Ananias and Sapphira exemplify this in Acts 5:1-11—they claimed to give everything but kept back part, lying to the Holy Spirit. God struck them dead.

The reason for severity: **for I am a great King** (כִּי מֶלֶךְ גָּדוֹל אָנִי), ki melekh gadol ani). God's greatness demands excellence, not leftovers. **My name is dreadful**

among the heathen (נָרָא בָּגְיִם, ushmi nora va-goyim). (nora) means feared, revered, awesome. Even pagans recognize God's majesty; only His own people treat Him with contempt.

Historical Context

The practice of making vows pervaded ancient Israel's worship (Leviticus 27, Numbers 30, Deuteronomy 23:21-23). Vows were voluntary but once made, became obligatory—breaking them brought curse. The deceiver in Malachi 1:14 made a public vow (perhaps in temple worship) promising God a valuable male animal, but then privately substituted a defective one, hoping no one would notice. This combines sacrilege (offering unacceptable sacrifice) with deception (breaking vows) and greed (keeping the best for self). Jesus condemned similar hypocrisy in Pharisees who made elaborate vows while neglecting justice and mercy (Matthew 23:16-22). Paul warned against making vows rashly (Acts 23:12-14 describes men who vowed not to eat until they killed Paul). The New Testament encourages making commitments carefully and keeping them faithfully (Ecclesiastes 5:4-6, James 5:12).

Related Passages

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

1 John 4:8 — God is love

Study Questions

1. How might we be guilty of 'bait and switch' with God—promising one thing but delivering less?
2. What does God's identity as 'great King' demand regarding the quality and sincerity of what we offer Him?
3. How does the irony that pagans fear God's name while His people despise it challenge our casual approach to worship?

Interlinear Text

וְנִנְצַדְתָּ רְאֵבָר וְרַבָּר
But cursed be the deceiver

וְנִנְצַדְתָּ רְאֵבָר וְרַבָּר
H779 H5230 H3426 H5739 H2145 H5087

וְזָבַת מְשֻׁטָּת לְאַדְנָן כִּי גָּדוֹל מְלָךְ
and sacrificeth a corrupt thing unto the Lord King for I am a great

H2076 H7843 H136 H3588 H4428 H1419

וְנִנְצַדְתָּ רְאֵבָר וְרַבָּר
H589 H559 H3068 H6635 H8034 H3372

בְּגָיִם:
among the heathen
H1471

Additional Cross-References

2 Corinthians 8:12 (Parallel theme): For if there be first a willing mind, it is accepted according to that a man hath, and not according to that he hath not.

Malachi 1:8 (Sacrifice): And if ye offer the blind for sacrifice, is it not evil? and if ye offer the lame and sick, is it not evil? offer it now unto thy governor; will he be pleased with thee, or accept thy person? saith the LORD of hosts.

Revelation 21:8 (Parallel theme): But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death.

Psalms 76:12 (Kingdom): He shall cut off the spirit of princes: he is terrible to the kings of the earth.

Psalms 47:2 (Kingdom): For the LORD most high is terrible; he is a great King over all the earth.

Jeremiah 10:10 (Kingdom): But the LORD is the true God, he is the living God, and an everlasting king: at his wrath the earth shall tremble, and the nations shall not be able to abide his indignation.

Zechariah 14:9 (Kingdom): And the LORD shall be king over all the earth: in that day shall there be one LORD, and his name one.

Luke 12:46 (References Lord): The lord of that servant will come in a day when he looketh not for him, and at an hour when he is not aware, and will cut him in sunder, and will appoint him his portion with the unbelievers.

Malachi 1:11 (Sacrifice): For from the rising of the sun even unto the going down of the same my name shall be great among the Gentiles; and in every place incense shall be offered unto my name, and a pure offering: for my name shall be great among the heathen, saith the LORD of hosts.

Revelation 15:4 (References Lord): Who shall not fear thee, O Lord, and glorify thy name? for thou only art holy: for all nations shall come and worship before thee; for thy judgments are made manifest.

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