

Isaiah 22:17

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Behold, the LORD will carry thee away with a mighty captivity, and will surely cover thee.

Analysis

Behold, the LORD will carry thee away with a mighty captivity—The Hebrew *ṭūl yəṭaltēlkā* (טוֹל יְטַלְתֶּלְכָּא) uses an intensive form meaning 'hurl you away violently,' suggesting forceful expulsion. The phrase *ṭaltēlâ gāver* (טַלְתֵּלָא גָּבֵר, 'a mighty captivity' or 'with a man's throw') indicates the strength of a warrior hurling someone away. This contrasts sharply with Shebna's carefully hewn tomb—instead of resting in his prestigious memorial, he would be violently ejected.

And will surely cover thee (וְיִכְסֶה יְיָ אֶתְּךָ, *wə-‘āṭōh ya‘teh ’ōtāk*) uses another intensive construction. Some interpret this as covering with shame or wrapping for burial far from his intended tomb. Others see it as God covering/concealing him completely—obliterating his memory, the opposite of the fame his tomb was meant to secure. Either way, the irony is devastating: the man building a monument for remembrance will be covered in obscurity.

Historical Context

Exile was the ultimate disgrace for ancient officials who served at royal courts. Being carried away likely refers to either death in battle during Assyrian campaigns or deportation. The Assyrians regularly deported conquered peoples' leadership to break resistance and erase national identity. If Shebna advocated rebellion against Assyria or alliance with Egypt (which failed in 701 BC), he may have been executed or deported when his policy proved disastrous. His demotion to 'scribe' by Isaiah 36-37 (before Sennacherib's siege) suggests partial fulfillment

—stripped of power but not yet exiled. Complete fulfillment may have occurred later, unrecorded in Scripture.

Related Passages

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Study Questions

1. What does the contrast between Shebna's self-made monument and God's violent expulsion teach about human plans versus divine sovereignty?
2. How does being 'covered' in obscurity after seeking fame illustrate the principle that whoever exalts himself shall be humbled (Luke 14:11)?
3. What warnings does this prophecy give about building security through earthly position rather than faithful service?

Interlinear Text

הִנֵּה ה	יְהוָה	מְטִלְטֵלְךָ	טִלְטֵל ה	גְּבֹרָה
H2009	Behold the LORD	will carry thee away	captivity	with a mighty
	H3068	H2904	H2925	H1397
וְעָטָה:	וְעָטָה:			
and will surely	and will surely			
H5844	H5844			

Additional Cross-References

Jeremiah 14:3 (Parallel theme): And their nobles have sent their little ones to the waters: they came to the pits, and found no water; they returned with their vessels empty; they were ashamed and confounded, and covered their heads.

