

Micah 1:16

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Make thee bald, and poll thee for thy delicate children;
enlarge thy baldness as the eagle; for they are gone into
captivity from thee.

Analysis

Make thee bald, and poll thee for thy delicate children (קָרַחִי וְגַזְזִי עַל־בְּנֵי תַעֲנוּגִיךָ, qorchi va-gozzi al-benei ta'anuggayikh). קָרַח (qarach, make bald) and גָּזַז (gazaz, shave/poll) describe mourning customs where parents cut/shaved hair over dead children. "Delicate children" (בְּנֵי תַעֲנוּגִים, benei ta'anuggim) emphasizes tender, cherished ones—heightening pathos. Though Mosaic law forbade certain mourning practices (Leviticus 19:27-28; Deuteronomy 14:1), this command uses hyperbole to convey devastating loss.

Enlarge thy baldness as the eagle (הָרַחֵבִי בִּי קָרַחְתֶּךָ כְּנֶשֶׁר, harchibi qorchatekh kannesh er). The נֶשֶׁר (nesher, eagle or vulture) molts feathers, appearing bald. Make your mourning as extensive as eagle's molt—complete, conspicuous desolation. **For they are gone into captivity from thee** (כִּי גָלוּ מִמֶּךָ, ki galu mimmekh). גָּלָה (galah, go into exile/captivity) explains the devastating loss—beloved children deported, families torn apart, heritage destroyed. Exile was ancient world's supreme catastrophe—losing homeland, temple, identity, freedom.

This concluding verse personalizes judgment's horror. Not abstract theological concepts but concrete human tragedy—parents mourning exiled children. The prophet began with cosmic witnesses (mountains/hills, 1:2) and ends with personal grief (bereaved parents). Judgment affects real people. The Babylonian exile later fulfilled this prophecy fully—Jerusalem's children marched to Babylon in chains (2 Kings 25:11; Psalm 137). Jesus wept foreseeing similar judgment (Luke 19:41-44;

23:28-31). God takes no pleasure in judgment (Ezekiel 18:23, 32; 33:11) yet cannot ignore persistent covenant violation.

Historical Context

Shaving the head was ancient Near Eastern mourning practice, expressing grief over death or disaster (Job 1:20; Isaiah 22:12; Jeremiah 16:6; Ezekiel 7:18; Amos 8:10). Though some mourning customs were forbidden as pagan (Leviticus 19:27-28; Deuteronomy 14:1-2), Micah's command is poetic/rhetorical, emphasizing the magnitude of coming loss. When Assyria conquered Judean cities (701 BC), they deported populations—Sennacherib boasted of exiling 200,150 people.

The prophecy found ultimate fulfillment in Babylonian exile (586 BC). Nebuchadnezzar destroyed Jerusalem, burned the temple, executed Judah's nobles, and deported survivors to Babylon (2 Kings 25). Psalm 137 captures this anguish: **"By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down, yea, we wept, when we remembered Zion."** Lamentations describes mothers eating their children during Jerusalem's siege (Lamentations 2:20, 4:10). Micah's prophecy prepared Judah for this horror, explaining it as covenant judgment rather than divine failure. The hope: exile wasn't final; God promised restoration (Jeremiah 29:10-14; Isaiah 40:1-2).

Related Passages

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Study Questions

1. How does the command to mourn for exiled children emphasize that judgment affects real people, not abstract theological categories?

2. What does the progression from national judgment (ch. 1:2-5) to personal grief (1:16) teach about how covenant violation impacts individuals and families?
3. In what ways should awareness of judgment's personal cost motivate urgent evangelism and intercession for the lost?

Interlinear Text

קָרַחַ י'	וְגַזִּי	עַל	בְּנֵי י	תַּעֲנוּגַי יְיָ	הִרְחַבֵּי
Make thee bald	and poll	H5921	children	thee for thy delicate	enlarge
H7139	H1494		H1121	H8588	H7337
קָרַחְתִּיךָ	כַּנְּךָ שֶׁר	כִּי י	גָּל ו	מִמָּוָה:	
thy baldness	as the eagle	H3588	for they are gone into captivity		H4480
H7144	H5404		H1540		

Additional Cross-References

Isaiah 22:12 (Parallel theme): And in that day did the Lord GOD of hosts call to weeping, and to mourning, and to baldness, and to girding with sackcloth:

Job 1:20 (Parallel theme): Then Job arose, and rent his mantle, and shaved his head, and fell down upon the ground, and worshipped,

Jeremiah 7:29 (Parallel theme): Cut off thine hair, O Jerusalem, and cast it away, and take up a lamentation on high places; for the LORD hath rejected and forsaken the generation of his wrath.

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:

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.

