

Exodus 33:4

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And when the people heard these evil tidings, they mourned: and no man did put on him his ornaments.

Analysis

And when the people heard these evil tidings, they mourned—The Hebrew **רָעָה** (ra'ah, 'evil/calamitous') captures the devastating nature of losing God's presence. True repentance manifests in mourning, not mere regret over consequences. Removing ornaments (likely the jewelry used to make the golden calf) signifies stripping away false securities and idolatrous attachments. This corporate grief demonstrates awakened conscience—they finally grasp that covenant without communion, promise without presence, is spiritual poverty.

Historical Context

Ancient Near Eastern mourning practices included removing jewelry, tearing garments, and sitting in ashes. The ornaments likely included Egyptian jewelry taken during the exodus (Exodus 12:35-36), some of which had been melted down for the calf.

Related Passages

Psalm 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Genesis 1:1 — Creation of heavens and earth

Study Questions

1. Does the thought of losing God's presence move you to genuine mourning, or are you primarily concerned with losing His blessings?
2. What 'ornaments' or attachments might God be calling you to strip away that compete with wholehearted devotion?

Interlinear Text

וְשָׁמַע ע	וְשָׁמַע מ	אַת	בְּרִית ר	בְּרִית ע	בְּרִית ה	לִזְמֹרְן
heard	And when the people	H853	tidings	these evil	H2088	they mourned
H8085	H5971		H1697	H7451		H56
וְשָׁמַע ע	וְשָׁמַע מ	אַת	בְּרִית ר	בְּרִית ע	בְּרִית ה	לִזְמֹרְן
H3808	did put	and no man	on him his ornaments	H5921		
H7896	H376		H5716			

Additional Cross-References

Numbers 14:39 (Parallel theme): And Moses told these sayings unto all the children of Israel: and the people mourned greatly.

Ezekiel 26:16 (Parallel theme): Then all the princes of the sea shall come down from their thrones, and lay away their robes, and put off their broidered garments: they shall clothe themselves with trembling; they shall sit upon the ground, and shall tremble at every moment, and be astonished at thee.

Ezekiel 24:23 (Parallel theme): And your tires shall be upon your heads, and your shoes upon your feet: ye shall not mourn nor weep; but ye shall pine away for your iniquities, and mourn one toward another.

Ezekiel 24:17 (Parallel theme): Forbear to cry, make no mourning for the dead, bind the tire of thine head upon thee, and put on thy shoes upon thy feet, and cover not thy lips, and eat not the bread of men.

Numbers 14:1 (Parallel theme): And all the congregation lifted up their voice, and cried; and the people wept that night.

