

**Station Seven - Lament of exiles and refugees**  
**Meditation offered by Silvia Gosnell**

**Reading: Psalm 137:1-6**

"By the rivers of Babylon— there we sat down and there we wept when we remembered Zion. On the willows there we hung up our harps. For there our captors asked us for songs, and our tormentors asked for mirth, saying, "Sing us one of the songs of Zion!" How could we sing the Lord's song in a foreign land? If I forget you, O Jerusalem, let my right hand wither! Let my tongue cling to the roof of my mouth, if I do not remember you, if I do not set Jerusalem above my highest joy."

**Reflection--**

I love this reading; it feels like the psalmist's cry is my cry, too. I was born in exile, the child of teenage Cuban refugees; sometimes I think that this deep yearning for home that I carry inside was in the very milk that I was fed. I also recognize that longing in the Latino immigrants that I've seen over the years in my psychology practice, who continue to endure separation from family - sometimes for 20 years - as a result of our broken immigration system. And I sensed the same heartache last September, on pilgrimage to the Holy Land, when I saw Palestinians cut off from each other and from Jerusalem by a 26-foot wall, more than 275 miles long. I'm heartened, though, that in this generation there seems to be something wonderful moving among us, stirring us to speak out against divisions - whether they be visible walls like the one at our own southern border, or the invisible ones of wealth & class that keep us separate from our brothers & sisters who sleep out on the Boston Common. But, even as we work to bring down barriers, I confess that I worry about a dark underbelly to our quests for justice... something that I see in myself, in our community, and in the culture that we inhabit: I, for one, can become self-righteous in a heartbeat. My self attaches to the rightness of my cause, my voice takes on a particular tone... and then it's all over. Spiritual poison. When we speak from this place of hubris, of judgment, instead of healing a division we create another one. We're conveying: "I'm morally superior to you"... and we implicitly banish others at an emotional level.

Sadly, I think that, in our culture, this is a pretty common avenue by which evil wields its wily way into even our best desires and intentions. Our narcissism makes us forget the truth... that we're all broken... all of us. We all build walls - both external and internal - when we feel vulnerable & hurt & frightened. Hunkering down behind walls gives us the illusion of protection, especially at times of true trauma... like 9/11 and last year's marathon, or the suicide bombings in the Middle East, or the deep economic insecurity of the recession. Our human brokenness leads us to divide the world into all good & all bad, us versus them, me versus you. It's not right, and it provides only an illusion of safety, but we all do it at one time or another.

On this day, though, that mold was broken. Having already humbled himself to become fully human, God, made man, underwent an almost unfathomable degree of personal trauma, both physical and psychological. But, even nailed to a tree, mocked & spat upon, he refused to divide the world, to build any sort of emotional barrier between himself and those who humiliated & tortured him. He didn't issue any self-righteous proclamations or demands, even though he had every right. Instead, he reached deep inside himself, into that endless source of compassion & love that has been there from the beginning, before our brokenness, & that abides deep inside each of us... and then, through prayer, he built a bridge instead of a wall. "Father, forgive them." It seems to me that this gentle, quiet, trauma-transcending love is the only thing that offers real hope of healing the world. It points us to Sunday, and calls us home.

*Our gratitude to Silvia Gosnell for drawing us near the One who receives us all and through whom we too will be changed.*