

Malachi 2:14

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Yet ye say, Wherefore? Because the LORD hath been witness between thee and the wife of thy youth, against whom thou hast dealt treacherously: yet is she thy companion, and the wife of thy covenant.

Analysis

Yet ye say, Wherefore? Israel's question reveals stunning spiritual obtuseness—they're genuinely puzzled why God rejects their worship. Malachi's entire prophecy features this pattern of divine accusation followed by incredulous denial (1:2, 1:6, 1:7, 2:17, 3:7-8, 3:13). **Because the LORD hath been witness between thee and the wife of thy youth**—עֵד (ed, witness) recalls God's role at the marriage covenant. Every marriage occurs before the divine witness who guarantees covenant fidelity.

Against whom thou hast dealt treacherously: yet is she thy companion, and the wife of thy covenant—חֵבֶרֶת (chavereth, companion) denotes equal partnership, not mere property. The בְּרִית (berit, covenant) of marriage carries the same weight as Israel's covenant with Yahweh. Divorcing the wife of one's youth is בָּגַד (bagad, treachery), the same term used for Israel's apostasy from God (Jeremiah 3:20). This equation elevates marriage to sacred covenant status and makes divorce a form of covenant-breaking parallel to idolatry.

Historical Context

Ancient Near Eastern marriage was often transactional, viewing wives as property to be acquired and dismissed at will. Deuteronomy 24:1-4 regulated divorce but

didn't mandate it. By Jesus's time, competing rabbinic schools debated divorce grounds—Shammai limiting it to sexual immorality, Hillel permitting it for any displeasure. Malachi's absolute language ('the wife of thy covenant') challenged cavalier divorce culture, a theme Jesus would later radicalize (Matthew 19:3-9).

Related Passages

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Study Questions

1. How does understanding God as witness to every marriage covenant transform how you view wedding vows?
2. What does calling a spouse 'companion' rather than 'possession' reveal about God's design for marriage?
3. In what ways does contemporary Christian divorce culture parallel Malachi's generation—technical legality replacing covenant fidelity?

Interlinear Text

וַאֲמַרְתָּ ׀	עַל	מָה	עַל	כִּי	יְהוָה	הֵעֵיד
Yet ye say	H5921	Wherefore	H5921	H3588	Because the LORD	hath been witness
H559		H4100			H3068	H5749
בֵּינֶךָ	וְיִן	וְאִשְׁתְּ	נְעוּרֶיךָ	אִשׁ ר	אֲתָה	
H996	H996	and the wife	of thy youth	H834	H859	
		H802	H5271			
		בְּגִדְתָּהּ		וְהָיָא	חֲבֵרְתֶךָ	
		against whom thou hast dealt treacherously		H0	H1931	yet is she thy companion
		H898				H2278
		וְאִשְׁתְּ	בְרִיתְךָ:			
		and the wife	of thy covenant			
		H802	H1285			

Additional Cross-References

Isaiah 54:6 (References Lord): For the LORD hath called thee as a woman forsaken and grieved in spirit, and a wife of youth, when thou wast refused, saith thy God.

Ecclesiastes 9:9 (Parallel theme): Live joyfully with the wife whom thou lovest all the days of the life of thy vanity, which he hath given thee under the sun, all the days of thy vanity: for that is thy portion in this life, and in thy labour which thou takest under the sun.

Genesis 31:50 (Witness): If thou shalt afflict my daughters, or if thou shalt take other wives beside my daughters, no man is with us; see, God is witness betwixt me and thee.

Malachi 2:15 (Parallel theme): And did not he make one? Yet had he the residue of the spirit. And wherefore one? That he might seek a godly seed. Therefore take heed to your spirit, and let none deal treacherously against the wife of his youth.

Proverbs 2:17 (Covenant): Which forsaketh the guide of her youth, and forgetteth the covenant of her God.

Jeremiah 8:12 (References Lord): Were they ashamed when they had committed abomination? nay, they were not at all ashamed, neither could they blush: therefore shall they fall among them that fall: in the time of their visitation they shall be cast down, saith the LORD.

Jeremiah 42:5 (Witness): Then they said to Jeremiah, The LORD be a true and faithful witness between us, if we do not even according to all things for the which the LORD thy God shall send thee to us.

Malachi 3:5 (Witness): And I will come near to you to judgment; and I will be a swift witness against the sorcerers, and against the adulterers, and against false swearers, and against those that oppress the hireling in his wages, the widow, and the fatherless, and that turn aside the stranger from his right, and fear not me, saith the LORD of hosts.

Proverbs 30:20 (Parallel theme): Such is the way of an adulterous woman; she eateth, and wipeth her mouth, and saith, I have done no wickedness.

Ezekiel 16:8 (Covenant): Now when I passed by thee, and looked upon thee, behold, thy time was the time of love; and I spread my skirt over thee, and covered thy nakedness: yea, I sware unto thee, and entered into a covenant with thee, saith the Lord GOD, and thou becamest mine.