

# Psalm 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**—(תִּזְבַּקְלְשׁוּנִי לְחַפֵּי אַמְלָא אֶזְבְּכִי) 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** (אַמְלָא אֲשַׁלֵּה אֶת-רֹאשֵׁלֶם עַל רַאשׁ שְׂמַחֲתִי)—alah (exalt/lift up) Jerusalem above rosh simhati (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

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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

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לְשׁוֹןِ יְהִי תְּדַבֵּר קָרְבָּן

cleave    thee let my tongue    to the roof of my mouth

H1692

H3956

H2441

לֹא אָמַן

H518

H3808

עַל יְרוּשָׁלָם אַתְּ אֲלֹתָה לֹא אָמַן אַתְּ אֲלֹתָה

If I do not remember

H518

H3808

if I prefer

H853

not Jerusalem

H5921

H2142

H5927

H3389

רַאשְׁמַמְתִּין

above my chief

joy

H7218

H8057

## Additional Cross-References

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**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 reproof: 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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