

## SACKCLOTH AND ASHES (MOURNING)



### HUMBLING ONESELF

In biblical times there were multiple ways of humbling oneself. Bowing down was the most common. Many people fasted in order to humble themselves before Adonai. There were various types of fasts, but the idea was simply humbling oneself and asking favor of Yah. When you fast, you abstain from food.

Those who put on sackcloth and ashes literally put on a garment or piece of sackcloth and sprinkled ashes over their head/body. This was considered far more humbling than fasting. Sometimes people would even fast and put on sackcloth and ashes, which was the ultimate humility.

**Dan. 9:3** *So I gave my attention to Adonai to seek Him by prayer and supplications, with fasting, sackcloth and ashes.*

**2Sam. 3:31** *Then David said to Joab and to all the people who were with him, "Tear your clothes and gird on sackcloth and lament before Abner." And King David walked behind the bier."*

**1Kgs. 21:27** *It came about when Ahab heard these words, that he tore his clothes and put on sackcloth and fasted, and he lay in sackcloth and went about despondently.*

**Ps. 35:13** *But as for me, when they were sick, my clothing was sackcloth; I humbled my soul with fasting, And my prayer kept returning to my bosom.*

### PEOPLE SHAVED THEIR HEADS AND WORE SACKCLOTH WHEN MOURNING

If we look at what it says in the Good Book about baldness and wearing sackcloth, you will realize that they go together, and are accepted as a proof of mourning. When people mourned they often shaved their heads and wore sackcloth. Those around these people knew by their appearance alone that they were in mourning and were left alone to do so.

**2Kgs. 2:23-24** *Elisha left to go up to Beit-El. As he was on his way up the road, some boys came out of the town and began making fun of him. "Go on up, baldy! Go on up, baldy!" 24 He looked behind him, saw them and put a curse on them in the name of ADONAI; whereupon two female bears came out of the woods and mauled forty-two of the boys".*

**Micah 1:16** *"Shave the hair from your head as you mourn for the children who were your delight; make yourselves as bald as vultures, for they have gone from you into exile".* They were to shave because they were

mourning the captivity.

**Jer. 16:6** *Great and small alike will die in this land; they will not be buried, **people will not lament them; nor will they cut their flesh or shave their heads for them**".*

**Isa. 22:3-5** *"All your leaders fled together and were captured without the use of a bow; all from you who were found were captured, even though they had fled far away. 4 This is why I said, "Don't look at me, leave me alone to weep bitterly, don't try to comfort me over **the destruction of my people.**" 5 For **it is a day of panic, trampling and confusion** from Adonai ELOHIM-Tzva'ot in the Valley of Vision. With walls crashing down, they cry for help to the mountains".*

**Isa. 22:12-14** *"That day Adonai ELOHIM-Tzva'ot called on you to **weep and mourn, to shave your heads and wear sackcloth**; 13 but instead, one sees joy and celebrating, killing of oxen, slaughtering of sheep, eating of meat, drinking of wine — "Let's eat and drink now, because tomorrow we'll be dead!" 14 Then ADONAI-Tzva'ot revealed himself in my ears: "**You will not atone for this iniquity until you die.**" This is what Adonai ELOHIM-Tzva'ot says". Mourning in those days of destruction, **baldness and wearing sackcloth go hand in hand**, they were mocking Yah, pretending to mourn while being happy, NOT forgiven until you die.*



**Isa. 15:1-3** *"This is a prophecy about Mo'av: The night 'Ar is sacked, Mo'av is ruined. The night Kir is sacked, Mo'av is ruined. 2 He went up to the temple, to Dibon and to the high places, to weep. On N'vo and Meidva Mo'av is howling, **every head shaved bald, every beard cut off.** 3 **In the streets they wear sackcloth**; on their roofs and in their squares, everyone howls and weeps profusely". It is not a sin for an Israelite man to shave his head and wear sackcloth, it was a sign someone was mourning.*

**Job 1:18-22** *"While he was still speaking, another one came and said, "Your sons and daughters were eating and drinking wine in their oldest brother's house, 19 when suddenly a strong wind blew in from over the desert. It struck the four corners of the house, so that it fell on the young people; they are dead, and I'm the only one who escaped to tell you." 20 Job got up, **tore his coat, shaved his head**, fell down on the ground and worshipped; 21 he said, "Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked I will return there. ADONAI gave; ADONAI took; blessed be the name of ADONAI." 22 In all this Iyov neither committed a sin nor put blame on Elohim". Job was mourning because of what he was told about his family.*

**Amos 8:9-10** *"When that time comes," says Adonai ELOHIM, "I will make the sun go down at noon and darken the earth in broad daylight. 10 **I will turn your festivals into mourning** and all your songs into wailing; **I will make you all put sackcloth around your waists and shave your heads bald in grief.** I will make it like mourning for an only son and its end like a bitter day".*

**Ezek. 7:15-18** *"Outside is the sword, inside plague and famine. Those in the country will die by the sword. And as for those in the city, plague and famine will eat them up. 16 But if any of them manage to escape, they will head for the mountains like doves from the valleys, all of them **moaning**, each for his sin. 17 All hands will droop, all knees turn to water. 18 **They will put on sackcloth**; horror will cover them; every face will be ashamed, **every head shaved bald**".*

**PRIESTS WERE NOT TO SHAVE THEIR HEADS AND WEAR SACKCLOTH WHEN MOURNING**

**Lev. 21:1-5** *ADONAI said to Moshe, "Speak to the cohanim, the sons of Aharon; tell them: 'No cohen is to make himself unclean for any of his people who dies, 2 except for his close relatives — his mother, father, son, daughter and brother; 3 he may also make himself unclean for his virgin sister who has never married and is therefore dependent on him. 4 He may not make himself unclean, because he is a leader among his people; doing so would profane him. 5 **Cohanim are not to make bald spots on their heads, mar the edges of their beards or cut gashes in their flesh.** 6 Rather, they are to be holy for their Elohim and not profane the name of their Elohim. For they are the ones who present ADONAI with offerings made by fire, the bread of their Elohim; therefore they must be holy". Talking about Levites not being able to shave their heads when mourning.*

**BEING BALD NATURALLY WAS CONSIDERED AS CLEAN**

**Lev. 13:40-41** *"If a man's hair has fallen from his scalp, he is bald; but he is clean. 41 If his hair has fallen off the front part of his head, he is forehead-bald; but he is clean".*

To sum it all up, when people mourned for any reason, they did so in various ways. Sometimes they mourned in private and sometimes they did it in public. Either way, they sometimes made it very obvious to everyone around them that they were mourning. Sometimes the rich people who refused to humble

themselves, paid people to mourn for them in public, so everyone knew the circumstances and reasons for their mourning.

Mourning always involved humbling themselves. They humbled themselves by either shaving their heads, fasting, or wearing sackcloth. Many did all three things. It was simply a manner used to show they were grieving in ancient times. We could compare that to people dressing in black at funerals in our present age.

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