

Psalms 137:2

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

We hanged our harps upon the willows in the midst thereof.

Analysis

We hanged our harps upon the willows in the midst thereof (על־עֲמֹתִים בְּתוֹךְהָ—**תְּנַרְוֹתֵינוּ**)—The instruments of worship become silent memorials. Kinnor (lyre/harp) accompanied temple praise; hanging them on aravim (willows/poplars) along Babylonian canals symbolizes worship's suspension. Not destroyed but dormant—hope's stubborn refusal to adapt.

This gesture protests forced assimilation. Babylon wanted Israel's music without Israel's God (v. 3)—entertainment divorced from devotion. The silenced harps testify that true worship cannot be commodified or coerced. They wait for legitimate context—temple, Zion, freedom.

Historical Context

Babylonian reliefs show musicians in royal courts—conquered peoples provided cultural entertainment. The exiles' refusal to perform represents cultural resistance. The willows likely refer to Euphrates poplars, trees associated with Mesopotamian waterways.

Related Passages

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Study Questions

1. What instruments of joy hang silent in your life because proper conditions for celebration don't exist?
2. When has your faith been reduced to 'performance' for others' entertainment?
3. What stubborn hope refuses to normalize exile and demands homecoming?

Interlinear Text

בְּרֹתִים
בְּתַחְתָּם
עַבְבִּים
בְּתַחְתָּם
לִינּוּ
כִּנְרוֹתִינוּ
עַל
עַבְבִּים
בְּתַחְתָּם
לִינּוּ
כִּנְרוֹתִינוּ
H5921 upon the willows H6155 H8432 H8518 H3658

Additional Cross-References

Isaiah 24:8 (Parallel theme): The mirth of tabrets ceaseth, the noise of them that rejoice endeth, the joy of the harp ceaseth.

Ezekiel 26:13 (Parallel theme): And I will cause the noise of thy songs to cease; and the sound of thy harps shall be no more heard.

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