

# “Blessed Are the Killers of Infants”—Understanding the Imprecation of Psalm 137 in Light of the Canonical Contexts of the Major Prophets

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## Abstract

The imprecation of Psalm 137, “Blessed are the revengers and the killers of infants” (vv. 8–9) does not seem to be in conformity with the broader messages of the Psalter, “Blessed is the man who delights in the law of Yahweh (Ps 1:1–2) and who dwells in your house and ever praises you (Ps 84:5)” and of the Old Testament, “Do not take revenge and love your neighbours and foreigners (Lev 19:18; Deut 10:19).” However, this imprecation of infants-death can be interpreted and understood in the literary contexts of the Major Prophets that show intertextual connection with Psalm 137 in terms of the imprecation and judgment themes (Isa 13:15–18; Jer 51:20–23). Certain passages of the Major Prophets contain the oracles of judgments against Israel’s enemies that are announced throughout Isaiah and Jeremiah as if the psalmist’s imprecation is answered. God would destroy Judah’s enemy, Babylon, in order to restore Judah.

**Keywords:** imprecation; imprecatory prayer; imprecatory psalm; Babylonian exile; Judah and Babylon; intertextuality; canonical contexts; book of Isaiah; book of Jeremiah; judgment and restoration

## Introduction<sup>1</sup>

The aim of this article is to read the imprecatory prayer of Psalm 137 in light of the literary contexts of Isaiah 13:15–18 and Jeremiah 51:20–23 that contain the almost identical expression of imprecation found in Psalm 137—dashing the infants in order to prove that the psalmist’s imprecation against his enemies, “Blessed are the revengers and the killers of infants” is not contrary to the broader message of the Psalter: “Blessed is the man whose delight is in the law of Yahweh” (Ps 1:1-2) and “Blessed are those who dwell in your house and ever praise you” (Ps 84:5) and the Old Testament: “Do not take revenge and love your neighbours and foreigners” (Lev 19:18; Deut 10:19).

## Imprecation in Isaiah 13:15–18 and Jeremiah 51:20–24

Isaiah 13:15–18 and Jeremiah 51:20–24 contain messages about Babylon, Judah’s great enemy, that share certain elements with Psalm 137: 1) almost identical expressions of dashing infants, 2) judgment against Babylon, 3) the sins of Babylon, 4) the restoration of Judah in exile, and 5) the similarity between the messages of judgment against Babylon in Isaiah and Jeremiah 51 and imprecatory prayer against Babylon in Psalm 137 (Park 2018, 151). The common themes or elements found in the passages above provide a clue to interpreting the harsh nature of imprecation of the infants being dashed because in Psalm 137 the psalmist prays to God for the punishment of Babylon (Park 2018, 151). Both Isaiah (13:16a) and Jeremiah (51:22bc) uttered imprecations of the infants of Babylon being dashed.

## Theological Themes of Isaiah and Jeremiah

A theme that plays an important role throughout the book of Isaiah is God as Holy One of Israel (Koole 1997, 39; Baltzer 2001, 37; Walker 2005, 14). As Jan Koole elucidates, “the Holy One of Israel (*q<sup>e</sup>dosh yisrael*),”<sup>2</sup> a characteristic of God, “sums up everything he (Isaiah the prophet) can say about Yahweh (in his vision in Isa 6), his infinite exaltedness and immaculate perfection, his will to make himself known in judgment and in salvation to his people and then to the world” (Koole 1997, 39). Israel must be holy by separating herself from all the foreign nations and getting rid of their gods/idols on the basis of the Sinai covenant (Exod 19:6) (Stuart 2002, 175). Israel failed to become a “holy nation” due to her covenant failure, and eventually faced the Babylonian captivity. God as the Holy One of Israel is God who judges unfaithful Israel (6:11–13).

God as the sovereign Yahweh who controls the nations is an overarching theme throughout the book of Jeremiah (Thompson 1980, 108). God calls Jeremiah to be a prophet to the nations (1:4, 10). God gave all the nations (Edom, Moab, Ammon, Tyre,

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1 This article forms part of the dissemination of my PhD completed under the supervision of Professor Dirk J. Human at the University of Pretoria (Park 2018).

