

Ezekiel 7:18

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

They shall also gird themselves with sackcloth, and horror shall cover them; and shame shall be upon all faces, and baldness upon all their heads.

Analysis

They shall also gird themselves with sackcloth, and horror shall cover them; and shame shall be upon all faces, and baldness upon all their heads. This verse describes traditional ancient Near Eastern mourning practices now applied to national catastrophe. The outward signs of grief reflect inward reality of shame and horror at judgment received and sin that caused it.

They shall also gird themselves with sackcloth refers to wearing coarse goat-hair garments, standard mourning dress (Genesis 37:34, 2 Samuel 3:31). Sackcloth signaled grief, repentance, and humiliation before God. Its universal adoption here—all people wearing it—indicates national mourning. This is not individual loss but corporate recognition of divine judgment.

Horror shall cover them uses the Hebrew word for shuddering or trembling dread. Cover indicates all-encompassing, inescapable terror. Shame shall be upon all faces points to public humiliation. Ancient Mediterranean cultures were honor-shame based; loss of face was devastating. Baldness upon all their heads refers to shaving the head in mourning (Job 1:20, Isaiah 15:2, Jeremiah 48:37), another sign of grief and desolation.

From a Reformed perspective, these outward expressions of grief should lead to genuine heart repentance. The passage warns against presumption—God covenant people are not immune to shame and judgment when they violate covenant. It also

anticipates Christ bearing our shame so believers need not ultimately be covered with disgrace.

Historical Context

Mourning rituals in ancient Israel were highly formalized and socially prescribed. Sackcloth, ashes, head-shaving, weeping, and fasting were standard grief expressions. Lamentations provides detailed description of Jerusalem population engaging in exactly these practices after 586 BC destruction.

Archaeological evidence includes figurines and reliefs showing mourning postures and clothing. Mesopotamian and Egyptian texts describe similar practices, indicating cultural continuity across ancient Near East. The universality of these practices meant Ezekiel audience immediately understood the severity of coming judgment.

The shame upon all faces carries particular weight in honor-shame culture. Israel identity centered on being God chosen people, set apart, blessed among nations. Their destruction and exile represented ultimate public humiliation—being conquered by pagans suggested their God was weak or had abandoned them (though prophets clarified God was judging sin, not being defeated).

Post-exilic literature shows the community did indeed engage in deep mourning and repentance. Nehemiah 9 and Ezra 9 record prayers of confession acknowledging sin and accepting responsibility for judgment received. The outward mourning produced inward spiritual renewal.

Related Passages

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Study Questions

1. How do outward expressions of grief relate to genuine inward repentance?
2. What does the public nature of Israel shame teach about corporate sin and judgment?
3. In what ways does Christ bear our shame so we need not be permanently covered with disgrace?
4. How should churches respond when they recognize divine discipline for corporate unfaithfulness?
5. What is the relationship between godly sorrow and salvation (2 Corinthians 7:10)?

Interlinear Text

וְהִגְדּוּ	שָׁק יִמָּ	וְכָסְתָּ ה	אֹתָם	וְתִצַּח וְתִ
They shall also gird	themselves with sackcloth	shall cover	H853	and horror
H2296	H8242	H3680		H6427
לְכָל	פָּנִים	בּוֹשָׁם	וּבְכָל	רֹאשֵׁיהֶם
H413	H3605	shall be upon all faces	them and shame	H3605
	H6440	H955		H7218
וְהָיָה				
and baldness				
H7144				

Additional Cross-References

Amos 8:10 (Parallel theme): And I will turn your feasts into mourning, and all your songs into lamentation; and I will bring up sackcloth upon all loins, and baldness upon every head; and I will make it as the mourning of an only son, and the end thereof as a bitter day.

Isaiah 3:24 (Parallel theme): And it shall come to pass, that instead of sweet smell there shall be stink; and instead of a girdle a rent; and instead of well set hair

baldness; and instead of a stomacher a girding of sackcloth; and burning instead of beauty.

Job 21:6 (Parallel theme): Even when I remember I am afraid, and trembling taketh hold on my flesh.

Ezekiel 27:31 (Parallel theme): And they shall make themselves utterly bald for thee, and gird them with sackcloth, and they shall weep for thee with bitterness of heart and bitter wailing.

From KJV Study • kjevstudy.org