

Studies in Psalms by [John T Polk II](#)  
For [The Fellowship Room](#)

Psalm 137

4/24/13

## Psalm 137

## What 70 Years of Regret Did

Because of their horrendous sins, God's people (both Northern Israel and Southern Judah) were violently removed from their Promised Land for 70 years ([2 Kings 17:5-23](#); [2 Chronicles 36:15-23](#)). This Psalm was clearly written to express the Israelites' sense of loss and regret while in Babylon, and their anticipation of revenge that God would bring against the Babylonians. That "payback" came at the hands of Cyrus, king of Persia, who then caused the Israelites to return and rebuild their Holy City, Jerusalem ([2 Chronicles 36:22-23](#); [Jeremiah 50:18-32](#)).

Verses 1-6 state the woeful lesson learned;

Verses 7-9 give the somber belief that God repays "in kind" ([Jeremiah 50:29](#)).

**Verses 1-6:** Being "by the rivers of Babylon" instead of their Jordan River was a constant reminder of why they were in Babylon. Those rivers included the Tigris and Euphrates, Chebar ([Ezekiel 1:3](#)), and the Ulai ([Daniel 8:2](#)). Israelite sorrow was so deep they "wept" when they thought about destroyed Jerusalem; "hung [their] harps" because there was nothing to sing about, even though their captors requested a song; and prayed for their "right hand" become useless and "tongue" stick to the "roof of" their mouth, if they tried to forget their "chief joy" should be in Jerusalem.

**Verses 7-9:** Israel was descended from Jacob, and his twin, Esau, became known as "Edom" ([Genesis 25:30](#); [36:1](#)). "Edom," thus was a name for non-Israelites, or "nations" in the Old Testament and "Gentiles" in the New Testament. The Babylonians who had destroyed Jerusalem are represented by the term "sons of Edom" and specifically, "daughter of Babylon" whom God was going to destroy at the time of this Psalm. That destruction has already taken place, and a lingering prophecy still affects that place today.

"Babylon" is modern Iraq, and the first "Gulf War" was fought when Saddam Hussein declared he would excavate ancient Babylon and bring it back to its former glory. God had decreed otherwise: "'Then it will come to pass, when seventy years are completed, *that* I will punish the king of Babylon and that nation, the land of the Chaldeans, for their iniquity,' says the LORD; 'and I will make it a perpetual desolation'" ([Jeremiah 25:12](#); also see [Jeremiah 51:24-26](#), [Jeremiah 51:59-64](#)).



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**(Psalm 137: 8-9)** These verses reflect what God promised would happen to Babylon:

'Let the violence *done* to me and my flesh *be* upon Babylon,' The inhabitant of Zion will say; 'And my blood be upon the inhabitants of Chaldea!' Jerusalem will say. (**Jeremiah 51:35**)

Babylon's bloodshed of innocent children in Jerusalem was repaid in kind when the Persians did the same to Babylonian babies.

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