Sidon, and even Judah) into the hands of Babylon, the greatest enemy of Judah (Jer 27:6) (Lundbom 1999, 144; Thompson 1980, 108). God reminds Israel through the prophet Jeremiah how God has chosen her forefathers and made the covenant with them (Jer 2:2–3, 21; 3:14; 12:7–10; 13:17; 33:24) (Park 2018, 152). Blessings and curses of the Sinai Covenant first given to their forefathers were still valid for them (11:26–32; 22:9; cf. Deut 27–28) (Harrison 1973, 38). Because Israel as the chosen nation failed to keep the Sinai Covenant that God made with her forefathers (Jer 11:3–5), God’s judgment upon her is impending (Allen 2012, 437).

## Judgment against the Nations

Judgment against the nations is another overarching theme throughout the book of Isaiah (Koole 1997, 41). All nations (chs. 13–24, 46–48), including God’s people Israel and Judah (chs. 1–12, 28–33), are the objects of God judgments. The message of judgment against Babylon (Isa 13:1–14:24) appears in the oracles against the nations (OAN) (Isa 13–24) and in the message of Israel’s restoration (46:1–47:15) (Park 2018, 152). God used Babylon to punish Judah for her sins of breaking God’s covenant; now God judges Babylon for all the evil things that Babylon did to Judah in order to restore her (Koole 1997, 41).

The theme of judgment against the nations, an overarching theme in Isaiah, appears in Jeremiah as well (Park 2018, 155). Jeremiah 5 describes how the nations that were once used by God as instrument of judgment against Judah are now facing the judgment of God (Jer 51:6–8, 20–24). The theme of the judgment against Judah and other nations shows the sovereignty of God over all nations and all creations (51:15–19) (Park 2018, 155). The disobedience of God’s people—especially their pagan worship and social injustice—ever since Moses’ generations was “chronic (Jer 2:20; 3:25; 22:21; 32:30–31),” “deep-seated (Jer 5:3; 13:23; 17:1)” and came “to a head in Jeremiah’s period (Jer 3:11; 7:26; 16:12)” (Allen 2012, 437; Park 2018, 155). The people refused to repent and rejected God and Jeremiah because they accepted the message of the false prophets that no matter how wickedly they behaved, God would never abandon and punish his people despite their “social injustice” and “pagan worship” (Jer 6:12–14; 23:9–32; 27:14–18; 28:1–4; 29:24–32) (Allen 2012, 437; Park 2018, 155). Eventually, God used Babylon to punish Judah (Lundbom 1999, 147). However, the foreign nations including Babylon that were once used by God for the judgment against Judah are soon to be judged for their sins (pride and arrogance) (Jer 46:8, 25–26; 48:29; 49:4, 16; 50:31–32) (Park 2018, 155–56).

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2 The expression “the holy one of Israel (*qedosh yisrael*)” appears 30 times in Isaiah but only six times in the rest of Old Testament (Stuart 2002, 175).

## Hope and Restoration of Judah

Another overarching theme in the book of Isaiah is salvation of Yahweh; the name of the prophet Isaiah (“Yahweh will save” or “Yahweh is salvation”) reflects the nature of salvation of God (Koole 1997, 5; Baltzer 2001, 37; Williamson 2006, 12). The Holy One of Israel saves and redeems His people (41:14; 43:3, 14; 47:4; 48:17; 49:7; 54:5) (Grogan 2005, 450; Park 2018, 513). God will set the people of Judah free (51:14). The Babylonians will experience God’s judgment entailing the death of their infants (Isa 13:16) and loss of their children (Isa 47:9). Furthermore, the Edomites, another enemy of Judah cursed by the psalmist of Psalm 137:9 (“Remember, O Lord, against the Edomites the day of Jerusalem!”) is destined to experience the judgment of God (“the sword of Yahweh”) (Isa 34:5; Ps 137:7) (Beuken 2000, 284–87; Park 2018, 153). The imprecation of infants-death in Psalm 137 can be interpreted and understood in the literary contexts of Isaiah 13. The imprecation that the Babylonians would be judged and their infants dashed in Psalm 137 also appears in the prophetic words of Isaiah (Isa 13) (Park 2018, 153–54).

The theme of the restoration of Judah in Isaiah appears in Jeremiah as well. Like the prophet Isaiah, the prophet Jeremiah announced the message of the restoration of Judah through the message of the judgment on Babylon (Lundbom 1999, 148; Park 2018, 156).<sup>3</sup> Judah will be restored as God begins to punish the enemy nations (Jer 50–51). In Jeremiah 50:18–19, the prophet says, “Therefore, thus says the Lord. Behold, I’m bringing punishment on the king of Babylon and his land, and I will restore Israel to his pasture.” The message that God spoke through Jeremiah is that God would gather His people from all nations, restore their fortunes, and “God would be found by” them (Jer 29:10–14) (Thompson 1980, 113). Thus, it is certain that God who hears and answers the psalmist’s imprecatory prayer in Psalm 137—judgment on Babylonians and their infants—will judge Babylon to restore Judah (Park 2018, 156).

