

Psalms 137:6

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

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.

Analysis

If I do not remember thee, let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth (תִּדְבַק־לְשׁוֹנִי לַחִי אִם־לֹא אֶזְכְּרֶיךָ)—Davaq (cling/cleave/stick) describes the tongue adhering to the palate, making speech impossible. The musician who won't sing Zion's songs improperly may he lose the capacity to sing at all. **If I prefer not Jerusalem above my chief joy** (אִם־לֹא אֶעֱלֶה אֶת־יְרוּשָׁלַם עַל רֹאשׁ שִׂמְחָתִי)—alah (exalt/lift up) Jerusalem above rosh simchat (head/summit of my joy).

The progression intensifies: first the right hand (v. 5), now the tongue—
instruments of worship and witness silenced if covenant memory dims. This models
the priority hierarchy believers must maintain: Christ and His kingdom above all
earthly joys (Philippians 3:7-8).

Historical Context

Liturgical memory sustained Jewish identity through diaspora. Daily prayers
toward Jerusalem, Passover's 'Next year in Jerusalem,' and Torah study kept
covenant consciousness alive across generations. This verse became a watchword
for refusing assimilation into pagan cultures.

Related Passages

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

Study Questions

1. What would it cost you if God silenced your voice for preferring lesser joys over His kingdom?
2. How do you measure whether Christ remains your 'chief joy' amid life's legitimate pleasures?
3. What liturgical practices keep covenant memory alive when circumstances pressure you to forget?

Interlinear Text

תִּדְבֶּק	לְשׁוֹנִי ין	לְחִפִּי	אִם	לֹא	אֶם	לֹא
cleave	thee let my tongue	to the roof of my mouth				
H1692	H3956	H2441	H518	H3808		
אֶזְכֹּר כִּי	אִם	לֹא	אֶעֱלֶה	אֶת	יְרוּשָׁלַיִם	לֹא
If I do not remember			if I prefer		not Jerusalem	
H2142	H518	H3808	H5927	H853	H3389	H5921
רִאשׁוֹנִי	שִׂמְחָתִי:					
above my chief	joy					
H7218	H8057					

Additional Cross-References

Ezekiel 3:26 (Parallel theme): And I will make thy tongue cleave to the roof of thy mouth, that thou shalt be dumb, and shalt not be to them a reprover: for they are a rebellious house.

Psalms 22:15 (Parallel theme): My strength is dried up like a potsherd; and my tongue cleaveth to my jaws; and thou hast brought me into the dust of death.

Job 29:10 (Parallel theme): The nobles held their peace, and their tongue cleaved to the roof of their mouth.

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