

Malachi 2:3

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Behold, I will corrupt your seed, and spread dung upon your faces, even the dung of your solemn feasts; and one shall take you away with it.

Analysis

Behold, I will corrupt your seed, and spread dung upon your faces, even the dung of your solemn feasts; and one shall take you away with it. The curse intensifies with graphic imagery. **I will corrupt your seed** הַנְּנִי גָּעֵר לְכֶם אַתֶּן (hineni go'er lakhem et-hazerra)—the verb גָּעֵר (ga'ar) means to rebuke sharply or ruin. זֶרַע (zera, seed) could mean agricultural crops or priestly descendants. God threatens either their livelihood or their lineage. Both interpretations fit: failed harvests would end tithes and priestly support; corrupted descendants would end priestly succession.

The humiliation continues: **spread dung upon your faces** וַיַּרְא תְּמִימָה פֶּרֶשׁ עַל-פְּנֵיכֶם (vezeriti feresh al-peneikhem). פֶּרֶשׁ (feresh, dung/excrement) from sacrificial animals was to be carried outside the camp and burned (Leviticus 4:11-12, 16:27). To have it spread on one's face was ultimate desecration and shame. **Even the dung of your solemn feasts** פֶּרֶשׁ חֲגִים (feresh haggeikhem)—from festival sacrifices they themselves offered. Their own corrupt worship would become their judgment.

One shall take you away with it וְנִשְׁאָה אֶתְכֶם אֶלָּיו (venasa etkhem elav)—they would be carried out like refuse, removed from God's presence. This graphic language emphasizes how completely God rejects corrupt worship. He finds it not merely inadequate but repulsive, fit only for disposal.

Historical Context

In ancient Israel, priests were God's chosen mediators, set apart as holy (Exodus 28:36, 29:44, Leviticus 21:6-8). They approached God's presence, handled sacred things, and represented the people. The threat to smear them with dung was the ultimate reversal—treating holy priests as unclean refuse. This judgment anticipated the end of the Levitical system. When Christ came as the perfect High Priest, the old priesthood was rendered obsolete (Hebrews 7:11-28). The temple's destruction in AD 70 ended the priestly line permanently. Today, all believers are priests (1 Peter 2:9, Revelation 1:6), but the warning remains: treating worship contemptuously invites God's judgment, not His blessing.

Related Passages

Genesis 1:1 — Creation of heavens and earth

Psalm 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Study Questions

1. How does the graphic imagery of dung on faces emphasize God's revulsion at corrupt worship?
2. What does it mean that the priests' own festival sacrifices would become their judgment?
3. How should the seriousness of this warning shape our approach to worship and spiritual leadership?

Interlinear Text

עַל	פָּרָשׁ	זִבְחַת	לְקַם	אֶת	גַּעַר	גַּעַר	הַבָּבָר
H2005	Behold	I will corrupt	H0	H853	your seed	and spread	dung
		H1605			H2233	H2219	H5921
עַל	פָּרָשׁ	חַגִּיכָּם	מִפְנִיכָּךְ	מִפְנִיכָּךְ	אֶת	זִבְחַת	אֶת
upon	your faces	dung	of your solemn feasts	and one shall take you away			
	H6440	H6569			H2282		H5375
אַלְיָה:	אַתְּכָךְ						
	H853	H413					

Additional Cross-References

Nahum 3:6 (Parallel theme): And I will cast abominable filth upon thee, and make thee vile, and will set thee as a gazingstock.

Malachi 2:9 (Parallel theme): Therefore have I also made you contemptible and base before all the people, according as ye have not kept my ways, but have been partial in the law.

Exodus 29:14 (Parallel theme): But the flesh of the bullock, and his skin, and his dung, shalt thou burn with fire without the camp: it is a sin offering.

Joel 1:17 (Parallel theme): The seed is rotten under their clods, the garners are laid desolate, the barns are broken down; for the corn is withered.

1 Kings 14:10 (Parallel theme): Therefore, behold, I will bring evil upon the house of Jeroboam, and will cut off from Jeroboam him that pisseth against the wall, and him that is shut up and left in Israel, and will take away the remnant of the house of Jeroboam, as a man taketh away dung, till it be all gone.