

Jeremiah 48:37

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

For every head shall be bald, and every beard clipped: upon all the hands shall be cuttings, and upon the loins sackcloth.

Analysis

For every head shall be bald, and every beard clipped (כִּי כָל־רֹאשׁ קָרְחָה וְכָל־זָקָן גִּרְוּעָה)—Shaving the head (qorchah, קָרְחָה) and cutting the beard (geru'ah, גִּרְוּעָה) were ancient mourning practices, signs of extreme grief and humiliation (Job 1:20, Isaiah 15:2). These practices were forbidden to Israel (Leviticus 19:27-28, Deuteronomy 14:1) but common among pagans. Their universal practice across Moab ('every head... every beard') indicates comprehensive mourning—all social classes share in grief.

Upon all the hands shall be cuttings, and upon the loins sackcloth (עַל־כָּל־יָדַיִם גִּדּוּדֹת וְעַל־מִטְנֵי־שָׁק). Self-inflicted gedudot (גִּדּוּדֹת, cuttings/gashes) on hands and wearing saq (שָׁק, sackcloth—coarse goat hair) around the loins were mourning rituals expressing anguish. These physical manifestations of grief indicate that Moab's suffering will be so severe that all will engage in extreme mourning practices. The cumulative effect describes a nation in total despair.

Historical Context

These mourning practices were widespread in the ancient Near East. Archaeological evidence and literary sources confirm head-shaving, beard-cutting, self-laceration, and sackcloth-wearing as grief responses to death, national calamity, or divine judgment. While forbidden to Israel, these practices characterized pagan cultures. The prophets often described coming judgment using these images (Isaiah 15:2-3, Jeremiah 41:5, Ezekiel 7:18). When Babylon

conquered Moab, survivors indeed mourned comprehensively—for lost family members, destroyed cities, ended national existence, and failed gods.

Related Passages

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Study Questions

1. How do these extreme mourning practices illustrate the severity of experiencing divine judgment?
2. What does the universal nature of mourning ('every head... all hands') teach about how sin's consequences affect entire communities?
3. In what ways do outward expressions of grief (biblical or cultural) help process deep loss and tragedy?

Interlinear Text

כָּל H3588	כָּל H3605	רֹאשׁ H7218	קָרָהּ הַ H7144	וְכָל H3605	זָקָן H2206	גִּזְעָהּ הַ H1639	עַל H5921
		For every head	shall be bald		and every beard	clipped	
כָּל H3605	יָדַיְמָ H3027	גִּזְדֵּי תַ H1417	וְעַל H5921	מִתְנֵי יְמִי H4975	שָׂקָהּ H8242		
	upon all the hands	shall be cuttings		and upon the loins	sackcloth		

Additional Cross-References

Jeremiah 41:5 (Parallel theme): That there came certain from Shechem, from Shiloh, and from Samaria, even fourscore men, having their beards shaven, and their clothes rent, and having cut themselves, with offerings and incense in their hand, to bring them to the house of the LORD.

Jeremiah 47:5 (Parallel theme): Baldness is come upon Gaza; Ashkelon is cut off with the remnant of their valley: how long wilt thou cut thyself?

Genesis 37:34 (Parallel theme): And Jacob rent his clothes, and put sackcloth upon his loins, and mourned for his son many days.

Isaiah 20:2 (Parallel theme): At the same time spake the LORD by Isaiah the son of Amoz, saying, Go and loose the sackcloth from off thy loins, and put off thy shoe from thy foot. And he did so, walking naked and barefoot.

Jeremiah 16:6 (Parallel theme): Both the great and the small shall die in this land: they shall not be buried, neither shall men lament for them, nor cut themselves, nor make themselves bald for them:

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