

SHARING SCRIPTURE

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From Jerusalem to Babylon

For use: Jan 5 - 11

Texts: 2 Kings 21:10-16; Daniel 1; Galatians 2:19, 20; Matthew 16:24-26; 2 Corinthians 4:17; James 1:5

Emily Takatak and her family were forcibly removed from her ancestral home on Baffin Island in Canada's eastern Arctic. She had no idea why Canada's government instigated the move, or even if she'd ever return to her home. Officials did not allow her to take any of her possessions, so she couldn't adequately feed or clothe herself and her children. She later discovered that the government burned all of her belongings. The ill-conceived relocation program beginning in 1950 that uprooted Emily and the rest of her Inuit community led to decades of hunger and disease for the nation.

Carolyn Bennett, the Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations, recently issued an apology on behalf of the Canadian government. She met with 40 tribal elders to begin the process of resettlement. "We will reconcile past wrongs," Bennett said, "by celebrating your communities, honouring your culture, respecting your language, and recognizing the ongoing contribution of Inuit to Canada." The government is providing \$20 million to help the Inuit reestablish their nation and culture. [1]

Just as with the relocation of native peoples across the Americas by foreign conquerors, God's people have faced similar trials.

Nebuchadnezzar forcibly relocated Daniel and his friends—through no fault of their own—from their ancestral home in Judah to Babylon. The idolatrous practices of Judah's national leaders led God to send Nebuchadnezzar and the Babylonian army to destroy the nation and relocate its people. Now in Babylon, the Hebrew teens had to adjust to their new life in a foreign culture.

We can only imagine the grief they experienced because of this upheaval. They lost their homes and their neighborhoods. They probably lost some loved ones in the fight for national survival. We don't know the fates of their families and other friends. Their daily routines, including their worship practices, were shattered. Everything familiar to them disappeared. Their conquerors even changed their names—an evidence that Babylon now owned them. They only had each other, and God.

To top it all off, they were immediately challenged to violate their consciences when their new masters directed them to eat meals that included unclean flesh and food offered to Babylonian idols. Their response to this gives us a clue about their early upbringing. We can reasonably assume that their parents, teachers, community elders and others instilled in them a sense of faithfulness to God and the scriptural teachings of their Jewish culture. More than that, however, this episode assures us that when the pressure to violate our faith ramps us, God's power helps us hold tight to our values against all challengers.

~Chuck Burkeen

[1] <https://www.rcinet.ca/eye-on-the-arctic/2019/08/14/inuit-apology-nunavut-baffin-relocation-dog-killings-bennett-igaluit/>

For Reflection

Connecting: Go to <https://bit.ly/39AiPTm> and follow the instructions for the Fruit Basket Upset Game. Once you've finished, discuss how it feels to be forced out of your comfortable place (perhaps some of you sit in the same seat every week).

Sharing: When you consider the situation of Daniel and his friends in Daniel 1, why do you think they were so courageous in presenting their dietary request to the Babylonian officer?

1. They had absolute, unwavering faith in God
2. They wanted to have some small comfort from home, and their only option was to have familiar meals
3. If they can convince the officer to concede to this small request, perhaps they can work up to larger requests later
4. They had already lost everything else, so why not try? They have nothing left to lose
5. Even the sight of this unfamiliar food made them ill
6. Other:

Applying: The recent fires in California, Australia, and elsewhere have forced some families to relocate hundreds of miles away. Occasionally, they will show up at churches with little more than what they packed into their cars. What can your church do to help families resettle if they come to you some day?

Valuing: Is there any area of change in your life that you are struggling to cope with? Pray that God will help you make the adjustment smoothly, then pray for the ability to help others cope with challenging new circumstances as well.

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classes, and it continues to bless so many people worldwide. Thank you for your continued interest in these biblical themes and what they mean to your life and those people with whom you share it.

Paul Richardson
Executive Director

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