

Malachi 3:7

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Even from the days of your fathers ye are gone away from mine ordinances, and have not kept them. Return unto me, and I will return unto you, saith the LORD of hosts. But ye said, Wherein shall we return?

Analysis

Even from the days of your fathers ye are gone away from mine ordinances, and have not kept them. Return unto me, and I will return unto you, saith the LORD of hosts. But ye said, Wherein shall we return?

God traces Israel's apostasy to ancestral roots. **From the days of your fathers** (מִימֵי אֲבוֹתֵיכֶם, mimei avoteikhem) indicates generational rebellion—this isn't a recent problem but an inherited pattern stretching back through Israel's history. **Ye are gone away** (סָרַתֶּם, sarterem) means to turn aside, depart, or apostatize. **From mine ordinances** (מִחֻקֵּי, meḥuqqotai) refers to God's statutes, decrees, and prescribed ways.

Yet God issues a gracious invitation: **Return unto me, and I will return unto you** (שׁוּבוּ אֵלַי וְאֶשׁוּבָה אֲלֵיכֶם, shuvu elai ve'ashuvah aleikhem). The verb שׁוּב (shuv) means to turn back, repent, return. God promises reciprocal movement—when His people turn to Him in repentance, He turns to them in blessing. This echoes Zechariah 1:3 and James 4:8 ("Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you").

The people's response reveals spiritual blindness: **Wherein shall we return?** (בְּמָה נָשׁוּב, bameh nashuv)—literally "in what shall we return?" They don't recognize their apostasy, believing themselves righteous. This self-deception is more dangerous than open rebellion. They resembled the Laodicean church who said "I

am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing" while actually being "wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked" (Revelation 3:17). God's answer comes in verse 8—they've robbed Him in tithes and offerings, revealing hearts far from Him.

Historical Context

Israel's history demonstrated repeated cycles of apostasy, judgment, and return. From the golden calf at Sinai, through the judges' period ("every man did that which was right in his own eyes"), to the divided kingdom's idolatry, to exile in Babylon—the pattern held consistent. Even after returning from exile with renewed commitment to Torah (Ezra-Nehemiah), within generations they lapsed again. By Malachi's time (450-400 BC), spiritual apathy and willful disobedience characterized the people despite their formal religious observance. They maintained sacrifices and festivals but their hearts were far from God. Their question "Wherein shall we return?" reveals how sin blinds—they couldn't see their own spiritual poverty. This parallels the Pharisees in Jesus' day who claimed to see but were actually blind (John 9:40-41). The remedy for such blindness is the Spirit's convicting work, opening eyes to see sin and Christ's sufficiency.

Related Passages

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Study Questions

1. How does generational sin ("from the days of your fathers") operate in families, churches, and cultures?
2. What does it mean that God promises to return to us when we return to Him in repentance?

3. How can we avoid the spiritual blindness that asks "Wherein shall we return?" while persisting in sin?

Interlinear Text

לְמִיָּמֵי י	אֲבוֹתֵיכֶם ׀	סָרְתָּ ׀	מִחֻקֵּי	וְלֹא א
Even from the days	of your fathers	ye are gone away	from mine ordinances	
H3117	H1	H5493	H2706	H3808
שְׁמֶרְתָּ ׀	נָשׁוּב׃	אֵלַי	נָשׁוּב׃	
and have not kept	Wherein shall we return		Wherein shall we return	
H8104	H7725	H413	H7725	
׀	וְאָמַרְתָּ ׀	יְהוָה ה	צָבָא וְת	וְאָמַרְתָּ ׀
H413	But ye said	the LORD	of hosts	But ye said
	H559	H3068	H6635	H559
				H4100
	נָשׁוּב׃			
	Wherein shall we return			
	H7725			

Additional Cross-References

Zechariah 1:3 (References Lord): Therefore say thou unto them, Thus saith the LORD of hosts; Turn ye unto me, saith the LORD of hosts, and I will turn unto you, saith the LORD of hosts.

Romans 10:21 (Parallel theme): But to Israel he saith, All day long I have stretched forth my hands unto a disobedient and gainsaying people.

Deuteronomy 31:20 (Parallel theme): For when I shall have brought them into the land which I swear unto their fathers, that floweth with milk and honey; and they shall have eaten and filled themselves, and waxen fat; then will they turn unto other gods, and serve them, and provoke me, and break my covenant.

Romans 10:3 (Parallel theme): For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God.

James 4:8 (Parallel theme): Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you. Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye double minded.

Hosea 14:1 (References Lord): O Israel, return unto the LORD thy God; for thou hast fallen by thine iniquity.

Jeremiah 3:22 (References Lord): Return, ye backsliding children, and I will heal your backslidings. Behold, we come unto thee; for thou art the LORD our God.

Luke 15:16 (Parallel theme): And he would fain have filled his belly with the husks that the swine did eat: and no man gave unto him.

Isaiah 65:2 (Parallel theme): I have spread out my hands all the day unto a rebellious people, which walketh in a way that was not good, after their own thoughts;

Nehemiah 9:26 (Parallel theme): Nevertheless they were disobedient, and rebelled against thee, and cast thy law behind their backs, and slew thy prophets which testified against them to turn them to thee, and they wrought great provocations.