## Imprecation in the Nearer Context of Isaiah 13:15–18

A series of oracles/prophesies against nations appears in Isaiah 13:1–23:18 (Koole 1997, 6). Babylon is the first nation that will face God’s judgment. In the oracle (*maššah*) that Isaiah saw (*hazah*), the imprecation against the Babylonian infants is uttered (Isa 13:2–22; 14:3–23).<sup>4</sup> Isaiah 13:2–5 states that God will lift a “banner” which might symbolise that God will “execute judgment” on all nations (Grogan 2005, 559–60). The prophet Isaiah, then, commands in verses 6–8, “wail” because “the Day of the Lord (*yom yhw*)” which is a dreadful day is near that all nations will be judged (Grogan 2005, 560). Verses 14–16 describe the judgment against Babylon that all the

3 The message of restoration is found in the passages of the New Covenant (Jer 31:31–34) and the messianic hope (23:5–6; 33, 15–16) (Thompson 1980, 113).

4 For the structural outline of this passage, see Grogan (2005, 465). As for the explanation of “oracle concerning Babylon,” see Grogan (2005, 553–55).

Babylonians including their infants will be slain (Park 2018, 157). God will use the Medes to punish Babylon (vv. 14–16).

The restoration of Jacob/Israel is announced in 14:1–2. The text contains a taunt song sung by Israel against the king of Babylon (vv. 3–23), filled with mockery, derision (v. 4), and God’s punishment on Babylon (v. 5) (Park 2018, 157). The oppressor will cease to exist (v. 4b) and *Sheol* (NIV: grave; NLT: the place of the dead) will meet him (v. 9) (Park 2018, 157). Verses 18–21 describes how the king of Babylon, who used to be in the highest point, heaven, is now lowered to the lowest point, that is, *Sheol*. Unlike other kings who died in glory and were buried in their graves (Heb. house), the king of Babylon will be slain by the sword, not buried in the grave (vv. 19–20) (Park 2018, 157).

### Imprecation in the Nearer Context of Jeremiah 51:20–24

The imprecation of little children being killed appears in Jeremiah 51:20–24, which is part of the oracle against Babylon in Jeremiah 50–51. The fall of Babylon is announced in Jeremiah 50:2–3 and then follows the “word of comfort” to the exiled Judean people (Brown 2005, 66). In other words, the message of the restoration of the exiled Judah and the message of the judgment on Babylon are announced simultaneously in Jeremiah 50–51 (Thompson 1980, 731). The oracle against Babylon is the last and longest one comparing other nations (Thompson 1980, 731–32). The passage has “a specific historical setting” showing that in those days when Israel will be restored and return, Babylon will be judged (vv. 4, 20) (Brown 2005, 534). Medes (the enemies from the north) rather than Persia (geographically, from the east) will destroy Babylon (Thompson 1980, 733). Moreover, Isaiah 51:11 describes that God will “stir up” the Medes in order to judge Babylon as “vengeance for his (God’s) temple” (Fretheim 2002, 625). However, the Bible does not clearly indicate any geographic location in the discussion about the identity of the enemy of Babylon: Persia or the Medes (Harrison 1973, 184). While the message of the judgment against Babylon is announced, so is the message of restoration for Israel. God’s wrath is about to pour out on Babylon for all the evil deeds Babylon did to Israel (Jer 50:17–20). In 50:17–20, Jeremiah says, “Behold, I am about to punish the king of Babylon and his land, as I punished the king of Assyria. I will restore Israel.”

## Imprecation in the Broader Context of Isaiah 13:15–18

The oracle against Babylon in Isaiah 13–14 is part of the oracles against the nations in Isaiah 13–27.<sup>5</sup> Isaiah 13–27 belongs to the first part of Isaiah 1–39, which focus on the theme of judgment of Israel (Walker 2005, 168). A series of divine oracles is announced against Judah and Jerusalem in Isaiah 1:1–12:6 (Grogan 2005, 465). Isaiah 1:1–31 describes how corrupt and sinful God’s people have been. (1:1–31). The prophets prophesied the day of the Lord, indicating the impending judgment on Judah and Jerusalem (2:6–5:30) (Walker 2005, 16). Then, Isaiah 6 describes Isaiah who saw the vision of God in the temple (“the Holy One of Israel”) and who is called to be a prophet to Judah and Jerusalem (Park 2018, 159).

