

Psalm 137

"Zion's Exiles Weep in Babylon; The Psalmist Vows to Remember Jerusalem and Calls for Terrible, Divine Justice on Zion's Enemies"

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A1 TEARS DEVOID OF WORSHIP-MUSIC IN BABYLON BECAUSE OF ZION 137:1-4

B1 Immobilizing Tears in Babylon Because of Zion 137:1

- C1 The Location of Weeping: {1} By the rivers of Babylon,¹
- C2 The Trauma of Weeping: There we sat down and wept,
- C3 The Cause of Weeping: When we remembered Zion.

B2 Moratorium on Worship-Music in Babylon Because of Zion 137:2-4

- C1 The Symbol of Silence 137:2
 - D1 {2} Upon the willows in the midst of it
 - D2 We hung our harps.
- C2 The Occasion of Silence 137:3
 - D1 The heartless demand of captors: {3} For there our captors demanded of us songs,
 - D2 The ridiculing mirth of tormentors
 - E1 And our tormentors mirth, *saying*,
 - E2 "Sing us one of the songs of Zion." ²

¹ 137:1 - Babylon, wept, Zion: The psalmist recalls a vivid memory. He and other Jewish exiles found themselves near the Euphrates and its canals in Babylon. Remembering Zion, the now-destroyed capital of their homeland, they were so traumatized with grief they were forced to sit down and weep uncontrollably. It is a picture of heart-rending grief, reminiscent of Lamentations 1:2,16-17a, 20-21; 2:11, 18; 3:48-51.

² 137:3 - tormentors, songs of Zion: The Jewish exiles' captors mocked their prisoners, demanding they sing psalms about Zion. The grief-stricken prisoners remained silent, unable to sing psalms about Yahweh, who had delivered them captive in a foreign land (137:4).

C3 The Explanation of Silence 137:4

D1 Inability to sing songs praising Yahweh: {4} How can we sing the LORD'S song

D2 When He had delivered them captive in a foreign land: In a foreign land?

A2 CURSE-FILLED VOW TO REMEMBER JERUSALEM 137:5-6

B1 The Curse of Manual Immobility 137:5

C1 The Cause of the Curse: {5} If I forget you, O Jerusalem,

C2 The Fulfillment of the Curse: May my right hand ³ forget *her skill*.

B2 The Curse of Muteness 137:6

C1 The Fulfillment of the Curse: {6} May my tongue cling to the roof of my mouth

C2 The Cause of the Curse

D1 If I do not remember you,

D2 If I do not exalt Jerusalem

D3 Above my chief joy.

A3 A CALL FOR CURSES UPON JERUSALEM'S ENEMIES 137:7-9

B1 A Call for Yahweh to Remember and Repay the Sons of Edom 137:7

C1 The Targets of the Curse: {7} Remember, O LORD, against the sons of Edom ⁴

C2 The Occasion for the Curse: The day of Jerusalem,

³ 137:5-6 - right hand, tongue: Though the grief-stricken captives were unable to sing, the psalmist called down curses upon himself, vowing never to forget Jerusalem, the object of his greatest joy and longing. If he ever did forget, he asked God to strike him with a stroke that would leave him powerless to move his right hand or even to speak. Those who ask devout modern day Israelis to give up Jerusalem as their capital are oblivious of the utter impossibility of that demand.

⁴ 137:7 - sons of Edom: The descendants of Esau had cheered and evidently aided as the Babylonians destroyed Jerusalem. The psalmist asks Yahweh to remember and repay Edom (cf. Ezek. 25:12-14; Joel 3:19-21; Obadiah vv. 9-19). Modern day Jordan now occupies the land of Edom.

C3 The Speech Meriting the Curse

D1 Who said, "Raze it, raze it

D2 To its very foundation."

**B2 The Blessings Predicted for the Destroyer of the Daughter of Babylon
137:8-9**

C1 The Target of the Curse: {8} O daughter of Babylon, you devastated one, 137:8a

C2 The Blessing Predicted for the Nation that Repays Babylon for What Babylon Did to Judah 137:8b

D1 The superlative blessing: How blessed will be the one who repays you

D2 The poetic justice: With the recompense with which you have repaid us.

C3 The Blessing Predicted for the Brutality-in-Kind Conqueror of Babylon 137:9

D1 The superlative blessing: {9} How blessed will be the one

D2 The utter brutality

E1 who seizes and dashes your little ones

E2 Against the rock.⁵

⁵ 137:9 - dashes your little ones Against the rock: The psalmist's memory is seared with visions of Babylonian soldiers brutally slamming the skulls of toddlers and infants against rocks. He predicts that God will bless the conquerors of Babylon, who will perpetrate the same violence against Babylonian babies. The Persian army conquered Babylon the night of October 12, 539 B. C. (Daniel 5:30; see J. Dwight Pentecost, Daniel, *The Bible Knowledge Commentary*), and King Cyrus (2 Chron. 36:22; Ezra 1:1) appointed Darius the Mede ruler over Babylon (Dan. 6:1).

Expanded Analysis of Psalm 137

Prepared by James T. Bartsch

July, 2006

WordExplain.com

P. O. Box 527

Cottonwood Falls, Kansas 66845

Email Contact: jbartsch@wordexplain.com

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