

Digging Deeper: The Greater Meaning of Malachi 3:16

“At that time those who fear Jehovah spoke with one another, each one with his companion, and Jehovah kept paying attention and listening. And a book of remembrance was written before him for those fearing Jehovah and for those meditating on his name.” (Malachi 3:16)

Malachi prophesied at a time when many Jews had grown cold toward Jehovah. Some were even saying: “It is of no value to serve God,” because it seemed that wicked people were doing better than faithful ones. (Malachi 3:14, 15) The main point is that in that discouraging setting, Jehovah noticed the few who still feared him, encouraged one another, and kept him in their

thoughts, and he made sure they would never be forgotten. Right after this verse he said: “They will be mine.” (Malachi 3:17)

1 “Paying Attention”: Jehovah Leans In to Listen (קָשַׁב, *qashav*)

The Hebrew word קָשַׁב (*qashav*) means to pay attention, to listen closely, or to give careful heed. It pictures someone leaning in so as not to miss a word. Notice what Jehovah was listening to: faithful people speaking “with one another, each one with his companion.” Their ordinary, upbuilding conversations mattered so much to him that he gave them his full attention.

The psalmist used the same word about prayer: “But God did hear; he paid attention to my prayer.” (Psalm 66:19) Today, too, Jehovah notices when we use our

words to build each other up, especially at our meetings, “encouraging one another, and all the more so as you see the day drawing near.” (Hebrews 10:24, 25)

- Jehovah listens not only to our prayers but also to the encouraging words we share with one another.

2 “A Book of Remembrance”: Never Forgotten (זִכָּרוֹן zikkaron)

The word for “remembrance” is זִכָּרוֹן (*zikkaron*). It means a reminder or a memorial, something kept so that a person or event will not be forgotten. In Malachi’s day, Persian kings kept written records of loyal deeds so they could reward them later. Jehovah used that picture to show that he keeps careful note of everyone who is loyal to him.

Of course, Jehovah does not need a literal book to remember. But the illustration assures us that nothing good we do for him slips his mind. David said: “Do collect my tears in your skin bottle. Are they not recorded in your book?” (Psalm 56:8) And Paul wrote: “God is not unrighteous so as to forget your work and the love you showed for his name.” (Hebrews 6:10)

- Even when others overlook what we do, Jehovah remembers every act of faithfulness.

3 “Meditating On”: Treasuring His Name (חָשַׁב, *chashav*)

The verb חָשַׁב (*chashav*) means to think, to consider, or to value something. The NWT footnote says “thinking on” or possibly “treasuring.” These faithful ones did more than know Jehovah’s name. They thought deeply about it and about

everything it stands for: his love, his justice, his wisdom, and his power. To them, his name was precious.

Isaiah expressed that same feeling: “We long for your name and your memorial.” (Isaiah 26:8) When our thoughts are full of Jehovah, it shows in our speech and in the way we live. That is why Paul urged Christians to keep their minds on what is true, righteous, and praiseworthy, and to “continue considering these things.” (Philippians 4:8)

- What we treasure, we think about, and Jehovah notices those who treasure him.

Key Spiritual Reflections

- **Upbuilding Speech:** Would Jehovah be pleased to listen in on my conversations with my brothers and sisters this week? (Malachi 3:16; Hebrews 10:24, 25)

- **Feeling Remembered:** When I feel that my service to Jehovah goes unnoticed, how does the “book of remembrance” comfort me? (Psalm 56:8; Hebrews 6:10)
- **Treasuring His Name:** How can I make more time to think about Jehovah’s qualities, so that his name becomes even more precious to me? (Isaiah 26:8; Philippians 4:8)