The group of prophecies known as “the book of Immanuel” in Isaiah 7:1–12:6, portrays God’s promises to give a “promised son” through a virgin (v. 14) to Ahaz when the army of the Syro-Ephramite coalition was waging war against Judah (Kidner 1994, 638; Stuart 2002, 179). Oracles of judgment are announced on behalf of Judah against Israel (9:8–10:4) that allied with Assyria (10:5–19) (Stuart 2002, 179). In these oracles, the message of hope and restoration is announced for Judah. The messianic king (“a shoot from the stump of Jesse,” 11:1) will be established (10:20–11:16). The book of Immanuel (10:20–11:16) concludes with a joyous and thankful song of salvation (12:1–6), then follow the ten oracles against the nations including Judah (Isa 13–27) (Park 2018:159). Then, oracles of judgments are announced against Israel and Judah (28:1–33:24) who once trusted in Egypt (ch. 30) (Park 2018, 159).

Two oracles are announced in Isaiah 34:1–35:10. In the first oracle (34:1–17), all the nations will be utterly destroyed, and in the second oracle (35:1–10), which focuses on the “comfort and restoration” of Israel, God’s people will be restored (Walker 2005, 168). Moreover, the message of the Messiah’s coming and deliverance for God’s people is announced in Isaiah 40–48 (Park 2018, 160). The theme of the “second exodus” and forgiveness of the iniquity of the people indicate the end of the exile (Stuart 2002, 182). God is described as the Creator of all things and the Comforter of Israel in Isaiah 41:1–44:23 (Walker 2005, 168). God raised up an “anointed servant,” Cyrus, in order to restore and comfort Israel (45:1). Israel will experience the second exodus when Cyrus, a chosen servant of God, destroys Babylon (ch. 45) (Kidner 1994, 655). The message

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5 Isaiah 13–27 is subdivided into two parts, chapters 13–23 and 24–27: God’s judgment on the nations beginning with Babylon, and God’s triumph over the nations (also often known as the “apocalypse of Isaiah”) (Oswalt 1986, 62–63, 440). The oracles/prophecies are against Babylon (13:1–14:23), against Assyria (14:24–27), against Philistia (14:28–32), against Moab (15:1–16:14), against Damascus (and Ephraim) (17:1–14), against Cush (18:1–7), against Egypt (19:1–25), against Babylon (21:1–10), against Edom (21:11–12), against Arabia (21:13–17), against Jerusalem (22:1–25), and against Tyre (23:1–18) (Grogan 2005, 465). Isaiah 24–27 forms another series related to the previous two sets of oracles. Isaiah 24 forms an “inclusion on the topic of world overthrow” (1–3, 17–20) (Motyer 1993, 132). The theme of “the Lord’s war and victory” that begins in Isaiah 24 reappears and concludes in Isaiah 27, showing that the whole world is under God’s judgment (Motyer 1993, 133).

of the destruction and humiliation of Babylon is graphically described in Isaiah 46:1–47:15 (Stuart 2002, 183). The message that Israel will be restored is announced in Isaiah 49:1–55:13. The restoration of Israel will be initiated as God destroys Babylon through Cyrus, a chosen servant of God (ch. 45) (Kidner 1994, 655). Israel will be reconciled to God (49:1–52:12), and the great invitation of God (“Come, everyone who thirsts, come to the waters!”) is issued (52:3) (Park 2018, 160).

The last section of Isaiah (chs. 56–66) summarises the past sins of Israel (56–57) and focuses on the glorious day when God would restore Jerusalem (Grogan 2005, 814; Goldingay 2014, 3). The themes of Isaiah 1 are revisited in Isaiah 56, that God’s salvation would soon to come to Israel (vv. 1–8) (Stuart 2002, 184). The theme of Israel’s spiritual blindness due to her idolatry that appears in previous chapters is revisited (56:9–57:13) (Park 2018, 161). A redeemer who will bring salvation (59:16–21) echoes Isaiah 1:18–20 (Stuart 2002, 184). Then follow themes of Zion’s future glorification and the anointed one of the Lord (60:1–63:6). Isaiah 63:7–65:15 describes how God would eventually judge all nations in order to avenge and redeem Israel. Then follows the description of the God’s creation of a new heaven and a new earth—the future glory of Zion (65:17–66:24). In many ways, the book of Isaiah echoes the themes of Psalm 137—curse and judgment on Babylon and restoration of Judah (Park 2018, 161). As God destroyed Babylon, he also restored Judah. The imprecation that the psalmist of Psalm 137 uttered appears in the prophetic oracles of Isaiah against Babylon.

