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## Revised Psalm 137

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## Revised Psalm 137

Lament of the Israelites carried off into exile, into a land not their own

By Joel Thompson, SJ

- <sup>1</sup> By the rivers of Babylon—  
there I stood confused, sad and angry with tears in my eyes  
when I remembered both the sufferings of my people as well as their joys
- <sup>2</sup> On the willows there  
I pounded my fists
- <sup>3</sup> For there the captors stood staring dispassionately and  
asked me “what do you have to be angry about?” “haven’t we been good to you?”  
and the tormentors asked, “can you stop overreacting? Focus on the positives – smile!”  
“Sing us one of the songs of Zion!”
- <sup>4</sup> How could I smile and sing? How could I pretend that everything was fine  
in a world of racial injustice, greed, and invalidation? In a world where the color of my skin  
made me feel like a threat, like a fool, like an unwanted blight? In a world where I was  
judged and made to feel lesser than others...
- <sup>5</sup> If I forget the sufferings of my tired people, of the poor and of the marginalized,  
let my right hand never write again
- <sup>6</sup> Let my tongue never move to utter praise  
if I do not remember you,  
if I do not set solidarity and the work for justice  
above my highest joy.