

Trees of The Bible

A study course for Lent 2021

Week Four: The Willow Tree

By the rivers of Babylon we sat and wept when we remembered Zion. There on the willows we hung our harps,*

Psalm 137:1&2

Introduction

Willows trees are usually pliant with tough wood, slender branches, and large, fibrous strong roots. The weeping willow originated from China and spread west along ancient trade routes. It was often used for medicinal purposes.



Weeping Willow by Claude Monet 1918

The fall of Jerusalem in late 6th century BC and the 70 year exile of the people to Babylon is one of the most significant and traumatic events in Jewish history. It was a turning point in Jewish religious life: the return to Jerusalem (see Book Ezra) and the rebuilding of the Temple saw a renewal of faith (see Book of Nehemiah).

“One of the most valuable traits of the willow tree is its flexibility. The willow tree is one of the few trees that is capable of bending in outrageous poses without snapping. This can be a powerful metaphor for those of us seeking recovery or a spiritual path. The message of the willow tree is to adjust with life, rather than fighting it, surrendering to the process. “

The Willow Tree- An American women’s refuge.

* The Hebrew word (*arabah*) used here is a generic word for a tree that grows by water, see also Leviticus 23:40 (Jewish festival of Sukkot) & Isaiah 44:1-5. Some Bibles translate this word as *populars*, which are members of the willow family.

LISTEN to the Boney M 1978 hit classic “By the rivers of Babylon”
(<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ta42xU2UXLA>)

READ Psalm 137; Jeremiah 39 and 1 Peter 4:1-19

REFLECT

What is the significance of the willow tree in the Old Testament?

How did the suffering of the Jews in Exile eventually turn out for good?

Have you had times of “weeping” in your life when things completely fell apart?

Does the willow tree provide a symbol of God’s loving kindness in the midst of trouble?

RECITE - Psalm 137

- 1 By the rivers of Babylon we sat and wept when we remembered Zion.
- 2 There on the willows we hung our harps,
- 3 for there our captors asked us for songs, our tormentors demanded songs of joy;
they said, “Sing us one of the songs of Zion!”
- 4 How can we sing the songs of the Lord
while in a foreign land?
- 5 If I forget you, Jerusalem, may my right hand forget its skill.
- 6 May my tongue cling to the roof of my mouth if I do not remember you,
if I do not consider Jerusalem my highest joy.
- 7 Remember, Lord, what the Edomites did on the day Jerusalem fell.
“Tear it down,” they cried, “tear it down to its foundations!”

Silence

PRAY

For all refugees and exiles that they may find security, help and refuge.....

For those who suffer that they may commit themselves to our loving and faithful God.....

For the sick in body, mind and spirit, that they may know God’s power to heal...

For those who grieve that they may be comforted and have hope....

For ourselves that we may be strong in the face of suffering....

Most gracious Father, whose Son suffered for the sin of the whole world, grant us the grace to bear all suffering patiently and to continue to do your will here on earth, through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen**

Lord’s Prayer

Let us bless the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**