### Imprecation in the Broader Context of Jeremiah 51:20–24

In Jeremiah 1, the prologue to the book of Jeremiah, Jeremiah is appointed a prophet to the nations. In Jeremiah 2–20, oracles concerning Judah’s sins and punishment are announced in the reign of king Josiah of Judah (Park 2018, 162). God will judge his people who have gone astray. These oracles indicate Israel’s failure to keep the covenant God made with her forefathers (11:1–15). Oracles of salvation and restoration are also proclaimed; God says there will be another exodus, that is, “a second exodus” on behalf of Israel (16:14–15 (Park 2018, 162). The messages of judgment are announced to the unrighteous kings of Judah (Jehoahaz, Jehoiakim and Jehoiachin) (21:1–22:30) and the false prophets (23:9–40; 26:1–29:32). A judgment oracle of “the cup of the Lord’s wrath” is announced against the nations in the midst of the oracles concerning the leaders of Judah (Jer 25:15–38) (Park 2018, 162). All the nations, from Egypt to Babylon, will drink the cup of God’s wrath (Lalleman 2013, 300). The oracle of the judgment on the nations reappears in Jeremiah 46:1–51:64. Israel and Judah will be restored as a new covenant is established (Jer 30:1–33:26). After the message of comfort is announced, the message of judgment against kings Zedekiah and Jehoiakim is announced that Babylon will attack and besiege Jerusalem (34:1–39:18).

Jeremiah 40:1–45:5 describes the aftermath of the fall of Jerusalem, that the people fled to Egypt and worshipped the idols in Egypt, which was against the advice of Jeremiah (ch. 44) (Park 2018, 163). Jeremiah 45 portrays how Jews in Egypt will be punished

when Nebuchadnezzar attacks Egypt. Then follows the passage known as the oracle against the nations (chs. 46–51). The passage describes the destruction of nations including Egypt, the Philistines, Moab, Ammon, Edom, Damascus, Kedar, Hazor, Elam, and, finally, Babylon. Babylon, the great enemy of Judah, once used as an instrument for God’s judgment on Egypt, now becomes the object of God’s wrath (Park 2018, 163). There is a message of hope and restoration for Israel in the midst of the messages of judgment against the nations (chs. 46:27–28; 50:1–10, 17–20; 51:34–40, 49–53). God’s salvation of Israel will be accomplished through his judgment of the nations (McConville 1994, 704). The book of Jeremiah ends with a “glimpse of hope,” in which Jehoiachin king of Judah is released from prison (Lalleman 2013, 68).

### Psalm 137 in Light of Isaiah 13:15–18, Jeremiah 51:20–24

Certainly the imprecations (“remember against”; “doomed to be devastated”; “repays you with the recompense with which you have done to us”; “takes and dashes your infants against the rock”) in Psalm 137:7–9 echo the judgmental oracles uttered by Isaiah and Jeremiah (Park 2018, 164). The imprecatory words of the psalmist that Babylon and Edom would be judged are also found in the prophetic oracles of the prophets Isaiah (13:15–18: “their infants will be dashed in pieces before their eyes”) and Jeremiah (51:20–24: “with you I break in pieces the old man and youth; with you I break in pieces the young man and young woman”; “I will repay Babylon”) (Park 2018, 164). The basis of the psalmist’s imprecation of the infants of Babylon being dashed is found in the oracles against Babylon in Isaiah and Jeremiah. The latter certainly provides a clue to the reason for the Babylonian captivity of Judah and the psalmist’s imprecation of the infants being dashed (Park 2018, 164).

