

Psalm 137: The Babylonian Exile and Communal Pain

Google “Babylonian Exile” and read about this cataclysmic disaster for the Jewish people, which is traditionally dated 586–516 BCE.

King James translation (1611)

- [1] By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down, yea, we wept, when we remembered Zion.
- [2] We hanged our harps upon the willows in the midst thereof.
- [3] For there they that carried us away captive required of us a song; and they that wasted us required of us mirth, saying, Sing us one of the songs of Zion.
- [4] How shall we sing the LORD’s song in a strange land?
- [5] If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her cunning.
- [6] If I do not remember thee, let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth; if I prefer not Jerusalem above my chief joy.
- [7] Remember, O LORD, the children of Edom in the day of Jerusalem; who said, Rase it, rase it, even to the foundation thereof.
- [8] O daughter of Babylon, who art to be destroyed; happy shall he be, that rewardeth thee as thou hast served us.
- [9] Happy shall he be, that taketh and dasheth thy little ones against the stones.

Jewish Publication Society Translation (1982)

- [1] By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat, sat and wept, as we thought of Zion
- [2] There on the poplars we hung up our lyres,
- [3] for our captors asked us there for songs, our tormentors, for amusement, “Sing us one of the songs of Zion.”
- [4] How can we sing a song of the LORD on alien soil?
- [5] If I forget you, O Jerusalem, let my right hand wither;
- [6] let my tongue stick to my palate if I cease to think of you, if I do not keep Jerusalem in memory even at my happiest hour.
- [7] Remember, O LORD, against the Edomites the day of Jerusalem’s fall; how they cried, “Strip her, strip her to her very foundations!”
- [8] Fair Babylon, you predator, a blessing on him who repays you in kind what you have inflicted on us;
- [9] A blessing on him who seizes your babies and dashes them against the rocks!

Transliteration of the Hebrew text

[1] Al-naharot Bavel sham yashavnu gam-bachinu bezachreynu et-Tsion.

[2] Al-aravim btochah talinu kinoroteynu.

[3] Ki sham she'alulu shoveynu divrey-shir vetolaleynu simcha shiru lanu mishir Tsion.

[4] Eych nashir et-shir YHVH al admat neychor.

[5] Im-eshkacheych Yerushalayim tishkach yemini.

[6] Tidbak-leshoni lechiki im-lo ezkreychi im-lo aaleh et-Yerushalayim al rosh simchati.

[7] Zechor YHVH livney Edom et yom Yerushalayim ha'omrim aru aru hayesod bah.

[8] Bat-Bavel hashedudah ashrey sheyeshalem-lach et-gemuleych shegamalt lanu.

[9] Ashrey sheyocheyz venipeytz et-olalayich et-hasalah.