

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** (בן יכבד אב) and **a servant his master** (עבד אדון). The verb **כבד** (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?** (אם-אב אני) (ve'im-av ani ayyeh khevodi). God is Father to Israel (Exodus 4:22, Deuteronomy 32:6, Isaiah 63:16), yet receives no **כבוד** (kavod, honor/glory). Similarly, **if I be a master, where is my fear?** (אם-אדון אב אני מוקאי) (ve'im-adonim ani ayyeh mora'i). **מוקא** (mora) means fear, reverence, awe. The priests who should model honor and reverence instead **despise my name** (בזח שמי) (bozei shemi)—**בזח** (bazah) means to despise, show contempt, treat with scorn.

Their defiant response—**Wherein have we despised thy name?** (במה בזינו את-שםך) (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

אָבִים	אָדוֹןִים	אָבִים	אָבִים	אָבִים	אָבִים
his father	and if I be a master	and if I be a master	his father	his father	his father
H1121	H5650	H113	H1	H518	H1
honoureth	and a servant	and if I be a master	where is mine honour	and if I be a master	where is mine honour
H3513	H1	H518	H3519	H113	H346
A son	his father	and if I be a master	where is mine honour	and if I be a master	where is mine honour
הַיּוֹם	כִּי	אָמַת	אָמַת	אָמַת	אָמַת
אָנִי	אָנִי	אָנִי	אָנִי	אָנִי	אָנִי
H589	H346	H518	H3519	H113	H346
מָוֶךְ	אָמַרְתָּם	אָמַרְתָּם	אָמַרְתָּם	אָמַרְתָּם	אָמַרְתָּם
where is my fear	And ye say	the LORD	of hosts	unto you O priests	unto you O priests
H4172	H559	H3068	H6635	H0	H3548
אָמַרְתָּם	אָמַרְתָּם	אָמַרְתָּם	אָמַרְתָּם	אָמַרְתָּם	אָמַרְתָּם
בְּזַיִן	בְּזַיִן	בְּזַיִן	בְּזַיִן	בְּזַיִן	בְּזַיִן
Wherein have we despised	my name	And ye say	my name	my name	my name
H959	H8034	H4100	H8034	H8034	H8034
שְׁמָךְ	שְׁמָךְ	שְׁמָךְ	שְׁמָךְ	שְׁמָךְ	שְׁמָךְ
בְּזַיִן	בְּזַיִן	בְּזַיִן	בְּזַיִן	בְּזַיִן	בְּזַיִן
Wherein have we despised	my name				
H959	H853	H4100	H8034	H8034	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.

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