

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

**PSALM 137 AND MIDDLE CEREBRAL
ARTERY INFARCTION**

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**Letter to Editor: Psalm 137 and Middle Cerebral Artery Infarction. Saxby
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A recent contribution [1] described post-stroke mania, following left middle cerebral infarct. Here, we detail what is probably the first written account of a left middle cerebral infarct.

The Babylonians (present-day Iraq) destroyed Jerusalem (including Solomon's temple) and dispersed the residents. This event is usually dated at 607 BCE, but may have been twenty years later.

Zabur (the Book of Psalms) was given to Daud (David) and is sacred to the three great monotheistic religions. Psalm 137 (depending on numbering) is about 150 words long (depending on translation). It deals with the distress of displaced people, and has been attributed to the prophet Jeremiah during a period of captivity. The captives included singers and harpists (verses 2 and three). Their captors asked them to "sing songs of joy", but they were in no mood to sing, and would have liked to avenge themselves on their enemies. Verses 5 and 6 are of particular interest to students of medical history.

"5. If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget *her cunning*.

6. 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."

With the loss of 'cunning' (which refers to skill/ability) of the right hand, and the tongue 'cleave' (which refers to adhering/stuck) to the roof of the mouth, Psalm 137 is probably the first written accounts of the devastating effects of a left middle cerebral artery infarct.

It can be argued that as the psalms are in poetic form and should not be taken literally, and that what was meant is that singers would lose the ability to sing and harpists would lose the ability to play. Occam's razor encourages us to favour simple over complex solutions: where possible, one pathology over two. A single pathology could account for both mentioned impairments.

Conflict of Interest: Nil

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Reference

1. Pathak A, Srivastava M: Post-stroke mania – A case report. *ASEAN Journal of Psychiatry* 2014; 15: 209-212.

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