

Malachi 1:6

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

A son honoureth his father, and a servant his master: if then I be a father, where is mine honour? and if I be a master, where is my fear? saith the LORD of hosts unto you, O priests, that despise my name. And ye say, Wherein have we despised thy name?

Analysis

A son honoureth his father, and a servant his master: if then I be a father, where is mine honour? and if I be a master, where is my fear? saith the LORD of hosts unto you, O priests, that despise my name. God shifts from defending His love for Israel (vv. 2-5) to indicting priestly contempt. The analogy establishes universal principles: **A son honoureth his father** (בֶּן יְכַבֵּד אָב, ben yekhabbed av) and **a servant his master** (וְעֶבֶד אֲדֹנָיו, ve'eved adonav). The verb כָּבַד (kavad) means to honor, glorify, give weight to. Basic human relationships demand respect; how much more the divine-human relationship?

God applies this logic: **if then I be a father, where is mine honour?** (וְאִם־אָב אֲנִי, ve'im-av ani ayyeh khevodi). God is Father to Israel (Exodus 4:22, Deuteronomy 32:6, Isaiah 63:16), yet receives no כְּבוֹד (kavod, honor/glory). Similarly, **if I be a master, where is my fear?** (וְאִם־אֲדֹנִים אֲנִי אֶה מוֹרָא, ve'im-adonim ani ayyeh mora'i). מוֹרָא (mora) means fear, reverence, awe. The priests who should model honor and reverence instead **despise my name** (בֹּזֵי שְׁמִי, bozei shemi)—בָּזָה (bazah) means to despise, show contempt, treat with scorn.

Their defiant response—**Wherein have we despised thy name?** (בַּמָּה בָּזִינוּ אֶת־שִׁמְךָ, bameh vazinu et-shemekha)—reveals spiritual blindness.

Historical Context

The post-exilic priesthood had grown complacent and mercenary. They controlled temple operations, religious instruction, and mediation between God and people. Their corruption meant Israel's entire spiritual infrastructure was compromised. They violated Leviticus 22:17-25, which forbade defective sacrifices. This pattern appears throughout Israel's history: when spiritual leaders fail, the people follow (2 Chronicles 36:14, Jeremiah 23:11, Ezekiel 22:26). Jesus would later confront similar priestly corruption, cleansing the temple and pronouncing woes on religious leaders who laid heavy burdens on others while neglecting justice, mercy, and faith (Matthew 23).

Related Passages

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

1 John 4:8 — God is love

Study Questions

1. How does the father-son and master-servant analogy clarify what God deserves from His people?
2. In what ways might we show contempt for God's name while maintaining outward religious observance?
3. What special accountability do spiritual leaders bear for modeling honor and reverence toward God?

Interlinear Text

בן	יְכַבֵּד	אב	וְעַבְד	אֲדוֹנִי	וְאִם	אב
A son	honoureth	his father	and a servant	and if I be a master	H518	his father
H1121	H3513	H1	H5650	H113		H1
אֲנִי	אֵלֹהִים	כְּבוֹדִי	וְאִם	אֲדוֹנִי	אֲנִי	אֵלֹהִים
H589	H346	where is mine honour	H518	and if I be a master	H589	H346
		H3519		H113		
מִוְרָאִי	וְאָמַרְתֶּם	יְהוָה	צָבָא	וְלָכֶם		הַכֹּהֲנִים
where is my fear	And ye say	the LORD	of hosts	H0		unto you O priests
H4172	H559	H3068	H6635			H3548
בְּזֵי יְנוֹ	שְׁמִי:	וְאָמַרְתֶּם	בְּמֵה			
Wherein have we despised	my name	And ye say	H4100			
H959	H8034	H559				
בְּזֵי יְנוֹ	אֶת	שְׁמִי:				
Wherein have we despised	H853	my name				
H959		H8034				

Additional Cross-References

Luke 6:46 (References Lord): And why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?

Isaiah 1:2 (References Lord): Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth: for the LORD hath spoken, I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me.

Exodus 20:12 (References Lord): Honour thy father and thy mother: that thy days may be long upon the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee.

1 Peter 1:17 (Parallel theme): And if ye call on the Father, who without respect of persons judgeth according to every man's work, pass the time of your sojourning here in fear:

Hosea 12:8 (Parallel theme): And Ephraim said, Yet I am become rich, I have found me out substance: in all my labours they shall find none iniquity in me that were sin.

Isaiah 64:8 (References Lord): But now, O LORD, thou art our father; we are the clay, and thou our potter; and we all are the work of thy hand.

Proverbs 30:17 (Parallel theme): The eye that mocketh at his father, and despiseth to obey his mother, the ravens of the valley shall pick it out, and the young eagles shall eat it.

Ephesians 6:2 (Parallel theme): Honour thy father and mother; (which is the first commandment with promise;)

Proverbs 30:11 (Parallel theme): There is a generation that curseth their father, and doth not bless their mother.

Matthew 7:21 (References Lord): Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven.