

Ezra 9:3

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And when I heard this thing, I rent my garment and my mantle, and plucked off the hair of my head and of my beard, and sat down astonished.

Analysis

Ezra's emotional devastation intensified: 'I sat down astonished until the evening sacrifice.' The word 'astonished' (Hebrew shamem) means desolated, appalled, devastated. He remained in this state for hours—from when he heard the news until 3 PM (evening sacrifice time). This prolonged grief demonstrates the seriousness of sin in godly perspective. Ezra didn't quickly move past shock to pragmatic problem-solving but deeply felt the offense against God. This models appropriate pastoral grief over congregational sin.

Historical Context

Ancient Near Eastern mourning customs included sitting in silence, torn garments, disheveled appearance, and public display of grief. Ezra's extended shocked silence communicated both his personal devastation and the gravity of corporate sin. The public nature (at the temple or prominent location) meant the community witnessed his grief. This prophetic act called people to recognize sin's seriousness. His waiting until evening sacrifice shows he remained in this state approximately six hours.

Related Passages

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

Study Questions

1. What does prolonged grief over sin (sitting 'astonied' for hours) teach about taking seriously what God takes seriously?
2. How does public display of mourning serve prophetic function in calling community to recognize sin's gravity?

Interlinear Text

בְּגַד יְאַת קָרַב עַתִּי בְּזַבְּרָה אַת וְכַשְׁמָעִי
And when I heard H853 this thing H2088 I rent H853 my garment
H8085 H1697 H7167 H899

וְלִזְקַנִּי רָאשִׁי מִשְׁעָר תְּאַמְּרָתִ הָ וְמַעַילִי
and my mantle and plucked off the hair of my head and of my beard
H4598 H4803 H8181 H7218 H2206

וְאָשַׁב הָ מְשׁׁוּמָם: אָשַׁב הָ
and sat down astonished
H3427 H8074

Additional Cross-References

Nehemiah 1:4 (Parallel theme): And it came to pass, when I heard these words, that I sat down and wept, and mourned certain days, and fasted, and prayed before the God of heaven,

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.