



# SHARING SCRIPTURE

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### **Trials, Tribulations, and Lists**

**For use:** Nov. 24 - 30

**Texts:** Ezra 1:9-11; Daniel 1:1, 2; Daniel 5; Deuteronomy 30:1-6; Ezra 8:1-23; Nehemiah 10:29; 11:1, 2; 12:1-26.

In America, we have just experienced another Thanksgiving and the roller coaster that comes with the annual family gathering. For some, describing the event with the verb 'celebrated' gives an accurate description, yet for others, 'endured' could be a better portrayal. As stories are passed around the dinner table, they may recall trials and tribulations they had to overcome—including holiday travel.

In the days prior to Thanksgiving, news sources reminded travelers how to make the trip more comfortable and efficient. Continually confronted with the possibility of poor weather, delays, and crowded highways, reaching destinations is not always smooth. Tips abound advising vacationers of ways to avoid disasters and drama while trying to reach their destinations. [1] Transportation Security Administration (TSA) expects to screen 26.8 million passengers and airline workers over this long weekend, a 4% increase over last year. [2]

In sum, travel, be it by air, car, or any other means, brings with it a certain amount of unpredictability and as a result, stress, which may cause one to question the purpose of the trip.

Just as travel can be difficult today, the same was true for the Israelites as they returned to Jerusalem, and the surrounding areas, from their captivity in Babylon. The long journey was dangerous as was always the case with people walking so many miles. Of course, the journey was not the only difficulty.

For example, relocation can be uncomfortable. These Israelites had lived in Babylon for years, many for their entire lives. Moving to a different location, even though it meant returning to the land God had given to them, didn't seem as appealing to some as staying on where they were already established. Not all had followed the instructions God had commanded through the prophets, and some decided to remain.

For those eager to make the trek and return to Jerusalem, something needed to be done before they began the journey. Ezra called for fasting and prayer. He called for followers to humble themselves and seek God's guidance and protection for themselves, their families, and their possessions. Ezra's call to prayer points out the important fact that

God cares about families and about details.

~Joy Veverka

[1] <https://www.travelpulse.com/gallery/features/10-ways-to-avoid-disastrous-holiday-travel.html?image=2>

[2] <https://thepointsguy.com/guide/holiday-travel-tips/>

## For Reflection

**Connecting:** Ask class members to (concisely) share their most memorable moment of Thanksgiving (or another holiday for those outside of the United States).

**Sharing:** According to Ezra 8:15-20, why was it important to have men from Levi going back to Jerusalem?

1. They were the only ones welcome back in Jerusalem
2. They were to be servants for all of the others
3. They were the ones God had chosen to help in the temple and they would be needed when Israel arrived back in Jerusalem
4. They were the wealthiest and Ezra didn't want to leave their wealth in Babylon
5. They might have told the Babylonians about God
6. Other...

**Applying:** Read the words to the second verse of Hymn #538, "Guide Me, O Thou Great Jehovah." How does the phrase, "Let the fire and cloudy pillar lead me all my journey through," apply to anyone dealing with decisions to relocate or to make changes in order to follow God? Think about how your class might compile some short stories of God's leading and direction in situations of relocation. These could be shared in a newsletter.

**Valuing:** Contemplate the promises in Deuteronomy 30:1-6 that are given to those who return to God. Pray together for family members or church members to be drawn to God.

## Please Tell a Friend

If you appreciate using Sharing Scripture as a resource, and you know others who may be interested, please share these newsletters with your friends. Better yet, have them personally sign up for this free resource. They can do that by calling by calling 800.272.4664 or by emailing us at [creativeministryinfo@gmail.com](mailto:creativeministryinfo@gmail.com).

Three decades ago, we created this resource for small groups and Sabbath school 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.

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