

Psalms 137:3

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

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.

Analysis

For there they that carried us away captive required of us a song (פִּי שָׁם) (שָׁאֲלוּנוּ שׁוֹבֵינוּ דְּבַר־יִשִּׁיר)—The captors demand entertainment from captives. Shovenu (those who took us captive) becomes shoalunu (asked/required of us)—forced performance. **And they that wasted us required of us mirth** (וְתוֹלְלוּנוּ שִׂמְחָה)—tolalenu (those who devastated us) demand simchah (joy/gladness), adding cruelty to conquest.

Sing us one of the songs of Zion (שִׁירוּ לָנוּ מִשִּׁיר צִיּוֹן)—Sacred music reduced to exotic novelty. This echoes modern secularization: biblical imagery co-opted for entertainment while rejecting biblical authority. The request itself blasphemes by divorcing form from substance.

Historical Context

Babylonian propaganda strategy included cultural displays of conquered peoples to demonstrate imperial power. Requiring worship songs from those whose temple they destroyed added psychological humiliation to physical captivity—forced performance of faith as entertainment for destroyers.

Related Passages

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Study Questions

1. When has the world demanded you perform 'Christian joy' while mocking Christian truth?
2. How do you resist co-option of sacred things into secular entertainment?
3. What songs of faith can only be sung in freedom—and which testify even in captivity?

Interlinear Text

כִּי	שָׁם	וְנוֹ	שָׂאֵל	שׁוֹבֵי	יְנוֹ	דְּבָרֵי
H3588	H8033		required	For there they that carried us away captive	of us a song	
		H7592		H7617		H1697
	מִשְׁ	יְרֵ	וְתוֹלְלֵי	יְנוֹ	שְׂמֵחָה	שֵׁנוֹ
	us one of the songs	and they that wasted	us required of us mirth	saying Sing		
	H7892	H8437	H8057	H7891		
לְ	נוֹ	מִשְׁ	יְרֵ	צִיּוֹן:		
H0	us one of the songs	of Zion				
	H7892	H6726				

Additional Cross-References

Luke 21:6 (Parallel theme): As for these things which ye behold, the days will come, in the which there shall not be left one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down.

Micah 3:12 (Parallel theme): Therefore shall Zion for your sake be plowed as a field, and Jerusalem shall become heaps, and the mountain of the house as the high places of the forest.

Isaiah 35:10 (Parallel theme): And the ransomed of the LORD shall return, and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads: they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.

Psalms 65:1 (Parallel theme): Praise waiteth for thee, O God, in Sion: and unto thee shall the vow be performed.

Psalms 9:14 (Parallel theme): That I may shew forth all thy praise in the gates of the daughter of Zion: I will rejoice in thy salvation.

Psalms 80:6 (Parallel theme): Thou makest us a strife unto our neighbours: and our enemies laugh among themselves.

Psalms 79:1 (Parallel theme): O God, the heathen are come into thine inheritance; thy holy temple have they defiled; they have laid Jerusalem on heaps.

Jeremiah 9:11 (Parallel theme): And I will make Jerusalem heaps, and a den of dragons; and I will make the cities of Judah desolate, without an inhabitant.

Jeremiah 26:18 (Parallel theme): Micah the Morasthite prophesied in the days of Hezekiah king of Judah, and spake to all the people of Judah, saying, Thus saith the LORD of hosts; Zion shall be plowed like a field, and Jerusalem shall become heaps, and the mountain of the house as the high places of a forest.

Nehemiah 4:2 (Parallel theme): And he spake before his brethren and the army of Samaria, and said, What do these feeble Jews? will they fortify themselves? will they sacrifice? will they make an end in a day? will they revive the stones out of the heaps of the rubbish which are burned?