

1 Samuel 4:12

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And there ran a man of Benjamin out of the army, and came to Shiloh the same day with his clothes rent, and with earth upon his head.

Analysis

A Benjamite messenger runs from the battlefield to Shiloh, arriving the same day with torn clothes and earth on his head - traditional signs of mourning and disaster. The urgency of his journey matches the severity of his news. Benjamin's territory lay between Ephraim (where Shiloh stood) and the coastal plain (where the Philistines camped), making a Benjamite courier geographically appropriate. His appearance alone signals catastrophe before words are spoken.

Historical Context

Torn clothes and earth on the head were standard ancient Near Eastern expressions of grief and mourning. The messenger's appearance would communicate disaster before any words were spoken, following cultural conventions for bearing tragic news.

Related Passages

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Study Questions

1. How do physical expressions of grief communicate spiritual realities?
2. What can we learn from the immediacy of the messenger's journey?

Interlinear Text

וַיַּרְא	אִישׁ	בְּנִימָן	מִקְרָם	עָרָבָה	הַיּוֹבָא	שֵׁל
And there ran	a man	of Benjamin	out of the army	and came	to Shiloh	
H7323	H376	H1144	H4634	H935	H7887	
בְּיֹום	וְיֹמָה	וְמִלְחָמָה	קָרְבָּן	יָמָם	עַל	
בְּיֹום	וְיֹמָה	וְמִלְחָמָה	קָרְבָּן	יָמָם	עַל	
the same day	H1931	with his clothes	rent	and with earth	H5921	
H3117		H4055	H7167	H127		
רָאשׁוֹ						
upon his head						
H7218						

Additional Cross-References

Joshua 7:6 (Parallel theme): And Joshua rent his clothes, and fell to the earth upon his face before the ark of the LORD until the eventide, he and the elders of Israel, and put dust upon their heads.

Job 2:12 (Parallel theme): And when they lifted up their eyes afar off, and knew him not, they lifted up their voice, and wept; and they rent every one his mantle, and sprinkled dust upon their heads toward heaven.

Nehemiah 9:1 (Parallel theme): Now in the twenty and fourth day of this month the children of Israel were assembled with fasting, and with sackclothes, and earth upon them.

2 Samuel 1:2 (Parallel theme): It came even to pass on the third day, that, behold, a man came out of the camp from Saul with his clothes rent, and earth upon his head: and so it was, when he came to David, that he fell to the earth, and did obeisance.

2 Samuel 15:32 (Parallel theme): And it came to pass, that when David was come to the top of the mount, where he worshipped God, behold, Hushai the Archite came to meet him with his coat rent, and earth upon his head:

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