

Malachi 2:15

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

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.

Analysis

And did not he make one? Yet had he the residue of the spirit. And wherefore one? This notoriously difficult verse likely alludes to Genesis 2:21-24—God made אֶחָד (echad, one) unified flesh from Adam and Eve, though He had רוּחַ (ruach, spirit/life-force) sufficient to create many wives for Adam. The divine self-limitation to monogamy establishes God's creational design. **That he might seek a godly seed**—זֶרַע אֱלֹהִים (zera elohim, offspring of God) reveals marriage's covenantal purpose: producing children raised in Yahweh-worship. Divorce and remarriage to pagan women undermines this goal, creating religiously divided households.

Therefore take heed to your spirit, and let none deal treacherously against the wife of his youth—the imperatives שָׁמַר (shamar, guard/keep watch) and בָּגַד (bagad, deal treacherously) bookend the warning. Covenant fidelity requires vigilant spiritual discipline, guarding one's רוּחַ (spirit/disposition) against the treachery of casual divorce. The repetition of 'wife of thy youth' emphasizes the particular heinousness of abandoning long-faithful partners.

Historical Context

The concern for 'godly seed' reflects post-exilic Israel's precarious position. As a small remnant surrounded by pagan nations, their survival as a distinct covenant people depended on raising children in pure Yahweh-worship. Mixed marriages threatened this by dividing children's religious loyalty (as Solomon's foreign wives turned his heart, 1 Kings 11:4). Nehemiah's horror at discovering children of mixed marriages who couldn't even speak Hebrew (Nehemiah 13:24) illustrates the generational consequences Malachi warns against.

Related Passages

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Study Questions

1. How does God's creational design of 'one flesh' monogamy challenge contemporary serial monogamy and 'trading up'?
2. What does 'seeking godly seed' reveal about marriage's purpose beyond personal fulfillment?
3. In what practical ways must believers 'guard their spirit' against the cultural normalization of covenant-breaking?

Interlinear Text

וְלֹא	הָאֶחָד ד	עָשָׂה	וְשָׁר	בְּרִי וְיָחִיד מ
H3808	And wherefore one	And did not he make	Yet had he the residue	of the spirit
	H259	H6213	H7605	H7307
לִּי	וְיָמָה	הָאֶחָד ד	מִבֶּקֶשׁ שׁ	אֶלֶּה יִם זֶרַע
H0	H4100	And wherefore one	That he might seek	seed a godly
		H259	H1245	H2233 H430
וְנִשְׁמָרְתֶּם	בְּרִי וְיָחִיד מ	וּבְאִשְׁתִּי	נְעוּרֵי יָךְ	אֶל
Therefore take heed	of the spirit	against the wife	of his youth	H408
H8104	H7307	H802	H5271	
וְלֹא יִבְגְּדוּ:				
and let none deal treacherously				
H898				

Additional Cross-References

1 Corinthians 7:14 (Parallel theme): For the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband: else were your children unclean; but now are they holy.

2 Corinthians 6:18 (Parallel theme): And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty.

Malachi 2:14 (Parallel theme): 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.

Job 27:3 (Spirit): All the while my breath is in me, and the spirit of God is in my nostrils;

Titus 1:6 (Parallel theme): If any be blameless, the husband of one wife, having faithful children not accused of riot or unruly.

Proverbs 7:25 (Parallel theme): Let not thine heart decline to her ways, go not astray in her paths.

Proverbs 6:25 (Parallel theme): Lust not after her beauty in thine heart; neither let her take thee with her eyelids.

Jeremiah 2:21 (Parallel theme): Yet I had planted thee a noble vine, wholly a right seed: how then art thou turned into the degenerate plant of a strange vine unto me?

Ephesians 6:4 (Parallel theme): And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.

Matthew 15:19 (Parallel theme): For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies: