

“Va, pensiero” (Go, my thought), Chorus of Hebrew Slaves, NABUCCO, Act III,
music by Giuseppe Verdi, libretto by Temistocle Solera, 1842

SYNOPSIS: Exiled and forced by their Babylonian captors to live and work in terrible conditions, the Hebrew slaves express their nostalgia for their homeland and contrast their past lives with their present existence.

CHORUS

Va, pensiero, sull'ali dorate;
va, ti posa sui clivi, sui colli,
ove olezzano tepide e molli
l'aure dolci del suolo natal!
Del Giordano le rive saluta,
di Sione le torri atterrate...
Oh mia patria sì bella e perduta!
Oh membranza, sì cara e fatal!

Go, my thought, now, on wings so golden,
go, alight on the cliffs, and on the hilltops,
where sweet-smelling, warm and gentle
are the breezes of our native land!
Give the banks of the Jordan your greeting;
on the towers of Zion, find a haven...
Oh, my country, so fair and forsaken!
Oh, rememb'ring, so dear and so cruel!

Arpa d'ôr dei fatidici vati
perchè muta dal salice pendì?
Le memorie nel petto raccendi,
ci favella del tempo che fu!
O simile di Solima ai fati
traggi un suono di crudo lamento,
o t'ispiri il Signore un concerto
che ne infonda al patire virtù,
che ne infonda al patire virtù,
che ne infonda al patire virtù.

Golden harp of the all-seeing poets,
why do you hang there so mute on the willow?
In our hearts, revive mem'ries long forgotten,
tell us stories of days that have passed!
Or, to echo the fate of Jerusalem*,
sound a song full of bitter lamenting,
or may Heav'n inspire in you harmonies
that will give us the strength to endure,
that will give us the strength to endure,
that will give us the strength we need to endure.

*"Solima" is derived from the Greek word for Jerusalem, "Hierosolima."
(Translator's note)

--From a course, "Verdi and Puccini," for Lifelong Learners at UC Santa Cruz
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