The nearer and broader contexts of Isaiah 13 and Jeremiah 51 show that Babylon received the oracles of judgments uttered by the prophets Isaiah (13:1–14:23; 21:1–10) and Jeremiah (50:1–51:64) as though the psalmist’s imprecatory prayer is answered (Park 2018, 164). The difficult nature of the imprecatory psalm, once read in light of Isaiah 13 and Jeremiah 51, can be resolved, and understood. The messages of judgment against Babylon that repeatedly appear throughout the books of Isaiah and Jeremiah help the reader of Psalm 137 understand that the imprecation of the psalmist is not personal, but something that needs to be considered and interpreted in connection with the oracles of judgment against Babylon found in the books of Isaiah and Jeremiah (Park 2018, 165).

The psalmist was no doubt well aware of the messages of judgment and destruction of Babylon described in Jeremiah 50–51 (Park 2018, 166), and he spoke of the imprecations just as written in Psalm 137, “Blessed are those who dash the infants of Babylon against the rock!” (v. 9). Therefore, the reader who reads the psalm in light of Isaiah 13 and Jeremiah 50–51 comes to know that the judgment on and destruction of Babylon is not based so much on the imprecations of the psalmist but on the prophetic oracles of God’s judgment against Babylon (Park 2018, 166). Reading the psalm in light



of Isaiah 13 and Jeremiah 50–51 shows that people of all ages—not just infants—are the objects of God’s judgment. Isaiah 13 and Jeremiah 50–51 show that all Babylonians of all ages are judged and punished by God (Park 2018, 166). Psalm 137:8–9 describes the way that the infants of Babylon are killed—being dashed against the rock. The reason why the infants should be killed is that “the royal house in Babylon” will come to an end by their death (Hossfeld 2005, 518). The theme of the death of the infants of Babylon in Psalm 137:8–9 also appears in Isaiah 47:1–15: “These two things shall come to you, in a moment, in one day, the loss of children and widowhood shall come upon you in full measure” (v. 9ab).

The imprecation of the psalmist is in accord with the prophetic oracles in Isaiah and Jeremiah. All the themes and motifs that appear in Psalm 137, “the ceasing of pain and suffering, restoration, the fall and destruction of Babylon, enjoyment of rest and peace, the songs for joy” allude to the words of God through the prophets Isaiah and Jeremiah (Park 2018, 167). It is highly likely that the psalmist already knew the words of hope and restoration and spoke out the imprecations that allude to the words of God that were already spoken through the Old Testament prophets (Park 2018, 167).

## Synthesis

From what has been discussed above, we can understand that the psalmist’s imprecation “Blessed are the infant-dashers!” is in accordance with God’s commands to “love your neighbours (foreigners)” and “do not seek revenge” (Lev 19:18; Deut 10:19). These commands of God were given to Israel when God was establishing a covenant with his people at Mount Sinai. Subsequently, the fate of the Israelites became dependent on how they would respond to the covenant obligations: blessings for obedience or curses for disobedience. Certainly, biblical history shows that the covenant life of Israel involves the consequences for obedience and disobedience. Their way of life had so flagrantly rebelled against God that eventually God poured out the curse on them and they had to experience the Babylonian exile.

God who judges his people because of their continual transgressions, however, also shows mercy, forgives, and restores them based on the prophetic words that have been spoken through the prophets. The restoration will be initiated and fulfilled in accordance with what the prophets Isaiah and Jeremiah uttered, by the utter destruction of Babylon. The psalmist proclaimed the imprecations that the prophets had previously proclaimed (Isa 13:16; Jer 51:22).

Thus, the imprecations spoken by the psalmist and the prophets are the very words of God. Because the imprecation of the psalmist should be regarded as the words of God, it is fair to say that the psalmist’s imprecation does not contradict God’s commands of the covenant to love neighbours and foreigners and not to seek revenge (Park 2018, 186–87). If the Israelites had kept the commands of the covenant in the first place, they

would have not experienced the Babylonian captivity. Thus, it can be said that the command of God not to seek revenge does not contradict the psalmist's imprecation.

Psalm 137 is not an individual prayer that believers should pray against their enemies because imprecation in the psalm is nothing more than a prayer based on God's words spoken first by God himself and then by the prophets. The imprecation would not have been uttered by the psalmist unless God already said so. The imprecation of infants-death uttered by the psalmist in Psalm 137 indicates that judgment and restoration are intertwined in God's saving plan for the exiled people.

However, there are individual laments like Psalms 69 and 109 that contain imprecations. In these psalms, the psalmist apparently cries out to God for vengeance against not his national enemies (like the Edomites and Babylonians in Psalm 137) but personal enemies. Whether individual laments that contain imprecations are still relevant and applicable to Christians today calls for further study.

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